

**THE ROLE OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY IN THE MARKETING
STRATEGIES OF POP MART IN THAILAND**

RAWIPHAT CHAROENWIWATCHAI

**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT
COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2024**

COPYRIGHT OF MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY

Thematic paper
entitled
**THE ROLE OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY IN
THE MARKETING STRATEGIES OF POP MART IN THAILAND**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University
for the degree of Master of Management

on
25 August 2024



Rawiphat Charoenwiwatchai

Mr. Rawiphat Charoenwiwatchai
Candidate

Winai Wongsurawat

Assoc. Prof. Winai Wongsurawat,
Ph.D.
Advisor

Nathasit Gerd Sri

Assoc. Prof. Nathasit Gerd Sri,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

Vichita Ractham

Assoc. Prof. Vichita Ractham,
Ph.D.
Acting Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

Kittisak Jermstittiparsert

Prof. Kittisak Jermstittiparsert,
Ph.D.
Committee member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Winai Wongsurawat, Ph.D., for guidance, insightful advice, and kind support throughout the researching and writing process of this thematic paper. His expertise and encouragement have been invaluable in guiding me along the journey until the completion of this study.

I would also like to express my special thanks to two interviewees who sacrificed their time, giving profound experiences and great contributions to this research. My appreciation should also go to my friends at College of Management, Mahidol University, and family for their unrelenting support throughout my academic journey. Their continuous assistance has been a root of my strength, empowering me during challenging times.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to myself, Mr. Rawiphath Charoenwiwatchai, for the commitment, perseverance, and hard work in completing this thematic paper. I am proud of the effort and determination I have put into this successful paper.

Rawiphath Charoenwiwatchai

THE ROLE OF CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY IN THE MARKETING STRATEGIES OF POP MART IN THAILAND

RAWIPHAT CHAROENWIWATCHAI 6549104

M.M. (GERERAL MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASSOC. PROF. WINAI WONGSURAWAT, Ph.D., ASSOC. PROF. NATHASIT GERDSRI, Ph.D., PROF. KITTISAK JERMSITTIPARSERT, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Currently, art toys have become a booming market around the world, with significant popularity in Thailand. Valued for their limited editions and creative designs, these toys attract diverse collectors. However, the specific consumer psychology that drives the success of companies like POP MART remains underexplored. This study then aims at investigating how POP MART leverages consumer psychology to enhance its marketing success in Thailand, including creating exclusivity and excitement, engaging customers through unique experiences, and offering the affordable luxury with nostalgia.

By interviewing two art toy collectors and reviewing existing interviews with POP MART executives and designers, the study reveals how POP MART's strategies, such as limited editions and surprise "blind box" toys, create sense of urgency and repeat purchases. Their physical stores offer an engaging experience that online shopping cannot replace, and their pricing strategy makes high-quality toys seem like affordable luxuries. Nostalgia also plays a key role, as adult collectors are attracted to toys that evoke childhood memories. The recommendations to POP MART include releasing more limited editions, expanding product lines, and adopting sustainable practices to further boost customer engagement and loyalty.

KEY WORDS: POP MART / ART TOYS / CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY / BLIND BOX

27 Pages

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Research Objectives	3
1.4 Research Questions	4
1.5 Expected Outcomes	4
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 POP MART's Marketing Strategies	5
2.2 Consumer Psychology	6
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	9
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS ANALYSIS	13
4.1 Marketing Mix	13
4.2 Adoption of Consumer Psychology in Marketing Strategy	15
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	22
5.1 Conclusion	22
5.2 Limitations of the Study	23
5.3 Recommendations	24
REFERENCES	25
BIOGRAPHY	27

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Art toys, also known as designer toys or urban vinyl, have their origins in the 1990s, when artists began creating limited-edition toys as a form of artistic expression. Collectors highly value art toys, which are typically created in limited quantities as compared to common mass-produced toys. They are designed by artists, often feature unique and artistic designs, and are sometimes handcrafted. The movement began in Asia, particularly in Japan and Hong Kong, where artists like Raymond Choy, a famous Hong Kong artist who has been a pioneer of art toy since 1995, made the first art toy collection called "The Qee Keychain Collection," an art toy that was designed similar to the human body but replaced with a head of animals like a bear, cat, rabbit, and monkey under the brand "Toy2R.". That was the key starting point for introducing art toys internationally. Four years later, Michael Lau, a Hong Kong artist and designer, showcased his Gardeners series, which is inspired by the G.I. Joe movies but transforms the characters into eye-catching tattoos with ear piercings and carrying skateboards. This combination of pop culture and street lifestyle makes it more accessible to people (NAENOII, 2024). Moreover, a company such as Medicom Toy, famous for the art toy called "Bearbrick," is also one of the examples of how art toys started to gain attention. Over time, the popularity of art toys spread globally, becoming a significant niche market that attracts collectors, artists, and enthusiasts alike.

In Thailand, the art toy culture has expanded significantly over the past decade. Initially, the market was small, with only a few collectors and a limited number of products. However, as globally trends in art toys began to spread into Thailand, local interest increased. Art toy exhibitions, conventions, and stores dedicated to designer toys started popping up in major cities such as Bangkok. Social media and celebrity endorsements reinforced this excitement, making art toys more accessible and attractive

to a wider audience. The Thai market, once considered a niche, has expanded rapidly, reflecting the global fascination with these collectible items.

The demographic of art toy collectors in Thailand has changed dramatically. At first, collectors were mostly young adults and teenagers who were especially interested in subcultures such as anime, manga, and street art. However, throughout time, this group has grown to consist of people of all ages and backgrounds. Nowadays, collectors can include professionals, parents, and even older adults who have developed a passion for these unique collectibles. The motivations for collecting have also diversified, moving beyond just a hobby enthusiasm to include social status representation and investment potential.

The objectives of buying art toys have expanded from personal enjoyment and collection to more complex motivations. Originally, people collected art toys because of their appealing looks and unique editions and characters. However, as the market expanded, the reasons for collecting them changed and widened. Today, many collectors view art toys as a form of social currency, using them to signal taste, wealth, and social status. Additionally, art toys have gained recognition as valuable investment items. Limited-edition pieces, especially those created by renowned artists, can appreciate in value over time, making them attractive assets for both investors and collectors.

POP MART, a leading player in the art toy market, has made a significant impact in Thailand. The company is known for its wide array of characters and its innovative marketing strategies, which have captured the imagination of Thai consumers. The outstanding turning point of POP MART's success in the country is the character "Labubu," which gained huge popularity after being adopted by Thai and international celebrities, especially Lisa from BLACKPINK girl group. The endorsement by high-profile people has not only boosted the brand's visibility but also its status as a desirable and trendy collectible item.

POP MART's success can also be attributed to its diverse range of offerings. The company provides a variety of characters, from well-known, beloved figures to newly designed collections. This variety caters to different tastes and preferences, ensuring that there is something for every collector. The blind box model, where consumers purchase a box without knowing the specific toy inside, adds an element of

surprise and excitement, further driving consumer engagement and repeat purchases. The company's strategy of frequent collaborations with artists and brands also introduces fresh and unique designs, keeping the product line exciting and dynamic.

The history and evolution of art toys in Thailand, coupled with changing collector demographics and motivations, set the stage for understanding POP MART's strategic exploitation of consumer psychology. By leveraging elements of exclusivity, excitement, and nostalgia, POP MART has successfully broadened its appeal and created a compelling brand experience. The company's ability to offer a wide variety of characters and maintain a high level of consumer engagement has solidified its position in the Thai market. This study aims to delve deeper into these strategies that POP MART takes advantage of human psychology to exploit Thailand's market.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing popularity and success of POP MART in Thailand, there is a limited understanding of its marketing success relating to psychological strategies. While general marketing principles are widely studied, the combination of psychological triggers employed by POP MART remains underexplored. The increasing popularity of POP MART among the Thai market reflects the unique business strategy that is interesting to explore more.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the strategic use of consumer psychology in POP MART's marketing efforts in Thailand. Specifically, this study aims to:

- 1) Identify the psychological principles and strategies used by POP MART to create a sense of exclusivity and excitement among consumers.
- 2) Examine the role of physical retail experiences in enhancing consumer engagement and loyalty.
- 3) Explore how POP MART promotes the concept of affordable luxury to attract a broad demographic.

- 4) Investigate the ways in which POP MART urges childhood nostalgia to appeal to adult consumers.
- 5) Provide insights into the effectiveness of these strategies based on data from interviews with art toy collectors and existing insights from industry experts.

1.4 Research Questions

How does consumer psychology drive POP MART's marketing success in Thailand?

1.5 Expected Outcomes

This study is expected to portray an in-depth analysis of the consumer psychological strategies adopted by POP MART in its marketing implementation. The findings will offer valuable insights into how POP MART creates a distinct brand experience that drives consumer engagement and loyalty. Additionally, this study aims to contribute to the academic study on consumer psychology and marketing, providing a case study that highlights the practical application of psychological theory in real-world scenarios. For the general public, the insights gained from this study can inform the development of effective marketing strategies that leverage consumer psychology to achieve business success.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 POP MART's Marketing Strategies

POP MART is a current leading brand in the art toy industry who offers innovative and unique products. Starting in 2010 from China, the company is able to expand its branches and reputation internationally and become a key player in the art toy market. The main reason for POP MART's success is its strategic marketing methods, which combine traditional retail experiences with consumer psychology theory. The company stands out in the market due to its various product offerings, effective pricing strategies, and physical stores.

2.1.1 Marketing Mix

One of the basic tools for marketers or businesses to plan a strategy is “marketing mix.” The theory was originally initiated by Professor James Culliton, a Marketing Professor at Harvard University in 1948, then developed by Jerome McCarthy with the famous 4Ps elements, namely Product, Price, Placement, and Promotion. This concept facilitates the business to focus on how to promote their product and service with the right strategy that matches with the target group (*Marketing Mix and The 7 Ps of Marketing*, n.d.). The details of each framework are as follows:

2.1.1.1 Product or service

This element refers to the goods and services that a business offers to the customers. Key aspects of this model include design, quality, features, options, packaging, and market positions. Focusing on the product helps the business ensure that they provide the right thing that meets the needs of consumers.

2.1.1.2 Price

Price is one of the factors that customers consider before buying any products or services. A suitable pricing strategy is also significant for the business as it contributes to the company's revenue. Therefore, pricing strategies employed by

each company for each product are different. The well-known strategies include penetration pricing, cost-plus pricing, competitive pricing, price skimming, and value-based pricing (*The 5 Most Common Pricing Strategies*, n.d.).

2.1.1.3 Placement

This framework refers to where the product is distributed or service is available, for example, distribution channels, including a delivery process to the destination such as warehouses, transportation, and distributors (*What Is Place in the Marketing Mix?*, 2023).

2.1.1.4 Promotion

This framework shows the communication style of the business with consumers, influencing them to be interested in and buy its products and services. Promotion strategies vary from sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing, to public relations. The promotion channels consist of social media, television, websites, emails, etc. (*What Is Promotion in the Marketing Mix?*, 2023).

2.2 Consumer Psychology

Consumer psychology is the study of how thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and perceptions influence how people buy and relate to goods and services (Cherry, 2023). Understanding consumer psychology is significant for marketers, as it helps them design strategies that effectively meet the needs and desires of their target audience, leading to sales increasing and brand loyalty enhancement.

2.2.1 Psychological Triggers in Marketing

According to wisernotify, psychological triggers in marketing are strategies designed to influence consumer behavior by appealing to their emotions, perceptions, and cognitive biases (Vaghasiya, 2023). These triggers can make products and services more attractive and persuasive, driving sales and increasing customer loyalty. Below are key psychological triggers used in marketing:

2.2.1.1 Scarcity

The scarcity concept indicates that people perceive items that are rare or limited with higher value than general products. This model takes advantage

of the fear of missing out (FOMO) concept, urging consumers to make quicker purchasing decisions to avoid missing out on an opportunity. For instance, brands launch limited-edition products to create a sense of urgency among target customers.

2.2.1.2 Social Proof

Social proof is based on the idea that people look to others' actions and behaviors to guide their own. This trigger relies on the influence of peers, reviews, and endorsements to validate a product or service. For instance, platforms like Amazon highlight product ratings and reviews from other customers, helping potential buyers make informed decisions.

2.2.1.3 Emotional and Identity Triggers

Emotional and identity triggers aim to connect with consumers on a personal level, appealing to their feelings, values, and sense of self. Marketing with emotional attraction can create strong, lasting connections and brand loyalty. For instance, brands use storytelling to make their products connect with customers' identities and past experiences.

2.2.1.4 Enhancing Customer Experience

Creating positive and memorable customer experiences can significantly boost satisfaction and loyalty. A well-designed customer journey can turn casual buyers into repeat customers. For instance, features like interactive displays, augmented reality apps, or engaging packaging designs make the purchasing process more enjoyable and memorable.

2.2.1.5 Exclusivity and Status Triggers

Exclusivity and status trigger consumers' desires to feel unique and superior. Products or services perceived as exclusive or high-status attract consumers who seek to differentiate themselves from others. For instance, encouraging customers to share their exclusive or limited-edition purchases on social media enhances the perceived status of owning the product and generates social validation.

Psychological triggers are essential tools in marketing, helping to shape consumer behavior and enhance the effectiveness of marketing strategies. By leveraging scarcity, social proof, emotional and identity triggers, enhancing customer experiences, and appealing to exclusivity and status, brands like POP MART can create emotionally

resonant marketing campaigns. These strategies not only drive immediate sales but also build deep emotional connections with consumers, enhancing long-term loyalty and engagement.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the research question: "How does consumer psychology drive POP MART's marketing success in Thailand?". It provides the details of the data collection methods, which include primary and secondary research, sample selection, interview process, and data analysis. The study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on in-depth interviews with two art toy collectors and including secondary research to gain insights into the psychological triggers influencing their buying behavior.

3.1 Data Collection Methods

Data collected for this research comprise primary and secondary research with details as follows:

3.1.1 Primary Research

Primary data is collected through interviews with two art toy collectors in Thailand. This method allows for a flexible yet focused exploration of the participants' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to their interactions with POP MART products.

3.1.1.1 Interview Questions

The interview questions are designed to uncover the psychological triggers that drive the participants' purchasing decisions. Key topics covered include:

1. Perceptions of Exclusivity and Scarcity:
 - How do you feel about limited-edition releases from POP MART?
 - Do you often buy POP MART products because they are exclusive or rare?
 - Can you describe your emotions when you acquire a rare and secret POP MART toy?

2. Social Proof and Community Influence:

- How does the POP MART collector community influence your purchasing decisions?
- Do you participate in social media groups about POP MART? How does this affect your buying behavior?
- Have you ever bought a POP MART toy because of a recommendation or trend within the community?

3. Nostalgia and Emotional Connection:

- Do POP MART toys remind you of your childhood? How important is this factor in your decision to buy?
- Can you share any specific memories or emotions linked to your collection of POP MART toys?

4. Perception of Value and Affordability:

- How do you perceive the value of POP MART toys in relation to their price?
- Do you consider POP MART toys a luxury item? Why or why not?
- How does the pricing strategy of POP MART influence your purchasing behavior?

5. Shopping Experience:

- Do you prefer buying POP MART toys in physical stores or online? Why?
- How does the in-store experience at POP MART influence your decision to purchase?

3.1.1.2 Sample Selection

The study focuses on two art toy collectors in Thailand who have experience with POP MART products. The selection criteria include:

1. Collectors who have been purchasing POP MART toys for at least one year.
2. Individuals who actively engage in the POP MART collector community, either online or offline.
3. Participants who have made multiple purchases so that they can provide detailed insights into their buying behaviors and motivations.

As a result, two art toy collectors comprise:

1. Firstly, a male graphic designer who has been collecting over 300 art toys for 10 years. His long-term engagement with the hobby and collection size can provide valuable insights into how Pop Mart's strategies appeal to seasoned collectors. His professional background in graphic design allows for a deeper understanding of the artistic elements that drive his purchasing decisions, making him an ideal interviewee to discuss the influence of Pop Mart's collaboration with artists and the aesthetic appeal of their products.
2. Secondly, a female dentist who has over 50 art toys and has been collecting for 3 years. She represents a different segment of the market or individuals who are newer to collecting and view art toys as both a hobby and a potential investment. Her motivations include social status and investment, making her an interesting interviewee to discuss how Pop Mart's marketing strategies leverage the concepts of affordable luxury, exclusivity, and social proof to attract and retain customers who are not traditional toy collectors.

3.1.1.3 Interview Process

The interviews are conducted in a semi-structured format, resulting in flexibility to explore new insights as they emerge. Each interview lasts approximately 60–90 minutes and is conducted via video call or Zoom application. The details of both interviews include:

1. Person A's interview took place on 9 June 2024 from 11.00 to 12.00, or around 60 minutes.
2. Person B's interview took place on 10 June 2024 from 14.00 to 15.30, or around 90 minutes.

3.1.2 Secondary Research

Secondary research involves analyzing existing data, studies, and interviews conducted by others. In this study, secondary research sources include existing interviews with POP MART executives, character designers, and collectors.

Overall, this chapter has outlined the research methodology used to explore how consumer psychology drives POP MART's marketing success in Thailand. By using qualitative methods and conducting in-depth interviews with art toy collectors,

the study will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of POP MART's marketing strategies relating to consumer psychology's role in the art toy marketing strategy.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS ANALYSIS

This chapter provides the analysis of marketing strategy employed by POP MART based on the marketing mix framework, including the adoption of “consumer psychology” theory in the strategy through data collection from interviews with two art toy collectors as well as existing interviews with POP MART executives, one character designer, and collectors. With all the data gathering, it can be observed that POP MART has adopted the consumer psychology elements into its strategy, such as exclusivity and excitement, tangible retail experiences, affordable luxury, and nostalgia for childhood. Below is the essence of its marketing strategy as well as how these psychological triggers have been effectively utilized to drive POP MART's success.

4.1 Marketing Mix

POP MART's marketing strategy in Thailand can be analyzed based on the marketing mix framework, which includes Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Each component is utilized to align with consumer psychology. The details are as follows:

4.1.1 Product

4.1.1.1 Variety and Exclusivity

POP MART offers a wide range of products, including limited edition and exclusive collections. This variety will match the different tastes and preferences of consumers, ensuring that there is something for every collector. The exclusivity of certain items creates a sense of urgency and desirability among consumers, related to the psychological trigger of scarcity.

4.1.1.2 Quality and Design

The high quality and unique design of POP MART's products enhance their appeal as collectible items. Each figure is carefully created with attention

to detail, making them not just toys but pieces of art. Collaborations with famous artists and designers further elevate the brand's prestige.

4.1.1.3 Blind Box Experience

The blind box model is a core strength of POP MART's product strategy. Consumers purchase a box without knowing which figure they will receive, adding an element of surprise and excitement. This model not only drives repeat purchases as consumers seek to complete their collections but also leverages the psychological thrill of unboxing and the possibility of discovering a rare and secret item.

4.1.2 Price

4.1.2.1 Affordable Luxury

POP MART strategically positions its products as affordable luxury items. The pricing is set at a level that is accessible to every level of customer but also reflects the perceived value and quality of the toys. This balance ensures that consumers feel they are getting a high-end product without a prohibitive price tag.

4.1.2.2 Tiered Pricing

POP MART employs tiered pricing for its collections. Regular editions are priced affordably, while limited editions and rare and secret items are priced higher, reflecting their exclusivity and desirability. This tiered approach is designed for different segments of the market, from casual buyers to serious collectors.

4.1.3 Place

4.1.3.1 Physical Stores

POP MART has established a number of physical stores in high-traffic locations such as shopping malls, theme parks, and airports. These stores are designed to enhance engagement, offering a tangible, sensory experience that increases the overall brand perception. The physical presence allows consumers to interact with the products, increasing their likelihood of purchase.

4.1.3.2 Online Channels

Not only the physical stores, but POP MART also maintains a strong presence in their online stores. The e-commerce platform provides convenience for customers who prefer to shop from home but can enjoy exclusive online deals and

promotions as well. The combination of online and offline channels ensures a seamless shopping experience for consumers.

4.1.4 Promotion

4.1.4.1 Social Media Engagement

POP MART leverages social media platforms to build a strong community of collectors. Through regular updates, unboxing videos, and user-generated content, POP MART creates buzz and maintains high levels of engagement. Social media campaigns often feature influencers and celebrities, increasing the brand's reach and appeal.

4.1.4.2 Event Marketing

POP MART organizes and participates in interactive events such as toy fairs, pop-up shops, and collector meet-ups. These events create opportunities for collectors to interact with the real products, enhancing a sense of community among collectors. Special releases and exclusive items at these events even drive more attendance and excitement.

4.1.4.3 Collaborations and Partnerships

Collaborations with well-known artists, designers, and other brands add an image of prestige and value to POP MART's offerings. These partnerships not only attract fans of the collaborators but also introduce fresh and different designs, keeping the product line dynamic and appealing.

4.2 Adoption of Consumer Psychology in Marketing Strategy

From the data collection, the consumer psychology theory plays a significant role in POP MART's marketing strategy. The main findings include four aspects, as outlined below.

4.2.1 Creating Senses of Exclusivity and Excitement

Exclusivity is a powerful psychological driver that POP MART adopts into its marketing strategy. The principle of scarcity is at the core of this approach. POP MART frequently releases limited edition toys, creating a perception of rarity that enhances consumer desire. When products are seen as rare or difficult to obtain, their

perceived value increases. This scarcity principle taps into the fear of missing out (FOMO) concept, urging collectors to make quick purchasing decisions, often leading to impulsive buys.

From the interview with both art toy collectors, their answers about how high the expectation is for them to get the secret one when buying each collection are the same, or “very high.” This is confirmed by Ms. Rasika Paneewong, known as Softpomz, a famous YouTuber, saying that “we [collectors] feel that getting a secret is a bonus. If you get it, wow! I myself am a lucky person.” Moreover, her statement even highlights how a sense of exclusivity plays a vital role in POP MART strategy, as she said, “Honestly, I think that what most people want is probably not the secret itself. But it's probably because I feel like I'm a luckier person than others. And it's pride in yourself. It should feel more like that” (Pawakhung, 2024).

Furthermore, POP MART enhances the sense of exclusivity by building a community of collectors. Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, or Instagram play a crucial role in this, where customers share their unboxing experiences and rare finds, generating buzz and social validation. This community aspect not only enhances the brand's visibility but also reinforces the desirability of POP MART products as consumers seek to be part of an exclusive group. This finding is ensured by two interviewed collectors who agree that with social media, they both feel influenced by the trend that they want to collect the popular figures to show off in their social media channels as well as to share this in person when they meet their friends or their own community.

Another aspect of POP MART's exclusivity strategy is the "blind box" model, where consumers purchase a box without knowing the specific toy inside. This element of surprise generates excitement and a sense of exclusivity as consumers hope to find the rarest figures. This concept is the intention of POP MART's CEO, Wang Ning, who once stated that “buying happiness is not equal to buying excitement” (Ardpruksa, 2024). The thrill of unboxing, combined with the anticipation of discovering a rare item, keeps consumers coming back. The repeat purchase behavior is driven by the addictive nature of the blind box experience, reinforcing customer loyalty and increasing sales. This concept aligns with the findings from the interviews

since both collectors stated that when they did not get the figure that they wanted on their first try, there was a high chance that they would want to buy or try again.

Furthermore, POP MART often collaborates with renowned artists and brands to create unique, themed collections. These collaborations add another element of excitement by introducing diverse designs with interesting stories in each collection, attracting fans of the collaborators, and expanding POP MART's customer base. Each new collection becomes an event in itself, generating anticipation and excitement among collectors and fans. This strategy is also reflected by interviewee A saying that the factor influencing him buying a new collection is the story behind the figures, as he views an art toy as an art piece, not just a toy.

4.2.2 Offering a Real Experience

While online shopping has grown exponentially, POP MART recognizes the enduring value of a real-store experience. As emphasized by Justin Moon, Vice President of POP MART, in the interview by the Cloud, he said, “When other brands focus on selling online, we will sell offline. Most people, when doing marketing, tend to look at what is trendy at the time and act accordingly. But we often choose to bet in the opposite direction. Doing it this way is more work. Because there are no competitors” (Saksiamkul, 2023).

Apart from avoiding competition, the most important reason for POP MART to expand its stores is to offer customers a real experience. As mentioned in MarketPlus magazine, Ms. Siriporn Plangchantuk, Country General Manager of POP MART Thailand, said that “with the concept of 'Bring Joy and Happiness', we take into account customer experience. Therefore, we focus on giving an impressive experience to customers, so if they purchase art toys via online channels, they cannot see or touch the real thing. But if you come to the store, you will see it with your own eyes” (MarketPlus, 2024).

The company has established numerous physical stores in prime locations, such as shopping malls and airports. These stores are designed to be more than points of sale; they are immersive environments featuring visually striking displays and interactive elements that engage visitors. In Thailand, Mr. Moon revealed in 2023 the hopeful long-term goals of the joint venture: “We expect to open up to 20 retail and

pop-up stores, along with approximately 50 vending machines (POP MART ROBOSHOP) throughout Thailand” (4D Communications, 2023).

Physical stores provide consumers with a tangible, sensory experience that online shopping cannot provide. Customers are able to see, touch, and feel the products, enhancing their connection to the brand. This real-life engagement is crucial in building brand loyalty, as it provides an enjoyable and memorable shopping experience that encourages repeat visits. Interviewee A said that “whenever I get a chance to go to POP MART, I will spend time there, whether the items I want are available or not. Walking around the shop is so enjoyable that I am not expecting to get any items back; just walking around and enjoying each collection can fulfill my day. Moreover, being able to see and touch real figures makes me want to buy them more than scrolling online, as we can open them right away.”

4.2.3 Promoting a Sense of Affordable Luxury

POP MART’s pricing strategy effectively balances the concept of luxury with affordability. Confirmed by Mr. Moon, he stated that “In the past, the prices of products in the art toy market were quite high, targeting a specific market of customers, such as the Otaku group, which is a group with reasonable purchasing power. But POP MART aims at a wider market. Therefore, we set up a strategy to design our toys to be smaller in size. Make the price lower to make it accessible to more people” (Saksiamkul, 2023).

Moreover, POP MART is not only affordable; it also offers a piece of art or a collectible item. With the story behind each collection and the high quality of products, POP MART’s art toys become more than just an art toy; they become valuable items that could be considered luxury products for investment. This sense of affordable luxury allows consumers to indulge in the purchase of non-essential yet desirable items without feeling financially burdened. As mentioned by interviewee B, “I started collecting art toys because of my own preference as a young kid. However, since the art toy trend starts to boom and lead to a high rise in price, I turn to collecting more limited figures as it can be seen as a future investment.”

Furthermore, Piao Sompop, one of the art toy collectors revealed during the existing interview with ALTV4, mentioned that “happiness can be changed into money.

Toys and collectibles can make money. The rarer it is, the more expensive it is. Values range from a few hundred to half a million. Collectors can advertise toys for sale in exchange for money. Some people use it to make content for their YouTube channel. If you have a lot of people following you, you will have sponsors. Once, I decided to sell a large set of my most cherished toys. I get a lump sum of money to prepare for buying a house” (H. ARIGATO, 2022).

Interviewee A said that “I am okay with the price of art toys in POP MART. I think if the price is too low, the products will be seen as of bad quality, but if it’s too high, it’s unreasonable and unnecessary as well. For example, some blind box prices are around 320 to 550 baht, so they are affordable and not too high to buy more or the whole collection. Sometimes, I buy the whole set to make sure that I get every piece I want in that collection. POP MART does not add more cost if you buy the whole collection. So, the shop doesn’t take advantage of customers.” Therefore, the concept of affordable luxury is presented and confirmed.

4.2.4 Evoking a Sense of Childhood

The last psychological aspect POP MART takes advantage of is the powerful emotion of nostalgia by creating products that evoke a sense of childhood. Many adults retain fond memories of their childhood toys and experiences, and POP MART’s sophisticated, artistically designed collectibles often represent these nostalgic sentiments. By targeting "kidults"—adults who enjoy revisiting elements of their childhood—POP MART expands its market beyond traditional toy consumers. This idea is confirmed by Softpomz, who said that “when I was a child, my parents often said that toys were wasteful. However, these days, I have observed that people who are really into art toys are not young children; they are people who have grown up. And I believe that this generation or my generation, going back to when they were children, would have encountered their parents saying things like this: “Why are you wasting money on toys?” and “you don't want them; you already have them at home.” Growing up, I felt like it wasn't wrong. We can start to afford them ourselves. It's like we're going back to healing our childhood selves” (Pawakhung, 2024).

Moreover, as POP MART works with many designers to create unique story-telling collections, it even triggers childhood memories in customers. For

instance, the Crybaby and the Powerpuff Girls collaboration helps reach both collections' fans to get engaged and buy the product from POP MART (Johnston, 2024). In the interview, interviewee B said, "I really loved and followed Crybaby before it partnered with POP MART. After its collaboration, I bought every collection of Crybaby. And after the new collection with the Powerpuff Girls, I was very surprised because this has been my favorite cartoon since I was young. I like every main character: Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup. I feel very happy that both art design and cartoons that I like have become art toys. It fulfills my childhood memories."

Furthermore, the statement from the Crybaby collection's designer mentioned that "I feel happy that Crybaby becomes a small part that might change many people's attitudes about crying. I want it to be international. Where there are humans, Crybaby is there, gently patting everyone on the shoulder and saying that it's okay to shed tears" (Reungwes, 2023).

Therefore, this dual between a negative attitude towards crying and turning it to be normal ensures that POP MART's products are not only toys but also cherished items for display and collection, blurring the line between child nostalgia and adult sophistication.

Collecting art toys can also enhance the nostalgic experience. Adult collectors often share their collections and experiences on social media, creating a sense of belonging and shared nostalgia. This community-driven approach strengthens the emotional connection to the brand, fostering loyalty and encouraging ongoing engagement. This concept is also reflected in the interviewee A statement saying that "buying art toys can not only fulfill my childhood dream, as I didn't have money when I was a kid, but it also creates the space to share my own story with people who are interested in the same things. For example, a community group on TikTok or Facebook is a place where we can exchange views and buy and sell items."

In conclusion, POP MART's marketing strategies are mainly based on consumer psychology. By creating a sense of exclusivity and excitement, providing a tangible store experience, promoting affordable luxury, and evoking childhood nostalgia, POP MART has offered a compelling brand experience. These strategies not only attract a broad demographic but also build deep emotional connections with consumers, ensuring sustained engagement and loyalty. As POP MART continues to

innovate and expand, its understanding of consumer psychology will undoubtedly remain a key driver of its success, setting a benchmark for other brands in the collectible toy industry.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The marketing strategies employed by POP MART in Thailand are linked with psychological triggers that drive consumer behavior, as outlined in the literature review. By conducting qualitative interviews with collectors and analyzing existing interviews with POP MART executives, a character designer, and collectors, the study provided comprehensive insights into the effective use of psychological triggers in marketing strategies. Key findings include:

5.1.1 Exclusivity and Scarcity

POP MART effectively utilizes the concepts of exclusivity and scarcity to trigger a sense of urgency and desire among consumers. Limited edition and the blind box model are the core for this strategy, driving impulsive purchases and repeat buying behavior.

5.1.2 Tangible Retail Experience

The significance of physical retail stores is highlighted by POP MART, providing sensory experiences that online shopping cannot replace and imitate. This approach enhances consumer satisfaction and fosters brand loyalty.

5.1.3 Affordable Luxury

POP MART's pricing strategy balances affordability with luxury, offering high-quality, well-designed collectibles at accessible prices. This positioning attracts a broad group of consumers, positioning the products as valuable and attainable.

5.2.4 Nostalgia and Emotional Connection

The brand leverages nostalgia by creating products that evoke childhood memories. This emotional connection resonates strongly with adult collectors, enhancing the appeal of the collectibles.

5.2.5 Community and Social Proof

POP MART builds a community of collectors through social media platforms, enhancing brand visibility and reinforcing the desirability of its products. This community aspect fosters social validation and a sense of belonging among consumers.

Overall, POP MART's marketing strategies are deeply rooted in consumer psychology, successfully attracting and retaining a loyal customer base. By understanding and leveraging psychological triggers, the brand ensures sustained engagement and growth in the Thai market.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights resulting from this research, several limitations must be considered. The sample size for the qualitative interviews was limited to two collectors, which may not fully capture the diverse experiences and motivations of the broader consumer base. A larger sample size could provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior. Additionally, the study focused exclusively on POP MART's success in Thailand, resulting in limiting the findings from other markets with different cultural and economic contexts.

The research also relied heavily on secondary data, including existing interviews with POP MART executives, a character designer, and collectors. This reliance may introduce biases based on the perspectives and interpretations of those sources. Furthermore, the study provides a snapshot of POP MART's marketing strategies and consumer behavior at a specific point in time, lacking the longitudinal data needed to understand how these strategies and behaviors evolve. Lastly, the

inherent subjectivity in qualitative research introduces potential researcher bias in interpreting and presenting the findings, despite efforts to minimize it.

5.3 Recommendations

To build on the insights from this research and address the limitations, several recommendations can be made for POP MART and other brands in the collectible toy industry.

First, increasing the frequency and variety of limited-edition releases can sustain consumer excitement and drive repeat purchases. Collaborations with popular artists and influencers can attract new customer groups and generate more buzz. Using data analytics to understand consumer preferences and buying patterns can help in personalizing marketing strategy, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty through tailored recommendations and targeted promotions.

Second, building a strong community of collectors through exclusive events, online engagement, and social media interactions can deepen consumer relationships. Encouraging user-generated content and providing platforms for collectors to share their experiences can enhance brand loyalty and social proof.

Lastly, expanding more product lines to include different themes, sizes, and price points can attract a wider audience. POP MART could also consider increasing brand extensions and line extensions, providing more types of products in one collection that allow customers to use them daily, and more types of versions in each category to promote the POP MART ecosystem in customers' everyday lives. For example, the brand could leverage Labubu's trend by offering phone cases, mobile phone charging cables, bags, and other accessories with Labubu themes. Also, in the collection, there could be a variety of characters, colors or designs as well. Moreover, offering customizable or limited products can attract niche markets and enhance the sense of exclusivity among customers. Finally, adopting sustainable practices in production and packaging can appeal to environmentally conscious consumers, enhancing brand reputation and attracting a new segment of responsible consumers.

REFERENCES

- 4D Communications. (2023, September 20). *POP MART, a THB 20 billion Art Toys Business, Officially Opens First Flagship Store in Thailand on September 20th at CentralWorld*. ThaiPR.NET. https://www.thaipr.net/en/life_en/3385802
- Ardpruksa, S. (2024, April 23). *The Rise of Art Toys: How These Collectibles Become Phenomena*. Koktail Media. <https://www.koktailmagazine.com>
- Cherry, K. (2023, November 20). *Consumer Psychology and Behavior*. Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-consumer-psychology-2794899>
- H. ARIGATO. (2022, October 6). *Interview with Piao Sompop: When “toys” lead to success in life*. <https://www.altv.tv/content/pr/6296da124783cb8c28ef2956>
- What is place in the marketing mix? Definition and tips*. (2023, September 28). Indeed Career Guide. <https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/what-is-place-in-marketing-mix>
- Johnston, R. (2024, March 28). *‘The Powerpuff Girls’ Let Their Tears Flow in Exclusive Collaboration With CryBaby | 104.7 The Mix ... The MOST Variety For Your Workday*. <https://www.1047mixfm.com/2024/03/28/the-powerpuff-girls-let-their-tears-flow-in-exclusive-collaboration-with-crybaby/>
- Marketing Mix and The 7 Ps of Marketing*. (n.d.). Mailchimp. Retrieved July 15, 2024, from <https://mailchimp.com/marketing-glossary/marketing-mix-7ps/>
- MarketPlus. (2024, October 4). *How POP MART penetrates Thai Market, winning customers' heart*. <https://www.marketplus.in.th/content/detail.php?id=24561>

REFERENCES (Cont.)

- NAENOII. (2024, January). *Art Toys*. QOQOON. <https://qoqoon.media/art-lifestyle/art-toys/>
- Pawakhung, N. (2024, May 13). Art Toys: The Guide to Collecting. *LUXUO Thailand*. <https://luxuothailand.com/life/art-toy-collector-softpomz.html>
- Reungwes, P. (2023, July 26). (Not) Sorry for Being So Sensitive. *The Cloud*. <https://readthecloud.co/crybaby-molly/>
- Saksiamkul, K. (2023, September 20). *Justin Moon's Tactics: Turn POP MART into Art Toy Leader in 20 countries*. *The Cloud*. <https://readthecloud.co/justin-moon-pop-mart/>
- The 5 most common pricing strategies*. (n.d.). BDC.Ca. Retrieved July 15, 2024, from <https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/marketing-sales-export/marketing/pricing-5-common-strategies>
- Vaghasiya, K. (2023, May 28). 10+ Psychological Sales Triggers (Influence Purchases). *Best Social Proof & FOMO App for Your Website | WiserNotify*. <https://wisernotify.com/blog/psychological-sales-triggers/>
- What is place in the marketing mix? Definition and tips*. (2023, September 28). Indeed Career Guide. <https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/what-is-place-in-marketing-mix>
- What is Promotion in the Marketing Mix? – Zogle*. (2023, October 30). <https://zogle.co.uk/what-is-promotion-in-the-marketing-mix/>