

capacity is regarded as a symbol of vitality, renewal, and the power of rebirth (Wang et al., 2019; Qin et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2025). As such, shenrong culture represents not merely a compilation of medicinal knowledge but a composite knowledge structure that integrates medical theory, symbolic meaning, and ritual/liturgical practices (Guan et al., 2021; Xia et al., 2022).

However, this cultural framework-grounded in Yin-Yang, Five Elements theory, and the interrelatedness of the organ systems-faces semantic gaps and cognitive translation challenges in cross-cultural communication. Western biomedical discourse, oriented around anatomy, physiology, molecular mechanisms, and evidence-based medicine, lacks direct equivalents for concepts such as qi, jing (essence), or Yin-Yang (Potenza et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). Expressions in shenrong culture such as “tonifying deficiency”, “strengthening the righteous to dispel pathogenic factors”, or “unity of essence, qi, and spirit” involve not only linguistic conversion but also the adjustment of cognitive frameworks and the restructuring of cultural logic. Without adequate explanation of TCM’s holistic worldview and long clinical tradition, the cultural and medical connotations of shenrong may easily be reduced to perceptions of “non-science”, “mysticism”, or reinterpreted through consumer-oriented labels such as “anti-fatigue” or “anti-aging” (Ichim and De Boer, 2021). Thus, communicating shenrong culture internationally requires balancing the depth of its original meaning with cross-cultural intelligibility, making translation a key mechanism for semantic bridging and conceptual reframing.

## 2.2 Rising global market demand amid regulatory and cognitive disparities

Driven by the expanding global demand for functional foods and natural health products, shenrong-related goods have witnessed notable growth in international markets. Ginseng has become one of the best-selling herbal medicines worldwide, with a global market size exceeding USD 2.1 billion and products distributed across six continents (Ichim and De Boer, 2021; Potenza et al., 2022). Deer antler, due to its regenerative properties and potential health benefits, has also gained increasing attention, with global annual production reaching approximately 1 300 tons and continuing to rise alongside medicinal and wellness demand (Zhao et al., 2025). Consumers in Europe, North America, Southeast Asia, and Australia show growing interest in health concepts such as “natural”, “traditional”, and “holistic nourishment”, creating new opportunities for the commercial dissemination of shenrong products. However, international acceptance of shenrong is often shaped by frameworks of “functional consumption” or “natural supplements”, rather than a systematic understanding of TCM’s life philosophy and the deeper cultural connotations of shenrong (Suh et al., 2019). As a result, shenrong culture is easily recoded into Western consumer categories such as “immune booster” or “anti-fatigue product,” diluting its philosophical foundations and cultural depth.

At the same time, shenrong products entering global markets must navigate widely divergent regulatory systems. Countries differ significantly in the categorization of herbal medicines and animal-derived supplements, safety standards, labeling rules, and advertising claims (Suh et al., 2019; Ichim and De Boer, 2021). For ginseng, quality authentication and the identification of genuine vs. adulterated products are major challenges; mislabeling and adulteration not only undermine consumer trust but also pose safety risks (Ichim and De Boer, 2021). Many regions impose strict restrictions on medical claims such as “treat” or “cure”, requiring instead functional expressions like “supports” or “helps maintain”, which shape the permissible boundaries of shenrong-related discourse in target-language texts (Potenza et al., 2022). For deer antler, regulations on the importation, quarantine, and labeling of animal-derived materials are often stricter, and concerns about animal welfare and sustainability are increasingly incorporated into regulatory oversight (Zhao et al., 2025). These institutional differences and epistemological mismatches jointly form challenges for the international communication of shenrong culture.

## 2.3 Animal ethics and cultural differences as sensitive points in communication

Within globalized communication, shenrong culture inevitably becomes subject to cross-cultural ethical scrutiny, with animal ethics being particularly sensitive. As an animal-derived material, deer antler’s harvesting practices and related welfare concerns are evaluated through strict ethical frameworks in some cultural contexts. Although deer antler harvesting in northeastern China has a long history and is guided by experiential norms such as “taking