

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Purchase Intention

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Abstract. With the proliferation of social media, Pop Mart employs content marketing strategies such as "product spoilers" and "IP storytelling" on Douyin and Xiaohongshu to attract users through differentiation, strengthen brand affinity, and stimulate purchasing intent. Based on this, this paper examines the impact of different types of social media marketing content on consumer purchase intent using 501 valid questionnaire responses as the research sample. The study first employed chi-square tests to validate that all three content types significantly influence consumer purchase intent. Subsequently, regression analysis compared the impact intensity of different content types, revealing that Intellectual Property (IP) story content exerted the most pronounced effect. This finding indicates that content possessing narrative and emotional value more effectively stimulates consumer interest and identification with the brand and products, thereby converting into stronger purchase motivation. This research not only enriches empirical studies on the effects of social media marketing content but also provides reference for brands to optimise their content strategies on platforms. Companies are advised to focus more on deep mining and narrative expressions of IP stories to enhance consumer stickiness and market competitiveness.

Keywords: Social media marketing, content types, purchase intention, Pop Mart, IP stories.

1. Introduction

In recent years, designer toys have gradually moved from a minority collectible to mainstream consumption and have become an important vehicle for expressing identity and emotion. The "blind box economy" model, represented by Pop Mart, has aroused the "sense of surprise" and "desire for collection" of young consumers through random selection mechanisms, IP co-naming and scarcity strategy [1]. Under this consumption mechanism, the blind box is not only a commodity but also a cultural experience and an interactive ritual.

According to industry reports, China's trendy toy market has grown at an average annual rate of more than 30 percent since 2017 to reach about 47.8 billion yuan in 2022 and is expected to exceed 100 billion yuan by 2026 [2]. This shows that blind-box and trendy consumption have become trend-carriers of cultural consumption upgrading and social ritualized consumption. In this context, Pop Mart stands out as an industry leader with its efficient IP operations and channel placements.

The marketing practices of Pop Mart have been the subject of several in-depth studies. For example, relevant studies explore the driving forces behind the temptation of blind boxes from the perspective of consumer psychology, pointing out that uncertainty meets consumers' expectations of scarcity and rarity [3]. Scholars use the "Political, Economic, Social, Technological (PEST) + Segmenting, Targeting, Positioning (STP)" model to analyze the market strategy of Pop Mart and believe that its success lies in the accurate positioning of young consumer groups and differentiated IP operations [4]. Other studies have analyzed the marketing mechanism and promotion means of Pop Mart and have pointed out that its interaction and community-building ability significantly enhanced consumer stickiness [5]. Related research further emphasizes the comprehensive advantages of Pop Mart in IP strategic narrative, online and offline integration ecological construction and globalization expansion, although Pop Mart also faces the risk of loyalty decline and homogenization [6].

The cultural background of Chinese consumers is another key to understanding the popularity of trendy toys. In the new era, consumers prefer to express their self-identity and community belonging through consumer behavior. Pop Mart's blind-box narrative and social media communication mechanisms just meet this psychological need [7]. Similarly, in the aspect of digital narrative marketing, storytelling marketing can effectively enhance brand image and consumer trust, thus affecting purchase intention [8]. Meanwhile, social media platforms, especially short-video platforms and community platforms like Douyin and Xiao Hongshu, have become the new battleground for trendy marketing.

2. Research design

Data collection employed a questionnaire survey targeting users aged 15–40 with experience browsing or purchasing collectible toys, and exposure to Pop Mart content on Douyin or Xiaohongshu. The survey was distributed via an online platform, yielding 501 valid responses to ensure sufficient representativeness. Subsequently, chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether different marketing content types exerted a significant influence on consumer purchase intent. Finally, regression analysis was used to determine which type of marketing content had the most significant effect on consumer purchase intentions.

2.1. Variable explanation

The independent variable used in this paper is the marketing content type, which refers to the different forms that POP Mart releases on Douyin and Xiaohongshu platforms to engage consumers and transmit brand and product information. Measurement categories include groups: the new product group, the IP story group, the interactive unpacking group, and the control group. Among them, the new product group takes product information transmission as the core, and the content focuses on the design concept, role image, hidden figure probability, release time and other key information of the new series of blind boxes, often in the form of 3D product display, detail close-ups, and so on, so as to meet consumers' cognitive needs for new products. The IP story group revolves around POP Mart's own IP (such as Molly, Labubu) or joint IP. It deepens the emotional value of the IP through animated shorts, graphic narratives, and character interviews to enhance consumers' sense of identity and loyalty to the IP. The interactive unpacking group takes "Blind Box unpacking" as the core scene, including Key Opinion Leader (KOL) evaluation, fan challenge, online lottery and other interactive forms, highlighting the randomness and social properties of the blind box, and stimulating consumers' sense of participation and desire for imitation. The control

group selects conventional content that does not include the above three types of characteristics (such as brand public welfare publicity, store activity notification), which is used to eliminate the interference of non-target variables on purchase intention and to clarify the independent influence of marketing content types.

The dependent variable used in this paper is consumers' willingness to buy, which refers to the subjective likelihood and propensity of consumers to buy POP Mart products after being exposed to the marketing content. This reflects the initial interest of consumers upon receiving the information and reflects the arousal effect of the targeted marketing content, is the starting point for purchasing decisions, and further reflects specific brand preference. This dimension measures the strengthening effect of marketing content on the perception of brand differentiation and reflects consumers' brand preference among similar products. Finally, it extends to future purchase expectations, reflecting the influence of marketing content on long-term consumer behavior, and reflecting consumers' trust in the brand's continued innovation and consumer stickiness. Together, these three dimensions constitute a complete evaluation system for purchase intent, which forms a logical closed loop from immediate interest to long-term loyalty and can adequately capture the path of influence of marketing content on consumers' decision-making [9].

2.2. Research hypotheses

In the social media marketing environment, brand content is considered to be an important factor driving consumer attitudes and behavior. According to the Stimulus-Organism-Response Model (S-O-R Model), external stimuli (such as brand marketing content) will trigger consumers' cognitive and emotional responses, which in turn affect their behavior (such as purchase intention). Empirical studies have shown that social media marketing can effectively enhance consumers' willingness to buy by enhancing brand image, consumer trust and participation [10-12]. At the same time, the type of marketing content is an important factor affecting consumers' psychological reaction and transformation, and different forms of content will bring different emotional experiences and participation effects [11]. Therefore, it can be inferred that different types of marketing content (new spoilers, IP stories, interactive challenges) on social platforms will have a positive effect on consumers' willingness to buy. As a result, it is proposed that Hypothesis

H1: POP Mart's new spoiler content, IP stories and interactive challenge marketing content on social platforms all have a significant impact on consumers' willingness to buy.

In addition, previous studies have found that emotional and narrative-oriented content can enhance consumers' emotional resonance and brand identity more than pure informational content or single interactive content. For example, narrative and immersive social media content can significantly improve consumer trust and brand attitudes, thereby increasing willingness to buy. In contrast, although the new spoiler content can provide information value, its role in emotional connection is limited; interactive challenge content can promote participation, but its effect on purchase transformation is often restricted by individual interest and motivation [12]. Consequently, it can be inferred that among these three content types, IP story-based marketing content exerts the most pronounced effect on purchase intent. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H2: The impact of the three types of marketing content on consumer purchase intention varies, with IP story-based content exerting a greater influence than new product previews and interactive challenge content.

3. Research findings

3.1. Chi-Square test

Table 1. Willingness to consider purchasing related products

Group	1	2	3	4	5	Total
IP Story Group	40	19	34	34	14	141
Unboxing Interaction	27	32	17	30	34	140
Control Group	18	17	14	15	16	80
New Product Group	24	27	26	34	29	140
Total	109	95	91	113	93	501

As shown in Table 1, the chi-square test results for purchasing intent regarding "willingness to consider purchasing related products" across different groups yielded a Pearson chi-square value of 23.2784 (degrees of freedom = 12) and a p-value of 0.025. Since 0.025 is less than the significance level of 0.05, this indicates a significant influence of different groups on "willingness to consider purchasing related products".

Table 2. Giving priority to Pop Mart when buying

Group	1	2	3	4	5	Total
IP Story Group	34	30	32	21	27	141
Unboxing Interaction	15	19	44	26	36	140
Control Group	15	14	19	14	18	80
New Product Group	41	28	19	24	28	140
Total	102	91	114	85	109	501

As shown in Table 2, the chi-square test results for purchasing intent regarding "prioritising Pop Mart when buying trendy toys" across different groups yielded a Pearson chi-square value of 26.9240 (degrees of freedom = 12) and a p-value of 0.008. Since 0.008 is less than the significance level of 0.05, this indicates a significant influence of different groups on the purchasing intent to "prioritise Pop Mart when buying trendy toys".

Table 3. Purchase of future new products

Group	1	2	3	4	5	Total
IP Story Group	28	30	27	33	23	141
Unboxing Interaction	33	34	28	24	21	140
Control Group	22	13	13	13	19	80
New Product Group	23	16	31	30	40	140
Total	106	93	99	100	103	501

As shown in Table 3, the chi-squared test results for purchasing intent regarding "very likely to purchase future new products" across different groups yielded a Pearson chi-squared value of 21.7363 (degrees of freedom = 12) and a p-value of 0.041. Since 0.041 is less than the significance level of 0.05, this indicates a significant influence of different groups on the likelihood of

purchasing future products. The three chi-square test results collectively demonstrate that different marketing content types exert a significant influence on purchase intent.

3.2. Regression analysis

Table 4. Results of buy_future regression analysis results table

buy_future	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P > t	[95% confidence interval]	
group_dummy1	-0.3925025	0.1695343	-2.32	0.021	-0.7255948	-0.0594103
group_dummy2	-0.5857143	0.1698357	-3.45	0.001	-0.9193987	-0.2520299
group_dummy3	-0.4178571	0.19915	-2.1	0.036	-0.8091368	-0.0265775
_cons	3.342857	0.120092	27.84	0	3.106907	3.578808

As shown in Table 4, in the regression analysis for "high likelihood of purchasing future new products (buy_future)", the dummy variables for the new product group (group_dummy1), IP story group (group_dummy2), and the unboxing interaction group (group_dummy3) all yielded P-values (0.021, 0.001, 0.036) below 0.05. This indicates that, compared to the control group (group_dummy4, omitted here due to multicollinearity), the new product group, IP story group, and unboxing interaction group all exerted a significant influence on consumers' willingness to purchase future new products. Among these, the IP Story group (group_dummy2) exhibited the smallest P-value of 0.001, indicating the most pronounced effect on consumers' intention to purchase future products.

Table 5. Results of buy_consider regression analysis

buy_consider	Coefficient	Std. err	t	P > t	[95% confidence interval]	
group_dummy1	-0.0357143	0.169773	-0.21	0.833	-0.3692756	0.297847
group_dummy2	-0.3838399	0.1694717	-2.26	0.024	-0.7168093	-0.0508706
group_dummy3	-0.1964286	0.1990765	-0.99	0.324	-0.5875639	0.1947067
_cons	3.121429	0.1200477	26	0	2.885565	3.357292

As shown in Table 5, in the regression analysis for "willingness to consider purchasing related products (buy_consider)", the p-value for the IP story group (group_dummy2) is 0.024 (less than 0.05). Therefore, the IP story group (group_dummy2) has the most significant impact on "willingness to consider purchasing related products".

Table 6. Results of buy_priority regression analysis table

buy_priority	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P > t	[95% confidence interval]	
group_dummy1	0.0937183	0.1687242	0.56	0.579	-0.2377824	0.4252191
group_dummy2	0.5642857	0.1690242	3.34	0.001	0.2321957	0.8963758
group_dummy3	0.2892857	0.1981984	1.46	0.145	-0.1001244	0.6786958
_cons	2.785714	0.1195182	23.31	0	2.550891	3.020537

As shown in Table 6, in the regression analysis for "buying bubble toys with priority selection for Pop Mart (buy_priority)", the regression coefficient for the IP story group (group_dummy2) is 0.5643, with a P-value of 0.001 (less than 0.05). This indicates that, compared to the baseline group,

the IP Story group exerts a significant positive influence on consumers' willingness to "prioritise selecting Pop Mart"; consequently, relative to the New Product group and the Unboxing Interaction group, the IP Story group exerts the most pronounced effect on "prioritising selecting Pop Mart when purchasing trendy toys".

In summary, IP story-based marketing content exerts the most pronounced influence on consumer purchase intent. Social e-commerce platforms must precisely grasp the impact logic of IP story content, strengthening its creation and dissemination—for instance, by producing serialised IP story shorts and fostering deep, contextualised collaborations between IP characters and products. With the help of emotional connections, this study can effectively deepen consumers' brand preferences; when brands/marketers are promoting new products in the future and encouraging consumers to "consider buying related products", to avoid the disconnection between IP stories and the core values of products, it is necessary to naturally integrate the selling points such as product design innovation and quality advantages into IP narration, so that the story not only conveys emotional attraction, but also clearly shows the value of the product itself that is worthy of attention. In the face of marketing content, if consumers are exposed to the marketing of IP story-related goods, they can more rationally strip away the emotional element of the story and focus on the innovation of the product itself to judge whether it is worthy of attention; when facing the marketing of related products in the IP story category, they should actively tap into the value of the product itself and make purchasing choices based on their own real needs, rather than just because of the passion or feelings of the story.

4. Conclusion

This study employed chi-square tests and regression analysis to examine the impact of IP narrative-based, interactive challenge-based, and new product teaser-based marketing content by Pop Mart on Douyin and Xiaohongshu platforms, specifically on consumer purchase intent (measured across three dimensions: "considering purchasing related products," "prioritising Pop Mart purchases," and "purchasing future new products").

Specifically, the chi-square test results indicate that the p-values for all three dimensions of purchase intent are below 0.05 across all three content types. This confirms that Pop Mart's new product preview, IP storytelling, and interactive challenge marketing content on Douyin and Xiaohongshu significantly influence consumer purchase intent. In regression analysis, the p-value for the IP story group was below 0.05 across all three regression analyses, making it the most significant indicator among all independent variables. This indicates that the IP story group exerts the most pronounced influence on consumers' future purchase intentions.

Furthermore, Hypothesis 1 holds true: Bubble Mart's marketing content across Douyin and Xiaohongshu—specifically new product teasers, IP storytelling, and interactive challenges—significantly influences consumer purchase intent. Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed: IP storytelling content exerts a greater impact on purchase intent than interactive challenges. This research provides empirical guidance for Pop Mart to refine marketing content and enhance consumer purchase intent. However, limitations exist, with potential future extensions including expanding sample size and platform dimensions to deepen analysis of marketing content's effect mechanisms.

Authors contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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