

necessary explanation and structural elaboration should help target readers grasp essential meanings; on the other, excessive “cultural simplification” must be avoided so that symbolic and theoretical dimensions of the original epistemology are not hollowed out, reducing shenrong to a functionally oriented yet culturally shallow commodity.

3.2 Ethics of cross-cultural adaptation: aligning with target-culture expectations and regulatory requirements

The ethics of cross-cultural adaptation concerns the acceptability and legitimacy of translations within the target culture. As global health product regulations continue to tighten, shenrong-related information must comply with various norms governing food safety, health claims, advertising, and cross-border e-commerce (Ichim and De Boer, 2021; Kadier et al., 2025). Experience from the global spread of TCM shows that societies differ significantly in health beliefs, medical systems, and the regulation of animal-derived products. Practices or terminology considered routine in the Chinese context may provoke skepticism, controversy, or even legal concerns elsewhere (Chen, 2023; Chen et al., 2025). For instance, directly translating “tonifying the kidney and enhancing yang” or “prolonging life” into claims such as “treats erectile dysfunction” or “extends lifespan” may violate health-claim regulations in many countries and constitute misleading advertising (Ichim and De Boer, 2021). Thus, cross-cultural adaptation ethics requires translators to faithfully convey source-culture meaning while systematically identifying the legal, cultural, and epistemological structures of the target environment to prevent misinterpretation or legal disputes (Figure 1).

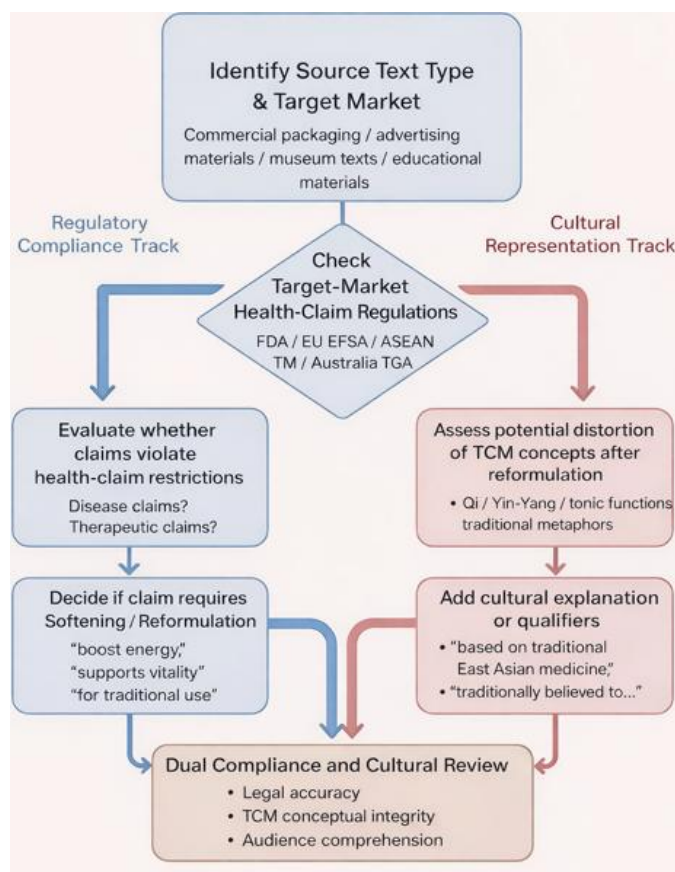


Figure 1 Dual compliance-culture check process for the translation of ginseng and deer antler claims in global markets

Cross-cultural adaptation ethics also involves understanding the cognitive patterns and cultural expectations of target audiences. For readers unfamiliar with TCM, traditional medical concepts require contextualization and structured explanation to avoid semantic misinterpretation (Min et al., 2024). For example, translating “qi and blood deficiency” simply as “lack of energy” risks being read as ordinary fatigue, rather than a diagnostic concept anchored in a full system of pattern differentiation. Studies indicate that moderate use of “rewriting” strategies—such as contextualizing terms, adjusting metaphors, or adding functional clarifications to formula