

# The Analysis of Translation Strategies Used in International Publicity of Moutai Terms through the Lens of Skopos Theory

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**Abstract:** As a famous liquor with distinctive Chinese characteristics, Moutai relies heavily on term translation in its global expansion. Skopos Theory emphasizes that translation strategies should be flexibly selected according to the intended purpose and target audience. This study explores three translation strategies: literal & transliteration, transliteration & annotation, and free & creative translation, with analysis of typical term examples. The research shows that under the guidance of Skopos Theory, flexibly adopting appropriate strategies based on term attributes and audience cognition can preserve cultural connotations, adapt to the understanding habits of foreign audiences, help build a strong overseas brand image, enhance international visibility, and promote the recognition and acceptance of Moutai among consumers from different cultural backgrounds.

**Keywords:** Translation; Moutai culture; Skopos theory; Liquor culture

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## 1. Introduction

Liquor culture is an essential part of Chinese culture, with China being the home of liquor. Being a major distilled spirit of the world and the top brand in the Chinese liquor industry, Moutai has been a cultural symbol and a national brand of China due to its long history, special brewing skills and rich cultural background. In cross-cultural communication of Moutai, the correct English translations of the most important terms of core vocabulary (such as brand name, brewing technology and corporate culture) are not only the main carriers of communication of its cultural connotations, but also the major bridges to meet the cognitive preferences of foreign audiences<sup>[1]</sup>. Its connection is on the creation of Moutai international brand image, an increase in its popularity abroad, and increasing the level of understanding and acceptance of Moutai among consumers of various cultural backgrounds.

## 2. Research the status of moutai term translation

Moutai is a benchmark brand of the liquor industry of Guizhou, and it makes excellent contributions to the local economic growth. At the same time, its liquor culture, being a significant intangible cultural heritage of China, has unique values in

intercultural communication. International cultural publicity is given a high level of priority by the brand, but systematic work on the construction of the core-term translation is not yet done and the related research is poor. Available literature focuses on the general approaches to cultural international publicity of Moutai, including cultural value mining and routes of brand protection. Nevertheless, special research on English translation for international publicity is minimal. While other researchers use translation theories to interpret how the translation of publicity materials should be performed or to assess the state of the existing translation activities in specific situations, their scope is small and local; they do not systematically cover the translation of the core cultural concepts and terms of Moutai, or sort out the advantages and drawbacks of available English translations in general. Thus, the preliminary value of Skopos Theory as a guide to Moutai term translation has been understood; however, the existing research does not satisfy the actual requirements of translating the core cultural meanings of Moutai due to a lack of complete examples and a lack of systematicity<sup>[2]</sup>. In line with this, this paper, relying on the three main principles of Skopos Theory, examines the translation experience of the typical Moutai terms, summarizes effective strategies and explores the possibilities of optimization, with a view to offering references to the cross-cultural communication of Moutai culture and Chinese liquor culture.

### **3. Connotation and principles of Skopos Theory**

#### **3.1. Four stages of Skopos Theory**

Translation studies as a field of linguistics were popular in the 1970s and the functionalist theory of translation based on the concept of Skopos Theory originated in Germany, which had undergone approximately four development phases. The early scholars formulated standards of criticism aimed at translation purposes and the first formation of functionalist theory happened. Subsequently, Skopos Theory was officially developed, and all translation acts are purposeful became the central rule. Later, translation was seen as an even more complicated communicative action that has particular objectives. Finally, in the later phase, the fidelity principle was added, and documentary translation and instrumental translation were introduced, enhancing the theoretical framework of functionalist translation.

#### **3.2. Three principles of Skopos Theory**

Skopos theory has three major principles that guide all translation activities including the skopos principle, the coherence principle and the loyalty principle.

##### **3.2.1. The Skopos principle**

The Skopos principle is the main basis of choosing translation strategies because any translation process is conducted and directed by certain purposes. The main core objective in the international publicity English translation of Moutai terms is to ensure that cross-cultural information is transmitted accurately. As they select the methods of translation, translators need to focus on the communication purpose, take into account the linguistic differences between the Chinese language and English, and the backgrounds of the foreign audience, have a profound understanding of the cultural meanings of the terms used in Moutai and be able to adapt various strategies in order to represent the culture of Chinese liquors more effectively to the world.

##### **3.2.2. The coherence principle**

According to the coherence principle, the target text has to be in line with the linguistic conventions of the foreign readers and comprehensible across cultural contexts. The omission of the cognitive and expressive habits of the foreign audience in the Moutai term translations will impede the effective transfer of the technological and cultural terms. As a result, the correct modifications and enhancements need to be done to Moutai-related words depending on the cultural context of the target audience to reduce the cultural divide and assist foreigners in comprehending the cultural meanings behind Moutai.

### 3.2.3. The loyalty principle

The loyalty principle requires that the target text is coherent with the source text in terms of intertextuality, to pass on the original message across cultures through effective cross-cultural communication. In the Moutai term translation, the terms that are associated with brand culture, brewing technology, and quality should be highly accurate. Small mistakes can lead to information distortion and reduce the effect of publicity. Consequently, the translation process should comply with the source text and preserve all the meanings and original cultural values of Moutai terms.

## 4. The translational strategy of moutai terms into international advertising through the lens of the Skopos Theory

### 4.1. Literal translation and transliteration

The most fundamental and popular approaches to the translation of Moutai terms are literal translation and transliteration. Literal translation adheres to the original meanings and communicates information clearly; transliteration has been widely applied to special brands, origin and technology-related nouns to maintain cultural features. The two ways are also brief and understandable, which means that they can be accurate with regard to information and fit the habits of foreign readers, hence making them effective in achieving global publicity of Moutai terms.

#### (1) Case 1: Feitian Maotai

Translation: *Feitian Moutai*

As a key product term of Moutai, the literal translation and transliteration of the term are used in the translation of the core product term of Moutai, which is the combination of literal translation and transliteration of the term. The term is transliterated as Feitian and the internationally recognized spelling of the term is Moutai. This translation is true to the original meaning and follows the rules of English expression, as well as the loyalty principle and the coherence principle of Skopos Theory. It also preserves the unity of the brand name, promotes the recognition abroad, and reaches the objective of standardized term communication<sup>[3]</sup>.

#### (2) Case 2: Maotai Town

Translation: *Maotai Town*

Analysis: “Maotai Town” is a keyword denoting the place of origin of Moutai, based on the strategy of literal translation and transliteration. Maotai is transliterated using the normal pinyin, and Town is directly translated as a regular word that is geographical. This is an accurate representation of the geographical term without omission or addition, meets the English conventions of place names and is logically consistent and understandable, which meets the principle of coherence. As a communication tool, it clearly indicates the starting point, promotes the regional uniqueness of the product, facilitates the creation of the perception of quality of the brand name “Made in Maotai Town,” and serves the aim of correctly passing the origin terms.

### 4.2. Transliteration and annotation

Annotated transliteration is only used on the Moutai-specific technological and raw material terms that have no English equivalent. Transliteration is a way of preserving cultural symbols based on the loyalty principle and short annotations are used to clarify connotations in accordance with the coherence principle, which makes it easier to understand the text to foreign readers<sup>[4]</sup>. This attitude would balance between cultural authenticity and communication effects, and completely pass on the uniqueness of Moutai technology and cultural implications.

#### (1) Case 1: Kunsha Craft

Kunsha Craft is one of the most important traditional brewing methods of Moutai that uses whole Hongyingzi glutinous sorghum with no crushing

Conclusion: “Kunsha Craft” is an individual central technological term of Moutai with specific geographical and technical features that have no equivalent in English<sup>[5]</sup>. The translation will use the term Kunsha Craft as it is a

special cultural symbol, which is based solely on the principle of loyalty of the Skopos Theory. At the same time, the annotations clarify its primary characteristic of brewing with whole Hongyingzi glutinous sorghum grains without breaking them into pieces, removing the intercultural understanding obstacles and ensuring that the translation is coherent and comprehensible, according to the principle of coherence. This approach retains the cultural specificity of the traditional craftsmanship of Moutai, enables foreign consumers to comprehend the importance of this craft to the quality of the liquor, and completely reflects the principle of skopos, bringing about proper and efficient cross-border communication of fundamental brewing methods.

(2) Case 2: 12987 Craft

Translation: The number 12987 Craft stands as a digital symbolization of the usual brewing operation of Moutai, which is 1 complete production, 2 additions of materials, 9 steaming processes, 8 fermentation, and 7 collection of base spirits

The analysis reveals that the phrase 12987 Craft is an essential digital term that reflects the Moutai brewing process with a powerful cultural sense. To be true to the principle of loyalty of Skopos theory, the original numbers are kept as it is in the transliterated form to restore the word. The annotations explain the procedure of a one-year cycle, two feedings, nine steaming, eight fermentations, and seven liquor collection, which shows the strict methods of Moutai and allows foreign readers to get the right idea. The translation is logical and consistent, hence it meets the principle of coherence. The translation does not destroy cultural uniqueness, presents professional knowledge efficiently, increases the understanding of Moutai technology and quality abroad, and contributes to the globalization of Chinese liquor culture<sup>[6]</sup>.

### 4.3. Free translation and creative translation

Creative translation is as appropriate to use in Moutai publicity and cultural concept as free translation, since both types emphasize emotion and value expression and literal translation can be stiff. The approach is based on the Skopos principle of Skopos Theory, which is to give up strict literalness, adopt idiomatic English expressions and optimize through creative translation to suit overseas contexts<sup>[7]</sup>. It will improve attractiveness, but it will not affect the original meaning or adhere to the principle of coherence in order to effectively communicate the culture and brand philosophy of Moutai.

(1) Case 1: Jiangxiang Youyuan

Translation: *Enduring Sauce-Aroma Elegance*

Review: “Jiangxiang Youyuan” is an old-school description of the flavor of Moutai that conveys strong Chinese aesthetic values, emphasizing the sweetness of the sauce and the extended aroma; this literal rendering is rigid and incomprehensible. Free translation helps to identify the key meanings of the translation and creative translation enhances the level of expression, matching English wine tasting terminology, smooth and intuitive, as per the coherence rule of Skopos Theory. It remains true to the flavor characteristics and communicates the sensory aesthetics using genuine words that would facilitate foreign people to appreciate its special quality and cultural implications.

(2) Case 2: Jiangxin Niangzhen

Translation: *Artisan Craftsmanship Creates Liquid Treasures*

Analysis: “Jiangxin Niangzhen” is a reflection of the craftsmanship and the brewing tradition that is unique to Moutai; its literal meaning is very likely to remove cultural overtones. This translation decodes the main meanings through free translation and conforms to the Western habits of expression through creative translation, smooth translation and natural translation, in line with the principle of coherence in Skopos Theory<sup>[8]</sup>. It is faithful to the original craftsmanship and quality meaning and it minimizes cross-cultural communication obstacles with context-sensitive expressions, achieving international recognition of Moutai brands and cultural values.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, according to Skopos Theory, this paper examines how Moutai terms can be translated into international publicity through three translation styles, which are literal and transliteration, transliteration and annotation and free and creative translation. This study extends the use of Skopos Theory to the translation of specific product terms, offers a reference model to the English translation of traditional brewing culture terms and addresses the shortcomings of the current research that focus on theory rather than on classification. By paying attention to practical translation practices and choosing appropriate methods depending on the types of terms, this paper enhances relevance and practicability, but also has constraints, including a limited scope of cases and no empirical examination of audience reception. More detailed studies of the appropriate translation strategies will be necessary in the future to offer more practical guidelines on how to translate Moutai terms, assist in creating a positive overseas brand image, increase international presence and encourage the recognition and comprehension of Moutai to clients of various cultural backgrounds.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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