

Brand Management is to Manage Consumer Cognition

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Abstract

This paper is to discuss how consumer cognition plays an important part in brand marketing strategy and process by creating the value recognition of a brand in the minds of consumers. And through dividing consumer cognition into four underlying elements, further analyze the internal mechanism of value chain and proposed three research paradigms of branding concept to manage customer cognition.

Keywords: perceived value, consumer cognition, brand-concept paradigm, brand management

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1. Introduction of brand marketing

A brand is also the impression consumers have of its users, defined by their own experience. Brands are what consumers buy. Products can be imitated by competitors, products can easily become outdated and outdated quickly, but successful brands can last forever, and the brand value will affect enterprises for a long time.

And what is brand marketing? It is the process of making customers form the cognition of enterprise brand and products through marketing, and it is the marketing concept of high grade that must be constructed for enterprises to continuously obtain and maintain competitive advantages.

The core concept of brand marketing is simple: put the specific image of the company's products through some means deeply into the hearts of consumers. In fact the most advanced marketing is not the establishment of a huge marketing network, but the use of brand symbols, the invisible marketing network built into the hearts of the public, the product to the hearts of consumers. It enables consumers to choose the product when they consume it, and investors to choose the enterprise when they cooperate with it. This is brand marketing.

Brand marketing refers to the marketing strategy and process in which enterprises create the value recognition of a brand in the minds of users through the promotion of product quality, culture and uniqueness based on consumers' demand for products, and finally form brand benefits.

2. The source of consumer cognition

Throughout the history of marketing, we can find a dozen of marketing theories. Such as demand management, competitive strategy, value design, customer relationship, blue ocean strategy, brand assets, brand image, USP, positioning theory, market monopoly, transaction cost, circulation efficiency... Different theories may seem different or even conflict to each other, but if we try to understand them from macro perspective of marketing, we can classify them from four dimensions, which is 1). Understanding Needs 2). Creating Value 3). Building Relationships. 4). Managing Cognition

As we all know, the famous Kotler's requirements management is a typical theory of Understanding Needs; As for value design, blue ocean and competitive strategy, they are about to say how to Create Value. For example, blue ocean strategy is about breaking through the existing competition by reorganizing the value chain, realizing value innovation and creating new business species. Michael porter's competitive strategies is mean to expand competitive strategies into three parts: total cost leadership, focus and differentiation, and cost itself is kind of differentiation value, so the essence of competitive strategy is to create differentiated value. The theories such as customer relationship, transaction cost and circulation efficiency belong to Building Relationships. It focuses on how to reach the final consumers, improve the access efficiency, reduce user costs and form a continuous relationship with consumers.

And as for Managing Cognition which can be expressed as USP, brand image, brand equity and positioning theory. They are aimed to tell consumers who you are and why do they deserved to be bought, manage brand image, cognition and association in the minds of consumers through various marketing means, and occupy the minds of users. The so-called brand, in fact, is a psychological phenomenon.

Or, to put it more simply, all marketing theory ultimately boils down to one word: value. And it can be concluded into three steps. First determine what value is offered to consumers by studying their problems and situations, then polish great products, price them, and create value. The last step is to deliver this value to consumers and their cognition, the reason why customers are willing to retain their loyalty is that they are involved in a value community which provide value no matter in which way. In a conclusion, the core processes are confirming value, creating value, transferring value and forming value community.

3. The components of consumer cognition

It is mentioned in the “growth path of a great brand”: “A brand growth process needs to go through three stages: tools, media, IP. In the meantime, a brand has three values: instrumental, individual, social identity.” The instrumental value carries the quality and characteristic, the individual value carries the self-expression, the social value carries the group consensus. How we can create those value through building excellent consumer cognition? We can divide consumer cognition into four underlying elements.

3.1 Difference

Difference represents the difference of the brand, the strength of this indicator is directly related to the operating margin. The greater the difference, the lower the degree of homogeneity in the market, the more bargaining power the brand has. The difference is not only reflected in the product characteristics, but also reflected in the brand image.

3.2 Relevance

The degree to which a brand is suitable for consumers is related to market penetration. Strong brand relevance means that the target population accepts the brand image and commitment made by the brand and is willing to try subjectively, which also means greater convenience in the corresponding channel construction. How consumers view the brand is related to how they feel about the brand. When consumers come into contact with brands for tentative consumption, their imagination will be confirmed and evaluation will be formed, which will further affect repeated consumption and word-of-mouth communication.

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Recognition represents the degree of consumers' understanding of the brand, which is related to the depth of consumer experience. It is the recognition of the brand gradually formed by consumers after long-term acceptance and use of the brand's products and services.

4. High brand awareness is not necessarily a good brand cognition

Brand awareness and brand cognition are two different things, they are easily promiscuous by advertising companies. Advertising companies have several creative ways to attract consumer, one of which is supposed to do brand recognition. Generally speaking, the time to achieve awareness is relatively short and the time to be roundly understood is relatively long.

Brand exists in the heart of consumers, when the positive emotional component is higher and higher, even if you have shortcomings, problems, consumers will still be willing to accommodate you. Do brand is not only achieve high brand awareness but also to build a good impression and cognition among consumers.

Therefore, brand is divided into high awareness and favorable impression. In the process of building a brand, the purchase frequency of some product consumers is relatively high, which needs consumer loyalty. But some products are sold completely by the characteristics of the product, at this time, you have to do brand personality or product personality, is often said in the marketing of the independent value of the brand.

Consumer cognition is on behalf of consumers' comprehensive association of product benefits, prices, occasions, characters, images and personalities, and on behalf of consumers' attitude and emotion towards the brand, it is to evaluate whether the brand meaning system can win users' recognition and create enough premium. It appeals to the user's emotional response.

5. Three paradigms of branding concept to manage customer cognition

Therefore, deliver these three values to consumers, or to establish these three values on consumer cognition is the key of brand management. At the same time, How to effectively manage consumer cognition is also an important proposition in contemporary brand research, while I propose three valid paradigms.

5.1 Mind-share branding concept is the first paradigm to manage customer cognition.

The instrumental value of a brand is rich and varied, it also can be called value chain. Obviously, the value a brand provides to consumers is a chain. For example, the value chain of automobile is not only a tool that allows people to physically move through space, but also include safety, design, warranty, environmental protection and identity.

In the 1950s, the great advertiser and President of the global group Dupont, Rother Reeves, wrote a book called "effective advertising," in which reeves first proposed the USP theory - the unique selling proposition. This

theory, opened the prelude of modern marketing. The USP highlights three points: 1). Each advertisement must provide consumers with an idea to make them understand what benefits can be gained from purchasing the products advertised; 2). This proposition must be unique and cannot be achieved or provided by competitors; 3). This proposition must be marketable and strongly focus on one point to impress and move consumers.

What USP delivers to consumers is the instrumental value of the product, for example, we have said many times that safety is for Volvo, driving is for BMW, and anti-dandruff is for head & head. And you may wonder that positioning theory is also the instrumental value of products, it emphasizes category status, which is an endorsement of quality, the ones that sell the most are the ones that sell the best. It has the instrumental value of a product by category endorsement, so I say it is a variant of USP. The USP is reflected in the branding paradigm, which is mind-share branding concept. It transforms the functional benefits and sales proposition of the product into a brand concept, which is continuously instilled into consumers.

The largest mineral water in China famous Nongfu Spring has mixed "natural" into a brand concept that is continuously delivered and shared with consumers. "We do not produce water, we are only the carriers of nature", "beautiful China, beautiful water" and "what kind of water breeds what kind of life" are actually the transmission of the natural brand concept, and to form the overall brand mark and image.

Through the integration of a variety of abstract association of ideas to share, to complete the integration of consumer psychological cognition level, maintain the output of brand identity image consistency, form a unified brand cognition.

5.2 high-emotional branding concept is the second paradigm to manage customer cognition.

In order to endow the brand with the attitude, emotion, personality and image, to establish the individual value for the brand. Across the advertising industry, a second brand-building paradigm is all the rage: highly emotional branding.

The second value of a brand is the individual value. The product becomes the medium for users to express themselves and the media to present their inner drama.

Since David Ogilvy came up with the brand image theory in the 1960s, the entire advertising industry has largely built on this paradigm, emphasizing the value of sensibility, attitude and values. Brand building should be based on humanity, seeking people's participation and looking for the meaning of the brand in people's mind, building affection connection with consumer at the same time. It emphasizes that the dialogue between the brand and consumers should be changed through appealing creativity, and attention should be paid to the story-telling and social popularity of the brand, so as to create a better relationship between the brand and consumers.

Emotion is an important aspect of a brand and an important part of brand value, but it is not the only and the whole of a brand. Brand management, in fact, is in the management of consumer perception. However, the cognitive process of a product includes feeling, cognition, learning, memory, imagination and so on. In addition, people's psychological process also includes emotion, will, motivation, personality and so on. Brand is essentially a psychological phenomenon. But the human psychological phenomenon is extremely complex.

Those who hold the brand monism, packaging a certain theory as a religion, and thinking consumers have a simple mind that can be captured by shouting a slogan are irrational. In any case, a highly emotional brand can add emotional benefits to the rational benefits of the product. It can turn a product with only instrumental value into a brand for users to express themselves. It's the key to building a brand and the second paradigm for managing consumer cognition.

5.3 cultural-connection branding concept is the third paradigm to manage customer cognition.

The origin of concept sharing brand building can be traced back to USP, which conveys the brand concept and establishes the cognition of tool value. The origin of highly emotional brand building can be traced back to BI brand image theory, which emphasizes the creation of perceptual value and endows the brand with emotion, personality, attitude and image identity, thus making the brand have the media value of self-expression. So the last point is about how to make the brand become the group consensus, belief and social value.

For the general model of consumer behavior, consumers make every purchase decision based on their needs and desires. Where do consumers' needs and desires come from? It comes from the self-concept and lifestyle of consumers, that is, what kind of person they think they are and what kind of lifestyle they have. This determines what products he will need and desire. Where do self-concepts and lifestyles come from? It comes from both internal and external influences. Internal influences, which we have already discussed, include sensation, cognition, memory, motivation, personality, emotion, attitude, etc. External influences include subculture, social status, reference group, family, etc. As group animals, each of us has our own identity anxiety, so we confirm who we are through consumption and the relationship between ourselves and others and groups. In this rapidly changing China, the sense of position of each of us is undergoing drastic changes. Maybe in this moment you think you are still the mainstream of society, and in that moment you will find yourself far behind The times. In short, it was a time of anxiety. Only when a brand satisfies the desire and anxiety of a group and constructs a cultural identity

picture for itself can it become the consensus and belief of the group. This brand building paradigm is called cultural-connection branding and is the third paradigm for managing consumer cognition.

6. Conclusion

The brand can not be produced, but born in the consumer cognition; Brands do not exist on assembly lines, but in the lives of consumers. Brand is an intangible thing which exists in mind, in emotion, in culture. But brand management is a tangible strategy which we can use to manage consumer cognition from mind, emotion and social culture.

Consumer cognition is an important part in the process of brand building. For brand management, we should not only understand individual psychology, but also pay attention to social psychology. We need to look for cultural insights as well as consumer insights. We know what's going on in our society today, what people are talking about every day, what people are afraid of and what they are chasing.

The intuitive understanding of consumer cognition is "how much the audience knows about the brand". This question seems simple, but it has a wide coverage and almost involve all aspects of the enterprise. The evaluation standard of consumer cognition about brand is more complex, latitude, multi-angle. And each enterprise's understanding is different, which makes many market practitioners feel confused and helpless on how to deconstruct and implement it. So it is very important to achieve the long-term value by managing consumer cognition during the brand's golden life.

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