

Research on the Formation Path and Development Countermeasures of Regional Brand Ecosphere in Industrial Clusters

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Abstract

Exploring the formation path of industrial cluster regional brand ecosphere is beneficial to the theoretical construction and practical countermeasures of industrial cluster regional brand. The research shows that the main forming paths of regional brand eco-circle in industrial clusters include government orientation, image of origin, maturity of industrial chain, support from stakeholders, regional resource endowment, intra-cluster brand cooperation, etc. The main development strategies are government orientation, industrial chain development, regional resource management and general product quality improvement. The research results are of great significance to the development of industrial clusters.

Keywords

Regional Brand Ecosphere; Industrial Clusters; Formation Path; Development Countermeasures.

1. The Formation of Regional Brand in Industrial Clusters

The concept of regional brand in the elaboration of regional marketing strategy points out that a city, a region or a country can carry out brand marketing activities like enterprises and products, such as national brand, city brand, etc. Later, researchers added connotation such as industrial characteristics, collective honor, collective trademark, joint operation and overall development level to the concept definition[1]-[2]. Among them, Allen(2007) made a special study on the concept and category of regional brand, formally defining it as a public brand of products or services of a specific industry in a certain region under the political/geographical framework[1]. This concept has been widely accepted by academic circles.

As the regional branding strategy of industrial clusters is regarded as an important way to enhance the national competitiveness, the competitiveness of cluster products can be improved through the branding strategy of industrial clusters. Due to its strong clustering function and brand communication utility, the regional brand of industrial clusters has become the main driving force of economic development in many regions. The explanation of the function and role of regional brands in industrial clusters is helpful to explore the subsequent effect mechanism and find the theoretical basis for the government to formulate regional brand development strategies. Therefore, it is of great significance to find out the formation mechanism of the industrial cluster brand ecosystem and explore its development countermeasures.

2. The Formation Path of Industrial Cluster Brand Ecosphere

Mihailovich (2006) initially constructed the formation path of regional industrial cluster brand, which mainly developed along the path of industry leadership, government guidance, enterprise agglomeration, brand registration and management[3]. Under the background of

regional culture and historical development, corporate products focus on a certain category, and then under the promotion of the government, the industrial advantages are gradually reflected, finally forming a regional brand with geographical indications. These research results laid a foundation for further analysis of the formation mechanism of regional brands in industrial clusters. Moreover, Pedersen (2004) emphasized that the government is the main force for regional brand building with the background of the cultural industry in the Oresund region[4]. On the basis of government impetus, four driving forces, namely, learning ability, industry association cohesion, innovation ability and collaboration ability, promote the active participation of stakeholders and realize the integration of brand resources. Under the guidance of the government and the coordination of industry associations, the brand ecosystem of industrial clusters takes the path of leading enterprise brand expansion, value chain system construction, intra-cluster marketing capability enhancement, and core brand cross-border innovation. Generally speaking, the research on regional brand of industrial clusters is an inevitable trend from macro to micro development, and is the focus of industrial cluster theory. This study systematically combs the internal and external driving factors of cluster brands, identifies the key factors, and analyzes their effects on cluster brands and their interaction mechanisms, in order to put forward policy recommendations for the establishment and sustainable development of cluster brands.

3. Key Factors of the Formation Path of Industrial Cluster Brand Ecosphere

The brand itself is a system driven by various internal and external factors. In order to study it comprehensively and systematically, we introduce a new concept: brand ecosystem. Upshaw (1999) formally put forward the concept of brand ecology in 1999, believing that a brand has life characteristics and its survival and development conform to the characteristics of ecological behavior[5]. However, Winkler (1999) and Nickerson (1999) also believe that they are in an ecological environment and are closely connected with the outside world[6]-[7]. Later, Seligman (2004) also successively explored the characteristics of brand ecology[8], laying a foundation for the theory of brand ecology. As one of the important contents of brand ecology, brand ecosystem is considered to be a business ecosystem composed of brand and the relevant environment on which it depends for its existence and development, including: macro elements such as government, society and nature, supporting environment elements such as investors, asset owners and industry associations; industry factors such as suppliers, brand enterprises, storage and transportation institutions, middlemen and customers; Competition factors such as competitors.

According to the brand ecology theory, this study regards all the factors in the system that are related to the brand and have a certain effect on its survival and development as "cluster brand drivers". The specific analysis is as follows:

(1) The macro basis. As a living body, the brand is placed in an ecological environment and exchanges with the environment. It is also affected by various environmental factors and other environmental factors. Cluster brands are first affected by macro-environmental factors. Porter (2000) believes that industrial clusters are not only clusters of enterprises, but also geographical clusters composed of related enterprises, suppliers, governments, industry associations and other related organizations [9]. Porter (2000) places special emphasis on the role of the regional government because it is the rule maker and manager[9]. Lindquist and Power (2002) also emphasize the irreplaceable leadership role of the government in regional cluster brand development[10]. In addition, the image of origin indicates the geographical characteristics of cluster brands, which is an important basis for consumers to evaluate the product quality and attributes[11]. The image of origin is the result of long-term accumulation

of various factors such as local government behavior, social culture, corporate products and so on. It is spread to the outside world through government, enterprises, agents and other actors. It builds trust in marketing channels and users' hearts and generates brand loyalty. Therefore, we regard the image of origin as one of the important drivers of cluster brands. In addition, the regional economic foundation also plays an important role in the creation and development of cluster brands, because the capital, technology, industrial workers and management experience needed for cluster development are the latter's essential foundation. Therefore, this study regards government orientation, image of origin and regional economic foundation as the macro driving factors of cluster brand creation.

(2) Industry development. Cluster development cannot be separated from industry development. If an industry meets the needs of global economic development and is part of the national strategy[9], then the cluster will receive certain support in terms of market demand and government policies. Otherwise, it indicates that the industry development prospect is an important driving factor for cluster brand development; Secondly, industry chain maturity is also the source of cluster and brand competitiveness, because the positioning and division of labor of brand enterprises within the cluster, product supply relationship, vertical and horizontal integration determine the synergy of cluster enterprises and affect the overall competitiveness of cluster brands; Finally, the support of stakeholders is also an important guarantee for the development of cluster brands. Apart from the government, industrial parks, intra-cluster enterprises, industry associations, social activists and other stakeholders need to be considered[1]. Industrial parks (some clusters have industrial parks, others do not), as the government's direct management department of clusters, play an important role in the creation, marketing and service of cluster brands. The industry association is the driver of brand value creation and brand behavior constraint. In addition, the large enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises in the cluster also assume certain responsibilities and play an indispensable role in their respective niches. Therefore, stakeholders are the important driving factors of cluster brand creation and development. To sum up, we regard the industry development prospect, industry chain maturity and stakeholder support as the industry drivers of cluster brand development.

(3) Resource support. The formation and development of cluster brands are not only due to regional development and policy orientation, but also affected by various existing resources. First of all, regional natural resources, traffic conditions and raw material supply are all important factors in the formation and development of the cluster. Its richness and convenience are important sources of cluster brand competitiveness. Industrial cluster is a cluster of enterprises that can develop, process and consume resources in a certain region. Whether a cluster brand can grow sustainably or not largely depends on the convenience and sustainability of the supply of raw material resources. In other words, regional resource endowment is an important driving factor for the development of cluster brand. Secondly, regional financial support is also an important guarantee for cluster brand development, for example, in the process of forming the regional brand, a large amount of local capital provides necessary infrastructure construction for cluster development[4], and investor behavior also plays a role in promoting the development of regional industrial clusters[12]; Moreover, industrial technicians are also a necessary condition for enhancing the competitiveness of cluster brands, because cluster brands themselves represent the capabilities of skilled workers and new market participants[10]. Finally, Industry-University-Research Collaboration is also an important driving force for cluster brand development, as extensive technical cooperation among relevant enterprises, universities and industry associations in the region is conducive to maintaining the industry's leading position in technology, and thus enhancing the overall competitiveness and risk resistance. Therefore, we regard regional resource endowments,

regional financial support, industrial and technical personnel and Industry-University-Research cooperation as the resource support factors that drive the cluster brand development. (4) Intra-group marketing. The cluster brand includes various sub-brands such as leading enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises. Their marketing objectives and ecological potential are all the influencing factors of the cluster brand as a whole. If the intra-cluster brand is consistent with the market positioning and marketing objectives of the cluster brand, it has better development potential. For the cluster brand, it should consider whether the overall brand positioning is consistent with the marketing objectives of the enterprise group. If the marketing objectives of different marketing subjects and stakeholders are consistent with the overall cluster brand, it is beneficial to the establishment and development of the latter[2]. In addition to the same goal, brand enterprises should also maintain marketing cooperation under the leadership of relevant government departments[13]. Generally speaking, the leading enterprises play an important role. Only it can promote the interaction between the overall brand and the individual brand, and establish joint value in the eyes of consumers[3], thus creating a strong cluster brand effect, which is the key to implement the cluster brand strategy. In addition, in the process of creating cluster brands, leading brands also play an important role in technological innovation and diffusion, standardizing the behavior of small and medium-sized enterprises, and formulating product quality standards. Therefore, we regard brand marketing objectives, intra-group brand collaboration, brand joint value and leadership brand strength as the driving factors of intra-group marketing for the creation and development of cluster brands.

4. Countermeasures for the Development of Industrial Cluster Brand Ecosphere

The establishment of cluster brand ecosystem and driving mechanism has certain management implications for the creation and development of cluster brands, involving local governments, industrial park management committees, industry associations, leading brand enterprises and other enterprises. The details are:

(1) Macroscopic management. Among the three factors of government orientation, image of origin and regional economic foundation, only government orientation can be changed, which requires the regional government to incorporate cluster brand building into its strategic planning, formulate fair and reasonable policies, and strengthen government investment, financial support and government marketing to promote cluster brand building.

(2) Industry management. Among the three factors of industry development prospect, industry chain maturity and stakeholders, the industry development prospect is an external factor and cannot be changed. Therefore, managers should devote themselves to the construction of industry chain and the support of stakeholders. First, they should provide special funds for the bottleneck problems of industry chain, encourage enterprises to operate differently, implement differentiated positioning in brand, build a reasonable industry chain, and enhance the competitiveness and risk resistance of clusters; Secondly, organize industry associations, leading enterprises, relevant enterprises, scientific research institutions, banks, media and other stakeholders to carry out discussion activities, so as to find points of interest for all parties, promote extensive cooperation and promote brand development.

(3) Resource management. Among the three factors of resources and environment, regional resources endowment cannot be changed in a short period of time. Therefore, the focus should be on regional financial support and the construction of industrial and technical personnel. First, it is necessary to improve the financing environment, establish a good financing mechanism, innovate credit business model, and maintain the sustainability of cluster scientific and technological innovation. Second, it is necessary to establish a high-level industrial

personnel introduction mechanism, and at the same time, jointly train grassroots technical personnel with vocational colleges.

(4) Promotion of marketing management within the cluster. We should strengthen the consistency of brand marketing objectives and enhance the strength of leading brands. First, local government economic committees, industrial zone management committees and industry associations led by leading enterprises should jointly formulate the overall marketing strategic objectives, standardize and restrict the marketing behavior of enterprises, so as to maintain the consistency of the overall brand direction. In addition, we should play the role of leading enterprises, promote them to establish brand standards, play their benchmarking role, and enhance the overall competitiveness of cluster brands.

(5) Cluster brand management. Collective honor, overall product quality and technological innovation ability can all be changed and improved, among which collective honor is a part of brand building. Government agencies, industrial parks and leading enterprises must strive for various awards and honors from aspects such as patented technology, park logo and collective construction, laying a foundation for overall marketing; In addition, the overall product quality improvement is especially important, which is the basis for customers to evaluate the cluster brand and the most difficult factor for cluster brand managers to control. Because there are many brands in the cluster, with good and bad mixed, it is easy to cause product injury crisis. In this regard, government departments should play an important role, not only to educate the enterprises in the cluster but also to carry out brand quality awareness education. More importantly, they should strengthen supervision and strictly control the quality. Finally, in terms of technological innovation, we should focus on supporting the research and development of key technologies, which is also one of the important factors for the sustainable development of cluster brands.

Although it has made some contributions to the cluster brand ecosystem, cluster brand driving mechanism and cluster brand management, this study still has some deficiencies. The main industry cluster analysis is limited to China's industry cluster research, which is not convincing enough. In the next step, we will conduct cross-regional case studies for specific industries to put forward targeted management measures.

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