Brand Prototype Theory and Application: A Literature Review

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Abstract: As an important asset, brand has important economic and social value for consumers, enterprises and even its source countries. However, throughout the history of world economic development, there are many well-known brands in Europe and the United States. On the contrary, it is born in the Chinese market and has a long life cycle. There are very few brands. Therefore, understanding the brand prototype theory and the development of brand prototype has important theoretical significance for the research brand, and also has certain practical value for the application of brand prototype theory in enterprises.

Firstly, the Definition of Brand Prototype Theory

The definition of Brand Prototype based on Rosch Prototype theory tends to discuss brand prototypes as a specific category in the business community, not just linking brands to prototypes. There are many researchers who like to adopt a categorized form when they divide brand prototypes. That is, branding prototypes by product category. In the past exploration, product prototypes and brand prototypes have the same meaning. The study of typical concepts involves two levels of natural definition and abstract definition. However, the brand prototype category was gradually phased out, and the brand perception of the consumer and the brand life experience were also infiltrated.

In the 1990s, Keller (1993) found that brand prototypes were linked to consumer brand knowledge. He believed that brand prototypes could diverge consumer thinking from individual brand attributes or interests. However, the most important social interaction has not been addressed (Rosa et al., 1999).

Jiang Lianxiong and He Yun (2010) continue the cognitive prototype theory. They believe that there is a comprehensive definition of all brands that consumers can use in real life in the in-depth study of consumers. Consumers' perception of the universality of brands is the brand prototype, which contains the basic understanding and requirements of consumers for the brand. It is a long-term and persistent existence that can influence consumers' brand evaluation, judgment and perception. Consumers divide the brand image according to the brand prototype, and the brand's advanced nature and uniqueness are only one aspect. They feel that the brand prototype represents the consumer's overall perception of the brand. It is the demand for the brand from the real life, which can be used to define the process and mechanism of consumer brand cognition and brand selection. (Jiang Lianxiong and Zhu Huihuang, 2010).

Secondly, the Development of Brand Prototype Theory

The word "prototype" was originally used by the scholar Philo to describe the "image of God" that appeared on humans (Abbott, 2008). The "word of the sea" explains the "prototype" in this way: "from real life, and People who have similar characters in the creation of literary and artistic works, and those who have a strong national atmosphere and trace the basic concepts of human culture, often appear in the process of social development. However, the true meaning of the prototype is rich and complex.

In the field of philosophy, the English of the "prototype" is the prototype, and the literal translation is the "original model." But the prefix arche- implies the dual meaning of representation and abstraction, so we can also define the "prototype" from these two different perspectives. The term "idea" (IDEA) used by Plato, its original meaning is "form", "shape", "schematic", etc., which
is similar to the meaning of "prototype", and later gradually extended to the abstract invisible nature and Attribute, Plato does not distinguish between the control of the double meaning of the word. His definition of "rationality" also refers to "species", "form", "paradigm", "rules" and other meanings, according to different Context to explain the meaning, but in general, it is mainly based on the meaning of "paradigm". This reflects the importance of philosophy to the origin and universality of things, as well as the "Tao" and "Qi" in Chinese traditional philosophy. After the views were consistent, Kant’s “pattern” was closer to the meaning of “prototype”. He believed that “pattern” was the intermediary of categories and phenomena. As a form, “experience content” was not detailed; it only involved in thinking. It is difficult to find; from a priori rather than reality, it is the product of the synthesis of imagination.

In the field of psychology, there are two main views on the definition of prototypes. The first is a “prototype” (prototype) that focuses on cultural psychology and collective unconsciousness. Mainly by the Swiss psychologist Albert (2008) and given its meaning and connotation. Analytical psychologist Albert (2008) proposed that collective unconsciousness exists in the deep psychology of human beings, and that illusions, strange dreams and other psychological behaviors are the confirmation of the existence of collective unconsciousness in reality. As a prototype concept of collective unconsciousness, it usually exists in people's psychological activities and cannot be concretely displayed. It is usually expressed by special methods such as dreams and myths. That is to say, the psychological prototype usually exists in the human subconscious, and its content is not fixed, and it is universal and transcends time and space. The second is a “prototype” (prototype) that focuses on cognitive processes and creative psychology. Rosch (1973) and others compared different cultural fields and found that “prototypes” existed widely in various cultures, and people categorized the world. The cognitive reference content is also the so-called original. When judging the category attribution of an item, it is not judged by the common characteristics of the members, but is matched with the prototype from the perspective of family similarity to see if it conforms to the prototype.

In the field of literature, the famous Canadian literary theorist Northrop Frye believes that "prototype" is the "intermediary" that connects specific literary works into a whole. For ordinary literary knowledge, individual literary works, the overall framework of literature and partial content, etc., have had an extremely important impact. The general abstract style of the prototype is covered in it, as well as the detailed features of the prototype. If the "prototype" is explained from the perspective of the real finger, then the prototype involves the factors that constitute the balance of the literary structure. When Frye explained the concept of prototype, he not only considered the characteristics of the abstraction of the prototype concept, but also further integrated the characteristics of the prototype, so that the abstraction still exists widely in the prototype.

It can be seen that the “prototype” has different definitions in different fields, and its nature has undergone major changes, from the supremacy of the creation of all things in the Plato era to the “intermediary” of Jung and Kant’s period, on the prototype. Under the "collective unconsciousness", the "concrete appearance" is set aside, and the "category" is followed by the "phenomenon". It will be further embodied in Frye's literature and later linguistics.

**Thirdly, the Application of Brand Prototype Theory**

Albert (2008) believes that Archetype theory focuses on the study of psychology and psychological aesthetics. He points out that because of the collective unconsciousness, people's world outlook and social outlook are formed, people will choose a way to reflect society. This kind of prototype consciousness can be used to divide the relationship between people and the external world and other things effectively. Divergence and expansion are the characteristics of the prototype. The language expression is the most prominent influence of the prototype, and it can stimulate strong resonance.

Rosch's (1973) Prototype theory is derived from cognitive psychology and linguistics. The theory points out that the division of categories comes from the overall cognition of the prototype. The grades of each member and the typical members are inconsistent, and the similarities are also
different. Therefore, for the classification problem, the theory of prototype theory is quite reliable. Human cognitive development and behavioral choice provide theoretical support.

Although the two prototype theories have their own focuses, they have made significant contributions to human psychology, cognition and behavior research with their own logic, and promoted the rapid development of disciplines in related fields. Prototypes are ubiquitous, shared by the individual mind, and the basis of attitudes toward human things (Brown, 2013). Prototype theory gradually infiltrated into literature, social cognition and behavior, semantics, pragmatics and other majors in the 1980s. Researchers in related fields, on the basis of the prototype theory of natural or artificial entities, go deep into the social level, complicate and even abstract the concepts, such as beliefs, love, self, etc., and conduct related theoretical research. Social cognition research no longer obtains research content from cognitive laboratories, but turns to society to gain cognition. In the past, the mechanism of prototype formation was explained from the level of brain function, and now it is studied from the social level. The previous prototype theory was natural and now social. It can be found that the transformation of prototype theory can deepen the understanding of prototype theory. From the perspective of brand cognition research, it can provide relevant theoretical basis for brand prototype research (Jiang Lianxiong and Zhu Huihuang, 2010).

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