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## Brand Name Translation: Language Constraints, Product Attributes and Consumer Perceptions in East and Southeast Asia

Frank C. Hong

Anthony Pecotich

Clifford J. Shultz

*Loyola University Chicago*, [cshultz@luc.edu](mailto:cshultz@luc.edu)

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# Brand Name Translation: Language Constraints, Product Attributes, and Consumer Perceptions in East and Southeast Asia

*The primary purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between foreign brand name translation and product-related cues—such as physical quality, perceived origin, and brand name—on consumers' perceived quality, price, and purchase intentions. In translations from alphabetic to character-based languages such as Mandarin, two generic methods of brand name translation are available: (1) direct translation for the meaning of the brand name and (2) phonetic translation for the pronunciation of the brand name. The results from a series of structurally related experiments designed to investigate the effects of brand name translation in a cross-cultural context indicate that for an unknown brand, a phonetic translation may be mandatory, whereas for an existing strong brand name, it may be best to retain the original name.*

Observation of foreign products in many East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) markets reveals that products often carry brand names that are translated from the original names. Two generic methods of brand name translation are available: (1) direct, that is, resulting in a different-sounding but same-meaning name in the local language, or (2) phonetic, that is, resulting in the same sound but perhaps different meaning in the local language (Chan 1990). The extent to which either translation decision might be optimal cannot disregard the combined effects of the consumers' educational background (extent of bilingualism) and product physical quality on consumer product evaluations and judgments (cf. Schmitt and Shultz 1995). Bi- or multilingualism is a characteristic of many nations (Romaine 1995) but is particularly common among ESEA countries. Therefore, foreign marketers not only must decide whether to translate their international brand names but also must consider the form, content, style, and image such translation requires for particular market segments.

There exists little empirical work on the combined effect of brand name translation associated with product physical quality on consumers' product evaluations. Studies examining the relationship between product physical quality and consumers' product evaluations have reported mixed findings (cf. Allison and Uhl 1964; Jacoby, Olson, and Haddock 1971; Schmitt, Pan, and Tavassoli 1994; Szybillo and Jacoby 1974). Furthermore, because the ESEA region is a market that

## ABSTRACT

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**F.C. (Frank) Hong,  
Anthony Pecotich, and  
Clifford J. Shultz II**

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consists of nearly 2 billion consumers with many cultures and languages and has a collective gross domestic product of approximately US\$2 trillion (e.g., Pecotich and Shultz 1998), the importance of appropriate translation in this region cannot be overstated. Our purpose is to examine the relationship among foreign brand name translation, product physical quality, and educational background on consumer responses in an ESEA market, so that marketers can make informed decisions regarding brand translation.

With regard to foreign brands in ESEA markets there are five strategic options:

1. Entering the market with the original Western brand name. This strategy may provide a strong image of an imported product, taking advantage of the Western “halo” effect (cf. Belk 1988).
2. Entering the market with a phonetically translated brand name. The pronunciation of the original brand name is retained while local connotations are attained.
3. Entering the market with a directly translated brand name. Direct translation is the option of choice if the original brand name has a certain specific meaning attached.
4. Entering the market with a combination of the original brand name and the phonetically translated name. This enables localization while retaining the image of the original.
5. Entering the market with a combination of the original brand name and the directly translated name. A strong local identity is provided while the image of a Western or imported brand is maintained.

Previous research has found that brand names have a significant effect on consumers’ perceived quality of products in single-cue and multicue situations (e.g., Peterson and Jolibert 1976), price (e.g., Donoho and Nelson 1989), and purchase intentions (e.g., Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991). Chan (1990) reports that the level of difficulty in brand name pronunciation affects sales of products. Furthermore, evidence suggests that children prefer sounds produced by their own mothers and prefer their native languages (MacWhinney 1998). On the basis of inductive reasoning and the findings from the empirical studies, we propose the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: A brand name translated into local languages will be rated higher than products with brand names in a foreign language or in a combination of foreign and local languages.

Dogana (1967) notes that whenever people hear a new and unknown word for the first time, their perception of the word may embody values due to the effect of the phonetic composition (cf. Pan and Schmitt 1996; Tavassoli 1999). Similarly, hearing a new brand name may leave a person with a positive or negative impression. It is anticipated that different methods of translation will have a differential impact depending on cultural influences, particularly language familiarity (cf. Aaronson and Ferres 1986). Most Singaporean Chinese, for example, are at least first-generation immigrants from China who, living under British influences, have undergone various degrees of cultural change. The extent of that change is modified by the cultural resilience of the particular person or family. An indicator for cultural resilience is the person's educational choice. Those who attend an English-language school are more likely to be Western in their attitudes and outlook than are those attending Chinese-language schools. Therefore, we posit the following hypotheses:

H<sub>2</sub>: (a) There exists a significant crossover interaction between brand and education, such that (b) English-educated consumers will rate the original brand name and the two combinations of original and translated brand names significantly higher than the phonetically and directly translated brand names, and (c) Mandarin-educated consumers will rate the phonetically and directly translated brand name and the two combinations of original and translated names significantly higher than the original brand name.

The effect of product physical quality on consumers' perceptions of product quality also has been explored and has produced mixed results (e.g., Allison and Uhl 1964; Olson 1977). Again, inductive reasoning suggests the following plausible hypotheses:

H<sub>3</sub>: (a) Product physical quality will have a significant, positive effect on consumers' judgments; furthermore, (b) product physical quality cues will have greater effect on consumers' product judgments than will extrinsic cues, such as a translated brand name, in a multicue situation.

H<sub>3</sub> involves the main effect and its size. However, in a multicue situation, the issue of interaction is often of more interest. In this case, the cultural familiarity suggests that an interaction should exist between brand translation and quality.

H<sub>4</sub>: An interaction should exist between brand name translation and product physical quality that should be manifested in the enhancement of the translation effect with higher quality.

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## PREEXPERIMENTAL STUDY DEVELOPMENT

The classic contexts of experimental design have involved a series of multiple working hypotheses (Chamberlain 1897) and/or critical experiments (Platt 1964). We developed this study in that spirit, following Winer (1999, p. 357), who recommends “multiple studies in which previous results are replicated and different manipulations, subjects, or procedures are used.” To enhance external validity, we employed a nonstudent sample of consumers in a realistic bilingual situation in Singapore. The product category used as stimuli for this study was fruit juice, specifically orange juice and starfruit juice. These two products were selected as stimuli because their quality can be easily varied, they are commonly consumed products, and they have different cultural associations and familiarity in Singapore (Western versus Eastern). In a pretest, orange juice was found to be associated with Western culture, with a mean rating of 7 on a ten-point scale, and starfruit juice was found to be highly associated with Eastern culture, with a mean rating of 3.7 ( $t(1, 49) = 2.9, p < .01$ ).

We compiled the list of brands of fruit juices through surveys of major supermarkets in Australia and Singapore. We presented ten brands of fruit juice, five known brands and five unknown brands, to 50 consumers. We selected the unknown brand Sunrise and the known brand Treetop, which had fairly similar connotations (mean ratings on a ten-point scale were Sunrise = 5.26 and Treetop = 4.82;  $t(1, 49) = .65, p > .131$ ), as stimuli for the experiments. We then phonetically and directly translated these brand names into Mandarin using procedures recommended for cross-cultural research. The pretest found no significant difference in connotations among the four brand names ( $F(3, 47) = 1.049, p > .388$ ).

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## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF EXPERIMENTATION

Six experiments were conducted. The experiments were divided into two groups: (1) two pencil-and-paper tests with orange juice and (2) four experiments involving taste-testing with both orange juice and starfruit juice. In the first group, two experiments using orange juice were designed to investigate the effect of brand name translation and product physical quality with consumers of different educational backgrounds (English-educated versus Mandarin-educated) and foreign brands with various levels of familiarity (well-known versus unknown brand). The second group of four experiments repeated the first group of experiments in a more natural taste-testing context and extended the design by using starfruit juice. The study was conducted in Singapore, using employees from two large organizations constituting a pool of 1500 employees. The subjects ranged from 18 to 45 years of age and included a roughly equal distribution of men and women. Participants were randomly selected from the pool; there were approximately 10% refusals and 20% rejection because of failure to meet educational selection criteria.

The design was a 5 (translation) × 3 (quality) × 2 (education) within-subject factorial, and education was nested in subjects. Participants from each of the two educational backgrounds (ten English-educated and ten Mandarin-educated) were randomly assigned to each condition. Repeated measures (presented in random order) were implemented because a more precise comparison of the effects could be made and because consumer behavior is a repeated-measures event. The five brand names (the original foreign brand name, the phonetically translated brand name, the directly translated brand name, the phonetically translated name combined with the original name, and the directly translated name combined with the original name) were combined with three levels of product quality (juice concentration) to create 15 index cards that served as experimental stimuli. Subjects' perceived quality and purchase intentions for each stimulus were rated on two 100-point rating scales used by Troutman and Shanteau (1976), and the prices subjects were willing to pay were recorded. The same rating scale was used in all the experiments.

The data collection for the experiments took place in the canteen of a manufacturing plant in Singapore, where the subjects were seated and a series of screening questions was asked. Each experimental task was individually administered in a different random sequence for each set of judgments. To ensure that the subjects fully understood the process, they were asked to explain it before the experiments began. The average time taken per subject for administering the experiment was approximately 35 minutes.

The analysis consisted of three stages: First, the relationships between the measures were investigated and the basis for simplification justified; second, exploratory data analysis and residual examination were carried out to ensure that the statistical assumptions on which the analysis is based were not seriously violated; and third, specific statistical analyses pertaining to the hypotheses were performed. Examination of the scatterplot matrix revealed no serious anomalies in terms of nonlinearity, homogeneity of variance, and compliance with the characteristics of the normal distribution. The Pearson correlations between the dependent variables (a table is available from the authors on request) were uniformly high (ranging from .85 to .99) and are all statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ). The variables for further analysis therefore are the weighted sums of the two observations for each dependent variable (Keppel 1982).

Multivariate analysis of variance was used to evaluate the hypotheses. The design involved two within-subject factors (the brand with five levels, quality with three levels) nested in the third (education with two levels). The overall model

### *Brand Name Translation*

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## **Experiment 1: Pencil-and-Paper Tests with Orange Juice and the Unknown Brand (Sunrise)**

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## **Results, Analyses, and Discussion**

was fitted and the graphs of residuals were examined, which revealed no gross violations of normality or evidence of heteroscedasticity. Because of space requirements, the detailed results are not shown but are available from the authors. The results of the multivariate tests were identical across the four multivariate test criteria, and all the main effects were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ), as were the education  $\times$  brand and education  $\times$  quality interactions. There was no support for  $H_4$ , as the interaction between brand translation and quality was not significant.

Given these significant omnibus tests (Hummel and Sligo 1971), we considered it appropriate to investigate the nature of the effects further. We examined the effects in sequence using univariate procedures, and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) main effects were significant ( $p < .05$ ) for all experimental factors across all dependent variables, as were the education  $\times$  brand and education  $\times$  quality interactions, with the exception of perceived price. To explore the nature of these relationships further, it was necessary to examine the means (as shown in Table 1), carry out multiple comparison tests, and plot the means of the significant interactions (Figures 1 and 2). Because the results were substantially statistically consistent for the dependent variables, we enumerate only perceived quality. The univariate main effects for brand translation were not significant, so  $H_1$  is not supported. The evidence in support of  $H_2$  was demonstrated for the significant main effect for education (e.g., Wilks' Lambda (3, 16) = .13,  $p < .01$ ). The univariate effects were also significant (e.g.,  $F(1, 252) = 43.3$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and the mean was higher for the Mandarin-educated (53.1) than for the English-educated (44.4) subjects. This suggests that there may exist an Eastern educational leniency bias in consumer judgments. However, we obtain the clearest evaluation of the hypotheses by examining the significant interaction between brand name and education, the graphs for which are shown in Figure 1.

For the English-educated subjects, the order of the perceived quality means was original and direct (48.2), original and phonetic (47.9), original (46.7), phonetic (40.2), and direct (38.9), and for the Mandarin-educated subjects, phonetic (58.0), original and direct (55.7), original and phonetic (55.3), direct (53.2), and original (45.7). The results with regard to quality strongly supported  $H_3$ . There were significant main effects for quality, and the order of the means was in the expected direction (e.g., perceived quality judgments: low 24, moderate 52.4, and high 70.8). Scheffe's multiple comparison procedure revealed that the means were all significantly different from one another ( $p < .05$ ). The effect size measure ( $\eta^2$ ) for quality ranged from .77 to .81; when this is compared with the other effect sizes, the largest of which is .07, it provides support for  $H_{3b}$ . There was no support for  $H_4$ , as the

Brand	Original		Phonetic		Direct		Original and Phonetic		Original and Direct		F	Eta-squared <sup>a</sup>	
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.			d.f.
<b>Dependent Variables</b>													
Perceived quality	46.7	19.9	49.1	23.2	46.0	21.8	51.6	21.1	52.0	21.7	4,286	.90	.01
Perceived price	1.6	.3	1.5	.4	1.5	.4	1.6	.4	1.6	.4	4,286	1.70	.02
Perceived intention	48.1	19.6	45.6	24.1	46.5	24.2	53.4	23.1	51.7	22.3	4,286	1.30	.02
<b>Quality</b>													
	<b>Low</b>		<b>Moderate</b>		<b>High</b>								
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.							
Perceived quality	24.0	10.0	52.4	7.3	70.8	11.4							
Perceived price	1.1	.2	1.7	.2	2.0	.2							
Perceived intention	21.8	8.5	54.7	10.0	70.7	11.8							
<b>Education</b>													
	<b>English</b>		<b>Mandarin</b>										
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.									
Perceived quality	44.4	20.6	53.1	21.1									
Perceived price	1.5	.4	1.7	.4									
Perceived intention	44.1	19.4	54.0	24.9	1,289	14.7*	1,289	21.1*	1,289	14.4*	607.92*	489.43*	619.07*

\*  $p < .01$ .

<sup>a</sup>Eta-squared were used; see Tabachnik and Fidell (1989, p. 53).

Notes: S.D. = standard deviation, d.f. = degrees of freedom.

Table 1.  
Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA of Brand, Quality, and Education for the Dependent Variables for Experiment 1: Pencil-and-Paper Test for Orange Juice and Unknown Brand



Figure 1.  
Education × Brand  
Interaction for Perceived  
Quality for Experiment 1

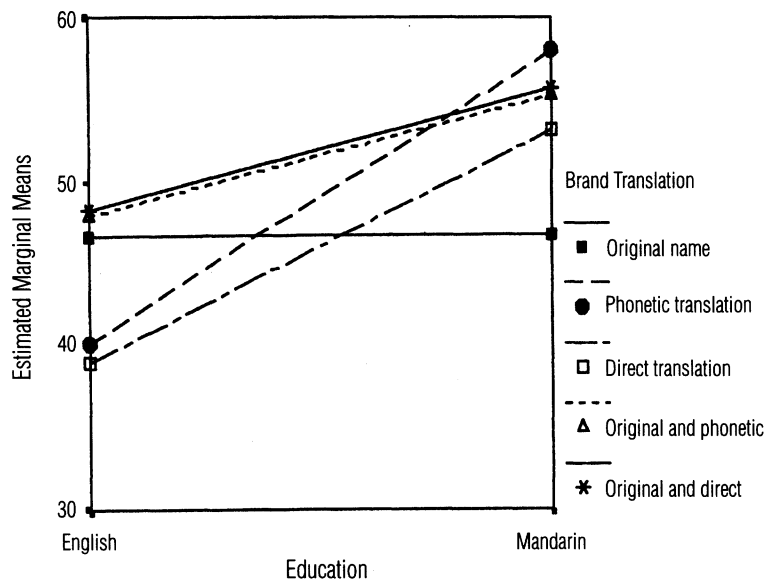
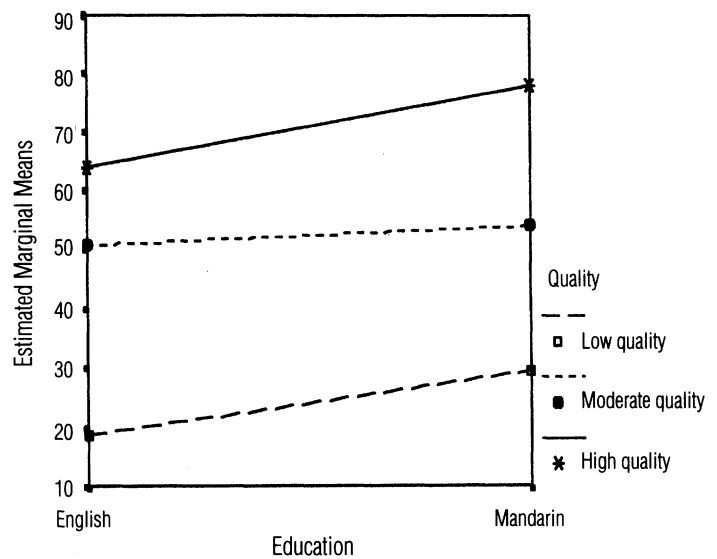


Figure 2.  
Education × Quality  
Interaction for Perceived  
Quality for Experiment 1



brand × quality interaction was not significant. An unanticipated education × quality interaction was found (Figure 2).

### Conclusions for Experiment 1

These results suggest that educational background may be an important consideration in the cross-cultural branding decision. The safest line of action is to provide both the original brand name and the translated brand name on the product, and the phonetic translation may be preferred. However, if the market is English educated, the original name may work, but if it is Mandarin educated, some form of translation may be mandatory. There is little evidence of the often-stated Western name preference. However, there are implications for this general statement from the unexpected significant interaction between quality and education. This interaction appears to be

due to the change of slopes, because the Mandarin-educated consumer judgment means were higher than the English-educated consumer means (see Figure 2). It therefore appears that there may exist a cultural halo in human judgment.

A possible confounding effect on these results was brand name familiarity. The use of a realistic but unknown brand in Experiment 1 provides information for new market entry, but the marketplace consists of an ongoing relationship, and the decision to translate an existing brand may be a source of competitive advantage. It is anticipated that brand familiarity will influence human judgments and that translation effects will be less important for familiar brands (Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991). To investigate this possibility, Experiment 2 replicated Experiment 1 but with the well-known brand name Treetop.

The results of the multivariate tests were identical across the four multivariate test criteria. All the main effects were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ), as were the education  $\times$  brand, education  $\times$  quality, and education  $\times$  brand interactions. With the exception of the education  $\times$  brand interaction, the results were similar in substance to those of Experiment 1. The univariate ANOVA tests were significant for all experimental factors across all dependent variables, except for the education main effect and the education  $\times$  quality interaction for perceived price, for which the brand  $\times$  quality interaction was also significant. The results with regard to the main effect for education were therefore not as clear as for Experiment 1. In this case, the univariate ANOVAs were significant for brand translation and quality but not for education (Table 2). The order of the quality means for brand name translation was original (59), original and phonetic (58.2), original and direct (54.2), phonetic (49.3), and direct (41.3). According to Scheffe's multiple comparison procedure (Keppel 1982), significant differences were found only between the directly translated brand names and the others ( $p < .05$ ).

$H_1$  is not supported, but the findings suggest that in the case of a familiar brand name, the retention of the original name with phonetic translations may provide the best options. The significant education  $\times$  brand interaction was due to a crossover for the phonetic translation (see Figure 3). This did not support  $H_2$ , because the findings suggest that a direct translation of a familiar brand name may not work, surprisingly, even with Mandarin-educated subjects. The pattern of the education  $\times$  quality interaction was substantially the same as for Experiment 1. The only support for  $H_4$  was found with the brand  $\times$  quality interaction for perceived price (see Figure 4). The results with regard to physical quality were also similar to those of Experiment 1 and provided further strong support for  $H_3$ . There were significant main effects for physical quality, and the order of the means was in the ex-

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## EXPERIMENT 2: PENCIL-AND-PAPER TESTS WITH ORANGE JUICE AND THE KNOWN BRAND (TREETOP)

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### Results, Analyses, and Discussion

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### Conclusions for Experiment 2

Table 2.  
Descriptive Statistics and ANOVAs of Brand, Quality, and Education for the Dependent Variables for Experiment 2: Pencil-and-Paper Test for Orange Juice and Known Brand

Brand	Original		Phonetic		Direct		Original and Phonetic		Original and Direct		d.f.	F	Eta-squared <sup>a</sup>	
	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.	Mean	S. D.				
<b>Dependent Variables</b>														
Perceived quality	59.0	19.5	49.3	20.3	41.3	17.8	58.2	20.6	54.2	20.6	4,286	8.0*	.10	
Perceived price	1.9	.5	1.8	.5	1.5	.4	1.9	.5	1.8	.5	4,286	7.2*	.09	
Perceived intention	58.0	22.3	48.8	22.3	41.5	20.6	56.9	21.3	49.9	20.2	4,286	5.8*	.08	
<b>Quality</b>														
	<b>Low</b>			<b>Moderate</b>			<b>High</b>							
Perceived quality	28.9	7.7	55.3	10.2	73.0	11.5					2,288	503.85*	.78	
Perceived price	1.2	.1	1.9	.2	2.2	.2					2,288	655.21*	.82	
Perceived intention	21.8	8.5	54.7	10.0	70.7	11.8					2,288	608.07*	.81	
<b>Education</b>														
	<b>English</b>			<b>Mandarin</b>										
Perceived quality	50.2	18.2	54.6	22.7							1,289	3.4	.01	
Perceived price	1.8	.5	1.8	.5							1,289	.4	.00	
Perceived intention	48.7	19.3	53.4	24.3							1,289	3.4	.01	

\* $p < .01$ .

<sup>a</sup>Eta-squared were used; see Tabachnik and Fidell (1989, p. 53).

Notes: S.D. = standard deviation, d.f. = degrees of freedom.

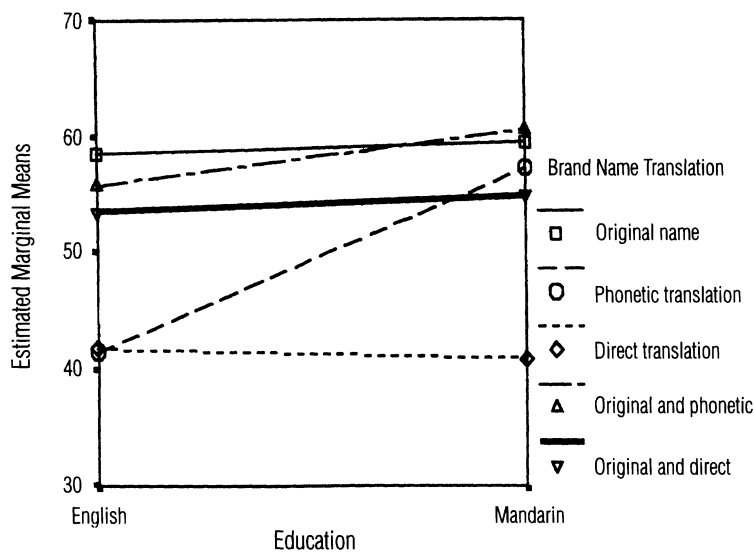


Figure 3.  
Education  $\times$  Brand Interaction  
for Perceived Quality for  
Experiment 2

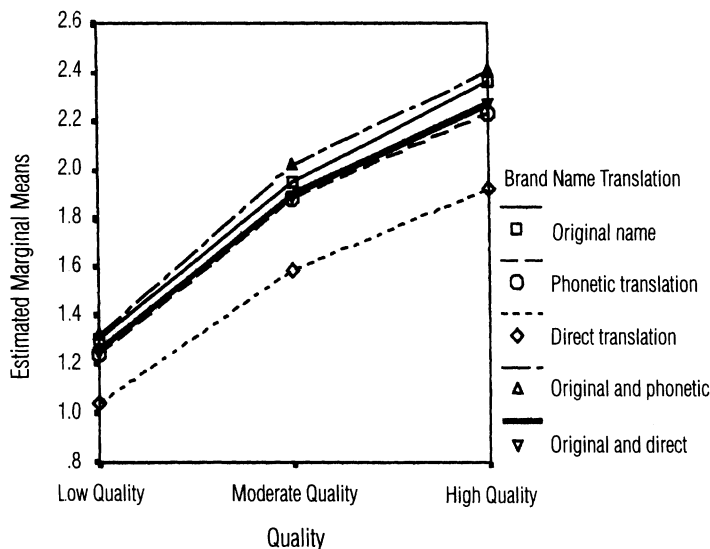


Figure 4.  
Brand  $\times$  Quality Interaction  
for Perceived Quality for  
Experiment 2

pected direction. Because these results were substantially the same as for Experiment 1, they are not discussed further. The fundamental implications are that in the case of a strong, well-known brand name, the best strategy is to retain the original brand name with a phonetic translation, if necessary.

Experiments 3 and 4 (Western product class, orange juice) and 5 and 6 (Eastern product class, starfruit juice) were repetitions of Experiments 1 and 2 in a more natural experimental taste-testing context. The sampling methods were identical to the experiments described for Experiment 1. However, in Experiments 3–6, 240 subjects were recruited, forming two experimental groups: 120 subjects with an English and 120 with a Mandarin education. In each of the four experiments, 30

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF TASTE-TESTING EXPERIMENTS

English-educated and 30 Mandarin-educated subjects were randomly allocated to participate. The designs of these experiments were similar to those of Experiments 1 and 2, with the exception that the implementation was more “natural,” requiring the use of actual products, packages, and taste tests. Pretests were used to establish quality differences of the fruit juices ( $n = 20$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, for the actual experiments, juices were diluted at 0% for high quality, 35% for moderate quality, and 55% for low quality. Fifteen bottles of fruit juice, the independent variables, were presented to each subject. The full-factorial  $5 \times 3$  design, with five brand names and three levels of product quality, was used, and each subject rated the overall quality, price, and purchase intentions for each of the 15 stimuli that were randomly presented and taste-tested.

The subjects were presented with actual products, and taste tests were conducted. Because of the complexity of the experiments, each subject was asked to judge the 15 stimuli on only one of the three dependent variables. Therefore, 30 English-educated and 30 Mandarin-educated subjects were required in each experiment. Twenty subjects (10 English-educated and 10 Mandarin-educated) were asked to judge the stimuli on only one dependent variable. Standard taste-testing practices were followed; the order of presentation and judgment was randomized and given orally, with one replication after an interval of a week.

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### **Experiment 3: Taste Tests with Orange Juice and the Unknown Brand (Sunrise)—Results and Discussion**

The univariate repeated-measures analysis revealed a similar pattern of results as for Experiment 1, with the exception of the education  $\times$  quality interaction and the main effect of education on perceived intent, which was not significant. The comparison of means revealed only the quality main effect, as in Experiment 1. The significant interactions, that is, education  $\times$  brand and education  $\times$  quality (for perceived intent), displayed the same characteristics as in Experiments 1 and 2, so only education  $\times$  brand is shown in Figure 5. It is noteworthy that the crossover is even more pronounced. Therefore, it may be concluded that the more realistic taste-testing experiment confirms the findings for Experiment 1, thus validating the pencil-and-paper methodology commonly used in applied marketing research.

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### **Experiment 4: Taste Tests with Orange Juice and the Known Brand (Treetop)—Results, Analysis, and Discussion**

In Experiment 4, the results were substantively similar to those of Experiment 2. Indeed, given the different context and the different subjects, the similarity of the results is remarkable as, for example, a comparison of Figures 3 and 6 clearly shows. The findings for this experiment therefore confirm the veracity of the findings from Experiment 2.

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### **Experiment 5: Taste Tests with Starfruit Juice and the Unknown Brand (Sunrise)**

Experiments 5 and 6 were differentiated from the others by the use of a product with Eastern connotations—Starfruit juice. Experiment 5, though essentially a replication of Ex-

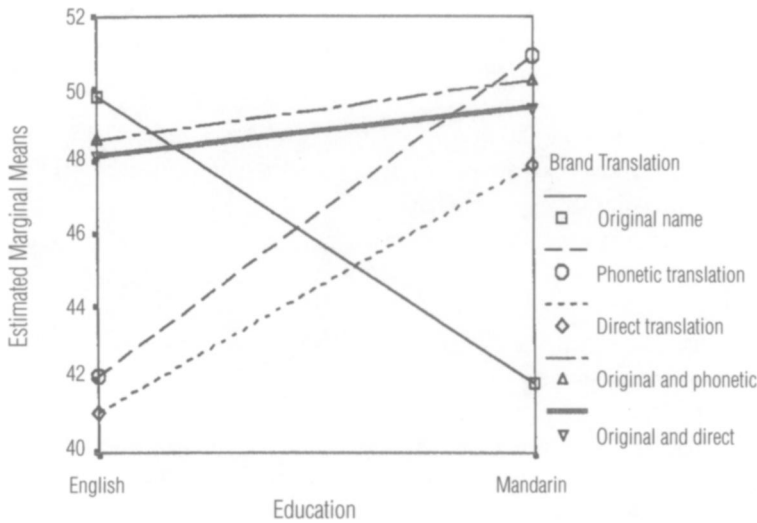


Figure 5.  
Education × Brand Interaction  
for Perceived Quality for  
Experiment 3

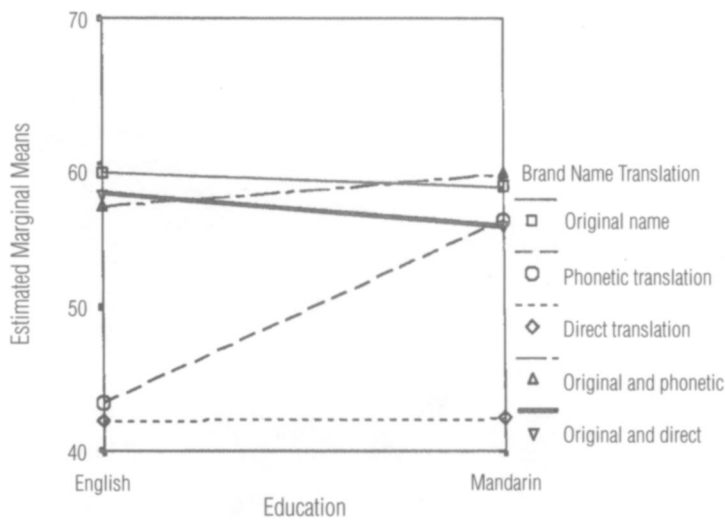


Figure 6.  
Education × Brand Interaction  
for Perceived Quality for  
Experiment 4

periments 1 and 3, provided different results in that the education main effects were not significant, with the exception of perceived intent, and there was a significant three-way interaction. Furthermore, the univariate tests were significant for perceived quality and price, thus providing limited support for  $H_1$ ; that is, there were statistically significant (Scheffe's test,  $p < .05$ ) differences between the original name and the two combinations. The interaction effects were essentially the same as for Experiments 1 and 3 and so are not described. Although the practical implication of this experiment is similar to that of the previous replications, there is an indication that if the product has Eastern connotations with an unknown brand, the safest strategic action may be to

### Brand Name Translation

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**Experiment 6: Taste Tests with Starfruit Juice and the Known Brand (Treetop)**

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**CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

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translate and include both the original and translated names on the label.

This experiment replicated Experiments 2 and 4 with an Eastern-based product—starfruit juice. The results, with the exception of the main effect for education, were substantially the same as in the other experiments and provided a sufficient level of consistency across subjects, methods, and design to suggest that they have a degree of external and internal validity.

Global branding is complicated by the diversity of languages, nationalism, and cultural factors, and the decision whether to adapt brand names to the language of the market is of critical relevance to corporate success. Specifically, the question is whether to translate a brand name or not and, if so, whether to use a direct or phonetic translation or some combination. Contextual factors that also impinge on the decision include the combined effect of the consumers' educational background (extent of bilingualism) and product quality on consumer product evaluations. We investigated the relationship among foreign brand name translation, product quality, and educational background on consumer responses in an ESEA market. We designed a series of structured experiments to systematically explore the issues. The results for the six experiments were remarkably consistent across contexts (pencil-and-paper versus taste test) and products (Western orange juice versus Eastern starfruit juice), and the only substantive difference was due to brand (unknown versus well-known). The more realistic taste test confirmed the pencil-and-paper methodology commonly used in applied marketing research. The patterns of results for the Eastern and Western product experiments were also substantively similar, suggesting that perceived product sources have little impact on consumer judgments.

The evidence did not support the general effect postulated in  $H_1$ , and a brand name translated into local languages was not rated higher than products with brand names in a foreign language only or in a combination of foreign and local languages. This is contrary to previous research that has reported significant effects of brand name on consumer judgments in both single-cue and multicue situations (cf. Allison and Uhl 1964; Dodds, Monroe, and Grewal 1991; Donoho and Nelson 1989). This difference may be partly explained by the strength of the quality manipulation and the existence of significant interactions postulated in the components of  $H_2$ . Nonetheless, these results throw into question the importance of brand name as a critical effect in situations in which clear quality differences exist, even in relatively ambiguous taste-testing situations.

Support was found for  $H_{2a}$ , and there was a significant crossover interaction between brand translation and education. The evidence also supported  $H_{2b}$ , and English-educated

consumers rated the original brand name and the two combinations of original and translated brand names significantly higher than the phonetically and directly translated brand names in product judgments. However, H<sub>2c</sub>, related to the Mandarin-educated consumers, was only supported for the unknown product. These results were as expected and provide preliminary evidence that a product with a brand name in a familiar language may be more effective in creating the necessary affinity with the consumers. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Chan (1990) and MacWhinney (1998), who postulated a preference for native languages and psycholinguistic patterns. It also provides evidence for cultural resilience when reinforced by educational background.

We found strong support for the quality effects proposed in H<sub>3a</sub> and H<sub>3b</sub>. Product physical quality had a significant, positive effect on consumer judgments, and this effect was large in comparison with the other experimental cues. These results are contrary to the early studies by Allison and Uhl (1964) and Jacoby, Olson, and Haddock (1971) that demonstrated only a small effect of product physical quality, but our results support the stronger findings of, for example, Dawar and Parker (1994). Our findings are important in that they extend this work into the international brand name translation context and support Schmitt, Pan, and Tavassoli's (1994) contention that foreign-sounding brand names can affect consumers' perceptions of product quality. We found mixed, limited support for H<sub>4</sub>, and we conclude that the existence of the interaction between brand name translation and product physical quality is questionable and must remain open for further investigation.

The findings also suggest that, in practice, the safest line of action is to provide both the original brand name and the translated brand name on the product and that the phonetic translation may be the best single option. The manipulation of brand name familiarity revealed that in the case of the well-known familiar brand name, the best alternatives involve the retention of the original name, and the variation associated with the phonetic translations provides the best options. The surprising result is that the direct translation does not appear to work, even with Mandarin-educated consumers. There is little evidence of the often-stated Western name preference.

In this study, we investigated the effect of brand name translation on consumer judgments. In summary, the findings suggest that pencil-and-paper tasks can provide similar results to more realistic taste tests, that the safest strategic action is to translate, and that the phonetic translation may work best. We emphasize the importance of cultural linguistic factors in a cross-cultural and international branding decision as well



as the value of quality. Our study has limitations (repeated-measure designs may suffer from order effects, though these interferences were minimized by random selection and assignment, and the evidence suggests that they were not a problem in this study), but it has brought the experimental methodology to an area of great importance for global branding. Many possibilities, including different products, contexts, brand names, and quality manipulations, remain for further investigation. Bi- and multilingualism is a pervasive factor in the modern marketing landscape that impinges on all cross-cultural research and therefore demands further, structured investigation.

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## THE AUTHORS

**F.C. (Frank) Hong** is a research associate, Department of Information Management and Marketing, University of Western Australia.

**Anthony Pecotich** is an associate professor, Department of Information Management and Marketing, University of Western Australia.

**Clifford J. Shultz II** is Professor and Marley Foundation Chair, Morrison School of Agribusiness and Resource Management, Arizona State University.

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