

Research on the IP-Based Operation Strategy of Art Education Brands: A Perspective Based on User Emotional Connection and Brand Extension

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Abstract: In the era of the experience economy and the attention economy, art education brands face challenges such as homogeneous competition and user retention. IP-based operation, as a new brand paradigm that builds high-loyalty user communities through content and value output, provides a strategic path for the upgrading of art education brands. This paper starts from the theory of brand management, integrates the concept of IP-based operation, and constructs an analysis framework with "user emotional connection" as the core and "brand extension" as the path. The research aims to systematically elaborate on how art education brands can establish deep emotional identification and spiritual resonance with users through content matrix construction, symbolic system design, value narration, and user co-creation; and explore how to prudently carry out multi-dimensional brand extension on this basis to achieve a win-win situation between commercial value and art education value. This research provides a theoretical basis and strategic guidance for the innovative and sustainable development of art education brands.

Keywords: Art Education; Brand IP; Emotional Connection; Brand Extension; User Co-Creation; Operation Strategy

1. Introduction

Currently, China's art education market is undergoing a profound paradigm shift. As the principal contradiction in society has evolved into one between the people's growing need for a better life and unbalanced, inadequate development, the consumer demand for art education has been upgraded from simply acquiring skills and passing graded examinations to a comprehensive pursuit of aesthetic experience, creativity stimulation, and cultural

identity. When users choose art education brands, their decision-making logic is becoming increasingly emotional and community-oriented, focusing not only on the professionalism of the curriculum system but also on the spiritual value and emotional belonging that the brand can provide. This shift has created a bottleneck in the effectiveness of traditional brand management models that focus on functional value output. How to build deep emotional connections with users and form differentiated competitive advantages has become a core issue for the sustainable development of art education brands[1].

In this context, the connotation of intellectual property (IP) has evolved from an intangible asset at the legal level to a cultural symbol system with values at its core, strong emotional appeal, and cross-media commercial realization capabilities. The essence of IP-based operation is to transform the brand into a "super symbol" with personality charm and cultural influence through systematic content narration and symbol construction, turning users from "consumers" into "fans" and even "co-creators." This operational paradigm is naturally compatible with the characteristics of art education that emphasize emotional experience and creative expression, providing a highly forward-looking strategic path for brand evolution. However, the IP-ization of art education brands is by no means a simple image cartoonization or content marketing; its core lies in achieving the sublimation of users' rational identity to emotional attachment with the brand through a sophisticated mechanism, and safely expanding brand boundaries on this basis[2].

Existing academic research has focused on IP-based operations in the cultural and entertainment industries, but mostly concentrates on traditional content fields such as film, animation, and games. There is a lack of systematic discussion on the particularity and

strategy of IP construction for education service industries, especially art education brands that combine the rational logic of "education" and the emotional characteristics of "art." Although brand extension theory is relatively mature, most research is based on fast-moving consumer goods or durable consumer goods, and there is insufficient research on the dynamic process and risk management mechanism of brand extension based on emotional connections. This constitutes the theoretical gap in this study[3].

Therefore, this paper aims to construct an integrated theoretical framework, systematically analyze the internal logic and implementation strategies of IP-based operation of art education brands from the dual perspectives of "user emotional connection" and "brand extension." The research will focus on answering two key questions: First, how can art education brands establish deep emotional connections with users that transcend transactional relationships through content, symbols, and community operations? Second, after consolidating the emotional foundation, what principles and paths should brands follow for IP extension to achieve a balance between commercial and artistic value, and effectively avoid the risk of brand dilution? This study will deepen and expand the application of brand management theory in the experience economy era, and provide theoretical guidance and strategic toolkits for the innovative practice of art education brands.

2. User Emotional Connection Mechanisms in Art Education Brand IP Development

The success of IP-driven operations for art education brands relies on establishing a solid and profound emotional connection with users, far beyond just offering a blockbuster course or marketing campaign. This connection transcends the traditional service supply-demand relationship, fostering in users a deep attachment to the brand based on value identification, emotional resonance, and a sense of community belonging, thereby building a competitive moat that is difficult for competitors to overcome. This chapter will deeply deconstruct the internal composition and operational logic of this emotional connection mechanism.

The starting point for IP development in art education brands is achieving a fundamental sublimation of the value proposition. It must leap from providing the functional value of "skills transfer" to offering the emotional and

spiritual values of "aesthetic inspiration," "creativity liberation," and "self-actualization." The brand needs to define a transcendent and lofty "meta-concept" that goes beyond commerce, such as "giving every child the eyes to discover beauty" or "art is everyone's innate language." This concept constitutes the "worldview" of the IP universe and is the ultimate purpose of all narratives and actions. It answers the user's deep question of "why choose you," transforming the learning behavior from a utilitarian investment into a meaningful value pursuit. For example, if a dance education brand defines its core value as "the free expression of body language" rather than "passing grade exams," it can create a deeper resonance with users pursuing individual liberation and confidence[4].

Value concepts need concrete carriers, and building a rich and continuous "content matrix" is the core engine for realizing IP development. This content matrix is far from a simple accumulation of course videos, but rather a multi-media, three-dimensional narrative ecosystem built around the IP worldview. "Story-driven content" is the soul, including the brand founder's original aspirations, the artistic life of renowned teachers, and the transformation journeys of students. These authentic and moving narratives personalize the otherwise cold brand, giving it warmth, sentiment, and inspiration. "Knowledge-based content" embodies professional authority, continuously providing value-added services to users through carefully produced art history popularization, technique analysis, and masterwork appreciation short videos or articles, consolidating the brand's cognitive position as an "art education expert." "Interactive content," such as online live Q&A sessions, artwork review meetings, and challenge activities, breaks down the barriers of one-way communication, creates real-time, high-frequency touchpoints, and enhances user participation and sense of belonging. All of this content needs to be packaged through a unified "symbol system" (such as a unique IP image, color scheme, and visual language) to ensure extremely high brand recognition, so that every piece of content can become a touchpoint for strengthening user brand memory.

Ultimately, the consolidation and sublimation of emotional connection depend on the complete transformation of the "user role"—from passive recipients of value to active co-creators of value.

Brands need to design sophisticated "user co-creation mechanisms" to catalyze this process. Encouraging and showcasing user-generated content (UGC) is the most basic level, such as collecting student artwork and sharing learning experiences. This not only greatly enriches the content ecosystem but also provides users with a visible sense of accomplishment and belonging. A deeper level of co-creation lies in empowering users to participate in decision-making, such as inviting core users to participate in beta testing of new courses, voting on derivative product designs, and even co-planning offline art events. This sense of "ownership" greatly enhances user engagement and loyalty[5].

As a result, the formation of a "brand community" becomes a natural outcome. Online communities (social media groups, dedicated app communities) and offline communities (workshops, exhibitions, performances) intertwine, providing users with a social space based on shared interests and values. Here, dense emotional bonds and social capital are formed between users and the brand, and between users themselves. The community's internal exclusive language, rituals (such as annual galas and graduation ceremonies), and shared memories foster a strong collective identity, forming a solid "fan culture." This culture makes the brand IP a symbol of social identity, and its consumption becomes a cultural practice within the circle, thus achieving the highest form of emotional connection: from "I love this brand" to "We belong to the group represented by this brand." At this point, the art education brand truly evolves from a teaching service organization into a cultural symbol with strong emotional cohesion.

3. Brand IP Extension Paths and Risk Management Based on Emotional Connection

Having successfully built an IP-based core with deep emotional connection at its heart, the art education brand gains the capital and authority to expand its value. Brand extension is an inevitable choice to transform IP potential into broader commercial value and brand influence. However, its success is by no means the result of blind expansion, but a precise operation built on rigorous strategy, with the ultimate goal of consolidating rather than diluting user emotional connection. This chapter will systematically discuss the core principles, specific paths, and accompanying risk management system that

should be followed for brand extension based on emotional connection.

The primary principle of brand IP extension is value fit. Any extension behavior must maintain a high degree of consistency with the "meta-concept" and aesthetic tonality carried by the brand IP core. Extended products should not be mere trademark licensing or OEM production, but a natural derivation and material presentation of the brand worldview. An art education brand with "Oriental aesthetics enlightenment" as its core concept should focus its extended products on the Four Treasures of the Study, Chinese-style cultural and creative products, traditional craft experience packages, etc., rather than abruptly launching Western-style painting tools. This internal consistency ensures that each extension is a reinforcement and revisiting of the brand's core values, capable of gaining emotional recognition from existing user communities, rather than triggering a cognitive conflict of "brand betrayal." Complementing this is the principle of user demand orientation. The inspiration for extension should come directly from the real, unmet derivative needs within the brand community. Through community interaction, user feedback, and data insights, the brand can accurately identify users' extended desires—users learning calligraphy may need more design-oriented stationery, specific brands of "Xuan Zhi", or related ancient book cultural and creative products; music students may desire high-quality headphones, music-themed clothing, or offline concert events. Extension driven by user needs naturally has a market foundation and community promotion momentum, significantly increasing the success rate.

Based on the aforementioned principles, the IP extension of art education brands can follow these multi-dimensional paths. Product and service extension is the most direct route, aimed at meeting the front-end and back-end needs of users' learning scenarios. Proactively, this can extend to art enlightenment toolkits, IP-themed art supply boxes, and other "starter kits." Reactively, this can involve developing derivatives related to art learning outcomes, such as customized merchandise featuring student artwork (printing paintings on phone cases, canvas bags), art publications (student portfolios, books on teaching philosophy), and even high-end customized study abroad programs, deeply integrating destination art and cultural resources to provide immersive experiences.

Spatial experience extension aims to inject two-dimensional IP images and values into three-dimensional physical spaces, creating offline experience landmarks. Brands can upgrade traditional teaching locations, transforming them into "art aesthetic spaces" that integrate exhibition halls, galleries, coffee areas, and classrooms, making them IP landmarks worth visiting in their own right[6]. Regularly hosting IP-themed art exhibitions, lectures by renowned artists, aesthetic salons for parents, and other activities can transform the space from a teaching location into a cultural and artistic social center radiating throughout the surrounding area, greatly enhancing brand image and user experience. Cross-border collaboration extension is an effective means for brands to "break the circle," acquire new traffic, and refresh brand perception. Collaborating with fashionable brands, home furnishing brands, technology products, and even real estate projects that align with the brand's tone can create highly engaging co-branded products or activities. For example, collaborating with a children's furniture brand to launch an "Artist Series" furniture line, or collaborating with a technology company to develop art education apps or hardware, can not only share R&D costs and user pools but also leverage the partner's brand assets to inject fresh, fashionable elements into the brand and attract the attention of potential user groups.

However, extensions inevitably carry risks. Brand dilution is the primary threat, where excessive or inappropriate extensions lead to a blurring of users' core understanding of the brand, weakening its professional authority and uniqueness. Managing this risk requires establishing a strict extension review mechanism, setting evaluation criteria based on the alignment of values and the needs of the target user, and being prepared to reject any collaboration proposals that do not conform to the brand's tone. Secondly, the risk of balancing commerce and art always exists. Overly commercialized behavior and a rush to monetize can provoke core user groups (typically art enthusiasts), who may perceive it as a betrayal of the initial artistic vision. The key to managing this risk is to adhere to a bottom line of quality, ensuring that all extended products themselves possess sufficient artistic value, aesthetic design, and craftsmanship, making them "works of art" in their own right, rather than poorly made

merchandise, thereby maintaining the brand's professional style and user trust. Through prudent path selection and strict risk management, the extension of a brand's IP can become a strategic tool for strengthening rather than weakening emotional connection.

4. Conclusion

This study systematically elucidates the internal logic and practical pathways of branding art education through IP operations by constructing a dual-engine model of "emotional connection-brand extension." The research reveals that the essence of IP-based branding in art education is a profound strategic shift from "transaction-oriented" to "relationship-oriented." Its success does not rely on the accumulation of marketing techniques but is rooted in the in-depth exploration and consistent shaping of the brand's core value system. Emotional connection is the cornerstone of IP operations. Through value sublimation, content narration, symbol construction, and user co-creation, it transforms users into brand community members with high stickiness and high emotional investment, establishing a solid competitive barrier for the brand. Brand extension, on this solid foundation, is a strategic extension of the rational release and amplification of IP value. It must strictly adhere to the two principles of value fit and user demand orientation. Through multi-dimensional paths such as products, spaces, and cross-overs, it can achieve a win-win situation for commercial and artistic value.

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