

The Power of Marketing in the Virtual Era: Influencing the Demand for Fashion Toys in China

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ABSTRACT

As the global economic growth slows down and the development of the Internet, people tend to purchase more products with entertainment value; therefore, the era of e-commerce has begun, and fashion toys such as Labubu have spread worldwide. However, the pertinent problem, such as how to keep the toys popular for a long time since many items are becoming popular and forgotten every day, still exists. The study explores four different marketing strategies by various types of influencers on social media, aiming to understand the power of influencers on the Internet. This study argues that influencers play a crucial role in sustaining the popularity of fashion toys like Labubu by leveraging their reach and engagement to create lasting consumer interest. The paper conducts qualitative and quantitative methodologies, such as surveys for collecting data, content review of different marketing strategies of influencers from social media, and literature review. The research contributes to the debate of how influencers from social media can address consumer behavior and the decision to purchase.

Keywords: influencer, social media, marketing strategies, fashion toys, consumer behavior

Introduction

In recent years, China's fashion toy industry has experienced rapid growth, driven not only by product innovation but also by the rise of influencer-led digital marketing strategies. Among the most notable phenomena in this space is the emergence of the blind box market, a niche yet wildly popular segment characterised by surprise elements, collectible value, and intense emotional engagement (Haizhi, 2023). Digital platforms like Xiaohongshu and Douyin have played a pivotal role in shaping this consumer culture, providing fertile ground for content creators to engage users through trend-driven storytelling, unboxing content, and community interactions (Zhu & Ratasuk, 2024). As Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and Key Opinion

Consumers (KOCs) increasingly mediate the relationship between brands and audiences, understanding the dynamics of influencer marketing in this sector becomes essential.

While a growing body of literature examines how influencer strategies impact consumer behaviour, particularly regarding purchase intention and brand trust, most existing studies focus on short-term conversions or specific campaign outcomes (Cruz, 2025; Yang, 2024). However, in a market characterised by short product life cycles and rapid trend shifts, a critical challenge remains underexplored: *how can brands extend the popularity and relevance of fashion toys beyond their initial viral moment?* More specifically, how can influencer marketing be strategically designed to sustain consumer interest, reinforce brand affinity, and prolong the commercial lifespan of these ephemeral products?

This paper seeks to address this gap by offering a comprehensive process framework for designing and evaluating marketing strategies in the fashion toy industry. The study identifies key psychological, emotional, and strategic levers influencing short-term and long-term consumer engagement based on insights from three complementary research methods: literature review, content analysis, and a consumer survey.

The literature review provides a theoretical grounding in influencer marketing, consumer psychology, and product life cycle theory. At the same time, the content analysis of influencer-generated posts on Xiaohongshu and Douyin sheds light on real-time marketing practices and messaging patterns. The survey, conducted with 152 participants, adds empirical depth by capturing consumer perceptions of influencer credibility, product appeal, and brand trust in the context of fashion toys.

Based on this triangulated approach, the paper proposes a process framework that outlines how brands can:

1. Strategically position their products for initial market entry
2. Leverage platform-specific influencer tactics to enhance emotional connection
3. Sustain visibility and engagement through content cycles aligned with consumer expectations and psychological triggers

This framework provides actionable insights for marketers, content strategists, and product designers operating within fast-paced consumer markets. It also contributes to academic discourse by integrating platform-specific dynamics, emotional branding, and lifecycle marketing into a unified strategy model tailored for the Chinese fashion toy ecosystem. This research deepens our understanding of influencer marketing in a culturally specific context. **It**

offers a practical blueprint for brands aiming to transform viral appeal into sustained market presence in one of the world's most dynamic digital economies.

Methodology

This research examines the impact of social media influencers on consumers' toy purchasing decisions and how they sustain the popularity of fashion toys in China by studying marketing strategies on social media such as Xiaohongshu and Weibo. Since the topic involves consumer behavior and influencer effects, the research will adopt a mixed approach that blends qualitative content analysis and literature review with a quantitative survey. This design was chosen to understand the role of influencers on marketing strategies and analyze consumers' preferences, and aims to find a solution to keep the product's life cycle longer.

For the qualitative parts, it uses literature reviews and a content analysis. It focuses on analyzing the data of social media posts, blogs, ads, videos, or brand imagery. The research will collect about 20 recent posts by influencers with more than 50k followers related to toy purchases and toy pitching from social media, then analyze consumers' preferences for purchase decisions, and reveal strategic patterns in successful campaigns. The research will also collect 10 peer-reviewed articles on influencer marketing and consumer behavior for the literature review.

This study's target population mainly consists of females and males of all ages who live in urban or rural areas in China. For the quantitative part, the study conducted a structured online questionnaire to be distributed to 152 Chinese consumers to identify trends and determine what kind of promotion can truly appeal to them. The quantitative data from the survey will be analyzed using thematic analysis and tools like Excel for collecting data. Quantitative data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Data triangulation was employed to enhance the validity of the findings. Participants provided informed consent, and measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The chosen methodology is well-suited to exploring the impact of influencers on consumers' decisions, providing a comprehensive understanding through a mixed-methods approach.

Literature Review

This literature review aims to critically evaluate and synthesize existing research on the role of influencers in fashion toy marketing strategy, particularly in emerging markets. This study reviews previous research papers published during 2021~2025, based on the marketing strategies, gambling behavior, and selling background.

Table 1: Selected Literature Review

Study	Methods	Country	Factors	Findings
TW Whyke et al. 2023	Qualitative	China	- Surprise box - Probabilistic presumption	- The cultural production and meaning-making process undertaken by collectors - There is a 'blind box' consumption in China within globalization and the 'media-mix' fandom - Chinese are emerging adult sons who use, collect, and resell Blind Boxes.
Haizhi 2023	Qualitative	China	- Blind box products - 4P marketing theory - Marketing	- The 4P theory revealed that there was potential for innovation - Pop Mart needs to explore product innovation to ensure sustained success in the
			strategies	dynamic Beijing market - Distribution channels were effective, and exploring additional avenues could have broadened market coverage.
Yang 2024	Mixed methods	China	- Gambling behavior - Blind box consumption - Rational consumer behavior - Psychological allure	- Some people are into the psychological allure of surprise boxes - There are potential gambling risks associated with the growing trend of blind box consumption in China. - The trend of surprise boxes has created a booming demand that often outpaces supply
Lin 2024	Qualitative	China	- Surprise box - Consumer psychology - Purchasing behavior - Market problem	- Diversified marketing can effectively help the blind box economy achieve high-speed growth. - The rapid development of the economy is a double-edged sword. - It is necessary to strengthen supervision and crack down on this illegal behavior to protect market security and consumer rights.

Cruz et al. 2025	Qualitative	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blind box toys - Excitement - Repurchase intention - Stimulus-organism-response model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The blind box concept has emerged as an innovative marketing strategy. - The role of psychological and societal factors in shaping consumer behavior is evident in blind box products. - The blind box products introduce uncertainty into the purchasing process to stimulate sales.
Liu 2025	Qualitative	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4P marketing strategy - STP marketing strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The trendy toy market has entered a rapid growth phase. - was greatly influenced by digital information technology - Various brands are increasing their investment in trendy toys to meet the growing market demand.
Erdogan 2010	Quantitative	Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Celebrity Endorsement - Commercialize toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First, design strategies that help underpin competitive differential advantage for a firm's products or services - Celebrities serve not only to create and maintain attention, but also to achieve high recall
				rates for Marcos's messages in today's highly cluttered environment.
ŠMIT and ŠMIT 2021	Mixed methods	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business intelligence - Managers - Information - Data - Competitive advantage - Knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managers today encounter large amounts of data that do not mean much in the business process. - Some managers implement a separate business function or Business Intelligence section in developed countries
Ahn 2022	Quatitative	United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEO Advertising - Social media strategies - Influencer marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influencer marketing was powerful and alluring for most parents, but inappropriate for young children. - Popular media characters were limitedly discussed to attract young children.

Yan 2024	Mixed methods	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jellycat - Emotional promotion - Anthropomorphic toys - Social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jellycat’s anthropomorphic toys assist consumers experiencing stress and solitude during their social development by fostering emotional connections. - Jellycat harnesses the power of social media influencers to bolster brand recognition and foster customer loyalty.
Zhu and Ratasuk 2024	Mixed methods	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key Opinion Consumers - Purchase intention - Perceived risk - Customer trust - Social commerce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KOCs directly enhance purchase intention - Perceived risk negatively affects both purchase intention and customer trust - Customer trust plays a crucial role in bolstering purchase intention

The existing body of research on China’s fashion toy industry converges on its status as a rapidly expanding market, primarily fueled by advancements in digital technology. This growth is strategically orchestrated through established marketing frameworks, yet it is simultaneously tempered by significant psychological and ethical concerns that threaten its long-term sustainability.

Throughout the research on the fashion toy industry in China, the brands often utilizes marketing strategies such as “4Ps marketing” which is a foundational model that outlines four key elements: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, used to meet customer needs and achieve business goals, and STP marketing strategy which is a three-step approach that involves Segmenting the market, targeting specific customer groups, and positioning products to meet their needs (Liu, 2025) are identified as critical drivers. Haizhi investigated the potential for innovation with the 4P theory and revealed that there was also potential for innovation. Both of the studies mentioned above demonstrate that the market of fashion toys is entering a rapid growth era, which was caused by the development of digital technology.

Also, the fashion toys that sell as “blind boxes” contain gambling behavior (Yan, 2024). Surprise box is an organism's response mode; consumers can only know the series they buy instead of the exact product. According to Cruz et al, it is clear that the psychological and societal factors in blind box products are shaping consumer behavior. Therefore, the

gambling behavior and psychological behavior, as a double-edged sword (Lin, 2024), can only lead to a short period of high sales volume.

In conclusion, the current review further paints a picture of an industry at a crossroads. It identifies a significant gap in longitudinal studies assessing whether influencer strategies can convert short-term hype into sustained brand equity. Digital tools and sophisticated marketing strategies empower it.

Content Analysis

The evidence collected from social media, such as Xiaohongshu and Instagram, of fashion toys provides key insights for the study. The consumers of fashion toys are not only kids but also of all ages (Ahn, 2022); however, the dilemma of the fashion toy industry marketing strategies and its long-term effects on brand sustainability has yet to be systematically investigated. The following content analysis examines various product marketing strategies to motivate consumer purchasing. It examines how fashion toy brands use marketing content to influence consumer purchase intentions. Themes observed within the content analysis are further validated by surveys conducted with people of all ages. The detailed findings are shared below.

First, the rise of surprise boxes has redefined fashion toy collecting by merging into a more interactive and emotional consumption with psychological triggers, transforming it from a transactional activity into an emotionally charged experience. The companies design the toys as a series, such as Cry Baby, Labubu, and Jellycat, embedding them with key characteristics, backstories, and cultural motifs to satisfy the emotional needs of consumers (Figure 1). Take Crybaby, disclosed by its designer, as an example; the tearful figures serve as vessels for consumers to externalize depression, aligning with therapeutic consumption trends. The designer Nisa Srikumede (Molly Yolonda) had mentioned in an interview that she got inspired by the depression of the death of her dog Somchun and designed the whole Crybaby series for the people who are depressed; she hoped that people could put their sadness into Crybaby so they would not feel sad instead. Also, the company puts the toys individually into different boxes. It identifies them as surprise boxes or blind boxes, and consumers will never know which character they get, which inspires the consumers' curiosity and desire for the products. The "Secret Rare" setting in surprise boxes keeps the products' scarcity and raises their value. People need a lot of time and money to collect the whole series.

Figure 1: Blind Box Surprise Packaging



Second, the marketing success of modern toy series like Cry Baby, Labubu, and Jellycat is deeply linked with social media culture, where influencers and brands co-create value through a self-reinforcing promotional ecosystem (Liu, 2025). This dynamic operates as a symbolic exchange, as some series become popular in society, social media influencers can attract more attention by using the toy's hashtags and incorporating these elements into their content (Figure 2). For instance, the Labubu makeup challenge analyzed in Figure 2 resulted in 60.9K likes and 1040 comments. This phenomenon exemplifies platformed vitality that algorithms on

Xionghongshu, Douyin, and Bilibili will prioritize content featuring branded hashtags. Therefore, as more influencers post related videos and get enough attention from more views, the products also gain exponential exposure, and brands benefit from this organic promotion, as the constant stream of user-generated content reinforces the toys' desirability. The interaction between influencers and the products forms a virtuous cycle that leads more consumers to notice and purchase the products.

Figure 2: Influencer Marketing with Social Media



Third, celebrity influence in the collectible toy industry represents a powerful marketing mechanism that bridges parasocial relationships with consumer behavior (Erdogan, 2010). The celebrities, such as Lisa from Blackpink, Ningning from Asapa, actress Ju Jingyi, and Zhao Lusi, all possess a fashion toy, like Labubu and Molly, whether through organic social media posts and the cute outfit of the product or formal brand promotion, their actions generate measurable impacts on market demand and consumer trends. The phenomenon that the celebrities bring is called the “Celebrity effect”, which means the fans of those celebrities will follow their celebrities' behavior, so even though the celebrities just post one photo, their fans will still catch up on the items they have and imitate them by the psychological mechanism, contributing to the sales value. This “celebrity effect” operates through multiple channels, creating measurable impacts on market demand and consumer trends.

Figure 3: Celebrity Endorsement



Fourth, a component of contemporary toy marketing involves brand extension through diversified merchandise and experiential offerings for upselling, such as an official account and theme park (Figure 4 h can reinforce brand recognition and enhance emotional engagement with the brand by creating an immersive brand ecosystem. For example, the company of Labubu, Pop Mart, designed a Pop Mart theme park featuring their flagship characters like Labubu. People are attracted to the cute outfits of their toy, and increase its

exposure at the same time. Simultaneously, these companies engage in strategic co-branding initiatives, and the products that cooperate with Pop Mart will use the company's image to design their product. For example, people created the dental jewel in the image of Labubu. The merchandising approach mentioned above demonstrates how modern toy companies are redefining and overcoming brand boundaries by extending their IP into physical experiences and collaborative products.

Figure 4: Complimentary Merchandise for Upselling



The modern fashion toy industry has developed a sophisticated marketing ecosystem that strategically combines psychological triggers, digital culture, and celebrity influence to drive consumer demand. Brands usually create special mechanics, such as surprise boxes, to

motivate people’s curiosity and design products with special characteristics to make people recognize and remember them easily for upselling. Some of them will decide to cooperate with influencers or idols to promote their product. With the “Fan effect,” the fans will follow their celebrities' behavior, promoting the product.

Survey

Currently, everyone has access to the Internet, the influencers from social media also serve as a trigger to increase the sales volume, but it is still unknown what the impact of influencers and the Internet for regular consumers and how they affect consumers’ behavior.

Therefore, the research decides to utilize surveys to answer the questions above. To get the best feedback, the survey focuses on the people who use social media often.

The survey was created to be convenient and practical; people can scan the QR code or copy the study website to complete the questionnaire. One hundred fifty-two surveys cover males and females 18 to 45 years old to keep the results accurate and precise.

Table 2: Survey Questionnaire and Responses

<p>Hi! I am Lory Luo, an 11th-grade student at Ojai Valley School. Through this research, I will study and determine the impact and effectiveness of influencers from social media in the fashion toy industry to understand the consumer preference and perception towards social media marketing strategies concerning the fashion toy industry. Along with considering effectiveness, I intend to explore the experiences and challenges that consumers face and the factors that influence the success of fashion toy-oriented marketing. Please submit the survey form for academic purposes. I assure the confidentiality and security of your data. Thank you so much for helping me and my studies! Here is the link to the survey: https://www.wjx.cn/vm/OjvAaV2.aspx</p>		
Survey Questions	Options	% response
<p>1. How often do you use the following platforms: Weibo, Xiaohongshu, Douyin, Instagram, Twitter, Bilibili, and WeChat?</p>	<p>1. Never 2. Sometimes 3. Often 4. Frequently 5. Very frequently</p>	<p>1. 7.89% 2. 11.84% 3. 22.37% 4. 32.89% 5. 25%</p>
<p>2. Have you ever heard of toys like Labubu, Jellycat, or Crybaby?</p>	<p>1. Yes 2. No</p>	<p>1. 100% 2. 0%</p>
<p>3. If so, where did you hear those series from?</p>	<p>1. Social media 2. Friends recommendation 3. Other</p>	<p>1. 50% 2. 40.79% 3. 9.21%</p>

4. Have you ever purchased toys like Labubu, Jellycat, or Crybaby? If yes, did you purchase it online or at the store?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, Online 2. Yes, Physical Store 3. No 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 75% 2. 21.71% 3. 3.29%
5. How much do you agree with the following statements? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)		
5a. I trust toy recommendations from influencers on social media.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 13.82% 2. 7.89% 3. 26.32% 4. 25.66% 5. 26.32%
5b. Influencers on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong Disagree 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 12.5%
social media shape my opinion about toy quality.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. 10.53% 3. 26.32% 4. 25% 5. 25.66%
5c. I have bought a toy after seeing it promoted by an influencer.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 8.55% 2. 13.82% 3. 23.03% 4. 23.68% 5. 30.92%
5d. Influencer reviews help me compare different toy options.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 11.18% 2. 10.53% 3. 24.34% 4. 26.97% 5. 26.97%
5e. I prefer buying toys shown in real-life use by influencers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong Disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 9.87% 2. 10.53% 3. 26.97% 4. 26.97% 5. 25.66%

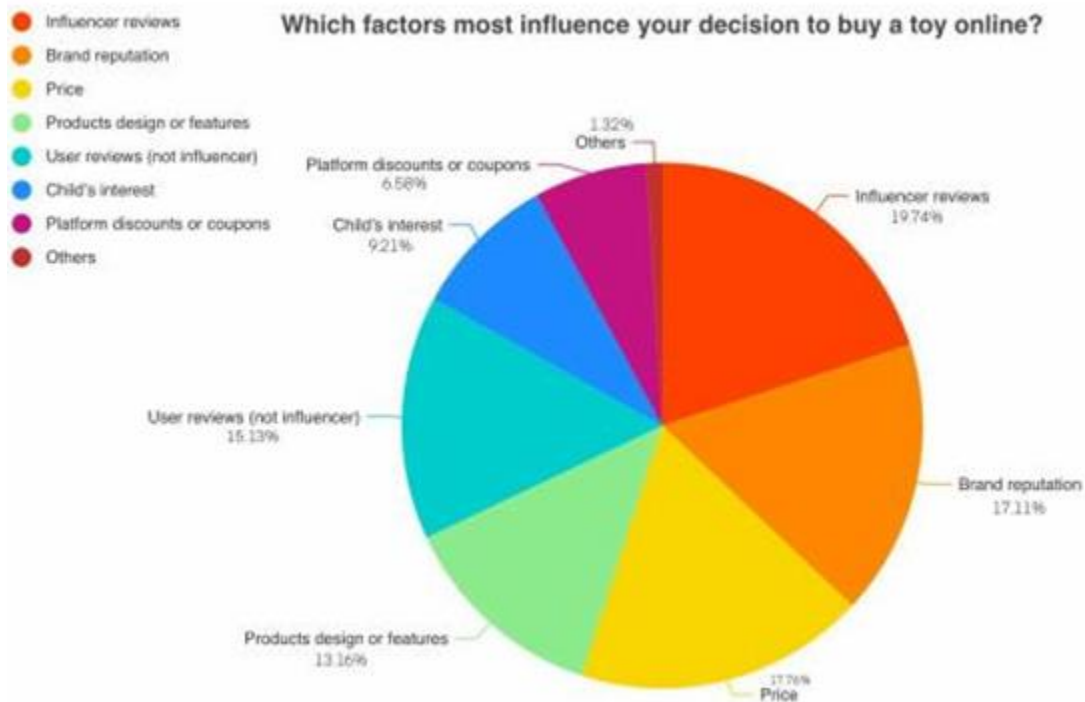
6. Which factors most influence your decision to buy a toy online?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Influencer reviews ● Brand reputation ● Price ● Product design or features ● User reviews (not influencer) ● Child's interest ● Platform discounts or coupons ● Other: 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 19.74% 2. 17.11% 3. 17.76% 4. 13.16% 5. 15.13% 6. 9.21% 7. 6.58% 8. 1.32%
7. Gender	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Female 2. Male 3. Others 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 49.34% 2. 50.66% 3. 0%
8 What is your age	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Under 18 2. 18-25 3. 25-30 4. 30-35 5. 35-40 6. Above 40 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4.47% 2. 7.89% 3. 27.63% 4. 60% 5. 0% 6. 0%
9. Do you have children under the age of 12?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, I do 2. No, I don't 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 43.42% 2. 56.58%
10. Monthly Household Income (RMB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Less than ¥5,000 ● ¥5,000 – ¥9,999 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1.32% 2. 26.32%
(Optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ¥10,000 – ¥19,999 ● ¥20,000 – ¥29,999 ● ¥30,000 or more ● Prefer not to say 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. 34.87% 4. 8.55% 5. 5.26% 6. 23.68%

The survey above provides insight into people's social media preferences and their impact on their purchase decisions in China. By analyzing consumer behavior, social media preferences, such as the videos they are interested in, and demographics, the research examines the factors and different kinds of influencers shaping consumers' choices and satisfaction. According to the 8th question, half of the respondents were female and half male, from under 18 to 35 years old, which means the accuracy of the data.

The survey mainly focuses on several ideas about the online habits of people who participated in the survey. A notable finding is that only 7.89% of people have never used social media, which points out that social media has become a part of life for highly attached to 92.11% of people, showing the importance of social media for most people, which implies how widespread social media is. Surprisingly, 100% of people have heard of the fashion toy brands and series such as Labubu from Pop Mart, 50% of them heard it from influencers on social media, and 75% of people have purchased those products online. This data indicates the power of the Internet and how widespread it is among people.

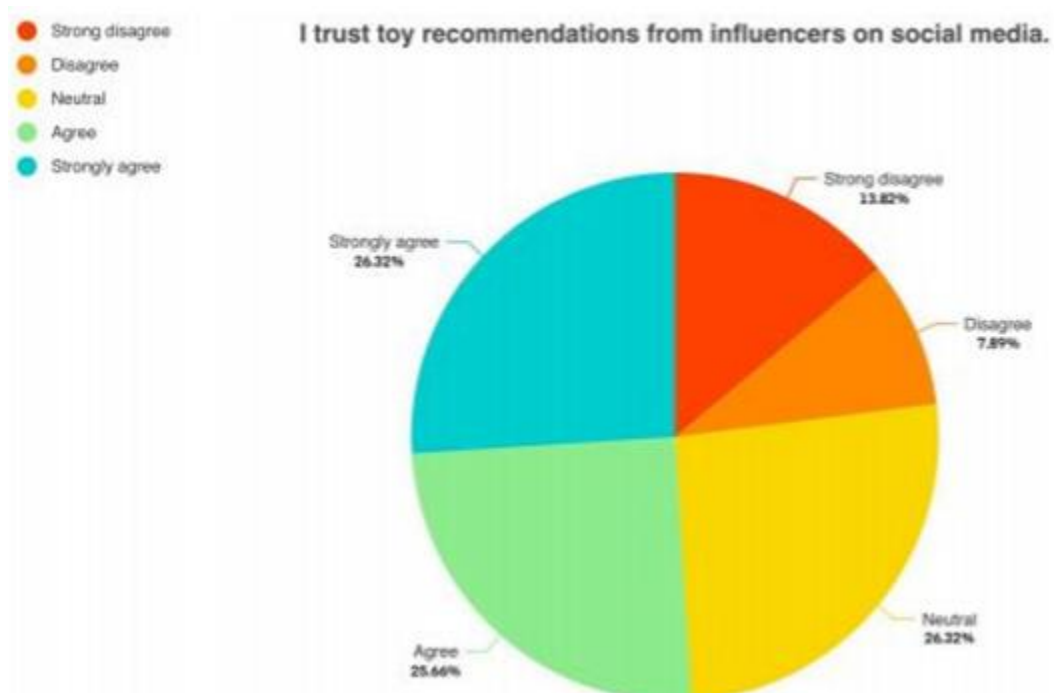
Through question 6 and careful data analysis (figure 5), influencer review emerged as one of the most critical factors in why people purchase online, with 19.74% participants choosing that it was essential for them to. It highlights the different behavior of people before purchasing, showing the distinct factors that most influence participants' decisions to buy a toy online. The price and brand reputation are also significant factors in consumer behavior, as indicated by 17.56% and 17.76%, which can also be considered factors that companies should consider before selling the products. The data above suggests that people pay more attention to the texture and price before purchasing a toy online.

Figure 5: The factors influencing a consumer's decision to buy a toy online



Based on question 5 (from a to e), the respondents answer the condition of influencers' reliability for themselves. It indicates that 26.32% strongly agree, while 25.66% agree. In comparison, 26.32% of people stood neutral, and the rest chose to disagree and strongly disagree. The strongly agree, agree, and neutral data show high proximity, with the neutral category being the highest at 26.32%. The data points out that small groups still have concerns about toy recommendations from influencers. This result reflects that people will consult the toy from influencers on social media.

Figure 6: Trust for toy recommendations from influencers on social media



The survey also asked about participants' monthly household income (RMB). Besides the people who chose to prefer not to say, most people's income is between 10000 RMB to 19999 RMB, which accounts for 34.87%; next is between 5000 RMB to 10000 RMB, which accounts for 26.32%. The data on people's income can be a reference for toy brands and toy companies to set the price.

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Correlation and regression analyses develop the relationships between key variables related to fashion toy products consumption and consumer purchasing behavior. They aim to look for the vital connection and possible influences on fashion toy consumption, the advertisement on social media, and the "celebrity effect". The relationships between variables were examined

using a correlation analysis, which quantified the strength and direction of their associations through the correlation coefficient (r) in Table 2. Furthermore, a regression analysis was used to identify significant predictors of fashion toy choices.

Correlation

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Variable pair	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Standard error value	Interpretation
I trust toy recommendations from influencers on social media, and Influencers on social media shape my opinion about toy quality.	0.987	3.852 and 3.485	There is a strong positive correlation between the two variables, proving that the level of trust in toy recommendations from social media influencers positively influences toy quality.
I have bought a toy after seeing it promoted by an influencer, and Influencer reviews help me compare different toy options.	0.924	3.945 and 3.485	The data shows a strong positive correlation, reflecting that the more people who buy toys due to influencer promotions, the more they tend to use influencer reviews to compare different toys.
Influencer reviews help me compare different toy options, and I prefer buying toys shown in real-life use by influencers.	0.984	3.765 and 4.009	The data indicates a strong positive correlation between “influencer reviews helping me compare different toy options” and “preferring to buy toys shown in real-life use by influencers. ”

I trust toy recommendations from social media influencers, and I have bought a toy after seeing it promoted by an influencer.	0.837	3.852 and 3.945	There is a relatively obvious positive correlation: people who trust influencer recommendations are likelier to place an order due to promotions.
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The correlation analysis explored the strength and direction of relationships between variables associated with fashion toy consumption and behavior. A robust positive correlation emerged for “I trust toy recommendations from influencers on social media” and its corresponding positive correlation ($r=0.924$). For “I have bought a toy after seeing it promoted by an influencer, and influencer reviews help me compare different toy options,” there is a strong positive correlation ($r=0.924$), reflecting that more people exhibit such behaviors.

Regarding “Influencer reviews help me compare different toy options and I prefer buying toys shown in real-life use by influencers”, a robust positive correlation holds ($r=0.984$). In contrast, there is a relatively strong correlation between “I trust toy recommendations from influencers on social media and I have bought a toy after seeing it promoted by an influencer” ($r=0.837$)

In conclusion, these findings reveal significant connections between influencer exposure and consumer behavior patterns.

Regression

Model	R-squared	Coefficient	Standard Error	Interpretation
I trust toy recommendations from social media influencers and	0.975	0.838	8.219	The high R—R-squared (0.975) shows a strong fit, meaning trust in influencers’ toy recommendations closely links to actual purchase behavior. The positive coefficient (0.838) confirms a direct, positive

bought a toy after seeing it promoted by an influencer.				relationship—trusting recommendations significantly predict buying toys after seeing influencer promotions. Socially, it proves influencers 'power to "convert trust into sales" for toys, making them key for brands to drive purchases via credible endorsements.
Influencers on social media shape my opinion about toy quality, and Influencer reviews help me compare different toy options	0.963	0.981	7.648	With an R—squared of 0.963, the model explains most of the variance in the relationship. The coefficient (0.981) highlights that as influencers shape quality perceptions, they also effectively guide comparison-based decisions. Practically, influencers act as "virtual product experts" for toys—their reviews simplify choice overload, so brands should partner with influencers to showcase quality metrics (durability, safety) to aid consumer comparisons.
Influencers on social media shape my opinion about toy quality and I prefer buying toys shown in real-life use by influencers.	0.98	0.98	7.919	A near-perfect squared (0.98) and coefficient (0.98) reveal a powerful connection. It shows influencers ' real-life toy demonstrations do not just build quality beliefs but directly drive purchase preference. For brands, this means "authenticity sells"—featuring toys in relatable, real - use influencer content (e.g., unboxing, play scenarios) boosts perceived quality and desire to buy, as consumers trust "seen - in - action" value.

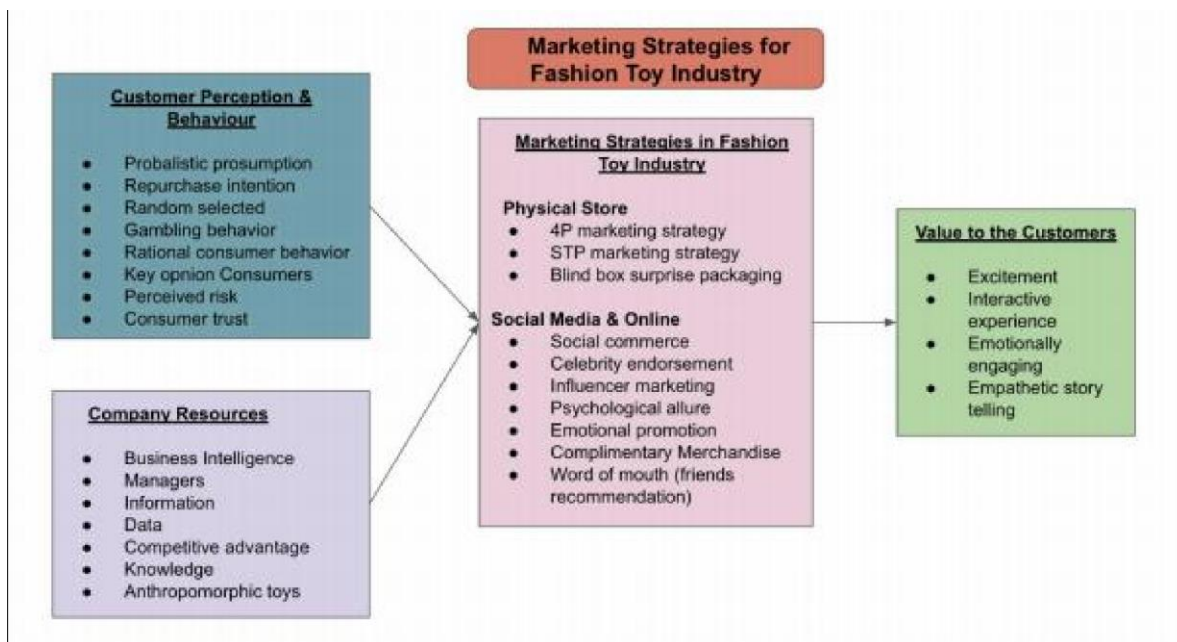
A regression analysis is performed to explore the connections between influencers on social media and consumer purchasing behavior. The results highlight social media influencers' significant impact on toy purchasing behavior and consumer perceptions. Trust in influencer recommendations strongly predicts actual toy purchases, with a high R-squared value of 0.975 and a positive coefficient of 0.838. Influencers also effectively shape opinions on toy quality and aid in comparing different options, as evidenced by an R-squared of 0.963 and a coefficient of 0.981. Furthermore, real-life demonstrations by influencers directly drive

purchase preference, shown by a near-perfect R-squared and a coefficient of 0.98. This suggests that authenticity and "seen-in-action" value are key drivers for consumer trust and buying decisions in the toy market.

Discussion

The insights gathered from the literature review, content analysis, and survey data aim to help understand the key challenges for keeping fashion toys developing and sustaining a high sales volume in the long term in China. This information and data created the framework diagram below.

Figure 1: Process Framework for Marketing Strategy for Fashion Toys



The framework identified customer behavior and corporate resources, which consequently influenced diverse marketing strategies, such as physical retail outlets and online stores. These strategies generate varying degrees of value for consumers, including excitement, interactive experiences, emotional engagement, and empathetic storytelling.

The customer perception and behavior chart enumerates several factors, including probabilistic assumptions, repurchase intentions, random selection, gambling behaviors, rational consumer conduct, Key Opinion Consumers (KOCs), perceived risks, and consumer trust. These elements assist in determining appropriate marketing strategies. The company resources chart lists the essential assets the organization must consider, such as business

intelligence, management personnel, information, data, competitive advantages, knowledge, and anthropomorphic toys (ŠMIT and ŠMIT, 2021).

With the advent of the Internet, social media has interconnected individuals globally, giving rise to influencers, the live streaming industry, and countless small enterprises. In the digital era, the most expedient and effective method to market a product involves engaging an influencer with a substantial follower base for promotion. Evidently, this approach proves successful across a broad spectrum of products, fostering the perception that social media promotion guarantees swift sales. For instance, the Zhuanzhuan application facilitates buying and selling second-hand phones, and Guazi specializes in pre-owned vehicles. Presently, nearly every Chinese smartphone user is familiar with these two applications, primarily due to the companies' extensive promotional efforts. Virtually every influencer encountered on Chinese social media has endorsed these platforms.

As illustrated by the examples above, social media promotion is arguably the most effective strategy for product sales. Nevertheless, this approach is not devoid of risks and disadvantages. Blanket influencer marketing functions as an accelerant in the traffic era; while it offers rapid short-term growth, reliance on such tactics may result in high costs coupled with low efficiency. Sustainable growth, especially for high-priced, long-decision-cycle products such as used cars, necessitates vertical trust-building and consumer education.

Turning to fashion toys, influencer promotion on social media may be effective in the short term by significantly increasing product recognition. However, as time progresses, new products quickly replace older ones, which then fade from public consciousness—similar to products that were popular three years ago often being forgotten. Consequently, extending the product life cycle emerges as a vital component of the overall marketing strategy.

The Labubu series by Pop Mart is regarded as one of the most influential fashion toy lines globally. Designed by Kasing Lung in Hong Kong, Labubu is depicted as a small, mischievous creature covered in fuzzy fur, with a broad grin filled with tiny, sharp teeth. According to its background story, Labubu belongs to a group known as "The Monsters." This monster family inhabits a mysterious forest, distant from human civilization, embodying childlike wonder and imagination. The narrative surrounding Labubu evokes nostalgia and aims to forge a memorable connection beyond mere toy appreciation.

Furthermore, brands must imbue their products with depth to transcend their status as mere toys. Strategic collaborations and limited editions with cultural significance are essential. Collaborations with artists, fashion designers, museums, or traditional cultural institutions

can enhance the product's narrative and artistic value, aligning with the brand's core identity and target audience.

Implication

This study empirically contributes to the existing academic studies as it has analyzed the impact of social media marketing on the toy industry, a marketplace focused on all ages, instead of only for kids. The previous study claimed that with the decline in consumption, the increasing pressure of life, and the fast-paced environment brought by the internet, consumers are now more inclined to focus on the emotional value that products bring, rather than just their cost-effectiveness. The research combines academic studies with industry reports. It brings together an analysis of privacy data and a new collection of data to better understand how social media is related to the marketing strategy of the toy industry and stimulates consumer purchasing.

Previous studies have researched the marketing strategy of the toy industry and consumer behavior, but very few studies have mentioned the impact of influencer online on consumers. Also, most past studies only focused on one country and often overlooked the cultural differences, which can lead to different results. This research brings all these aspects together, narrowing down finding across the world and all ages, and aims to cover these perspectives.

The findings relate to businesses, influencers, and toy designers. The research on influencers' roles in the toy industry and what companies can do to attract consumers shows how consumers make decisions and how their opinions may change. This is valuable information for the future of the toy industry. This study analyzes the role of influencers in selling products by showing how they change or help consumers make product decisions. It also indicates how social media and influencers can give businesses another way to promote their products.

Limitations and Future Directions

During the research process, the inevitable obstacles and limitations are hard to overcome; thus, this study recognizes the possible disadvantages that may reflect the generalization of its findings.

One of the study's limitations is the survey. The data from the survey most likely applies to only a small group, which is 152 people. It may not fully capture the diverse perspectives of fashion toy consumers in China. It possesses a risk of selection bias of certain

people or specific brands, which makes the relevance of the results to other fashion toys questionable and leads to data inaccuracy.

Another limitation is the limited sample. The study focuses on a narrow selection of fashion toy brands, such as Labubu and Crybaby, which could overlook other challenges faced by other brands in the market. For instance, the brands besides Labubu might encounter different barriers and need a unique solution depending on the conditions to extend their product life cycles.

To better address these limitations, studies in the future could go beyond the brands besides Labubu and other popular brands by investigating a wider range of fashion toy brands to assess and evaluate the diverse marketing strategies on social media that influence their life cycles. Additionally, longitudinal studies could explore how platform-specific trends sustain consumer engagement. Such efforts would deepen the understanding of social media's power in revitalizing fashion toys across China's dynamic digital landscape.

Conclusion

The study utilizes qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including regression analysis, and has focused on aspects that previous studies did not mention. The paper aims to extend the life span of fashion toy products since their popularity could only last a few months. The regression results revealed significant factors influencing consumer engagement and product longevity, providing deeper insights into effective marketing strategies. The study also analyzed multiple marketing strategies for fashion toys through content analysis. Additionally, a survey was conducted to collect new data from diverse participants to examine how social media influences consumer behavior.

The framework of this study consists of various aspects, each serving to enrich the discussion on the factors that go into the marketing strategies of fashion toys. These aspects include consumer perception and behavior, company resources, marketing strategies, and value to consumers. Through surveys, content analysis, literature review, and regression analysis, valuable insights were extracted from customers and the brands of fashion toys.

In conclusion, this study considers its limitations but also opens up new avenues for future researchers and entrepreneurs to explore the intricacies of expanding a product's lifespan, supported by the regression findings that highlight key predictors of consumer engagement.

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