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# Research on the Path to Creating Home Gardening Brand Assets Based on Customers—A Case Study of Hongyue Garden Maker

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**Abstract** In this paper, using the research method of grounded theory, with the competitive brand of home gardening—Hongyue Garden Maker as the specific object of study, we collect the data through interviews and surveys, conduct coding analysis step by step on the data, establish the brand asset creation path model consisting of some main dimensions including "brand salience", "brand performance", "brand image", "brand judgment", "brand feeling", and "brand resonance", and reveal the interaction and logical relationship between the above dimensions, so as to provide theoretical support for the asset creation of many kinds of home gardening and other brands.

**Key words** Home gardening, Brand assets, Asset creation, Grounded theory, Path model

## 1 Introduction

Home gardening has been quietly rising in people's life and sight, and the research of its status and development is in tune with the needs of the times, and is given great significance<sup>[1]</sup>. Home gardening refers to the activity of cultivating horticultural plants and decorating in the space of room, balcony, roof or courtyard, and its practical and beautiful characteristics cater to the expectation of consumers, which indicates that the home gardening industry will create a huge demand<sup>[2]</sup>.

The existence of demand is bound to bring about an increase in supply. The establishment of many home gardening enterprises of various sizes is in the ascendant. Enterprises must attach great importance to the brand building, and thus bring about real added value in their marketing activities. The creation of brand assets is a dynamic process, and in the process, the customer's response plays a crucial role in creating a competitive brand, and only when the customers participate and interact with the enterprises will it be possible to establish high-value brand assets.

In summary, under the premise of customer base, what is the path to creating home gardening brand assets? Is there a certain law in the birth of a strong brand? Such questions are not conclusive. Therefore, this study takes the home gardening brand—Hongyue Garden Maker for example, and explores the path to brand asset creation, so as to obtain a systematic result of theoretical system and provide theoretical guidance and implementation basis for the process of brand asset creation.

## 2 Literature review

The domestic home gardening is at the youth stage<sup>[3]</sup>, and there is

unlimited growth potential. The studies of the existing literature on the domestic home gardening focus on the following three aspects:

(i) The target group. It is based on the urban population to expand the space of home gardening development is an important development direction of Chinese home gardening industry<sup>[4]</sup>.

(ii) Related technology and practical application. In order to promote the long-term stable development of home gardening, a number of technologies based on the Internet of things have emerged, such as intelligent maintenance system of home gardening, making it easier and more intelligent<sup>[5]</sup>.

(iii) Consumption and buying behavior. Different consumers have different buying behaviors, and the home gardening consumption shows different manifestations from the age to the regions<sup>[6]</sup>.

From the existing literature, it is found that the exploration of home gardening is mostly carried out from the development of industry as a whole, universal technology and applications, consumer purchasing phenomena behind industry and other macro-levels, and there is a shortage of in-depth studies on the specific operation of enterprises. With the creation of home gardening brand assets as the perspective, the customer as the research foundation, and the competitive brand of actual flower enterprises as the research object, this study uses the grounded theory and starts from the phenomenon, to analyze and summarize the brand assets of a competitive brand.

## 3 Research design

**3.1 Object of study** The home gardening brand Hongyue Garden Maker in Jiaying City, Zhejiang Province is chosen as the object of study to explore the path to creating competitive home gardening brand assets.

Hongyue Garden Maker is a new home gardening brand launched by Zhejiang Hongyue Flower Co., Ltd. in the case of integrated 10-year business advantages. It is the country's first chain-type garden center and one-stop flower sourcing platform, and a total of 16 one-stop stores have been established in the Yan-

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gtze River Delta.

Hongyue Garden Maker is China's leading gardening terminal service brand, with its own brand assets, and its brand development path plays a role in promoting and guiding the development of the entire industry.

**3.2 Research method** Grounded theory is a systematic methodology in the social sciences involving the construction of theory through methodic gathering and analysis of data. Grounded theory is a research methodology which operates inductively, in contrast to the hypothetico-deductive approach. A study using grounded theory is likely to begin with a question, or even just with the collection of qualitative data. As researchers review the data collected, repeated ideas, concepts or elements become apparent, and are tagged with codes, which have been extracted from the data.

Grounded theory research methods have different orientations, genres and methodological propositions. Although the specific operational focuses are different, the specific paths of grounded theory scholars in each genre are basically the same, that is, collecting data, organizing and coding data, comparing and re-analyzing data, forming the theory and writing<sup>[7-8]</sup>.

Grounded Theory stresses that only when the theory is built based on real life experience can it have real vitality, and it can be combined with in-depth interviews, so that the theory is systematically and effectively constructed based on interview data<sup>[9]</sup>. This article selects this method for collecting, mining and organizing the relevant information, in order to explore and sum up the path to creating the competitive brand assets of home gardening.

**3.3 Data collection** The semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews are conducted on 38 consumers in Haining Jinzhu Park branch store of Hongyue Garden Maker, Haining Xiashi branch store of Hongyue Garden Maker, and Lin'an Yijin branch store of Hongyue Garden Maker, for in-depth mining of key events, to lay the foundation for the creation of the path.

At the same time, the second-hand data are collected directly

from the materials from newspapers, periodicals and Hongyue Garden Maker stores, to be used as the theoretical support for the later analysis.

## 4 Data analysis process

**4.1 Open coding process** The open coding is to use the interview data obtained for gradual conceptualization and categorization to accurately reflect the information content. Its purpose is to find categories, concepts in the phenomenon of the study and re-integrate them, so as to determine the nature.

In this study, we use the manual open coding, and Table 1 shows the decomposed partial coding process.

**4.1.1 Tagging and phenomena summary.** In this study, we bring out 150 tags on the basis of trying to use the interviewees' exact words, and make a summary of phenomenon in each tag, to create the basis for conceptualization.

**4.1.2 Conceptualization.** By exploring the phenomenon for each tag, a total of 54 initial concepts are obtained, including product awareness, product quality, employees' attitudes and so on. Due to the complexity of concepts and the existence of a certain degree of crossover, it is necessary to further analyze the semantic relations among different concepts, and integrate the related concepts, to lay the foundation for categorization.

**4.1.3 Categorization.** By analysis and classification of the concepts, 54 initial concepts are eventually integrated into 23 categories including popularity, awareness, favorability, main components, product reliability and durability, service effectiveness, efficiency and emotion, style and design, product price, user image, brand image, buying and using situation, brand personality and value, history, tradition and experience, quality, reputation, consideration, brand advantage, instant feeling, lasting feeling, behavior loyalty, attitude attachment, community belonging, and active intervention.

**Table 1 Partial coding results in the open coding process**

Tag No.	Tag content	Summary of phenomena	Conceptualization	Categorization
1	Know Hongyue (204)	Of the 221 respondents, 204 said they had heard of the Hongyue brand	Brand awareness	Reputation
2	Hongyue sells flowers (204)	Of the 221 respondents, 204 said they knew Hongyue was selling flowers	Category aware	
3	Know Hongyue logo (33)	33 respondents chose the correct Hongyue logo from 8 similar logos	Application identification	Awareness
4	Will recommend Hongyue (130)	Of the 221 respondents, 195 said they would recommend Hongyue to others	Brand recommendation	Favorability
5	Full varieties (28)	There are flowers with various habits, and can be placed in different venues	Variety category	Main components
6	The varieties can basically meet their own needs (26)	Every time they can buy the product they want to buy		
7	Categories of product used for buying are more than enough (2)	Dazzling in the store		
8	The product range is not enough (3)	The succulent varieties are not enough, with little choice		

(To be continued)

(Continued)

Tag No.	Tag content	Summary of phenomena	Conceptualization	Categorization
9	High level of varieties, many varieties (4)	There are many new varieties that can not be seen in other flower shops		
10	Products certainly meet their purchase needs (1)	Initially provide seedlings, and then provide garden design and technical guidance, there are new things each year		
11	The quality of flower products is trustworthy (21)	Leave a pot of flowers alone outside, but it blossoms unexpectedly	Product quality	Product reliability and durability
12	The herbs bought look good (1)	Kalanchoe flowers are well blossoming at home		
13	The quality of small potted plant is good (2)	Bought on the desk of the children's classroom, always in a very good condition		
14	Quality is difficult to guarantee (2)	The company sells flowers after scarification, the flowering quality is difficult to guarantee		
15	Not good quality (2)	It can not flower by one's own cultivation		
16	Low survival rate (1)	It can not be cultivated by oneself		
17	Seed quality is trustworthy (1)	Having bought seedlings from Hongyue for several years, and its seed quality is obvious to all		
18	Quality is not bad (10)	Products are imported, the product quality is guaranteed		
19	Growing neat (2)	Exactly the same height and size for the products inside		
20	No concept of quality (3)	Do not know how to judge the quality		
21	Staff is very dedicated (24)	Any questions will be answered and resolved	Employees' attitude	Service effect, efficiency and emotion
22	Employees' attitude towards customers are so-so (5)	Did not feel particularly good nor particularly bad		
23	Timely and efficient staff service (5)	Problems can be solved immediately		
24	Staff will take the initiative to introduce (2)	The guy in the shop will take the initiative to introduce the product-related content		
25	Staff enthusiasm is not high (1)	Staff is busy, do not take the initiative to ask about the demand, only answer when they are being asked		
26	Staff is friendly (6)	Can be very approachable to teach a variety of flower tips		
27	Service personnel fail to provide guidance (4)	Hope that the store can have a dedicated service member giving them product block instructions when the customers enter the store		
28	Excellent after-sales service (2)	The follow-up problems related to the conservation can be solved by consulting in WeChat or store, and the after-sales staff will also return the visit and provide on-site service, quite hard	Service quality	
29	Responsible for service (29)	Solve any problems to the end		
30	No special impression (2)	The in-store service did not leave a deep impression on oneself		
31	Companies provide complete services (35)	Companies can selflessly impart planting and conservation knowledge		
32	Uneven quality of service (1)	Staff service is uneven		

Note: The figures in parentheses indicate the number of tag contents included in the presentation of respondents.

**4.2 Axial coding process** After forming 23 categories, there is a need to draw on the canonical model to analyze the logical relationship between the results and the phenomenon conditions, context, action/interaction strategies, develop the key categories, namely axial decoding.

According to this process, this study will show the relationship between categories and deeply analyze the relationship between various categories and the construction stage of competitive

home gardening brand.

In the axial coding stage, the canonical model is used for continuous classification and abstraction of categories formed by the open coding, and six main categories are extracted, they are salience, performance, image, judgment, feeling, and resonance. Part of the coding results are shown in Table 2.

**4.2.1 Main category I—salience.** In different situations, the ability of the customer to recall and recognize the brand is differ-

ent. At the same time, the degree to which the brand name, logo, symbol and other elements are related to the specific brand in memory is also different. All of these phenomena are reflection of brand awareness.

**Table 2** Part of the coding results in the axial coding process

Categorization	Main category
Popularity	Salience
Awareness	
Favorability	
Main components	Performance
Product reliability and durability	
Service effectiveness, efficiency and emotion	
Style and design	
Product price	

Consumers' perceptions of a brand are reflected in different aspects, including how often the brand appears under different situations and circumstances, whether the brand can be easily recalled or identified, which necessary hints or reminders are needed, *etc.*, and these indicators can be measured by the brand salience. Hongyue Garden Maker wanting to establish a good brand image is on the premise that high brand salience is established in customers, so salience is regarded as the first main category of brand asset creation.

From the data obtained from the survey and research, the brand popularity of Hongyue Garden Maker in consumers, namely the probability of being known to consumers, has reached as high as 92.37%. In addition, under the premise of setting many confusing logos, there are still 14.93% of the respondents who can correctly identify the Hongyue logo, and at the same time, 88.34% of respondents will recommend Hongyue to people around them.

The three indicators (awareness, identification, recommendation) are corresponding to popularity, awareness and favorability, respectively. During the process of conceptualization and categorization, we find that when the flower consumers make a choice to buy, they tend to choose the brand of Hongyue Garden Maker. Therefore, we can see that the brand salience of Hongyue Garden Maker is worthy of recognition among the consumer groups.

**4.2.2** Main category II—performance. The product itself is at the core of the brand assets, because it affects the consumer's experience in using this brand, and they learn from others about the brand, and know about the information of this brand publicized by the company. As a brand with home gardening as theme, Hongyue Garden Maker provides not only flower products, but also many macro-level products such as shopping environment and purchase services. This can fully meet the needs and desires of consumers, and it is the key to successful marketing.

Therefore, Hongyue Garden Maker brand must ensure that the consumers' product experience at least meets the expectations, and it is just right to use the brand performance to represent the degree to which the products and services of Hongyue Garden Maker brand meets the functional requirements of customers. It reflects the objective assessment quality of Hongyue Garden Maker brand and the degree to which it meets the consumers' needs in practical,

aesthetic and economic terms.

According to the qualitative survey and in-depth analysis data, the consumers generally think the product varieties of Hongyue Garden Maker brand are diversified, with a number of options, which can well meet the needs of life and work. The performance consistency and service life satisfaction demonstrated in consumers' long-term purchase of Hongyue Garden Maker products, have given consumers some recognition of the reliability and durability of its products.

The diversity of Hongyue Garden Maker products and services, rapid response speed and high accuracy of service, and the high service quality of staff, enable consumers to speak highly of the service effectiveness, efficiency and emotion. The convenient shelf design of Hongyue Garden Maker products, stylish new designs and plant landscape design, bring strong visual impact and sensory enjoyment to consumers. Under the brand effect, consumers generally think that the price of Hongyue Garden Maker products is reasonable, and can accept slight price changes.

This shows that the brand performance of Hongyue Garden Maker stimulates the consumer desire, and meets the needs of consumers from all aspects. The strong brand performance and its value information have made the Hongyue Garden Maker brand win the consumer satisfaction and love. As a result, brand performance is the second main category.

**4.2.3** Main category III—image. Consumers' understanding of a leading flower brand is not only from a realistic point of view, but also from an abstract point of view. In the minds of consumers, each brand has its own user groups, personal values, usage scenarios, *etc.*, and some consumers use the personal experience, advertisement and other channels of information, but in the end, it will form the brand image association.

Through coding and categorization, it can be found that the consumers' understanding of Hongyue Garden Maker brand is based on the external attributes of the products and services it provides, as well as the ways of this brand to meet the customer psychological and social needs. From the past experience, the brand's advertising and other aspects, it forms the brand image association of Hongyue Garden Maker. In the end, many of the intangible assets of Hongyue Garden Maker form the main category of brand image.

From consumer interviews, it is found that the consumers' understanding of the brand image of Hongyue Garden Maker involves many aspects, such as appearance, personality, age, grade, *etc.* However, one thing in common is that consumers have an active understanding of its image, which shows that the brand building of Hongyue Garden Maker is successful at the stage of establishing brand image.

**4.2.4** Main category IV—judgment. Consumers judge a brand generally based on the following four aspects: brand quality, brand reputation, brand consideration and brand advantage. Through interviews, we find that consumers have different preferences and appraisals of Hongyue Garden Maker, involving how consumers combine different brand functions and images to produce different opinions. And these concepts ultimately form the brand judgment of Hongyue Garden Maker.

The consumers' judgment on the Hongyue Garden Maker brand is based on the understanding of its image. They have made their own judgment on all aspects of Hongyue Garden Maker, and have positive assessment of the quality, reputation, consideration and advantages. From this, we can see that the goal of Hongyue Garden Maker at the level of brand judgment has been achieved.

**4.2.5 Main category V—feeling.** When consumers face many brands, they will give their own feeling in addition to making judgments. The consumers to Hongyue Garden Maker have different feelings about every shopping experience or decision-making process, and have reacted emotionally to the brand.

When people's life is guaranteed, they begin to pay attention to body and mind relaxation, and home gardening is a good medium for them to achieve this goal. As a home gardening brand, Hongyue Garden Maker creates a craze for home gardening in society, and further stimulates consumers' feelings about the brand. These feelings may be moderate or may be stressful. The feelings inspired by the brand can be strongly felt when buying or using the product.

In this in-depth interview, the respondents' feelings of warmth, fun, excitement, sense of security, social identity and self-esteem are all reflected, and the respondents who feel that the warmth suits them are the most. Among these feelings, the first three are instant feelings, and the last three are lasting feelings. They are all brand feelings of Hongyue Garden Maker to the consumers and these feelings are positive brand feelings.

**4.2.6 Main category VI—resonance.** Customers and brands will establish a psychological connection, but there is different depth and intensity of psychological connection between the same customers and different brands or the same brand and different customers.

In the in-depth interview, the interviewees show some brand identity, brand contact and brand concern to the brand of Hongyue Garden Maker, and these concepts can be included in the categories of behavior loyalty, attitude attachment, community belonging, and active intervention, respectively. The consumers' brand

attitude attachment and brand community ownership can use the dimension of intensity. The purchase and use frequency of this brand, and the activities not related to purchase and consumption, can use the dimension of behavior.

The intensity and behavior above focus on the ultimate relationship between customers and brand, as well as the level of recognition. The nature of the relationship as well as the extent to which the customer is synchronized with the brand, can be explained by brand resonance. Brand resonance is measured by the intensity and depth of the psychological connection between the customer and the brand, and is reflected by the brand loyalty formed by their actions.

Resonance is a prerequisite for creating a strong brand, and a necessary step for a brand to generate brand assets with far-reaching value. From the behaviors of "really missing this brand if it disappears" and "keeping a close watch on the news of the brand", the consumers of Hongyue Garden Maker have already recognized the brand and formed a certain brand relationship.

**4.3 Selective coding** Finally, the selective coding is used to build the grounded theory in this paper. Through the above axial coding analysis, this paper constructs a six-stage path theory for the brand asset creation of Hongyue Garden Maker as a leading flower company, namely brand salience, brand performance, brand image, brand judgment, brand experience, and brand resonance (Fig. 1).

The theory as a whole shows the path of strong brand creation, which can be divided into sensible path and rational path. The sensible path includes brand image and brand feeling, while the rational path includes brand performance and brand judgment. The two paths produce the brand assets with far-reaching value.

In addition, the axial coding of two different paths will also affect each other. The brand performance is the basis of brand image, and the brand judgment is the premise of brand feeling. The interactions among the five processes, ultimately reaching the stage of brand resonance.

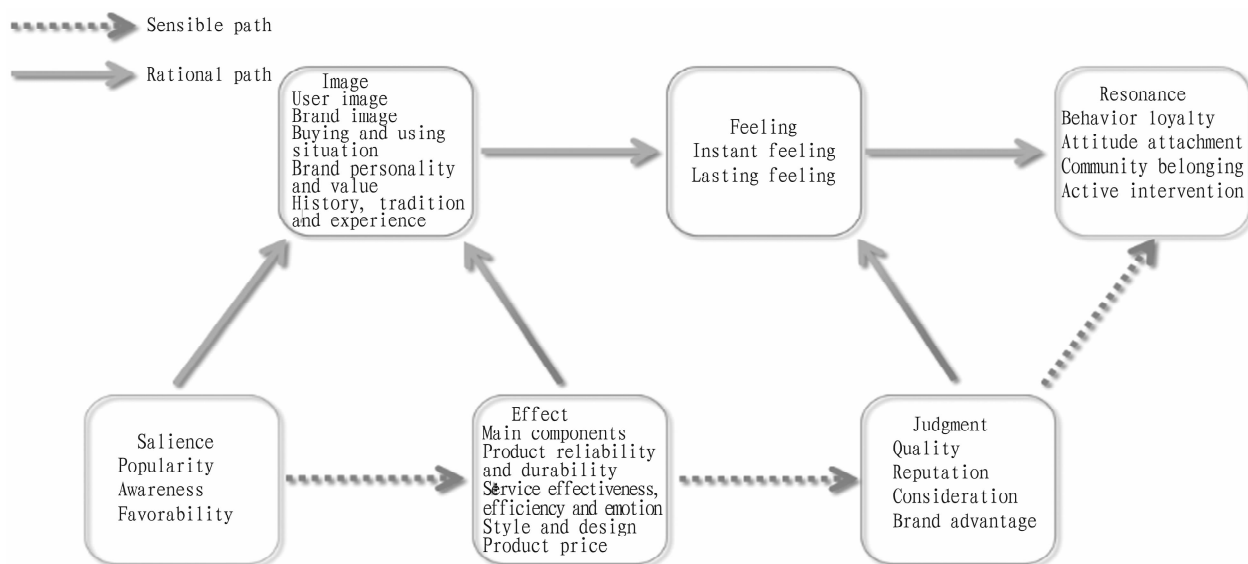


Fig. 1 The dynamic brand creation path

Based on the actual situation, it is found that the six phases have their own corresponding goals. The goal of brand building at the salience stage is to establish profound and extensive brand awareness; at the stage of brand performance and brand image, the goal is to establish the brand difference and common ground; at the stage of brand judgment and brand feeling, the goal is to make the customers have positive, easy response; at the stage of brand resonance, the goal is to make the customers show strong positive loyalty. When all four steps have been completed, the brand asset creation will be successful.

## 5 Conclusions

According to the literature analysis, semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews and gradual coding of interview data based on grounded theory, this study gets the six indispensable stages of brand asset creation path based on customers: brand salience, brand performance, brand image, brand judgment, brand feeling, brand resonance. This paper analyzes the six stages and brand asset creation process, builds a complete path, and forms the theory of "home gardening brand asset creation path based on customers".

Before the formation of a positive and loyal relationship between a brand and customers, it first needs to let the customers know what brand it is, namely let the customers know "who I am" when they see the brand-related external label, thereby establishing brand salience. Next, the customers need to know how the brand is, so it is necessary to establish brand performance and brand image to allow customers to know the brand. The customers will take the information from brand for the second digestion, and make their own judgments, which is the stage of brand judgment and brand feeling.

The brand judgment is based on brand performance, which is the customer's rational reaction to the brand, and the brand feeling is based on brand image, which is the customer's sensible reaction to the brand. After the above stages, that is, after identifying the brand, understanding the meaning of the brand, and responding to the brand, the customers will begin to show their relationship with the brand, or the brand loyalty, or the brand dependence *etc.*

If a strong positive relationship is established between the customer and the brand, then a strong brand is born and this brand also owns its brand assets. For the home gardening brand, the relationship between customers and the brand can not be ignored. In order to establish a lasting, positive relationship between the brand and customers, the foundation is to increase the popularity of this brand, which can be complemented by brand label, brand advertising, *etc.*

Next, there is a need to use the brand's own products and services to meet the needs of customers in order to let them intuitively understand what kind of the brand is. The home gardening industry is a "hot" industry. The flowers, grasses and gardens cause the visual impact on customers, and bring body relaxation and spiritual enjoyment, so the home gardening brand needs to pay attention to the customers' response.

Through the human-based shopping scenarios and personalization of the product, it is necessary to purposefully make the customers have the favorable judgments and feelings on the brand. Ultimately, as the above processes are well done, the content of brand provided to the customers can be sublimated, and the customers naturally have dependency and trust on the brand, and take this brand as a fixed brand in the home gardening consumption and even consultation, so, the resonance relationship is formed between the brand and customers.

In the existing market, not only for the home gardening brand, but also for other brands, we can learn from the brand asset creation path theory. There is a need to further study where the specific application scope node of this model, whether there is particularity in the intrinsic relation mechanism of paths.

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