

The Review of Blind Box Marketing and Problems in Blind Box Markets

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Abstract: This paper summarizes the main marketing tools in the blind box market according to the previous literature analysis, and gives appropriate suggestions and countermeasures for the blind box market to be more stable and high-speed growth aspects. Diversified marketing mean can effectively help the blind box economy achieve high-speed growth, and for different situations to develop appropriate recommendations and countermeasures is the key to stable growth of the market. However, the rapid development of the economy is often a double-edged sword, some businesses in order to obtain higher profits, the use of blind boxes such as the special characteristics of the commodity, deliberately mixed in the product with counterfeit and shoddy goods, and even add harmful chemicals, seriously affecting the market order and the rights and interests of consumers. This kind of behavior not only disturbs the normal competitive environment of the market, but also harms the legitimate rights and interests of consumers. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the supervision and crack down on this illegal behavior to protect the market security and consumer rights and interests. Based on this, this study aims to grasp the current situation of blind box market development in China, and to study the means of blind box marketing and market problems in China.

Keywords: blind box, consumer psychology, purchasing behavior, market problem

1. Introduction

As a commodity model that combines the thrill of the lottery and the element of surprise like a gift, the blind box, on the basis of satisfying customers' curiosity and desire to explore, has been transformed into a cultural communication tool, successfully creating an atmosphere of universal participation, and to a certain extent, also promoting the development of culture. In today's competitive market environment, blind boxes, as an emerging form of consumer goods, its marketing strategy is particularly important. At present, domestic scholars' research on blind box marketing focuses on how it utilizes consumers' psychology and how to continuously broaden the market, etc., and has achieved rich research results. For example, they analyzed the popularity of blind box products among young people and explored the relationship between them and social media communication. At the same time, they also studied the impact of blind box marketing strategies on consumers' purchasing behavior and consumption habits, as well as the challenges and opportunities of promoting sales on e-commerce platforms. In addition, they also pay attention to the role of blind box products in the cultural and creative industries and their impact on the development of related

industrial chains. In conclusion, scholars have made a lot of valuable and inspiring research results in this field.

However, the negative impact on the blind box market after utilizing such marketing is undeniably still a major problem. Scholars believe that blind box marketing may lead to overconsumption, waste of resources and money, and may foster a gambling mentality. In addition, the explosion of the blind box market may also lead to problems such as the proliferation of counterfeit goods and difficulties in guaranteeing after-sales service. Therefore, this paper summarizes the key problems existing in today's blind box market, calls on the regulatory authorities to strengthen the supervision of the blind box market, and at the same time advocates that enterprises should pay more attention to social responsibility and consumer rights protection when promoting their products, and thinks about what specific measures should be taken by the regulatory authorities to strengthen the supervision of this emerging market, such as establishing stricter product access standards, increasing law enforcement, and perfecting the monitoring mechanism. Aspects for improvement. In addition, we also summarize and consider the future development of the blind box market, how to cooperate with related enterprises to jointly safeguard the market order and consumer rights and interests, and promote the development of industry self-regulation.

2. Origin and Development of Blind Boxes

There is a classic line in the movie *Forrest Gump*: "Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what the next one will taste like". This line expresses the uncertainty and diversity of life to the audience, and the meaning it implies has been widely used in real life, especially in the form of a blind box, which is popular among young people in today's market.

Blind boxes, as a new sales model, have become popular worldwide in recent years and have triggered a consumer boom. It is characterized by the absence of any content information on the outer package, and the buyer can only know the specific product style he/she bought by opening the package, so the blind box can be described as a new probability commodity. It first originated in Japan's Fukubukuro, which was intended to promote the goods stocked up in warehouses at a low price, but was widely used in the Japanese model market in the 80's in the form of hand-made models and jewelry pendants with anime images [1]. In China, the early appearance of blind box products are such as "small raccoon", "magician" and other dry noodle series with the hero card, mainly for the student population. Due to its low unit price, numerous characters and the difficulty of collecting cards, full of unknowns and other characteristics, it attracted the interest of many students.

With the development of the times, changes in consumer concepts and entertainment, blind box marketing has become a brand-new marketing tool, and the trend of "everything can be blind boxed" has prevailed in the market. It combines elements of surprise, collection and exchange, and has become a way for young people to pursue personalization and uniqueness. In a blind box, every item is unknown, it can be a doll of unknown style or a ticket to an unknown destination. This brings people the fun of exploring the unknown and expecting surprises.

In today's Internet era, the blind box tide play is more through the combination of online and offline sales models has been further promoted and popularized, physical stores selling or live room connected to the draw box has been commonplace. The growth of the global hip game market is mainly due to consumers' pursuit of personalized, creative and entertaining products. Pop Mart, the leading blind box brand in China, is the best example to prove it. Due to the unknown and random nature of the blind box itself, it fully satisfies the curiosity of customers and makes the blind box economy reach a growing audience [2].

With the growing popularity and influence of social media, hipster products are becoming more and more popular among young people, always attracting those who are "too young to grow up" and are often regarded as kidults (adults who have the same interests as children) [3]. The main age

distribution of blind box purchasers is 18-24 years old, accounting for 34% of the overall consumers; followed by consumers aged 25-29 years old, accounting for 26% of the overall; consumers aged 30-34 years old and other age groups account for 22% and 20% respectively. Because of the increasing diversity of the blind box form, so that whether it is collectibles, toys, food or other products, have the opportunity to be favored by different consumers, but also for many enterprises to provide business opportunities.

According to relevant survey data and statistics, the global hip toy market increased from \$8.7 billion in 2015 to \$25.9 billion in 2021, with a CAGR of about 19.9%. As one of the largest manufacturing bases in the world, China has a unique advantage in terms of the tide play market. Compared with the global market, China's tide play market size was USD 6.3 billion in 2015, increasing to USD 36.6 billion in 2021, with a CAGR of about 34.1%, and is expected to reach USD 76.3 billion by the end of 2024. In the next few years, with technological innovation and design concepts constantly updated, the global as well as China's domestic tide play market will continue to maintain a high growth trend. At the same time, emerging modes such as online sales channels and social e-commerce will further boost the industry and drive more brands to participate in this field.

3. “Out of the loop” blind box marketing

3.1. “Gambling behavior” with public participation

The main reason why blind boxes can quickly occupy the mainstream market is because of the uncertainty and excitement, but also to meet the psychological needs of consumers, there is a combination of anticipation and surprise in the purchase process of psychological experience. As a kind of trendy toys, consumers pay more attention to the design and sales mode of the product, which is a kind of purchasing behavior in pursuit of novelty and aesthetics [4]. This unknown also makes people addicted to it, generating a continuous desire to buy while chasing more surprises and collection value.

Statistics from the China Blind Box Industry Development Trend Report show that 46.8% of consumers' main motivation for buying blind boxes is the sense of surprise. For many people, drawing a blind box is like participating in a small gambling game. Every time they open a blind box, they are filled with anticipation and nervousness, attracting many consumers to invest in it through its betting-type revenue feedback mechanism and the combination of uncertainty and surprise. Moreover, when consumers open the unknown package, they are full of curiosity and anticipation of the toys or goods that may appear in front of them. This anticipation brings a sense of pleasure, and each time they open the box, they may get a rare, limited edition or hidden model, which not only pushes the consumers' impulse to collect the whole set, promote players to form emotional adhesion and ultimately induce dependent consumption behavior [5]. Also makes them see the extraction of the hidden model or limited-edition blind box as a kind of investment, and they hope that by purchasing and reselling these small-probability blind boxes, they can get a considerable return on their value in the future. Blind Box fans' desire for "hot" dolls stems from the pursuit of scarcity and uniqueness. They want to get more value for less money, so they feel satisfied and happy when they win a hot doll. However, when hopes are dashed, some people will continue to invest more because they are not willing to invest in sunk costs, and so it goes, week after week, cycle after cycle [6], and this kind of behavior often leads to a vicious circle. This psychological phenomenon also reflects the adventurous and obsessive side that human beings often exhibit when faced with risks and losses.

As a consumption method full of mystery, the uncertainty of the blind box triggers people's curiosity and desire to explore the unknown. The surprise brought by opening the blind box makes the fans feel like they are in a world full of unknowns and surprises, which enables them to get rid of the banal and trivial daily life for a while. At present, modern young people are fascinated by the

blind box, fanaticism, but this fanaticism is extremely short-lived, uncertain, all kinds of marketing software to amplify the "blind box fever" phenomenon of external consumerism sugar coating [7]. This kind of surprise not only gives the fans pleasure and excitement, but also changes their attitude towards the ordinary life to a certain extent. Therefore, it can also be said that through its unique charm, Blind Boxes has created a trend of looking for freshness, excitement and fun in modern society.

3.2. "Social Currency" under Community

The popularization of the Internet and mobile terminals has made people's communication no longer restricted by factors such as geography and identity, breaking the original poorly-ordered pattern of circle socialization. On this basis, a kind of "circle" cultural group formed with interest and emotion as the core has emerged, and this kind of identity-based network circle continues to expand the scale and space of interaction with its unique appeal.

At the level of social psychology, identity is not only the individual's awareness of the specific social group to which he or she belongs, but also the acceptance and recognition of the group's values and behavioral norms. Any community culture contains not only common daily practices, but also a set of intangible cultural spirit and practice guidelines [8]. People seek out like-minded partners in their social interactions and form a variety of interesting relationships. Such relationships may stem from common interests, career fields, or lifestyles. Through communication and interaction, they build trust and emotional ties with each other, thus gaining a sense of fulfillment and belonging. At the same time, these communities also provide a platform for individuals to share knowledge, experience and resources, which promotes deeper communication and cooperation among members.

As a commodity with the property of collection, the consumption of blind boxes has actually exceeded the satisfaction of actual needs and become a symbolic commodity, and people buy blind boxes mainly to find a certain "feeling" and experience a certain "mood". This is a manifestation of self-emotional identity, and another emotional identity, integrating themselves into the utopian world of the blind box, playing different roles to experience different pleasures, simplicity and innocence are synonymous with them, and they face life in a different way [9]. As a result, the blind box serves as a kind of social currency, creating connections between consumers and forming a community. By posting photos, videos or texts to record their daily life, people can not only let others know their life status, but also gain fans and attention. In today's society, blind boxes are able to satisfy consumers' psychological needs for exploring and discovering new things as well as sharing and communicating. People generally pursue unique and rare items, which also reflect the individual's need to recognize their own value and status. By purchasing a blind box and obtaining a rare item, they can satisfy their sense of superiority and fulfillment in the group. The "I'm lucky" mentality does not only stop at the actual acquisition of the item itself, but is more of a spiritual satisfaction and affirmation. At the same time, displaying precious items on social media can also bring attention and praise, which further strengthens the individual's deep sense of luck and specialness.

For buyers who know about blind boxes, it seems that the scarcity, showiness and fashion ability of blind boxes can only be truly reflected and the utility of the goods can be maximized when they see people showing off the limited edition or numerous sets of blind boxes that can only be bought with an increased price. In today's society, material abundance and strong consumption power have become a symbol of success and happiness in the minds of many people. Therefore, in some groups, "showing off wealth" has become a trend culture, and is recognized and sought after, blind boxes can be used as a good entry point.

3.3. IP marketing under brand communication

IP is the abbreviation of "Intellectual Property", which requires a carrier medium, content attributes, a fan base that identifies with the IP, and a certain degree of realizability. The essence of IP marketing is to establish and develop a fan economy, and to develop the expectations and needs of its own fan circle through the in-depth excavation of the cultural identity of the target audience. The expectations and demands of the own fan circle are formed. With the continuous growth and activity of its own fan circle, the brand can gradually break through more circles with its appeal and driving force, and finally realize the formation of the whole network fan circle. The whole network fan circle will bring a continuous and stable user group for the brand, and play an important role in product promotion and marketing activities.

With the popularization of the Internet and the development of digital media, IP customization has become a new type of marketing concept. Brands, products and individuals with content derivatives, popularity and topicality can be regarded as IPs; for example, the character image and storyline of a popular movie can become IPs and be applied in various derivatives and cooperative promotions, such as Disney characters and the protagonists in the TV series Legend of Zhen Huan, etc. Some famous characters are Disney characters and protagonists in the TV series Legend of Zhen Huan. At the same time, famous bloggers and artists can also create their own personal IP for business cooperation and promotion activities. This phenomenal marketing concept can not only drive the consumer market, but also promote the development of cultural and creative industries. With the continuous development of social economy, people's demand for products and services is also rising, so the marketing strategy also needs to keep pace with the times. This phenomenal marketing concept is the product of market demand, in order to meet the needs of consumers at the same time, but also for the cultural and creative industries to inject new vitality. Through this phenomenal marketing concept, many enterprises can better promote their brand image and attract more consumers to pay attention to and buy their products or services. At the same time, it also provides more cooperation opportunities and platforms for the cultural and creative industries, and promotes the sharing of resources and exchange and cooperation within the industry.

IP value is not only embodied in business, but also includes users' emotional recognition and dependence on the brand or product. This emotional value can motivate users to continue to consume, and will influence their willingness to spread word-of-mouth and recommend the brand. At the same time, IP value also covers the potential for sustained consumption brought about by the brand or product, i.e., users' willingness and frequency of purchasing the brand or product in the long term. Therefore, with its rich and vivid IP images and huge fan base, Blind Box can open up the boundaries of retail and socialization, integrate the value of business and entertainment, and become a major hand in the development of China's cultural economy in the future [10].

4. The "out-of-the-ordinary" blind box market

4.1. False propaganda and artificial manipulation

"Blind boxes are essentially commodities, and due to consumers' uncertainty about their contents and operators' non-transparent extraction rules, in the blind box economy boom, there is a risk that consumers' legitimate rights and interests may be compromised." [11]. With the passage of time and market demand, the huge market dividends, so that many enterprises have been successful, resulting in some businesses have moved a crooked brain, in the blind box sales in the problem of excessive marketing and false propaganda. They often exaggerate the value and scarcity of goods, through a variety of means to attract consumers to buy. Because in essence, the blind box mode is to use people's curiosity and addiction mechanism to stimulate consumers to consume [12]. For example, in the

product packaging labeled "limited edition", "collector's edition" and other words, so that consumers mistakenly think that it is a rare item, there have been elementary school students in order to buy only 1% probability of commodities, will be hundreds of blind boxes all buy. Or through the lottery to increase the desire to buy, in fact, there is no real chance of a lucky draw. This kind of behavior not only misleads consumers about the true value of goods, but also brings economic losses and psychological distress to consumers.

There are also some businesses arbitrarily manipulate the probability of appearance of various items in the blind box, such as online small programs or live broadcasts to open the blind box, the consumer for his purchase of the blind box is invisible and intangible, if the operator can manipulate the probability of the appearance of various items in the blind box through the background program at will, or the probability of the appearance of the probability of adjusting the probability of 0, or the actual probability of the winning probability of a completely different from that of the announcement out of the consumer cannot be opened to the good! Consumers simply can't open anything good, and they don't know that the merchants are manipulating this kind of means. Such a model has deviated from the original intent of the blind box, and the result of opening the box has changed from "uncertainty" to "certainty". Consumers subjectively still think it is possible to open the hidden money, based on this false understanding and payment of funds, at this time the operator is suspected of fraud.

Therefore, merchants should also indicate the relevant information on the packaging of goods, such as extraction rules, probability and other content, and prohibit the use of exaggerated, false or misleading language in advertising. Regulators should strengthen their efforts to monitor the sale of blind boxes and rigorously crack down on illegal behaviors such as false advertising and excessive marketing. Typical cases are published to warn other operators to comply with relevant laws and regulations and to protect the legitimate rights and interests of consumers.

4.2. Difficulty in guaranteeing the quality of blind boxes

Due to the uncertainty of the types of goods sold in blind boxes, consumers cannot know the quality and value of the goods in advance, and there is a risk of purchasing low-quality goods. Especially when some small manufacturers or individual sellers participate in blind box sales, they may not have strict enough quality control processes and inspection standards, resulting in the quality of some goods not being effectively guaranteed. In order to maximize profits, some manufacturers may use shoddy production of goods, and there are also numerous cases of infringement.

In addition, the emergence of food blind boxes has brought certain health risks to people. Since the type and quality of food in a blind food box cannot be known, some businesses may use this form to dispose of expired or poor-quality food, which is difficult for consumers to effectively identify and evaluate after purchase, and this may pose a potential threat to health. Some blind boxes of food may contain excessive sugar, fat and other ingredients that are not conducive to health. Since consumers cannot know in advance what kind of food is contained in the blind box, how it tastes and the date of production, etc., it is very easy for consumers to buy food with potential safety hazards. Moreover, in the absence of clear regulations and supervision, businesses may also use inferior ingredients to make products in order to reduce costs, thus increasing the likelihood of consumers being exposed to health risks.

Therefore, it is necessary for the relevant authorities to introduce more stringent regulatory measures and regulations to ensure that consumers can obtain safe and reliable products when purchasing blind boxes for similar food or household products. A large part of the difficulty in regulating blind boxes is due to their "blind" nature. This characteristic makes it difficult for consumers to obtain information about the product before purchase, and it is also difficult for market regulators to carry out quality inspections on it like ordinary commodities. In addition, since blind boxes are usually sold online, the many online platforms, rapid transactions and high mobility make

it more difficult to monitor and detect and deal with problems in a timely manner. Therefore, blind box operators can be required to set up obvious warning signs at the sales site to remind consumers of the possible risks of the product, and establish a complaint and reporting channel so that consumers can reflect their problems and opinions in a timely manner. At the same time, during the production of blind box products, suppliers should reach an agreement with retailers to introduce a standardized production process, continuously optimize the production process and verification methods, and ensure that the product production process can be visualized and product quality testing can be quantified [13]. These measures will help guide rational consumption and protect consumers' rights and interests.

4.3. After-sales service has room for improvement

The return and exchange problem of blind box products has been an inevitable conflict between merchants and consumers. Due to the randomness and closed nature of the blind box product itself, some consumers may be dissatisfied or claim that the quality of the product is problematic after purchase. At this time, it is necessary for merchants to provide a reasonable and effective return policy to protect consumer rights and interests, and also take into account their own profits and operating costs. According to the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Consumer Rights and Interests", the "Guidelines for the Standardization of Blind Box Business Activities (for Trial Implementation)" issued by the State Administration of Market Supervision, if the blind box operator has been fully informed of the tips and confirmed by the consumer in the case of a single purchase, then the blind box sold in the form of the Internet does not apply to the unpacked blind box merchandise after the return of the seven days without a reason [14]. However, if a whole series of goods is sold in the form of an all-inclusive package, and if the goods within the series are clearly identified, the operator should still implement the seven-day no-excuses return provision for online purchases.

As the core value of the blind box goods is "consumers in the blind box will open the unknown style attached to a strong sense of surprise", so in the case of blind box dolls are already known, the value of its merchandise has been realized, at this time the blind box operators are required to accept no reason to return the blind box will inevitably affect the sales of blind box of the regular state, but also will destroy the blind box ecological The commercial logic of the blind box, so if unconditionally support the consumers online blind box in the unpacking of the seven days before the claim of no reason to exchange goods, there may be a certain moral hazard, but also the destruction of the blind box business ecology.

So for example, if a consumer purchases a single blind box in a live broadcasting room, such as has been told by the anchor not to apply the 7-day no-excuses return, and when purchasing also reconfirms the agreement not to apply the 7-day no-excuses return, then the purchased blind box cannot be requested to return after unpacking again. However, if the whole set is purchased, and the contents of the whole set of goods is clearly determined, or can ask for 7 days without reason to return. In addition, because the blind box goods itself has a sense of mystery and surprise, to a certain extent, increase the consumer's desire to buy. This psychological factor also poses a challenge to market regulation, because even if consumers are aware of the risks, they are still willing to try to buy and accept the uncertain outcome that may occur. Overall, the solution to the problem of regulating blind boxes requires a combination of legal, technological and industry self-regulatory mechanisms, and requires the joint efforts of the government, businesses and consumers to effectively address the issue.

5. Development Prospect Forecast

Against the backdrop of the growing domestic economy, consumers' demand for personalized and emotional products is increasing day by day, and blind boxes precisely meet this demand. Therefore, for a long time to come, it can be expected that the domestic blind box market will remain hot, and is expected to further expand the development space. Whether from the perspective of category innovation or consumer group expansion, there are huge potentials and opportunities.

With the promotion of blind box culture on social media platforms and the continuous improvement of related industrial chain, the marketing means of blind box has become more diversified and precise. Through the promotion of microblogging, shaking sound and other platforms, blind box products can more easily attract potential consumers and introduce a large number of new players to join the circle. At the same time, with the popularization of the Internet and mobile payment, the blind box market has also been able to develop rapidly under the combination of online and offline marketing modes. Through the promotion and publicity of online platforms, consumers can more conveniently learn about different kinds of blind box products and make purchases. Offline physical stores provide consumers with the opportunity to experience, communicate and socialize with each other, which enhances consumers' awareness and favoritism towards blind box products. This two-pronged marketing model will bring more new development opportunities for the blind box market, and promote the virtuous cycle of all aspects of the hip game industry.

As an emerging consumer product, its derivative market will continue to grow strongly. In addition to the original sales channels, the second-hand market for blind boxes is also emerging, and should gradually take over more of the market in the future. Some of the scarce products in the second-hand market show a remarkable premium, and some of them can even reach several times or even hundreds of times the original price. This shows that the blind box collection has a high investment and collection value, and has been more and more people's attention and pursuit. Therefore, it can be foreseen that in the coming period of time, the premiums shown in the second-hand market of blind boxes may be even more amazing, and attract more investors and collection enthusiasts to participate in it.

6. Conclusion

At present, domestic scholars' research on blind box marketing focuses on how it utilizes consumers' psychology and how to continuously broaden the market, etc., and has achieved abundant research results. From the aspect of consumer psychology, scholars, through in-depth analysis of consumers' motives and behavioral patterns of purchasing blind box products, believe that blind box, as a form of commodity characterized by randomness and uncertainty, can satisfy people's needs of exploring the unknown, which triggers the desire to purchase. The research of domestic and foreign scholars on the strategies and methods of blind box marketing provides a rich foundation for the possible problems behind blind box marketing, and also plays an important role in promoting the development of consumer rights and regulating the industry order.

This paper mainly studies and summarizes the marketing means behind the blind box and the problems exposed with the expansion of the blind box market. In terms of studying the marketing means, this paper explores what kind of psychology is utilized in the explosion of blind boxes, and how to stimulate consumer desire through strategies such as limited edition and scarcity. How to utilize the promotion methods on various social platforms and cooperate with famous IPs to launch co-branded styles to attract more fans and collectors' attention. At the same time, more and more means such as live streaming with goods and social sharing can be seen on online platforms to attract consumers to buy. In addition, when discussing the problems exposed by the expanding market, we focus on the phenomena of asymmetric information and insufficient risk awareness that consumers

may have about the purchasing process. At the same time, we analyze the safety risks posed by the inflow of low-quality, imitation and even hazardous substances into the market, and consider how the regulatory authorities should strengthen the supervision of this emerging market. Through these contents comprehensively show the current blind box industry development involved in many aspects of the problem.

Driven by the rapid development of trend culture, China's blind box industry has successfully entered the peak period of development, and the consumer group has gradually stabilized. The current market should seize the blind box new industry in a timely manner, but it does not mean that the market side can be aided and abetted, ignoring the bad behavior of the operators, some unscrupulous merchants in order to obtain profiteering for the production of counterfeit and shoddy products, and low prices or even give away and other means of sales. Blind box industry also exists within the price fraud, false propaganda and other issues, these phenomena have brought distress and losses to consumers, and negatively affect the image of the industry as a whole. Therefore, while strengthening supervision, we need to establish a more perfect blind box economic regulatory system, including comprehensive supervision of blind box product quality, price reasonableness, consumer rights protection and other aspects. In addition, we also need to improve the relevant laws and regulations to clarify the standards and operating norms of the blind box industry, to prevent unscrupulous businessmen from taking advantage of the loopholes to engage in illegal activities. More importantly, the state level needs to make corresponding provisions, clear powers and responsibilities, and constantly strengthen the supervision of the industry, and increase penalties for non-compliant merchants and platforms, so as not to let the blind box economy illegal and unethical. At the same time, in the process of promoting the healthy development of the new industry, we should also promote the concept of rational consumption, guide consumers to set up the correct values and consumption concepts, can not be greedy for cheap, can not take curiosity as the core of consumption, should choose a healthy way of life and consumption, in the enjoyment of the fun at the same time rationally choose the goods, and avoid over-investment. Only in this way can the blind box economy continue to develop healthily and create more positive impacts on society.

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