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# A Study on the Language Localization Strategies of Japanese Brands in the Chinese Market—Taking UNIQLO's Advertising as an Example

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## Abstract

In the market environment intertwined with globalization and localization, language localization has become a key strategic fulcrum for Japanese brands to enter the Chinese market. Based on cross-cultural marketing theory and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, this paper selects UNIQLO, a Japanese apparel retail giant, as the research object. By analyzing its advertising language strategies, application of cultural symbols, and communication effects, it explores the paths and logic of Japanese brands achieving language localization in the Chinese market. The study finds that UNIQLO has achieved precise alignment between its brand philosophy and Chinese consumers' cognition through four major strategies: semantic adaptation, cultural symbol transcoding, emotional language construction, and multi-scenario language innovation. Its successful experience provides important reference for multinational brands to balance global consistency and local adaptability, and also offers a practical paradigm for Japanese brands to deepen their penetration into the Chinese market.

## Keywords

Japanese brands; Chinese market; language localization; UNIQLO; advertising strategies

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

With the continuous expansion of the Chinese consumer market, Japanese brands have long occupied an important share in China's cross-border consumer market by virtue of their product quality and design advantages. According to Fast Retailing Group's 2023 fiscal year report, the revenue from the Greater China region accounts for 27% of UNIQLO's global total revenue, making it one of its core growth markets. However, cultural differences between China and Japan, language barriers, and changes in consumption concepts pose significant challenges to the market expansion of Japanese brands. As the core carrier of cultural communication, the degree of language localization directly affects the communication efficiency between brands and consumers. Cross-cultural marketing research shows that the effectiveness of unlocalized advertising will decrease by 70% (Nielsen, 2019), while successful language localization can increase brand awareness by 15% and purchase intention by 12%. Against this background, analyzing the language localization strategies of Japanese brands has important theoretical and practical significance.

### 1.2 Research Significance

Theoretical Significance: Enrich the research system of language localization in cross-cultural marketing, construct

a language adaptation model suitable for Sino-Japanese cross-cultural scenarios by combining high-context and low-context cultural theories, and make up for the lack of in-depth analysis of specific industry cases in existing research.

Practical Significance: Provide reference for Japanese brands and other multinational brands to formulate language strategies in the Chinese market, help brands avoid the risk of cultural misunderstanding, and improve advertising communication efficiency and brand identity.

### 1.3 Research Methods and Framework

This paper adopts a combination of case study method and literature research method. By sorting out theories related to cross-cultural marketing and linguistic semiotics, an analytical framework is constructed; focusing on UNIQLO's advertising cases, relevant data such as its advertising copy, social media communication content in the Chinese market are collected, and in-depth analysis is conducted from four dimensions: semantics, culture, emotion, and scenario.

The framework of the paper is as follows: The first part is the introduction; the second part sorts out the relevant theoretical basis; the third part analyzes the specific language localization strategies of UNIQLO; the fourth part evaluates the implementation effects of the strategies; the fifth part summarizes the research conclusions and implications.

## 2. Theoretical Basis

### 2.1 Cross-Cultural Marketing Theory

Cross-cultural marketing emphasizes that enterprises need to adjust their marketing strategies according to the cultural characteristics of the target market, with the core being to achieve "Glocalization" (thinking globally and acting locally). Communication Accommodation Theory points out that cross-cultural communication needs to adapt to the symbolic system and language habits of the target market. High-context cultures (such as China) rely more on implicit information and situational context, while low-context cultures (such as Japan) tend to express information directly. This difference requires Japanese brands' advertising language in China to shift from direct expression to indirect resonance, conveying brand value through cultural symbols and emotional hints.

### 2.2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory provides a quantitative analysis tool for language localization. China scores high in collectivism, power distance, and long-term orientation, and consumers attach more importance to group identity, authoritative endorsement, and emotional connection. Expressions such as "family reunion" and "national dressing" in UNIQLO's advertisements are adaptations to collectivist culture, while the communication strategy of "celebrities wearing spontaneously" utilizes the influence of authoritative demonstration in high-power distance culture.

### 2.3 Linguistic Semiotics Theory

Linguistic semiotics holds that language is not only a tool for information transmission but also a carrier of cultural meaning. The localization of advertising language needs to achieve "symbolic transcoding", that is, excavating core symbols in the target culture and endowing them with brand connotations. UNIQLO's use of the Chinese character "Shi" (comfort/fitness) not only echoes the life philosophy of "Ba Shi" (comfort and ease) in Chengdu but also aligns with the brand's core concept of "LifeWear", realizing the two-way empowerment of cultural symbols and brand value.

## 3. Analysis of UNIQLO's Language Localization Strategies in the Chinese Market

### 3.1 Semantic Adaptation: Aligning with Consumer Cognition and Contextual Habits

UNIQLO's advertising language focuses on localized translation of semantics to avoid cultural barriers caused by literal translation. In the product function description, the original Japanese expression "comfortable fabric" is transformed into more contextually appropriate Chinese keywords such as "slimming", "warm", and "suitable for commuting", accurately hitting consumers' core demands. Data shows that after adding the word "slimming" to its e-

commerce copy, the click-through rate increased by 35% and the return rate decreased by 2%, confirming the communication effect of semantic adaptation.

In terms of price communication, UNIQLO converts "299 yuan" into daily expressions such as "the cost of a hot pot meal" and "spend a little money for a relaxed style", catering to the "flaunt shyness" emotion of young people in the economic downturn cycle, and transforming price advantages into psychological value recognition. This semantic transformation not only retains the core information of product cost-effectiveness but also reduces consumers' cognitive threshold through localized expressions.

### 3.2 Cultural Symbol Transcoding: Integrating Local Life Philosophy

UNIQLO deeply excavates core symbols in Chinese regional culture and traditional customs to realize the localized expression of its brand philosophy. In the opening advertisement of its Chengdu flagship store, the Chinese character "Shi" (comfort/fitness) is taken as the core creative concept, which not only connects with the life philosophy of "Ba Shi" in Chengdu but also conveys the brand's "LifeWear" concept, forming cultural resonance. By inviting local illustrators to depict regional symbols such as mahjong, covered-bowl tea, and the vitality of vegetable markets, the brand is integrated into the daily life scenes of Chengdu people, transforming advertising language from commercial promotion into cultural expression.

In traditional festival marketing, UNIQLO's Spring Festival short film "One New Outfit, One Happy Moment" closely follows the folk custom of "wearing new clothes for the New Year", linking products with emotional symbols such as "ringing out the old and ringing in the new" and "family reunion". Expressions in the copy, such as "In a harsh world, nothing is more powerful than softness," not only reflect the national pursuit of "small happiness" after the pandemic but also transform the physical softness of clothing into emotional comfort, realizing the in-depth integration of the brand with traditional culture.

### 3.3 Emotional Language Construction: Triggering Value Recognition and Resonance

UNIQLO's advertising language focuses on building emotional connections and conveying humanistic care through situational narration. In its celebrity communication strategy, it avoids the commercial sense of traditional endorsement and adopts a "celebrity daily life" language logic, emphasizing the authenticity of Jennie "wearing UNIQLO without signing an endorsement contract", transforming advertising into "private outfit sharing". This communication language utilizes consumers' trust preference for "non-commercial behaviors", enabling the brand to obtain more effective credibility endorsement than traditional endorsements, and driving the topic #Jennie's UNIQLO Same Style# to exceed 80 million views in 48 hours.

In terms of group identity construction, UNIQLO uses internet buzzwords such as "Effortless Chic 2.0" and "song chi gan" (relaxed sense) for young consumers, and at the same time meets their psychological demand for "class dislocation" through expressions such as "Ordinary people can replicate celebrities' aura with the cost of a hot pot meal". This emotional language not only shapes the brand's trendy image but also expands the emotional recognition of the consumer group through the value proposition of "accessible to everyone".

### 3.4 Multi-Scenario Language Innovation: Adapting to the Digital Communication Ecosystem

In the digital communication environment, UNIQLO adjusts its language strategies according to the characteristics of different platforms to achieve full-scenario coverage. On social platforms such as Xiaohongshu and Douyin, it adopts short video copy such as "celebrity same-style outfits" and "affordable basic style transformation", combined with high-frequency comment words such as "looking expensive" and "suitable for all body types", forming viral communication; on e-commerce platforms, it optimizes search keywords such as "slimming" and "warm" to improve traffic conversion efficiency; in offline stores, it creates a sense of scarcity and promotes immediate purchases through concise and clear language such as "limited to one piece per person" and "pre-order deposit 50 yuan".

UNIQLO also flexibly uses the "mixed language" strategy, integrating Chinese-English mixed expressions in its advertisements, such as "Effortless Chic 2.0 equals 'looking unkempt but actually well-groomed in every detail'", which not only maintains the brand's international tone but also reduces the cognitive cost for young consumers through Chinese explanations, conforming to the consumption trend of multicultural integration.

## 4. Implementation Effects and Implications of UNIQLO's Language Localization Strategies

### 4.1 Implementation Effects

Improvement of Market Performance: The language localization strategy has directly driven UNIQLO's sales growth. In 2023, the turnover days of Jennie's same-style lamb wool coat in East China warehouses shortened from 45 days to 6 days, and the Spring Festival marketing campaign drove a 20% increase in same-store sales in the same quarter. Fast Retailing Group's revenue in the Greater China region increased by 12.3% year-on-year in the 2023 fiscal year, with net profit reaching a record high.

Deepening of Brand Identity: Through the integration of cultural symbols and the construction of emotional language, UNIQLO has transformed from a "Japanese apparel brand" to a "national brand that understands Chinese consumers". The "Shi" culture marketing of the Chengdu flagship store has been widely recognized by local consumers, and the copy of the Spring Festival short film has been spontaneously quoted by social media bloggers, achieving a content breakthrough.

Strengthening of Competitive Advantage: Compared with competitors such as ZARA and H&M with "over-design" and high-price strategies, UNIQLO's language positioning of "no design" and value expression of "affordable luxury" are more in line with the pragmatic needs of Chinese consumers, enabling it to achieve counter-trend growth amid the downturn of the fast fashion market.

### 4.2 Implications for Japanese Brands

In-depth Insight into Cultural Differences: Japanese brands need to analyze the characteristics of Chinese consumers in dimensions such as collectivism and power distance based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, and adjust their language expression logic. They should avoid directly transplanting advertising language from the Japanese market and instead adopt semantics and symbols that conform to the Chinese context.

Balancing Globalization and Localization: On the basis of maintaining the consistency of core brand values, realize localized innovation of language. For example, UNIQLO's global "LifeWear" concept is translated into Chinese as "Fu Shi Ren Sheng" (LifeWear), which not only retains the essence of the brand but also integrates the Chinese life philosophy of "Shi" (comfort/fitness).

Strengthening Emotional and Situational Connections: Combine Chinese traditional customs with modern life scenarios to construct an emotional language system. Integrate folk symbols into festival marketing and adopt daily expressions in daily communication, making brand language a carrier for consumers to express their emotions.

Adapting to the Digital Communication Ecosystem: Optimize language communication strategies according to the characteristics of Chinese social platforms. Improve communication efficiency by using internet buzzwords, short video copy, keyword optimization, etc., and expand brand influence through user-generated content (UGC).

## 5. Conclusions and Prospects

### 5.1 Research Conclusions

Taking UNIQLO as a case, this paper systematically analyzes the language localization strategies of Japanese brands in the Chinese market. The research shows that successful language localization needs to realize the organic combination of semantic adaptation, cultural symbol transcoding, emotional language construction, and multi-scenario innovation. By excavating core Chinese cultural symbols, aligning with consumer cognitive habits, building emotional connections, and adapting to the digital communication environment, UNIQLO has achieved precise alignment between brand value and the local market. The essence of its strategy is "telling brand stories in the Chinese language".

Language localization is not only a simple translation conversion but also a reconstruction of cultural meaning and emotional resonance. Guided by cultural dimension theory, Japanese brands need to deeply understand the cognitive logic and emotional needs of Chinese consumers, and integrate language localization into the entire process of advertising communication, product communication, and scenario experience, so as to establish a sustainable competitive advantage in the fiercely competitive Chinese market.

### 5.2 Research Limitations and Prospects

This study only takes UNIQLO as a single case. Although it is representative, it is difficult to cover the language

localization models of all Japanese brands. Future research can expand the scope of cases, compare the strategic differences of Japanese brands in different industries and scales, and further improve the theoretical model. At the same time, with the application of artificial intelligence technology in marketing, language localization will show an intelligent and personalized trend. Future research can explore the innovative path of language localization driven by AI, providing more forward-looking references for multinational brands.

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