Analysis of the Role of Design Management in the Creation of Corporate Brand Value -- Taking Fashion Umbrella Brand Wpc. as an Example

Ranran Zhao

Nanjing University of Science and Technology, Nanjing, 210094, China

Abstract: Taking the development of fashion umbrella brand Wpc. as an example, this paper explores the role of design management in the creation of brand value. Through empirical analysis and comparative analysis, it analyzes and summarizes the design strategy characteristics and the brand value presentation of Wpc., and then discusses the role of design management in brand value creation. In the creation of corporate brand value, good design management can provide a source of innovative thinking for corporate design and development, point out the direction of corporate development, facilitate the promotion and expansion of the brand market, and establish a good brand image in the minds of consumers.

Keywords: Design management, Brand value, Design strategy, Wpc.

1. Introduction

Wpc., founded in 2004, is a well-known fashion umbrella brand in Japan and has a history of nearly 20 years of growth. It is the umbrella brand with the highest annual sales in Japan. Because the brand products are often featured in Japanese fashion magazines, Wpc. is quite well-known among women, and is called "little princesses" in the umbrella industry by major fashion magazines. At the same time, due to its fresh and elegant design style, it has been recognized and loved by users of all ages. This paper analyzes and studies the design innovation, operation management, brand culture and other aspects of Wpc. brand, and then summarizes the characteristics of brand design strategy and the aspects of brand value presentation. Based on the above research, this paper finally discusses the role of design management in the creation of corporate brand value.

2. Design management and brand value

2.1. Definition and methods of design management

Design management is an emerging science arising from the intersection of the design field and the management field. It takes the user as the center, coordinates all aspects, and jointly points to the design benefit and profitability of the brand [1]. According to the American Design Management Association: "The goal of design management is to develop and maintain an effective business environment in which organizations can achieve their strategic and task objectives through design. Including design process, business decisions and strategies, the three can promote innovation, and create effective design products, services, communications, environment and brands." [2] This definition explains that design management is not limited to the solution of design problems, but the planning and guidance of design activities and design strategies. Because design management is comprehensive and intersecting, the research methods of design management should focus on empirical research, qualitative analysis, interdisciplinary research, longitudinal comparison and horizontal comparison [3].

2.2. The importance of brand value

Brand value is to quantify the value of the brand as an asset and equity, which is mainly manifested as the additional income or cash flow that the product enables the enterprise to obtain through the "brand" [4]. Brand value can be used to quantify the emotional and functional benefits a brand brings to consumers. The brand value formed by the interaction between enterprises and consumers is the core competitiveness

of enterprises. It can invisibly affect consumer behavior, establish brand awareness and credibility in the minds of consumers, and cultivate consumer satisfaction and loyalty to the brand, so as to enhance the brand competitiveness of enterprises.

2.3. The connection between design management and brand value

Brand value is the most core part of brand management elements, and it is also an important symbol that distinguishes a brand from similar competing brands. In the process of brand building, enterprises involve activities such as brand core value positioning, products development, strategic planning, marketing communication, and brand culture construction. Design management revolves around enterprise operation, which is the process of rationally allocating and organizing the resources of various design activities of the enterprise. This process is also the systematic process of creating brand value [5]. Brand value is formed in design activities, and design management planning guides the generation of value.

3. The application of design management in the creation of corporate brand value

3.1. Design strategy characteristics of Wpc. under design management

Wpc. is a design-centric enterprise, and its design management ideas are fully in line with the market characteristics and consumption characteristics of the electronic information age, that is, rapid updating, rich visual presentation methods and diverse needs. Facing the market with serious homogeneity of products and services, Wpc. highlights the cultural connotation and fashion characteristics of products from the perspective of design innovation, and then successfully realizes the transformation from a traditional brand to a fashion brand. This article analyzes the design innovation development of Wpc. brand as an example, summarizes the characteristics of Wpc.'s design management strategy, and discusses it from the following three aspects.

3.1.1. Hierarchy

Figure 1: Back protect umbrella.

According to Maslow ' s Hierarchy of Needs, the user ' s needs are hierarchical, mainly corresponding to the user ' s instinct level, use level and emotional level. At the instinct level, physiological features such as vision, hearing, and touch play a leading role, which makes people particularly sensitive to the appearance and touch of things [6]. Wpc. pays attention to the coordination and unity between color, material, texture, shape and the overall style of the product, and always adheres to the high consistency of design and brand tonality, presenting a fresh and elegant visual image to users. The unique visual image of the product makes Wpc. stand out among many umbrella brands, making the brand more recognizable and more visually impactful to consumers. The use level is related to people's feelings in the process of using products. Wpc. is committed to solving users' problems. Starting from the usability, ease of use and comfort of the product, it improves the design of product functions, structures and details. At the same time, Wpc. pays attention to the research and development of product technology to build brand core competitiveness. In order for backpack users to keep their schoolbags from getting wet when using umbrellas in rainy days, Wpc. has developed a special structure of the umbrella rib, as shown in Figure 1. It can realize part of the rib to extend backwards to expand the coverage of the umbrella, while keeping the rib compact when folded. In order to reduce the possibility of losing the umbrella storage bag, Wpc. has designed hidden pockets inside the umbrella surface. The emotional level mainly affects

the user's impression and evaluation of the product, and it is the core level to attract consumers and acquire loyal customers. Wpc. focuses on "meaning innovation", adding humanistic and social meaning to each product based on the appearance, shape and function. The meaning of the product is no longer limited to use, but also a kind of emotional transmission, so as to realize the establishment of the emotional relationship between users and the brand.

3.1.2. Differentiation

Wpc. meticulously divides the target user groups and scenarios. Due to the diversification and differentiation of brand products, it has been recognized and supported by all age groups and consumer groups in Japan. In terms of longitudinal age differences, Wpc. roughly divides users into females, males, and children. In order to highlight the intellectual temperament of women, the design style of the product is more elegant, fresh and small. Taking into account the use of men in business scenes, the design elements of the product tend to be simple lines, and neutral colors are used to create a calm feeling. The design style of children's products tends to be cute, lively and with high color brightness. From the perspective of horizontal product categories, Wpc. subdivides products into umbrellas, parasols and dual-use umbrellas according to different usage scenarios. According to different needs, pocket mini umbrellas, non-wet umbrellas and extension umbrellas are designed. Wpc. actively promotes the umbrella product line, while emphasizing the differentiated development of peripheral products, and has now expanded its business to the fields of sunshades, umbrellas, rainproof bags, raincoats, tableware and other fields. All-round positioning of products makes Wpc. lead the market trend and greatly increases user satisfaction.

3.1.3. Agility

Wpc. keeps up with the fashion trend, it can capture various fashion elements, hot spots and cultural characteristics, and can combine these well with the brand. It can be said that Wpc. is very agile and rapid in the development of product design innovation. From the perspective of design innovation, Wpc. will launch new products every quarter, and launch limited-edition products at special festivals and events, constantly attracting customers to buy new products. It is committed to making daily necessities into functional fashion items, adding new ideas and making it easier to attract the attention of young consumers. In terms of co-branding, Wpc. conducted interactive design with Chiikawa, Disney, Doraemon and other popular characters, and quickly launched the "umbrella series" and "peripheral products", as shown in Figure 2. In terms of festivals, Wpc. quickly seized the characteristics of special festivals such as Mother's Day and Valentine's Day, according to its main user groups being women and young people. It cooperated with karendo to launch a series of umbrellas specially designed for mothers, as shown in Figure 3, which is very popular in the market. At the same time, Wpc. pays attention to social hotspots. In the context of the epidemic, it considers how to use its own brand products to create a natural social distance - "umbrella distance", as shown in Figure 4. In terms of cultural differences, Wpc. noted the social phenomenon that "China is already a cashless society, and everyone only needs an umbrella and a mobile phone to go out". Therefore, a limited product that caters to the Chinese market was launched: a bag umbrella that can just put down an umbrella and a mobile phone, as shown in Figure 5.

Traditionally, as a tool for rainy days, umbrellas have a certain product life cycle, and it is difficult to attract consumers to buy them again in a short period of time. On the premise of maintaining the basic functions of umbrellas, Wpc. combines fashion elements, hotspots and cultural characteristics to give products fresh life, bring users different emotional experiences, and enhance the stickiness of users and the brand with its design agility.

Figure 2: Brand joint product of "Wpc. and Chiikawa".

Figure 3: Umbrella for Mother's Day.

Figure 4: "Umbrella Distance" under the Epidemic.

Figure5: Bag umbrella designed for the Chinese market.

3.2. Brand Value Presentation of Wpc. under Design Management

Through various design management practices, Wpc. has gradually formed its unique brand culture and value. In terms of design creativity, Wpc. broke the traditional concept of "umbrellas are only used to keep out the rain". It adds a variety of fashion elements to its design, keeps up with international fashion trends, and keeps pace with the times by updating brand design elements and innovating product technology, so as to continuously enhance the comprehensive value of the brand. And it cooperates with well-known Japanese fabric manufacturers to realize the unification of product technology and art. At the operational level, Wpc. faces the mass market and uses celebrity effects to create hot topics related to the brand, so as to face the diversified market pattern and enhance the competitiveness of the brand. At the level of user experience, Wpc. hopes to guide users' happy psychological emotions through products and bring the sustenance of users' group emotions, so as to strengthen the building of brand

image and cultivate users' association and loyalty to the brand.

3.2.1. Design creativity level——Guide fashion trends and create infinite possibilities

With the brand concept of "Create New Possibilities", Wpc. is committed to design proposals for all lifestyles in different weathers, and to match people of different ages and types. In terms of design style, Wpc. seeks inspiration from trend culture, and conducts design innovation through cooperation with well-known image companies, well-known technology companies and individual artists. The Wpc. brand integrates trend cultural elements, high-tech and high-tech materials into product design, thus giving the brand new value. For example, the cross-border cooperation between Wpc. and anello, combining the brand's high-tech waterproof technology and materials with anello's design style, a schoolbag series with the highest level of waterproofness and durability was designed, as shown in Figure 6, which realizes the re-creation of product value. Wpc. leads the trend of umbrellas and creates "fashionable items for sunny and rainy days", making umbrellas a fashionable culture. It conveys to people the idea that umbrellas can not only achieve the functional value of rain protection, but also can be used as accessories to perfectly match with clothing to achieve aesthetic value.

Figure 6: Cross-border joint product of "Wpc. and anello".

3.2.2. Operational level——Intensive penetration through multiple channels, focusing on fashion attention

From the perspective of brand marketing communication, with the help of celebrity effects, Wpc. uses micro-movies, fashion magazines, etc. as media, supplemented by offline exhibitions and other publicity methods, to continuously create hot topics and fashion attention for the brand. From the perspective of the product market, Wpc. initially only developed women's umbrellas, and the brand service targets and product categories are relatively single. With the diversification of the market, the transformation of globalization and the improvement of brand awareness, Wpc. has expanded its target group into three categories, namely females, males, and children. At the same time, according to the different needs of the service objects, the product category is further repositioned, forming a product line mainly focusing on the development of umbrellas and supplemented by the production of peripheral products. Due to the expansion of target users and product range, Wpc. has broadened the brand consumption market and increased the brand awareness in the minds of consumers. Wpc. always focuses on the development of the fashion market in the process of brand operation, and reconstructs service objects and product categories according to market trends, so as to continuously improve the competitiveness of the enterprise brand.

3.2.3. User experience level——Focus on conveying culture and embody humanistic care

Wpc. pays attention to the user's experience at the reflection level. Consumers gain emotions through the use of products, so as to realize users' dependence on the brand and promote the spread of brand culture. The product design at the reflective level starts from the user's heart and makes the organic combination of people, objects and environments [7]. At the level of reflection, Wpc. conveys design concepts through design elements, emphasizes the exploration of users' potential emotions, and forms emotional resonance between users and products. For example, Wpc. cooperated with photographer Masayuki Oki, who photographs stray cats, to launch umbrellas with stray cat elements and peripheral

products, thus calling on people to pay attention to and protect stray cats, as shown in Figure 7. Wpc. endows products with social and humanistic significance, aiming to create happiness for human beings and contribute to society. In the process of brand building, Wpc.'s understanding of user needs is not limited to the simple instinct level and functional level, but raises the focus to the level of reflection, and increases user loyalty by stimulating and resonating with users' emotions.

Figure 7: Products with stray cat elements created by "Wpc. and Masayuki Oki".

4. The role of design management in the creation of corporate brand value

Design management is one of the indispensable elements for enterprises to stand on the market, and its influence on enterprise operation and brand building has become increasingly prominent. Design management studies how to integrate and coordinate the resources and activities required for design at all levels, manage a series of design strategies and design activities, and seek the most appropriate solutions to achieve corporate goals and create effective products (or communication) [8]. By summarizing and analyzing the characteristics of design strategies and the presentation of brand value in Wpc. design management, it can be concluded that the role of design management in the creation of corporate brand value is embodied in the following aspects:

(1) Strengthen the sustainability of product design and development with innovative thinking. The construction of enterprise brand value depends on the products and services developed by the enterprise. With the emergence of new products and new technologies in the market, enterprises can only maintain their core competitiveness through innovative management thinking planning and coordinating product design, operation management, enterprise resources and other activities. Design management helps enterprises develop an innovative design ecosystem and maintain the orderly and stable development of enterprise innovative design. Wpc. is driven by design innovation, centered and guided by the core consumer groups of the brand, and promotes the sustainable development of brand products and services with the agility and differentiation of product design, thereby forming its own market competitiveness.

(2) Carry out overall planning and guidance for the development direction of the enterprise. Design management looks at corporate activities from the perspective of corporate strategy, and makes overall planning and coordination of design activities to improve the efficiency and quality of brand value construction. Good design management can point out the development direction for enterprises in the process of enterprise development [9], help enterprises to accurately locate the characteristics of product design and target consumer groups, and timely adjust their brand positioning and concepts according to new situations, so as to establish their own advantages. With the design concept of "Any weather, smile for life", Wpc. is committed to creating happiness and beauty for users. This design concept with a high sense of social responsibility drives Wpc. to solve design problems as the main goal, and constantly create products and services that are valuable to users. It conveys the enterprise spirit and cultural connotation to consumers through products, advertisements and identification systems.

(3) Conducive to brand promotion and market expansion, and establish a corporate image. Design management runs through the whole process of design, and links such as brand promotion, product category extension, and brand culture communication need to rely on effective design management methods to operate. The establishment of brand value depends on the user experience brought by products and services. Therefore, the brand promotion and product development based on the design management mode is conducive to the promotion of brand value. Under the systematic design management mode,

Wpc. has created a publicity model combining "online + offline", which enhances users' awareness of the brand with the transmission of online visual information and the actual offline experience. At the same time, design managers re-examine the dynamic changes in the market and fashion industry, and expand the scope of target users and product categories to adapt to diverse market needs. Wpc.'s products and services convey consumers' yearning for a better life and their pursuit of individuality. It uses design management methods to convey brand culture and establishes a fashionable, high-quality and sentimental corporate image.

5. Conclusions

Brand value creation under design management is a systematic project. Wpc. breaks the umbrella production mode of traditional thinking, from the perspective of design innovation, puts umbrellas in the fashion industry system to operate, and flexibly uses fashion elements and high-tech processes to accurately explore the differences and diversity of public needs. It is based on the fashion front of the rain gear industry through product innovation and emotional experience creation.

The process of design management is actually the process of planning the establishment and development of the brand [9]. It constructs the brand value system from the perspective of corporate strategy. Through the summary and analysis of Wpc.'s design strategy characteristics and brand value presentation under design management, this paper finds that good design management can provide a source of innovative thinking for corporate design and development in the creation of corporate brand value, and point out the direction of corporate development, facilitate the promotion and expansion of the brand market, and establish a good brand image in the minds of consumers.

References

[1] Shen Liyi, Liu Lixian, Shan Hongcheng. Research on Design Management of Fashion Brand Sorelle Fontana[J]. Journal of Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, 2021, 46(5): 577-582.
[2] Best K. Design Management: Managing Design Strategy, Process and Implementation[M]. AVA publishing, 2006.
[3] Wang Wei, Liao Hangyun. Research Object and Research Method of Design Management[J]. Idea & Design, 2017, (02): 31-39.
[4] Zhang Yun, Pan Lun, Li Feng. Experience of Multinational Corporations in Enhancing Brand Value and Its Enlightenment to China[J]. Reform & Openning, 2009, (10): 71.
[5] Huang Tianyang. The Importance of Design Management in Brand Value Construction[J]. Journal of Shandong University of Art and Design, 2013, (03): 111-114.
[6] Shen Haiyong, Chen Zixuan. Analysis of the Application of Emotional Theory in Commodity Design -- Taking NENDO's Works as an Example[J]. Design, 2021, 34(21): 41-43.
[7] Liu Ziping, Zhang Yuanjie. Research on Emotional Design of Products[J]. Industrial Design, 2021, (10): 73-74.
[8] Wang Tianxian, Li Binbin. Design and Design Management[J]. The Guide of Science & Education, 2012, (08): 144-165.
[9] Pan Yunzhu, Peng Huaming. Design Makes Brand -- Taking Starbucks (China) as an Example to Discuss How Design Management Plays a Role in Business Development[J]. Design, 2020, 33(09): 76-78.