

From the Psychological Characteristics of the “Z Era” to Explore the “Blind Box Economy” Benign Development Optimization Plan

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on the close relationship between the psychological characteristics of the “Z era” and the “blind box economy”, aiming to analyze the current situation and explore the optimization path to promote the healthy development of the blind box economy. Through the explanation of the rise of the blind box economy, market trends, in-depth interpretation of the Z era of the pursuit of personalization, strong social needs and other psychological characteristics, reveal the opportunities and challenges under the interaction of the two. Furthermore, targeted optimization strategies are proposed from the perspectives of product, marketing and supervision to help the blind box economy meet the needs of The Times, achieve sustainable prosperity, and provide useful references for the research and practice of related industries.*

Keywords: Z psychology of The Times; Blind box economy; Product innovation; Market regulation; Social marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the rise of the influence of various brands and the rise of online shopping, the combination of “blind box” and this trend has formed a new blind box economy, and has been rapidly popular, and the related market share has been rising. Different from various traditional economic models in China, blind box economy has obvious characteristics such as relatively unclear commodity information and limited consumer’s right to know [1]. Its unique sales form, that is, the goods are sold in a random blind selection, which has triggered a warm pursuit of consumers, especially the “Z era” group. “Generation Z”, usually refers to the generation born between 1995 and 2009, is gradually growing into a major consumer force, whose consumption preferences and behaviors have a profound impact on the market landscape.

At present, there are many related issues in China. After studying the basic knowledge related to the “blind box” economy, Lu Xiaoqian and Li Shengjiao focused on how to solve the difficult problem of consumer rights protection under the “blind box” marketing model from the perspective of consumer rights protection [2]. Starting from the reasons behind the rise of the blind box economy, Han Yueming analyzed the special features of the blind box economy that are different from the previous economic models [3]. Ye Xiaodan and Zhu Qianqing also first mentioned in their articles that the nature of blind box trading contracts should be confirmed, and advocated that blind box contracts should be divided into two categories: definite blind box and shooting blind box [4]. Ma Zhiguo and Xu Jikuan, starting from the background of digital economy, pointed out that with the distribution, platform, sharing and other characteristics of the digital economy gradually prominent, the blind box economy has become popular rapidly, and the related market has developed rapidly. Many industries have adopted this sales model and carried out the sales of blind boxes with the help of the digital economy platform [5]. Chen Saijin and Wang Yaping chose the perspective of youth to examine the blind box economy for the purpose of protecting the legitimate rights and interests of young consumers and their physical and mental health. It is pointed out that there are four main business logic behind the popularity of blind box economy among teenagers, including the achievement psychology caused by unexpected surprise, the gambler psychology caused by unknown expectations, the curiosity psychology brought by novel things, and the herd psychology stimulated by social needs [6].

However, there is a lack of systematic research on the comprehensive impact of psychological characteristics on blind box economy from the root level of Z era growth background, social and cultural environment, etc., and the strategy on how to promote the sound development of blind box economy based on these characteristics is not comprehensive and in-depth. From the perspective of multidisciplinary integration, this paper aims to fill the above research gaps and provide innovative ideas for the sustainable development of blind box economy.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF “BLIND BOX ECONOMY”

2.1 Overview of Blind Box Economy

Blind box economy is an economic form of selling goods in a blind selection mode. Consumers cannot know the specific style of the goods they buy in advance at the time of purchase, and this uncertainty constitutes its core appeal. Its origin can be traced back to Japan’s Fukukuo culture, where businesses put a number of goods into opaque bags and sell them at a uniform price during the New Year and other festivals. When consumers buy Fukukuo bags, they are like opening a blind box, full of expectations and surprises, and then combine the American “twist egg” to launch a twist egg model. More and more businesses begin to try to promote all kinds of goods in this way. The limited size of the outer packaging of twisted eggs has become prominent, so the current blind box has gradually evolved [7]. At the end of the 20th century, this form was introduced into China, initially in the field of toys, stationery and other small goods to test the water, in recent years, the rapid expansion of many industries, has become a very influential consumer trend.

Compared with the traditional sales model, the blind box economy presents distinct characteristics in many aspects. The first is that the commodity information in the blind box economy is not clear, and the blind box trading contract is aggressive [8]. Traditional sales let consumers know the details of the commodity clearly and pursue the practicability and cost performance of the commodity, while the blind box economy is full of unknown [9], focusing on creating a sense of surprise and desire to explore, and consumers experience the stimulation of heartbeat acceleration when they open the blind box. Meet emotional needs. From the perspective of marketing methods, traditional marketing relies on product features and functions to attract customers; Blind box marketing cleverly uses consumers’ curiosity and gambler’s psychology to create a sense of scarcity and stimulate the desire to buy through limited release and hidden model Settings. In terms of commodity pricing, traditional commodity pricing is more transparent according to cost, market supply and demand; Blind box goods contain uncertain factors, pricing is often more flexible, in addition to the value of the product itself, but also added a “surprise premium”, so that some consumers are willing to pay a higher price for the rare style may be obtained.

2.2 Market Size and Development Trend of Blind Box Economy

According to relevant market research data, China’s blind box economy has shown an explosive growth trend in recent years. In the past five years, the market size of the blind box industry has soared from more than one billion yuan to tens of billions of yuan, with a compound annual growth rate of more than 30%. Taking the well-known blind box brand Bubble Mart as an example, its annual revenue has achieved substantial growth for many consecutive years, and the number of stores has expanded rapidly in major cities across the country, which has led to the prosperity and development of the entire blind box industry chain upstream and downstream, covering design, production, sales, second-hand trading and other links.

Looking forward to the future, the blind box economy is expected to show a diversified development trend. On the one hand, cross-border integration will become the mainstream, blind box and film, animation, games and other popular IP deep combination, the launch of co-branded blind box, expand the consumption border; On the other hand, with the advancement of technology, such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) technology into the blind box experience, consumers can scan the blind box through mobile phones to obtain value-added content such as virtual images, animated stories, and enhance interaction. In addition, the sales channels will be more diversified, the online e-commerce platform will continue to optimize the blind box sales area, offline in addition to traditional physical stores, vending machines, pop-up stores and other emerging formats will frequently emerge to meet the purchase needs of consumers in different scenarios.

Among the consumer groups, “Era Z” dominates. This group grew up in the digital era with the rapid development of the Internet and the full popularity of social media, and their consumer psychology has distinct characteristics. They pursue personalized and unique experiences, eager to express themselves through the consumption of different products, the randomness of the blind box just provides a way to show their personality, and every time they open the box, it is like discovering a unique treasure. The “Z era” is keen on sharing the unpacking process of the blind box on social platforms and showing off rare harvests. Through online interaction and offline exchange of the blind box, it makes like-minded friends and integrates into specific social circles. The blind box has become a social “icebreaker”. At the same time, they have advanced consumption concepts, pay attention to product quality and consumption experience, are willing to give generously to interests and hobbies, and are extremely susceptible to the influence of social media and network celebrity recommendations, quickly switching between

“planting grass” and “pulling grass”, promoting the blind box consumption boom continues to heat up.

3. ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF “AGE Z”

3.1 Definition and Growth Environment of Z Era

“Generation Z”, as the main force of emerging consumers, usually covers people born between 1995 and 2009. They have grown up in a period of rapid social and economic development and ever-changing science and technology. The Internet has grown from birth to popularity, and social media such as wechat, Weibo and Douyin have risen one after another, becoming an indispensable part of their lives. Contact with all kinds of electronic products since childhood, so that they can easily access a large amount of information, a broader vision, more active thinking, and close contact with the global popular culture. At the same time, the family economic conditions are generally improved, the parents give a relatively relaxed consumption environment, so that they have more opportunities for independent consumption, these factors jointly shape the unique consumer psychology and behavior pattern of the “Z era”.

3.2 Main Psychological Characteristics of the Z Era

In the consumer field, the “Z era” is deeply tired of the same products and strives for personalized expression. Whether it is clothing, accessories, electronic products, toys, they expect products with unique design, customized functions, can accurately reflect their interests, hobbies, values. Taking the fashion blind box as an example, different series and theme blind boxes have different images, from retro style to future science fiction style, from cute system to dark cool system, to meet the diversified aesthetic needs of the “Z era”, so that they show unique personality in many blind box collections.

The “Z generation” is extremely socially active, and online social media is the main front for them to show themselves and communicate. They post photos, videos, text and other content to attract friends’ attention, likes, comments and build social connections. The blind box unpacking video is widely popular on B station, Douyin and other platforms, bloggers share the surprise, disappointment or unexpected joy of the unpacking moment, which arouses the resonance of the audience, and the comment area instantly becomes a popular place for fans to exchange experiences and discuss the blind box guide. Offline, they actively participate in various blind box lovers’ gatherings and exchange activities, using the blind box as a social media to expand interpersonal networks and strengthen group identity.

Compared with the older generation, the consumption concept of “Era Z” is more advanced. They no longer simply value the price of products, but put quality and experience in the first place, and are willing to pay a premium for high-quality products that can bring the ultimate experience. In the blind box consumption, even if they know that the price of some blind boxes is higher than their actual value, they will not hesitate to buy if they can bring a unique emotional experience and satisfy their curiosity. In addition, they are greatly affected by social media, and the recommendations of network celebrities and Kols can often quickly ignite their consumption enthusiasm, prompting them to follow the trend and form a consumption trend.

“Era Z” grew up in the wave of innovation, and has a natural curiosity for new things. New consumer categories, experiential consumption places, technology products and so on will always attract them to try first. As an emerging consumption model, blind box quickly caught the eye of the “Z era” with its mysterious unknowability and became a popular choice for them to explore novel consumption experience. Whether it is the newly launched theme blind box, or the blind box gameplay that integrates new technology, it can stimulate their desire to try and promote the blind box economy.

4. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF BLIND BOX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BASED ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF “AGE Z”

4.1 Development Opportunities

The blind box economy has keenly captured the psychology of pursuing individuation in the “Z era” and actively launched diversified customized services. Many blind box brands collaborate with well-known designers and

artists to create limited edition, exclusive design blind box collections to meet consumers' desire for unique products. For example, part of the high-end blind box series of Bubble Mat invites internationally renowned illustrators to work, from image design to packaging technology are unique, sought after by collectors, so that the blind box is not only an ordinary toy, but also a work of art that highlights personal taste.

The social nature of the blind box opens up new ways for brand communication. Consumers share their blind box opening experience on social platforms, forming a word-of-mouth effect and attracting more potential consumers. Taking the Little Red Book as an example, thousands of notes on the blind box are published every day, covering open-box assessment, collection display, hidden money guide and other content, and brand awareness is rapidly improved. Offline blind box exchange activities are also becoming more frequent, and enthusiasts exchange brand stories and recommend new products in the exchange process, further expanding brand influence and enhancing user stickiness.

In order to cater to the curiosity of the "Z era" for new things, blind box businesses continue to innovate. In addition to the traditional hidden Settings, it also launched a series of blind box collection rewards, the combination of blind boxes and secret room escape and other offline entertainment projects, and the linkage of blind boxes and digital collections. For example, a brand launched a collection of a specific series of blind boxes convertible limited edition hand activities, greatly stimulated consumers' desire to buy, prompting them to purchase repeatedly, in order to achieve the collection goal, promoting the sales of blind boxes continued to rise.

4.2 Challenges

With the rapid expansion of the blind box market, some bad merchants ignore product quality in pursuit of high profits. Some blind box toys have rough workmanship, poor materials, and even safety hazards, such as small parts easy to fall off and lead to children's ingestion. In recent years, consumer complaints about the quality of blind boxes have been on the rise, seriously affecting consumers' trust in blind box brands and restricting the healthy development of blind box economy.

Blind box economy as a new business form, the market supervision is relatively lagging behind. Some businesses take advantage of the concealment of the blind box sales model to carry out fraud, such as false publicity of hidden money probability, shoddy, excessive packaging, etc. Due to the lack of clear regulatory standards and law enforcement basis, the rights and interests of consumers are difficult to be effectively protected, and the market order is chaotic, weakening the enthusiasm of consumers to buy blind boxes.

In the fierce market competition, some blind box merchants use excessive marketing methods to attract consumers. Through hunger marketing to create the illusion of short supply, exaggerate the value and scarcity of hidden money, and mislead consumers to blindly follow the trend. Some Internet celebrities and Kols are driven by interests, and there is also false publicity when recommending blind boxes, which makes consumers find that the actual situation is far from the expectation after purchase, causing consumers to be disgusted, and causing a negative impact on the economic reputation of blind boxes.

5. OPTIMIZATION PLAN FOR THE SOUND DEVELOPMENT OF BLIND BOX ECONOMY

5.1 Product Innovation and Optimization

The blind box brand should closely combine the current popular IP, such as Disney, Marvel, Harry Potter and other film and animation IP, as well as the trend cultural elements, such as street art, e-sports, etc., to launch a joint blind box. Taking the Disney Princess series blind box as an example, the classic Disney princess image is presented in a new style of play, with exquisite accessories and scene props, which instantly ignite consumers' enthusiasm for collection, and enhance the attractiveness and added value of blind box products with the help of strong IP influence and trend charm.

Learn from the quality control experience of high-end toys and handicrafts, and establish a strict product quality standard system. From raw material procurement, production and processing to finished product inspection, every link is strictly checked. The use of environmentally friendly, safe and high-quality raw materials to improve the texture and durability of blind box toys; The introduction of advanced technology, such as 3D printing, fine engraving, etc., to improve the fineness and artistic sense of the product, and rebuild consumers' trust in the blind

box with excellent quality.

Actively expand the category of blind box products, out of the traditional toys, jewelry category. Explore the introduction of knowledge card blind box in the field of education, the knowledge of subject knowledge and interesting popular science knowledge into the blind box card, edutainment; In the field of fitness, we designed fitness blind boxes including fitness equipment samples, sports course coupons, etc., to stimulate people's enthusiasm for sports; In the field of home decoration, home blind boxes containing small green plants and creative ornaments are launched to add interest to life. By broadening the application scenarios, tap more potential consumer groups.

5.2 Marketing and Brand Building

Develop personalized marketing strategies according to different market segments of interests, hobbies and consumption habits in the "Z era". Launched the anime theme blind box series for anime lovers, and promoted it accurately in anime exhibitions and online animation communities; For beauty lovers, we launch beauty blind boxes, with beauty tutorials, trial kits and other value-added services, and cooperate with beauty e-commerce platforms and social media beauty bloggers to promote and improve marketing accuracy and effect.

Give full play to the advantages of social media platforms, open official accounts on Weibo, Douyin, B station and other platforms, and regularly release blind box new product announcements, unboxing videos, fan interaction activities and other content to attract fans' attention. Cooperate with influential Kols, invite them to experience blind box products and make sharing videos, with the help of KOL's strong fan base and credibility, expand the scope of brand communication, and enhance brand awareness and reputation.

Blind box brand should focus on creating a unique brand story and profound cultural connotation. Take Bubble Mart as an example, by telling the original intention and development course of the brand, create a brand image that loves life and pursues dreams; Excavate the cultural elements behind the blind box, such as integrating traditional Chinese cultural elements into the blind box design, launching the Spring Festival theme and intangible cultural heritage theme blind box, so that consumers can feel the cultural influence when purchasing the blind box, and enhance brand identity and loyalty.

5.3 Strengthen Market Supervision and Norms

The government should strengthen the supervision of blind box economy. The General Administration of Market Supervision shall formulate detailed code of conduct for blind box operation, clarifying requirements such as product quality standards, hidden money probability publicity, and marketing publicity norms; Local consumer associations should increase the frequency of supervision and inspection of the blind box market, expose bad business cases in a timely manner, and provide consumers with consumption warnings; We will establish a sound complaint and reporting mechanism, unblock channels for consumers to protect their rights, severely punish businesses that violate the law, and maintain market order.

Blind box industry associations should play an active role in formulating industry self-discipline conventions to guide enterprises to operate in good faith. Organize enterprises to carry out quality training, standard discussion and other activities to improve the overall quality level of the industry; Encourage enterprises to supervise each other, jointly punish enterprises that violate the self-discipline convention, create a good industry atmosphere, and promote the standardized development of the blind box economy.

Strengthen the education and publicity of consumers, guide consumers to consume rationally through media reports, public service advertisements, etc., and let consumers understand the risks and precautions of blind box consumption; Publish the consumer rights and interests protection clauses in the blind box sales venues and online platforms in a prominent position to remind consumers to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests; When the rights and interests of consumers are infringed, timely legal assistance is provided to ensure that consumers have a door to complain and a way to protect their rights.

6. CONCLUSION

This study deeply analyzes the close relationship between the psychological characteristics of the "Z era" and the blind box economy. The pursuit of individuation, strong social needs, advanced consumption concepts, curiosity

about new things and other psychological characteristics of the “Z era” not only brings development opportunities for the blind box economy such as product customization, social communication, and gameplay innovation, but also faces challenges due to problems such as product quality, market supervision, and excessive marketing. By proposing multi-dimensional optimization programs such as product innovation optimization, precision marketing, and strengthening supervision, and emphasizing the collaborative efforts of enterprises, governments, industry associations, and consumers, it is expected to promote the blind box economy to overcome difficulties and achieve sound development.

The future blind box economy has a broad prospect. Under the integration of technologies, 5G, AR, and VR help, online opening is more smooth, more interactive, and social influence is expanded. The market continues to be subdivided, in addition to fashion play, beauty blind box, will also launch health, folklore, intelligent hardware blind box, etc., to meet diverse needs. In the field of cultural communication, the integration of traditional culture can stimulate cultural confidence, and go international to show Chinese style. Of course, to achieve these requires the efforts of all parties, enterprise innovation, government policy improvement, industry association guidance, and rational participation of consumers, to build a prosperous blind box economic ecology, and add color to the global consumer culture.

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