

Analysis of Blind Box Marketing Strategies and Consumer Psychology

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Abstract: With the popularity of blind boxes, they have changed from the original toy products to today's trend goods, and even more and more products appear in the market in the form of blind boxes. Therefore, this paper would like to analyze the reasons for the popularity and success of blind boxes, as well as the psychology of people who like to buy blind boxes. In this paper, the marketing strategies and consumer psychology of the blind box are analyzed. The first is about the history of the blind box and its development. The second is to analyze the marketing strategies used by blind box companies, including the ordinary style and secret style of blind box, and the strategies of blind box companies to launch products through cooperation with various intellectual properties. At the same time, this paper believes that the marketing strategies of blind box companies are formulated to grasp the psychology of consumers to a certain extent, so this paper also analyzes the psychology of consumers who purchase blind boxes. This paper finds that the ordinary and secret style marketing strategy adopted by blind box enterprises can stimulate the purchasing behavior of consumers, and the strategy of cooperating with popular IP or independently developing new Intellectual property (IP) can promote innovation and the development of the blind box industry. With the expansion of the blind box market, it promotes economic growth to a certain extent.

Keywords: Blind box, Marketing strategy, Consumer psychology

1. Introduction

Blind box is a kind of “uncertain” goods, which are usually sold in opaque packaging bags or boxes, and the contents are generally toys, models, stationery, cosmetics and other types. Blind boxes are generally launched in a series, usually a series of blind boxes contain a number of ordinary styles and a secret style, with the secret style being less likely to be drawn than the ordinary style. People have to buy blind boxes before they can open them and find out what they are getting. Blind box companies usually design a variety of styles of blind boxes, and generally choose to cooperate with popular intellectual property and produce products themselves. Nowadays, people can purchase blind boxes online or offline, and in addition to the very expensive limited edition blind boxes, the general blind boxes are moderately priced, and it is more suitable for consumers of all income levels. The emerging sales model of blind boxes not only has brought profits to businesses, but also brought freshness and excitement to consumers. The success of the blind box makes the marketing strategy of the blind box worth discussing, and the psychology of consumers keen to purchase the blind box is also worth exploring. Through a literature review, this paper discusses the marketing

strategies used by blind box companies and the psychology of consumers buying blind boxes. More and more commodities appear in the market in the form of blind boxes, so this paper believes that exploring the impact of successful marketing strategies of blind boxes on consumers' psychology is helpful to better understand the blind box economy and gain enlightenment from it.

2. History and Development of the Blind Box

Blind boxes originated in Japan and they refer to the mysterious box-like goods sold by sealing different types of dolls or toys in transparent but identical boxes. Blind boxes generally are released in collaboration with various Intellectual property (IP), and one series of them has different dolls or toys which is usually divided into several ordinary styles and a secret style. Consumers pay the same amount of money for a blind box and are randomly given either an ordinary or a secret one. The probability of a secret style appearing is lower than that of ordinary styles. Blind boxes are even an evolution of the Japanese Lucky Bag, which was introduced by Japanese supermarkets in order to manage their inventory and promote new products. Lucky bags are also common in Japanese anime culture. Like the principle of blind boxes, consumers purchase a bag of products without knowing the exact contents in advance, which will arouse their curiosity.

In the 1990s, the collection card marketing model was developed in China, which was also the prototype of a blind box in China. For example, Chinese merchants would put paper cards of cartoon characters in snack bags and sell them together in order to attract consumers to make a purchase. In the last few years, blind boxes have become popular in China, especially with many young people keen to buy them. Not only toy blind boxes, stationery in China can even be sold in the form of blind boxes. Blind box marketing strategies in which customers do not know the exact contents of a package before opening it are becoming a phenomenon in China. At present, Pop Mart as a very popular blind box brand in China can be found in many shopping malls. In addition to their brand's iconic Molly, they have also partnered with many popular IPs to launch blind box products, such as Sanrio, Harry Potter, and League of Legends. Consumers can choose to purchase according to their own preferences. Consumers can not choose products but once they buy and open the packaging box of the blind box, they would get a sense of surprise when they get their desired goods unexpectedly. Blind boxes are loved by many consumers because they can bring a sense of mystery and serendipity to consumers.

3. Marketing Strategies of the Blind Box

3.1. Ordinary Style and Secret Style

Under a blind box series, there are usually several different ordinary styles as well as one or two secret styles. Secret styles refer to the one with the smallest number in a set of blind boxes and they will only appear according to a certain percentage given by the official. The number of secret styles is relatively small, so the probability of getting them is also lower than that of ordinary styles. For consumers, they might have a lucky mind before buying a blind box, hoping that they can draw the secret style, which is similar to buying a lottery. Even though the odds of winning are low, they still want to make a bet. Then, when consumers buy a blind box and they draw the secret style or the style they like they will feel happy. When consumers buy a blind box and do not draw the favorite style, they may give up the behavior of continuing to buy the blind box, or they may continue to purchase until they draw the style they like. Consumers can also spend a certain amount of money to purchase a complete set of blind boxes, which will contain all the ordinary styles, and there is a probability that they will get the secret style, but the possibility of drawing the secret style is not absolute. The scarcity of secret styles can stimulate consumers' desire to buy and stimulate repeated

buybacks. The more customers indulge in the act of purchasing blind boxes, the more likely the blind box company is to gain profits from it.

3.2. IP Cooperation

Intellectual property (IP) refers to a creation that adds the unique value of human intelligence derived from human creativity and ingenuity [1]. IP cooperation refers to the cooperation method with intellectual property as the core, involving multiple stakeholders, including copyright owners, developers, and platform operators. In IP cooperation, the copyright owner authorizes other parties to use its IP, while the partner develops related products based on the characteristics of the IP, and shares the benefits through sharing and other means. This cooperation model can cover online content dissemination, offline content experience and other aspects, aiming to maximize the use of IP value. IP plays an important role in the marketing strategy of blind boxes as a medium to convey users' emotions [2]. An excellent intellectual property requires high-quality content to attract users and fans, and cultivate their emotions through this content [3]. Many blind box companies choose to cooperate with the current hot IP and launch related blind box products. Some of the very popular IPs such as Disney, Sanrio, and League of Legends, themselves have a certain number of loyal audiences, when blind box companies cooperate with them, both sides can leverage their strengths, not only to help blind box companies earn profits but also to help the original IP to create new markets and achieve mutual benefit. Therefore, when loyal fans of the IP and blind box companies launch related blind box products, they are likely to make a purchase behavior. In addition to cooperating with existing popular intellectual property, blind box companies also sign contracts with designers to create more styles with distinctive images to attract the attention of consumers and cultivate new IP to expand their market. If the new IP blind box is loved by consumers, this series of blind boxes will also attract a certain number of buyers, and some of them may become loyal fans, and with an update of products, these fans will continue to repeat the purchase behavior. Such a marketing strategy is conducive to companies obtaining considerable profits, and at the same time, the profits obtained also enable them to speed up the update of blind boxes and produce more diverse products. By building a sound IP operation system and broadening the display form of IP, blind box companies can expand the commercial value of blind box products.

4. Consumer Psychology

4.1. Gambler's Fallacy

Gambling is betting on the outcome of partially accidental decisions on valuable objects such as money or property [4]. Although the behavior of buying a blind box is not a pure gambling act, consumers do not know the contents of the package in advance and pay a corresponding amount of money to purchase a blind box just to draw their favorite toy or model is actually similar to gambling. Especially when consumers cannot draw their desired goods and decide to continue to buy blind boxes, this behavior has become a form of gambling to a certain extent. Just like gambling, consumers are constantly risking money on an event where the outcome is uncertain and the odds are heavily involved. At this point, the gambler's fallacy is a good explanation for the consumer's psychological state and buying behavior. Gambler's fallacy is a cognitive bias that arises from a psychological heuristic called the representativeness heuristic and it suggests that people assess the likelihood that an event will occur by assessing how similar an event is to an event they have experienced before, and how similar the events surrounding both processes [5]. People think that successive events are less likely to happen, so they tend to think that the reverse is more likely. But in fact, the probability of something happening is fixed and does not change with previous events. For example, a gambler begins to believe that his luck will soon change and he will

win after losing several times in a row. For another example, despite the extremely low probability of winning the lottery, some people still believe that they will eventually win the lottery if they keep buying it. Some consumers keep spending money on blind boxes because they expect the next one might be their favorite style. However, the process of drawing a toy or model that consumers prefer in a blind box is itself unpredictable. Some customers may only buy one and get what they want, but some people keep buying and gain nothing, these serendipitous events are not fair, nor are they necessarily representative when they occur. Blind box companies use the gambler's fallacy to induce continuous purchasing behavior. When buying a blind box, people always want to try to see if they can win the secret style, so they will hold the fluke mind to buy a blind box. Although most of the time the draw is some small probability event, they are still willing to try this "gambling". When consumers get a secret style or their favorite style, the psychological pricing is much higher than the actual pricing of the blind box which promotes the repeated consumption behavior of consumers.

4.2. Uncertainty

Blind box is an innovative way of marketing, it is essentially called probabilistic selling, this means that consumers are not sure which product they will get after paying for it. As a commodity sold in an unusual way, the blind box is full of mystery and uncertainty, and it is understandable that people will want to try this kind of commodity. This uncertainty can lead to feelings of surprise, excitement or disappointment. Consumers with curiosity psychology to buy blind boxes, out of unwillingness or winning psychology, will repeat the purchase behavior, and continue to buy back blind boxes until they are satisfied [6]. In today's society, people's material life is gradually abundant, in addition to the pursuit of the practicality of the product itself, consumers will also seek additional spiritual consumption experiences in the shopping process. Because the blind box is not transparent and it is impossible to know what is inside the box in advance, so consumers can get a variety of emotions when they buy the blind box. Being attracted by a sense of uncertainty before purchase, and getting a surprise or loss immediately after opening the package can bring consumers a diversified spiritual consumption experience. At the same time, when consumers face uncertainty but still draw the goods of their own mind and get great joy, consumers also receive the emotional value of blind boxes and obtain a huge sense of spiritual satisfaction. What is more, this also caters to consumers' pursuit of emotional value and also lets consumers feel like the money they spend on the purchase of blind boxes is valuable. That is why more and more people begin to pursue the purchase of blind boxes to get happy, the unknown joy brought by the blind box will bring consumers stimulation to a certain extent, and each time the stimulation can make people expect what will be in the next blind box, so as to continue to purchase behavior. Blind box companies make use of consumers' psychology to transform the sales of products into sales emotions unconsciously, making consumers think that they have received effective feedback on their efforts. The instant emotional feedback also makes consumers immersed in the addictive psychology brought by the uncertainty of blind boxes, so that they are gradually stimulated and continue to purchase.

4.3. Collecting Behaviors

The act of collecting is defined as "the process of actively, selectively and enthusiastically owning and acquiring things that have been removed from everyday use and seeing them as part of a series of different objects and experiences" [7]. Many people should have more or less had the experience of collecting when they were young, such as collecting stamps, books or favorite toys. Collectors collect specific things, or they collect in pursuit of a certain feeling. People buy and collect blind

boxes, and the act of doing so can bring them joy and happiness. When consumers have been unable to draw their favorite blind box, they will even go to the online second-hand market to buy blind box goods sold by others at a high price. This may be difficult for people who are not interested in blind boxes to understand the behavior, but for blind box collectors and enthusiasts such pay is worth it, even if they have to pay a high amount of money, but as long as they can get their own favorite products, they will think it is worthwhile. Nevertheless, when collectors collect secret or limited-edition blind boxes, these blind boxes do have a certain collection value. Almost every hobby has a group of people who share the same hobby, and blind box enthusiasts are no exception. When blind box collectors communicate and display their collections on the Internet or in reality, they also gain self-affirmation. When they see that there are many people like them doing similar things, they will feel that they have a sense of belonging, because there are still many people with the same hobbies as themselves in this society. At this time, the blind box collectors not only obtained the blind box products with monetary value, but also obtained the emotional value.

5. Conclusion

This paper mainly discusses the current marketing strategies of blind boxes and the psychology of consumers who like to buy blind boxes. The conclusion is that the marketing strategy of the blind box is to grasp the curiosity and gambler psychology of consumers for the uncertainty and to divide a series of products into ordinary styles and secret styles each time. In order to ensure revenue, most blind box companies choose to cooperate with the current hot intellectual property and launch the corresponding blind box products. At the same time, they also focus on developing new intellectual property to attract new consumers with new stories and characters. The fans of the popular intellectual property itself as a loyal consumer group can drive the sales of products linked with the blind box company, and the developed new intellectual property has the chance to obtain new loyal audiences, so as to further expand the buying group and improve the income. The business model of the blind box has also begun to penetrate into more fields and has been used by more enterprises for reference, and it is predicted that the blind box economy has good development prospects. However, this paper only discusses the marketing strategy of blind boxes and consumers' psychology and does not discuss the side effects that excessive purchase of blind boxes may have on consumers. In addition, there is no discussion of the problems that may arise in the case of selling goods in the form of blind boxes, such as whether there are merchants who sell low-quality blind boxes to deceive consumers in order to quickly sell unsaleable products, and how blind box enterprises should improve their product quality to provide consumers with valuable blind box products. It is hoped that such problems can be explored in future studies.

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