

Exploring New Ideas for Trendy Culture Marketing Based on the Breakthrough Effect: Taking Pop Mart as an Example

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Abstract. In a highly diverse social and cultural context, based on the "breaking out of the circle effect", through the rapid dissemination of online marketing, niche cultures are increasingly transforming into mainstream trends. Among them, the phenomenon of blind box toys stands out particularly. This article explores the marketing strategies that support this cultural transformation, with a focus on the case of Pop Mart, a leading brand in the field of blind box toys. By using a comprehensive literature review and empirical analysis, this article studied the factors influencing Pop Mart's successful expansion of its consumer base and establishment of a strong market share, etc. From the perspective of consumers, determining the preferences of the target audience, predicting the upgraded behavior of consumers' emotional value experience, and driving more potential consumers are the magic weapons for the diffusion of trend culture. The study highlights the importance of leveraging the breakthrough effect, characterized by the rapid diffusion of information, the bandwagon effect, and the leverage of trend culture, to achieve market success.

Keywords: The breakthrough effect, blind box marketing, Pop Mart brand management

1. Introduction

This research is of great significance for expanding the influence of niche cultures and generating economic effects. This research mainly elaborates specifically from aspects such as the connotation of the breakthrough effect, the characteristics and development trends of trend culture, the case study of Pop Mart, and the analysis of new marketing strategies. The literature analysis method was employed to search for and read relevant materials and literature. The advantage of this method lies in its ability to well analyze the views of different scholars on trend culture and summarize the attitudes and expectations of some current consumers towards goods with high emotional added value. The ultimate research objective of this study is to summarize and generalize some feasible strategies and methods for enterprises to create greater economic effects through the successful cases of Pop Mart.

As an important cultural form that leads fashion and influences lifestyle, trend culture has developed rapidly in the national market in recent years and has given rise to a number of representative trend brands. These brands have adopted a variety of innovative marketing strategies during their development, achieving a win-win situation for brand value and commercial profits.

As a leading enterprise in China's trendy toy industry, Pop Mart is adept at perceiving the emotional demands of young consumers. Through the creation of trendy IPs, the surprising experience of blind boxes, and interactive dissemination on social media, it has successfully shaped a unique brand image, evoking emotional resonance among consumers and driving the brand's cross-border development [1]. Pop Mart caters to the psychological needs of young consumers for individuality and self-expression by designing trendy toy images and products, providing emotional value for consumers [2].

The breakthrough effect has played a significant role in the trendy toy exhibitions: on the one hand, these exhibitions have helped Pop Mart enhance its industry reputation and attract and sign more outstanding designers to enrich its "IP pool". On the other hand, the trendy toy exhibition serves as a window to promote trendy culture, capable of conveying the value of trendy toys and attracting more potential consumers [3]. By cultivating its social attributes, Pop Mart has gathered a large number of enthusiasts for its trendy toys, thereby establishing a strong and flexible target user community. It has successfully positioned itself as an important carrier of trendy IPs and created commercial value for the brand.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1. The connotation and characteristics of the breakthrough effect

The breakthrough effect refers to the phenomenon where information breaks through the boundaries of existing groups or circles during its dissemination. In the process of achieving the breakthrough effect, emotional communication not only plays a short-term role in breaking through information barriers and promoting the flow and interaction within circles, but also has a profound influence in consolidating the emotional memories of circles and reshaping the overall social identity [4].

The realization of the breakthrough effect usually goes through two key links: emotional infection within the circle and emotional flow between circles. Emotional infection within a circle is the starting point for emotional dissemination to achieve a cross-border effect. Before completing cross-border dissemination, it is necessary to evoke sufficient emotional resonance within the circle and complete adequate emotional infection, establishing a common cognition among users within the circle. The existence of information barriers to some extent hinders communication and interaction among different social circles. However, social circles are not completely isolated from each other. Social media users often have the characteristic of "crossing social circles", and different individuals can often establish information flows between social circles, thus generating connections and laying the foundation for the realization of large-scale emotional breakthrough [4].

It can be seen from this that the breakthrough effect implies an exponential explosive increase in social influence, and the content that achieves cross-border dissemination has great potential to be transformed into huge commercial benefits. In conclusion, the breakthrough effect, as an important phenomenon of information dissemination in the era of social media, is of great significance for understanding and grasping the formation mechanism of current social hot topics and promoting the reaching of social consensus.

2.2. Characteristics and development of trend cultural marketing

The essence of trend culture marketing is to establish an emotional connection with consumers through symbolic cultural content, thereby influencing consumers' purchasing decisions.

Trend culture encompasses a wide variety of manifestations, such as novel clothing with a distinct designer style, derivative products related to TV dramas and films, and even many daily necessities have incorporated numerous elements with the characteristic symbols of the new era. The reason why consumers purchase such goods has evolved from simple daily necessities to emotional support. The spiritual core behind these trendy cultures is the main reason that attracts consumers to make purchases. In life, if people can go out wearing clothes printed with their favorite cartoon characters, they will naturally have a good mood. These designs, which seem to have low practicality, precisely fill the gap of interest in people's dull or repetitive lives, thereby expanding into the trendy culture community and generating an emotional resonance and cultural identity among a group.

In terms of market size, the trend culture industry is in an early stage of rapid development [5]. With the Z generation as the main consumer force, it drives market vitality. Through explosive dissemination and expansion via the Internet, it has excellent development space. However, in recent years, in the trend culture industry, there have been more and more opportunistic behaviors such as shoddy production and severe homogenization to cater to consumers [6]. Not all new cultural industries can find a way for enterprises to stay young and vigorous. Pursuing profits at all costs will only backfire. In the rapidly changing market environment, it is particularly important to find a healthy and sustainable marketing path. One should actively adapt to consumers' demands and follow market rules.

3. Pop Mart: a case study of breakthrough in trend culture

3.1. Introduction to Pop Mart's development history and business model

Pop Mart is a Chinese company founded in 2010, specializing in the design, production and sale of trendy toys. The most well-known to the public is their renowned blind box products. The factory randomly packs different styles of toys from the same series in the same outer packaging for consumers to choose from randomly. They also design a special "hidden version" style toy with a lower probability of purchase, which increases the entertainment value of this consumption form. Pop Mart aims to attract young consumers and promote the development of trend culture through unique designs and innovative business models.

Pop Mart has collaborated with multiple renowned designers and brands to launch limited edition and co-branded series, enhancing the uniqueness and collectible value of its products. In addition to blind boxes, Pop Mart has also extended its industrial chain and launched a variety of peripheral products, including charging cables, keychains, coin purses, etc., to meet the needs of different consumers. Meanwhile, Pop Mart has also been actively expanding its overseas market, opening multiple international retail stores, especially in Southeast Asia and Europe and America. In 2020, Pop Mart was listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and became a public company, further enhancing brand awareness and taking the next step in market expansion.

3.2. Analysis of core pathways and marketing strategies for Pop Mart's breakthrough

Pop Mart takes blind boxes as its flagship product, capturing the deepest part of human nature. The combination of products and blind box forms makes it impossible for consumers to predict the style before purchasing, adding a sense of fun and surprise to the uncertainty. Trigger users' lucky mentality through probability Settings; Seize the users' curiosity, stimulate their desire to purchase

and collect, encourage consumers to keep buying and collecting styles, and increase the repurchase rate.

With the IP matrix at its core, it has built a diversified product system. There are now over a hundred available IPs. It holds the core resources of the trendy toy industry, delves deeply into the core of IPs, and has created a variety of product series. The product design styles are diverse, ranging from cute to funny, from traditional to future, precisely covering students, trendy toy enthusiasts, professional white-collar workers and other diverse groups.

As low-priced and high-quality artworks, the regular blind box series is priced at around 60 yuan, which is relatively affordable. This reduces the decision-making cost for users, enhances their purchasing intention, expands the consumer base, and at the same time ensures the daily operating costs of the store. The high-end MEGA series, collaborative editions and limited editions are relatively expensive to meet the needs of loyal users who pursue high quality and have collection demands, and to increase the profit margin of the store.

Pop Mart has a variety of online channel marketing methods. The public domain customer acquisition methods include: full entry into e-commerce platforms such as Tmall, JD.com, Amazon, AliExpress, Lazada, and Shopee; Extensively layout on media platforms such as Douyin, Weibo, Bilibili, and Xiaohongshu. Interact with consumers through forms such as releasing creative content, live-streaming unboxing, and product recommendation videos to enhance brand awareness and influence. The private domain operation methods include: accumulating private domain traffic pools through official accounts, mini-programs, self-built apps and independent websites. Mini-programs are equipped with member points systems to increase repurchase rates, and online box-drawing machines simulate offline box-drawing experiences to promote purchases.

And the offline channel marketing methods are also diverse. Directly-operated stores and theme stores: Directly-operated stores are set up in the core business districts of major cities across the country to enhance brand image and influence. The store design is localized and diversified, and the decoration and display are carried out according to the cultural characteristics of different regions and the preferences of consumers. Robot store expansion: Deploying robots in high-traffic areas requires a small investment, offers flexible distribution points, and enhances product accessibility and sales coverage.

Furthermore, Pop Mart's vertical and horizontal integration strategies in the trendy toy industry chain enable continuous innovation and diversified development, constructing its core competitive advantages [2]. The company's approach to emotional marketing creates a logic of "deeper life → stand together → we," emphasizing the importance of "closeness" to the consumer, not merely in physical distance but also in the distance of the mind [3]. Through interaction, Pop Mart facilitates the formation of a connection with its customers, fostering brand loyalty and emotional attachment. These core pathways and marketing strategies have propelled Pop Mart's breakthrough in trend culture, establishing it as a leader in the industry.

3.3. The manifestation of the breakthrough effect - LABUBU

In 2025, the LABUBU image launched by Pop Mart caused a global sensation. LABUBU adopts a limited release strategy, which is quite similar to the marketing approach of luxury goods. Through limited sales and flash sales wars, a sense of scarcity that "even if you have money, you may not be able to buy it" is created.

Lisa, Dua Lipa, Yu Shuxin, and Ouyang Nana, many celebrities have publicly expressed their love for LABUBU. The leading actors of the highly-acclaimed F1 film have also posted videos co-shot with LABUBU on social media platforms, which has greatly enhanced its global popularity.

The combination of "Star +LABUBU" has become a hit icon pairing, successfully attracting the extensive attention of fans and stimulating their spontaneous dissemination. With the boost of the popularity of trendy stars, LABUBU quickly came into the public eye and became a well-known fashion symbol.

LABUBU actively collaborates with other well-known brands across industries. For instance, it has teamed up with Coca-Cola to launch ice and snow-themed figurines, allowing LABUBU members to experience the joy of the ice and snow world in the ice and snow Grand world. Luckin Coffee has collaborated with LABUBU to launch limited-edition cup designs that incorporate the LABUBU image, attracting fans to visit and take photos. This not only covers more consumption scenarios for LabUBU but also continuously strengthens the IP's trendy attributes and commercial value through the cumulative effect of brand collaboration. The brand encourages its fans to spontaneously create Labubu-related emoticons, transformation tutorials and creative scene content on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Xiaohongshu. This not only strengthens its label as a "top trendy toy", but also forms cross-circle dissemination.

In addition, LABUBU also uses social media platforms to hold various online activities, such as raffles and check-in challenges, which have stimulated users' enthusiasm for participation, enhanced the stickiness between users and the brand, and brought it a continuous stream of traffic and sales opportunities. LABUBU's global strategy, centered on cultural integration, has successfully broken through geographical limitations. For instance, in the Thai market, the opening of the first store immediately triggered a buying frenzy. The brand has deeply integrated with local culture - LABUBU not only wears traditional Thai clothing but has also been awarded the title of "Magical Thailand Experience Officer" by the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Moreover, local consumers have voluntarily incorporated it into life scenarios such as temple decorations and tattoo culture, thus forming a truly rooted cultural symbol in the local area.

4. New perspectives on trend cultural marketing based on the breakthrough effect

Pop Mart's breakthrough effect manifests in several concrete ways. Firstly, Pop Mart has successfully cultivated a considerable number of trendy toy enthusiasts by leveraging the social attributes of its products, establishing a robust and resilient target user community. The process of opening blind boxes and deriving satisfaction from the obtained styles continues to stimulate consumers' desire to share, effectively socializing the product experience. This, in turn, facilitates the product's viral spread, enabling exponential growth in brand cash flow and company profits [3]. Secondly, Pop Mart's IP image, characterized by "cute characters," imbues its products with a healing effect that resonates with emotionally needy but lonely young people. By identifying the most effective means of appealing to consumers through extensive customer base and market analysis, Pop Mart has established itself as an important carrier of hip IP, creating substantial commercial value for the brand [2,3].

The case of Pop Mart reveals the core logic of the breakout effect in the marketing of trend culture. First of all, it is necessary to grasp the value demands and emotional needs of the target consumers and meet their expectations for the cultural product [7]. Secondly, through product innovation and cross-border IP collaboration, we constantly bring surprises and unique experiences to consumers, stimulating their emotional resonance and brand dependence. In addition, it is necessary to attach importance to the cultivation of brand communities. Through the interaction between online and offline, enhance consumers' sense of belonging and participation, thereby forming an emotional bond between the brand and consumers. For instance, from Beckham to Rihanna, every star has purchased LABUBU, ranging from its appearance on the Cannes red carpet

to an astonishing 1.08 million yuan [8]. Lenovo Xiaoxin and Pop Mart jointly held the "Magic Night of Trendy Toys" trendy culture event and jointly launched the world's first limited edition 3C trendy toy blind box [9].

At the same time, by leveraging social media, users are encouraged to share their experiences of "opening blind boxes", achieving the socialization of product experience and promoting the traffic and dissemination of the product itself [10].

In conclusion, trend culture enterprises need to achieve a deep connection between their brands and consumers through all-round emotional marketing strategies, thereby breaking through the barriers of different circles and winning broader market recognition. This provides new ideas and references for the marketing of trend culture.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, this study analyzes the marketing strategies of Pop Mart from the perspective of the breakthrough effect and its implications for the marketing of trend culture.

The research highlights the significance of marketing in the new era by accurately grasping the core emotional demands of target consumers, rapidly spreading through both online and offline methods, and establishing cultural communities. By understanding the connotation and characteristics of the cross-border effect as well as the development of the trend culture market, enterprises can effectively respond to the rapidly changing consumption pattern and formulate appropriate and novel marketing strategies.

Future research can further explore the applicability of marketing frameworks based on the cross-border effect in different industries and cultural backgrounds, as well as the corresponding adjustment measures made in response to changes in consumer preferences and market conditions.

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