

## Research Article

# Functional Values and Characteristics of Food Brand Name Based on the Relation between Language and Culture

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**Abstract:** For commodities, labeling is a mark enabling food producers or manufacturers to differ their goods from others in a same classification. As a kind of labeling, food brand is various in form and its name is the focus of this study. With market economic system, Chinese food industry is facing much severer market competitions, so studying on languages of food brand name has significant guidance to the sustainable development of food brand. This study investigates characteristics of food brand name whose functional values are analyzed and discussed in the view of culture, leading to the indication of main problems and naming principles of food brand name.

**Keywords:** Characteristic, culture, food brand name, functional value

## INTRODUCTION

According to The People's Republic of China Trademark Law, any visible symbol, such as word, figure, letter, number, a combination of 3D marks and colors, or their combinations, which can vary a commodity of a natural person, a legal body or an organization from others, can be registered as a brand (Liu *et al.*, 2014). Speaking from brand formation, brand can be divided into three types, namely word brand, figure brand and brand consisting of word, figure and letter; while this study analyzes and studies word brand and words involved in combined brands with word, figure and letter, namely brand name (Liu, 2013). As for an enterprise, the brand is the intangible asset forever and spiritual values, which puts great influence on the enterprise's competition. More than an address, a brand is a weapon to make an enterprise successful and competitive in the market. Besides, a brand name can reflect several aspects, such as social culture, folk custom and consumption psychology (Xie, 2009).

Food brand, a branch of labeling, possesses its unique features besides commonness of labeling (Li, 2013). On the condition of market economic system, Chinese food industry confronts with more and more violent competitions, thus it is significant in the guidance of food brand's sustainable development to study food brand names. Abundant brand names form a special language with the reflection of language changes (Shi, 2011). In fact, brand is a socially economic phenomenon and also a socially linguistic phenomenon (Cui, 2012). In this study, food brand name is studied in the view of linguistics and culture; to explain in details, through the comprehensive analysis

of food brand name, this study aims to generalize its basic characteristics and master its language laws. Finally, application issues of food brand name are assured by concluding its functional values. In the view of an enterprise, this study enables the enterprise to build perfect image and create successful brand to serve for the development of social economics. Besides, a remarkable brand name involves various factors, such as culture, social history and psychology, the deep dip of which will be flesh materials for researches of culture and psychology.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research scope and standpoint of food brand name:** Since the found of new China, the awareness of brands has remained poor due to a variety of reasons. With reform and opening up, people have different opinions about brand; especially after the entry of the 1990's, scholars pay much attention to brand names, leading to rich research achievements. To date, researches of brand name mainly put focus on commercial law, aesthetics and translation, among which characteristics of brand name speech, semantics and vocabulary are analyzed and cultural meanings of brand name are revealed. In addition, some researches compare differences and similarities between Chinese and English brands in the view of translation. However, how brand name and culture correlating is seldom studied (Xue, 2012); and this study does research on food brand name to analyze and discuss its uniqueness based on the commonness of brand names. Finally, food brand name is studied in a comprehensive and systemic way.

This study has 6066 food brand specimens from many websites, like Taobao, Ebay, Baidu Shopping, Chinese Trademark, Chinese Brand, Chinese Trademark Registration and Chinese Trademark Supermarket and from several food wholesale markets and supermarkets.

**Study methods of food brand name:** Having applied statistics, comparison and experiment, this study deeply analyzes and study languages of food brand name with the combination of language humanity theory. The purpose of this study is to indicate culture implications of food brand name and the relation between brand language and culture, via the language reflection of food brand name in a comprehensive and systemic way. With confirmation of naming principles, this study offers naming standards of food brand to help establish socialist spiritual civilization.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Characteristics of food brand name:** Language is a symbol system combining of speech and meaning; brand language, for example, as an application language, maintains general features of language and characteristics of other application languages. As in this study, food brand name is regarded as an application language whose features are presented in speech, vocabulary and grammar.

### Speech features:

**Syllables:** A brand name catching people's eyes is better be easily remembered and recognized. As a new brand in the commodity market, it will bring in positive influences on brand popularization with concise language and rich meanings. It should be noticed that in daily life, people are used to apply simple and concise names, such as "Cola" for "Coca Cola", which is in accord with language economics and reflects Chinese double syllables or multiple syllables. A total of 6066 food brand names in this study come from food wholesale markets, supermarkets and websites like Chinese Trademark Supermarket and Chinese Trademark.

Syllable distributions and rates of above food brands are presented in Table 1, from which distribution patterns can be acquired.

Two characteristics of food brand name can be observed from Table 1.

**Limited syllables of food brand name:** To impress consumers, sellers tend to choose names remembered and read easily, which is reflected in collected brands. Among those brands, 31 cases are found with six syllables, 6 cases seven syllables and none is over seven syllables, meaning that food brand name has limited syllables.

**Two or three-syllable based food brand name:** As shown in Table 1, two or three-syllable based food

Table 1: Syllable distributions and rates of food brand names

Syllables	Numbers (n)	Rates (%)
Monosyllable	47	0.77
Double syllables	2591	42.71
Three syllables	2415	39.81
Four syllables	825	13.60
Five syllables (above)	151	2.49
Non-Chinese form	37	0.61

brand names occupy more than 80%, which indicates that two syllables and three syllables are mostly accepted by the public.

**Sound features:** Sounds of modern brand names are refined to create sweet and pleasant hearing, in order to obtain popularity to make profits. Alliteration and vowel rhyme make food brand name readable and pleasant, leaving unforgotten impressions on consumers. Actually, alliterations and vowel rhymes in food brand name contain fixed ones in Chinese and specially and rhetorically created ones with rhythmic beauty.

**Level and oblique tones:** To some extent, a brand name is judged by its sound; for instance, people are more likely to remember and publicize brands with sweet and pleasant sounds. Having analyzed level and oblique tones according to modern Chinese tones, speech sound can be divided as connected level tone, collected oblique tone and level-oblique tone (Zhang, 2012). Except for 37 food brand names in non-Chinese form, the rest 6029 cases are observed and analyzed in the view of speech sound, whose results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 tells that level-oblique tone takes the leading position with 60% performances. The well-arranged level-oblique tone read melodiously and sweetly crashes consumers' hearing more easily, which is beneficial for a brand's popularization and promotion.

### Reduplication, onomatopoeia and harmonic tone:

Distinct sounds will stand out with properly-used reduplication in rhymes, resulting in sound effect with lingering beauty (Bai, 2012). With single and simple syllables, reduplication does good for publicity because it is easily memorized. Based on natural sounds, onomatopoeia applies speech sounds to create a feeling that consumers are personally on the scene. But onomatopoeia is more than similarity in hearing; it is about getting close to internal feelings. Take "Wo", the advertising language of China Unicom for example; "Wo" is a mimic sound representing surprise and cheer when people come across amazing and admiring situations. As for harmonic tones, they are adopted to reach implicit and mild communication effects that avoiding open and plain expression.

**Wording features:** Since the implement of reform and opening up, new brand languages carry on features of

Table 2: Number distributions of speech sounds

Syllables	Connected level tone		Collected oblique tone		Level-oblique tone		Total
	Number (n)	Rate (%)	Number (n)	Rate (%)	Number (n)	Rate (%)	
Monosyllable	27	57.45	20	42.55	0	0.00	47
Two syllables	882	34.04	637	24.59	1072	41.37	2591
Three syllables	551	22.82	204	8.45	1660	68.74	2415
Four syllables	38	4.61	12	1.45	775	93.94	825
Five syllables and above	6	3.97	2	1.32	143	94.70	151
Total	1504	24.95	875	14.51	3650	60.54	6029

past brand languages and create novel features matching social development and trends. As an individual activity, brands are named on the basis of sellers' intentions and desired outcomes, thus brands are flexible in form; so does food brand. The wording of food brand name shows distinct emotions and styles in practical communications. Besides, color-based meanings enable a brand name to be more human to gain emotional identity from consumers; and those meanings make brands close to consumers to further promote the brand (Li, 2010). If a brand desires excellent promotion and market profits, it needs to activate consumers' senses to push forward consumption.

The wording of food brand name is highlighted by universality and openness; to be explained in details, the wording concludes existed characters in modern Chinese, new created words and foreign words. Speaking from grammar features, most brand names are words or phrases with prejudiced construction. Thus from above analyses, food brand name on the whole is concise and precise, which is a comprehensive application of language elements.

**Functional values of food brand name:** Food brand name, the carrier of a brand, with its unique values, plays effects on foods' best-selling and food enterprises' survival and development. As a business language, food brand possesses five language functions, namely information, expression, instruction, social intercourse and aesthetics (Shen, 2011). To stimulate consumption, food brand name, the special language, must attract consumers' attentions, which demands food names to convey information with aesthetic feelings.

Besides basic functions of language symbols, food brand name also performs the following functions: distinction, recognition, advertising promotion, aesthetics and social function. Distinction function means attentions caused by a food brand name; while recognition function and advertising promotion function refer that food brand name matches social culture and ethnic psychology to realize business profits. As for aesthetics function and social function, a perfect brand name popularizes truth, kindness and beauty and advocates social virtues with beauty appreciation.

**Cultural analyses of food brand name:** Being regarded as a communication tool, language itself is a pattern of culture (Wang and Li, 2008). Closely bound up to culture, language is the carrier of culture and the symbol system recording social histories and cultures, which expresses significance by structure and sound. Mirroring from language documenting Chinese excellent and long-lasting histories and cultures, historical changes of human society can be interpreted. With language and social culture phenomenon, brand name is influenced by ethnic psychology, social history and customs. Moreover, brand name plays functions and effects of products or services and expresses some emotion or subjective will with rich cultures. By such a way, brand name appears deep and significant implications, meaning that more than a simple name, it is a carrier of ethnic cultures. Since brand is a language phenomenon, its creation and popularization cannot leave out culture. In fact, who names a brand and who accepts it are two ends of a communication line, which appears to deliver commodity information, but essentially convey cultural information indeed (Zhang, 2013).

Food brand contains and transmits ethnic cultures simultaneously, which reflects life aspects, such as philosophies, value ideas and social customs, like a polygon prism. As for a food, it is without doubt that its quality and package are important, but the choice of its brand name is also a great matter, because consumers are more likely to accept products involving rich implications and emotional factors. Thus a good brand name will be helpful in the establishment of a brand and its enterprise cultures, which makes the brand competitive. A food brand should catch consumers' eyes from the very beginning, so that consumers can decide to purchase in a short time while facing so many foods. For example, Quanjude, the time-honored brand, conveys the wish of reunion and virtue respect; and "Coca Cola" hitting the world delivers pleasant feelings. The two foods mentioned make consumers feel free and build social identities, leading to popularity and influence promotion of food brand.

Broad and profound historical culture of Chinese Nation is just a treasure house that is the source of endless brands. Rooting in excellent and long-lasting cultures, brand culture is impacted and restrained by traditional cultures, but it also inherits traditional cultures.

**Major problems and naming principles of food brand:** A perfect food brand name effectively passes information and brings consumers aesthetic enjoyment in an art form with ethnicity and beauty sense. However, problems also occur among brands; for instance, some brand names do not catch the balance among sounds, Besides, some do not point out product characteristics and some care too much of products' foreign features. After analysis, three major problems of food brand naming are concluded as follows: phonological imbalance, creation fading and severe westernization.

Three naming principles are born according to above problems.

**Accuracy:** Brand name acts differently in communications as a special language form, so the name of a food brand must clearly express the food without any vagueness. To be more accurate, words chosen should not be over exaggerated or abused. However, some food brand names over-indicate food effects, which produced false impressions. That definitely is irresponsible for food enterprises and misguides consumers.

**Appropriateness:** Acting as a business language, food brand name should be appropriate in communications. When naming, sellers should take consumers' psychology into consideration, referring that a creative name with positive associations wins consumers' trust. Food brand name will realize commercial values only if it fits audience psychology with public acceptance.

**Aesthetic sense:** An outstanding brand name can be compared to an art work leading to beauty enjoyment when appreciated. Food brand name, for specific, presents its aesthetic senses in music, conciseness, novelty and emotion (Li, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The research on food brand name has been processed to be a key course of business language study, which will achieve broader and deeper progress in areas like linguistics, culture, psychology and sociology. Restrained by language laws, food brand name itself is a language phenomenon reflecting language laws and a cultural phenomenon reflecting

ethnic psychology and social culture. In the view of linguistics, mainly language and culture, this study does a rough research and investigation on food brand name, which involves culture, psychology, aesthetics and etc. Because of limited corpus, deeper analysis and study still remain necessary with the expansion of research scope and objectives.

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