

historical narratives, or ritual contexts associated with shenrong culture are often deleted entirely from English packaging or websites, replaced by standardized marketing language such as “quality”, “purity”, or “science-backed”. This stands in stark contrast to certain American forest-farmed ginseng brands that emphasize “sustainability”, “CITES certification”, and “environmental stewardship” in English markets while rarely referencing the TCM cultural background (Liu et al., 2021). A comparison of the Chinese and English versions reveals that Chinese texts tend to follow a “traditional efficacy–cultural symbolism” logic, while English texts follow a “functional supplement–ethical consumption” logic. This structural shift reflects the trade-offs made by translators and brand owners among cultural-representation ethics, market communication goals, and sustainability narratives, providing important material for further analysis of translation ethics.

4.2 Translation issues in packaging and promotional claims: efficacy and cultural expression

Packaging and promotional language are the most direct and commercially oriented textual forms in international shenrong communication. Their translation is constrained not only by target-country regulations but also by consumer expectations within those markets. In terms of efficacy expression, many brands-seeking to match market appeal-translate traditional claims such as “tonify qi and strengthen the exterior” or “prolong life” into medically oriented assertions such as “improve immunity”, “anti-aging effects”, or “treat fatigue”. Although these translations increase clarity and marketing appeal, they may violate strict health-claim regulations in certain markets (Ichim and De Boer, 2021). Studies show that in North American and EU markets, translating traditional dietary or tonic language into explicit “disease-prevention” or “treatment” claims can be regarded as misleading, potentially leading to administrative penalties, product removal, or even lawsuits (Ichim and De Boer, 2021; Liu et al., 2021). More importantly, such translations obscure the long-term, balance-focused logic of shenrong culture rooted in TCM, causing international audiences to misinterpret shenrong as offering immediate, quantifiable biomedical effects-thus generating ethical distortions in cross-cultural meaning transfer.

Simultaneously, cultural expressions on packaging and promotional materials often display tendencies toward “cultural softening” or “cultural stylization”. Some products, aiming to attract consumers interested in Eastern culture, adopt generalized phrases such as “Eastern wisdom”, “ancient remedy”, or “secret tonic”, reducing complex medical theories and cultural experience into exoticized symbols. Others, attempting to avoid associations with “superstition” or cultural distance, adopt highly neutralized, de-culturalized translations, retaining only vague labels like “herbal supplement” or “traditional formula” (Liu et al., 2021). For core TCM concepts such as “qi” or “Yin-Yang”, translations often adopt semi-explanatory phrases like “energy balance” or “holistic harmony”. Without proper contextual and theoretical supplementation, however, such phrases risk becoming aesthetically pleasing but conceptually empty marketing rhetoric. Critical analysis of these translation strategies reveals how shenrong culture is recoded into a “functional commodity discourse” in cross-cultural settings, along with the ethical consequences of this transformation.

4.3 Cultural and market impacts of typical mistranslations

Typical mistranslations in the international communication of shenrong not only create semantic deviations but may also have deeper impacts on cultural representation, brand image, and consumer trust. One common issue involves mistranslation-or strategically misleading translation-of terms associated with product authenticity and quality markers. For example, mistranslating “cultivated” as “wild”, exaggerating “forest-farmed” as “wild-like”, or incorrectly labeling plant parts (e.g., confusing “root” with “leaf” or “fruit”) misleads consumers in evaluating product value and efficacy, and damages both brand credibility and regional reputations (Ichim and De Boer, 2021). Research shows that in markets with strict herbal supplement regulations, such mistranslations can trigger regulatory investigations, product recalls, or accusations of “deceptive marketing” (Ichim and De Boer, 2021; Liu et al., 2021). Thus, translation errors in shenrong-related products extend beyond linguistic inaccuracies to issues of supply-chain transparency, certification integrity, and consumer rights.

On the cultural level, imprecise or culturally insensitive translations may reinforce misunderstandings or prejudice toward TCM and shenrong culture. For instance, mistranslating “zī bǔ qiáng shēn” (tonifying and strengthening