

Chinese High School Students' Consumer Psychology Towards POP MART Blind Box Marketing

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of POP MART blind box marketing strategy on the consumer psychology of Chinese high school students. Through a questionnaire survey of 40 high school students, the results show that the brand has a high reputation and familiarity among the interviewed students, which fully proves the effectiveness of its marketing strategy. Although the surveyed students generally have a strong interest in the POP MART brand, the actual purchase behavior is not frequent. Key factors in consumer purchasing decisions include the attractiveness of the intellectual property image, the sense of surprise when unboxing, and a strong desire for limited-edition products. While most respondents were positive about POP MART's marketing strategy, many expressed dissatisfaction with the price and quality of its products. Therefore, if it can effectively solve these problems and make full use of social media to enhance user engagement, POP MART is expected to further consolidate and expand its influence in the Chinese high school student market.

Keywords: Chinese High School Students, Consumer Psychology, POP MART, Blind Box Marketing, Brand Awareness.

1. Introduction

POP MART, a well-known Chinese toy company founded by Wang Ning in 2010, has gained wide attention for its innovative toy collection model, the "blind box". The company was successfully listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange in December 2020, with a peak market value of about \$7 billion. In 2023, POP MART achieved about \$200 million in revenue in China and other markets, and its user base has surpassed the 10 million mark and is showing significant growth. To expand its global influence, the company has opened physical stores in many countries and regions, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia [1]. As of mid-2023, POP MART has 295 physical stores and more than 1,600 vending machines in China. In addition, POP MART has a wide range of products, covering more than 30 different characters and collections. SKULLPANDA, MOLLY, and DIMOO are among the most popular series [2]. The company has received numerous awards and honors for its outstanding contributions to the field of designer toys and has been widely recognized by the public.

A "blind box" is a toy that is placed in a closed box so that the consumer does not know which toy is inside until the product is sold. Its price range is set at 59 to 79 yuan (equivalent to about US \$8 to US \$11) to broaden market appeal and inspire consumers to purchase more to complete the collection

[3]. The essence of the blind box concept is the element of surprise, which uses the consumer's expectation of the unknown character to attract customers. The toy collections under the POP MART brand all featured numerous characters, and this design contributed to the rise of the collectible culture. The main driver of consumer engagement is the pursuit of rare hidden items or the integrity of collectibles. This phenomenon not only promotes brand sales performance but also strengthens the connection between brands and consumers because collectors tend to buy more blind boxes to complete their collections. The rise of blind boxes has continued to stimulate consumers' interest in and consumption investment in the field of collectible toys.

To enhance public awareness, POP MART adopted a variety of advertising methods, including setting up eye-catching physical store displays in major cities, planning interesting in-store activities, and building a strong online influence on mainstream social media platforms such as Douyin and Weibo [4]. Its marketing strategy combines user-generated content promotion, interactive web campaigns, and joint marketing agreements with established brands. POP MART makes full use of toy trading applications, combined with extensive social media coverage and active community participation, effectively promoting the dynamic development of collecting culture, which forms the core link of its marketing strategy. Through the implementation of a diversification strategy, POP MART has successfully connected with the target market and secured its leading position in China and even the global blind box toy market.

POP MART's marketing strategy focuses mainly on young consumers, who comprise a significant proportion of the blind box market. As an important part of this group, high school students show diversified purchasing behavior patterns caused by psychological, social, and economic differences. High school students are often more restrained in spending than adults with income because they often get their money from their parents. This means they are more selective and more cost-conscious. Keeping up with friends and following fashion trends are important buying factors in their shopping decisions. In addition, high school students are the main group of online shoppers [5], which further shapes their consumption habits. An in-depth understanding of these unique consumer characteristics is essential for marketers to develop smart marketing strategies to attract young people. POP MART can increase its appeal to high school students in a competitive market by identifying and determining the key factors that influence young people's purchasing decisions.

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of the POP MART blind box marketing strategy on the consumer psychology of Chinese high school students. The core goal is to gather key information and then propose effective marketing strategies based on it. By analyzing the consumption motivation and behavior of this group, the research aims to improve the market performance of POP MART and help the company broaden the base of high school students' consumer groups. In addition, the significance of this study is not limited to the benefit of POP MART, but the consumer characteristics revealed by it are also of profound value to marketers, especially in attracting young consumers in emerging economies. In the context of increasingly fierce competition in the blind box market, if enterprises can deeply understand and grasp the key factors affecting the purchase decision of high school students, they can effectively enhance the attractiveness of this important consumer group.

2. Literature Review

As innovative marketing strategies continue to influence consumer behavior patterns, it is increasingly critical to explore the unique motivations and preferences of young people. In the last two decades, the field of consumer psychology has made remarkable progress, especially in analyzing the behavior characteristics of young consumers.

Stearns' research highlights how important it is for microeconomics students to have a basic understanding of consumer behavior. Studies have pointed out that high school students may have

mastered the basic meaning of becoming consumers, but lack a deep understanding of the psychological factors that affect purchasing decisions [6]. This suggests that when studying the consumer psychology of Chinese high school students on the blind box marketing of POP MART, we need to pay special attention to their cognitive gap in this aspect, and then analyze how this gap affects their purchasing behavior.

According to Zhu's research, POP MART has risen to become the leader of the blind box market in China and has won increasing popularity among young Chinese groups [7]. This phenomenon is closely related to the effect of the blind box marketing strategy of POP MART on the consumer psychology of Chinese high school students. Zhu's research adopts the PEST analysis framework to comprehensively examine the macroeconomic factors affecting POP MART's business environment, which inspires this study to explore the psychological factors in high school students' purchasing decisions. On this basis, this study goes further, aiming to analyze how POP MART's strategic positioning accurately captures young consumers' pursuit of uniqueness to attract this key consumer group.

Fu and Zhao's research focuses on how young Chinese consumers are gradually embracing the blind box economy, revealing how companies such as POP MART effectively engage this group with innovative marketing strategies, thereby enhancing a sense of belonging and community among consumers. This study shows that fashion trends and peer influences have a significant effect on young consumers' purchasing behaviors [8]. Although this study provides a basic perspective for understanding the behavior of young consumers, there are still obvious deficiencies in the detailed exploration of the specific interaction mechanism between high school students and blind box products. To fill the research gap in this field, this study is devoted to exploring the influential factors between POP MART blind box marketing strategy and high school students' purchase decisions. By analyzing these associations in-depth, this study can improve the understanding of high school students' consumer psychology and shed light on how blind box marketing strategies affect their purchasing behavior.

By analyzing the consumption pattern of non-blind box products, the understanding of blind box products can also be improved. Hamari and Keronen pointed out in their research that perceived utility, entertainment value and social impact are key factors in assessing individuals' motivation to purchase virtual goods in free-to-play games [9]. This research is relevant to this study because these factors also apply to studies of blind boxes. Through the comparative study of these similarities, this study can better understand how perceived utility, excitement, and social influence affect consumers' purchase decisions, to provide a better optimization plan for POP MART's marketing strategy for high school students.

In addition, Molesworth and Denegri-Knott's research looks at how the Internet affects people's behavior while playing video games. Researchers believe that consumer decision-making is significantly influenced by online forums and communities, especially among younger audiences [10]. This study is relevant to ongoing research as it demonstrates how high school students' purchasing decisions are significantly influenced by the online world, which POP MART makes heavy use of in its marketing approach.

In summary, the research in the above fields provides a strong foundation for an in-depth understanding of the purchasing habits of young consumers. However, specific studies on the participation of Chinese high school students in the blind box toy market are still scarce. This study aims to explore the effect of blind box marketing of POP MART on the consumer psychology of Chinese high school students. Emphasis will be placed on the way this population selects and perceives blind box items. By better understanding their motivations and habits, this study aims to improve POP MART's marketing approach and facilitate its expansion among this important population.

3. Methodology

By using the questionnaire survey method, this study aims to deeply explore the effect of POP MART blind box marketing strategy on the consumer psychology of Chinese high school students. The survey will use Google Forms, a convenient platform, to design and publish a questionnaire with a variety of question types, to carry out the survey effectively. The questionnaire content takes into account the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, specifically covers closed and open questions, and focuses on respondents' cognition of blind boxes, their motivation to buy blind boxes and their experience with POP MART blind box products. The survey provides a comprehensive insight into how the brand and its products interact with this specific consumer group.

In this study, Chinese high school students aged 14 to 18 were selected as the target group, and participants were selected according to their purchase records and cognitive depth of the POP MART brand. The survey was mainly carried out on mainstream social media platforms, especially the POP MART super-topic community on Weibo, which, as a gathering place for POP MART fans, enjoys high popularity among Chinese high school students, thus accurately positioning the target group. By ensuring that the questionnaire is highly accessible to the target audience, this strategy effectively collects data on how that group interacts with the blind box product.

The questionnaire can be answered within a week, giving participants plenty of time to complete it at their convenience. During this period, a total of 40 questionnaires will be collected. Invalid responses were determined based on specific criteria, including incomplete questionnaires (key questions were not answered), uniform answers to all questions, clear patterns in responses, and instances where participants did not meet specified age requirements. This strict definition of conditions ensures that the data collected in the survey are complete and reliable.

In the part of data analysis, this study combines descriptive questions and inferential questions to interpret the quantitative data obtained in the closed questions. At the same time, this study will also conduct a thematic analysis of answers to open-ended questions, revealing insights into patterns associated with consumer behavioral tendencies and preferences.

Using this method, this study aims to understand the psychological reaction of Chinese high school consumers to the blind box marketing strategy of POP MART. The research results will provide strong support for the formulation of marketing strategies for this group, and then help POPMART effectively attract high school students consumer groups in the fierce market competition.

4. Results

A total of 40 questionnaires were collected, of which 37 were valid. When asked about their familiarity with POP MART blind box products, 75.67% of respondents said they were “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar,” indicating that POP MART has a strong brand presence among this demographic. In addition, when asked if they would share it with friends, 91.89% chose “yes.” This highlights the effectiveness and success of POP MART’s marketing efforts in reaching and engaging high school students.

In terms of purchase frequency, 86.48% of respondents occasionally (at least once a quarter) or rarely (less than once a year) buy POP MART blind boxes, and only a small number of respondents (13.51%) buy them frequently (at least once a month). Although POP MART has been effective in attracting interest from high school students, the survey data suggests that there is still room for growth in the frequency of purchases. Most participants (54.05%) said their average transaction cost was between 100 to 200 RMB (\$14 to \$29), indicating that this particular group is more cost-conscious. This result means that POP MART needs to offer good product quality while maintaining an affordable price point to entice high school customers to buy more.

According to the survey results, the main reasons that attract students to buy blind boxes are the appeal of POP MART's intellectual property concept (75%), the surprise factor in the unpacking process (51.35%), and the impulse to collect (43.24%). In addition, 77.78% of respondents admitted that the "limited/special style" image has a great influence on their purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of this image in stimulating consumer interest. These results are in line with POP MART's marketing strategy, which often emphasizes the excitement of opening packages and the uniqueness of limited-edition items. These strategies influence high school students' purchasing decisions.

In the process of discussing the marketing strategy of POP MART, we found that high school students showed a strong preference for limited-edition products and social media interaction. Although the majority of respondents (62.16%) are satisfied with the current marketing strategy, there are still a significant number of groups (37.84%) who expressed dissatisfaction, mainly due to product pricing and unsatisfactory product quality. The feedback revealed the areas where POP MART needs to improve in maintaining the loyalty and trust of this key consumer group.

5. Discussion

The survey results show the specific impact of POP MART's blind box marketing strategy on the consumer psychology of Chinese high school students. A notable finding was that respondents showed strong brand recognition, which is a sign that POP MART has successfully established a distinct brand image among this group. This familiarity is important because it creates the conditions for consumer stickiness and willingness to buy. In addition, students are likely to tell their classmates about the purchases they have made, which increases potential sales and brand awareness.

Despite this favorable perception, there are also questions about the frequency of purchases. While many high school students show a great deal of interest in POP MART's blind boxes, their actual buying behavior doesn't match that enthusiasm. The reason for this difference may be that POP MART's products lack continuous purchasing motivation for high school students and their price sensitivity. High school students have shown a lot of interest in buying blind boxes, but they tend to be more cautious in their purchases due to limited disposable income.

The elements that appeal to consumers in POP MART blind boxes have an important impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. These elements are in line with modern consumers' preference for unique and interesting experiences that are more appealing than traditional retail models. POP MART's emphasis on limited editions satisfied consumers' desire for exclusivity and created a sense of urgency that made consumers want to snap them up before they sold out. This strategy cleverly exploits the scarcity psychology of consumers and effectively improves the attractiveness of products.

However, many respondents in the survey complained about the quality and price of POP MART products, which highlighted the key areas that POP MART needs to improve. The high price of the product can be a barrier for potential customers to finally decide to buy. Consumers' potential concerns about the quality of POP MART products will gradually weaken their trust in POP MART as a whole, which will lead to the reduction of the company's customer loyalty and may lead to some negative evaluations of the products by consumers. To address these challenges, POP MART can stimulate product sales growth by implementing tiered pricing strategies for products or regular promotions. At the same time, POP MART should ensure the continuous optimization of product quality, as this is the key to maintaining customer attraction. To more effectively respond to customer expectations and enhance consumer community awareness and loyalty, POP MART should proactively collect and analyze user feedback and incorporate valuable suggestions into product design and marketing strategies.

6. Conclusion

As for the blind box marketing strategy of POP MART, the research results provide effective information for the consumer psychology of Chinese high school students. The survey results show that most people are well aware of POP MART products and have strong brand recognition, which indicates that the company has successfully attracted this market of high school students and established a strong customer engagement base. However, despite the high level of awareness, high school students' sensitivity to price has also led to the low frequency of purchase of the product.

Certain important factors, including the appeal of surprise and rarity, can have a big impact on people's purchase decisions. However, the main area for improvement is customer dissatisfaction with product quality and price. POP MART should consider adopting tiered pricing schemes to offer different products and guarantee consistently high standards of quality control to facilitate more frequent purchases.

Overall, although POP MART has successfully established its leadership position in the Chinese high school blind box market, in a highly competitive environment, continued growth and enhanced appeal are critical to fostering customer loyalty and promoting more frequent purchases.

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