



Factors Influencing Guangxi Agricultural Vocational and Technical University Students' Blind-box Purchasing Behavior: A Case Study of Pop Mart

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Abstract- This study examines how Pop Mart's 4P marketing strategies—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—shape Blind-box Purchasing Behavior (PB) among students at Guangxi Agricultural Vocational and Technical University (GAVTU), and compares the relative influence of each marketing-mix element. The research responds to a gap in the blind-box literature, which has often emphasized psychological motivations while giving less systematic attention to formal marketing strategies within a single integrated model. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The population comprised 26,784 full-time students, and the minimum sample size was estimated using the Taro Yamane formula. A stratified sampling approach across faculties and year levels was used, and 413 valid questionnaires were collected. The instrument was a structured 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire measuring Product, Price, Place, Promotion, and Blind-box Purchasing Behavior, together with demographic items. Content validity was confirmed by expert review using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC = 1.00), and the overall scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .957). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability diagnostics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression with VIF and Durbin–Watson diagnostics. The results show that all four 4P variables positively and significantly influence Blind-box Purchasing Behavior. The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 56.766$, $p < .001$) and explains 35.8% of the variance in Blind-box Purchasing Behavior ($R^2 = .358$; Adjusted $R^2 = .351$). Promotion exerts the strongest effect ($\beta = .247$), followed by Price ($\beta = .217$), Place ($\beta = .196$), and Product ($\beta = .145$). These findings suggest that in probabilistic and hedonic micro-markets such as blind-box consumption, promotion-driven anticipation and social signaling are especially influential, while pricing fairness and channel convenience remain critical practical conditions for student consumers.

Keywords: Blind-Box Consumption, 4ps Marketing Mix, Blind-Box Purchasing Behavior, Pop Mart, Vocational University Students.

I. Introduction

Blind-box consumption has developed into one of the most visible youth-consumption phenomena in contemporary China. Compared with conventional retail categories, blind-box products combine uncertainty, collectibility, and emotional stimulation within a compact and relatively affordable format. The buyer does not know the exact item before purchase, so the concealed-content mechanism transforms a routine transaction into an event filled with curiosity, anticipation, and the possibility of rare rewards. For young consumers, especially Generation Z and university students, blind boxes function not only as entertainment products but also as symbolic goods that can be displayed, shared, traded, and used to express identity. (Hu, 2023; Huang et al., 2022; Zhan, 2024).

Pop Mart has played a central role in shaping and legitimizing the blind-box market. The company built a recognizable business model by combining strong intellectual-property (IP) design, collectible series, hidden editions, co-branded collaborations, and an extensive online-to-offline channel system, including shopping-mall stores, vending machines, and e-commerce platforms. At the same time, short-video platforms, livestreaming, and user-generated “unboxing” content have accelerated the cycle from awareness to desire and purchase. This media environment turns new releases into highly shareable micro-events and increases the probability of impulse-like purchases. (Lin, 2024; Zhao, 2024; Miao & Guo, 2023).

For vocational-university students, blind boxes are particularly relevant because they fit common campus leisure rhythms and generally fall within a manageable price range. However, because consumers cannot confirm the exact item before purchase, blind-box buying is not purely a low-cost entertainment decision; it also involves uncertainty, perceived risk, and a tendency toward repeated attempts when consumers pursue hidden or rare editions. This makes blind-box purchasing an especially useful context for studying how marketing strategies influence actual buying behavior. (Xu, 2023; Yang & Yang, 2024).

Existing research on blind-box consumption has provided valuable insights into novelty seeking, hedonic value, emotional attachment, social belonging, and even problematic or compulsive consumption. Yet fewer studies have systematically tested how the classic 4P marketing mix—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—jointly affects actual Blind-box Purchasing Behavior within one model. Moreover, studies focusing on vocational-university students in Guangxi remain limited, despite the fact that this segment may differ from first-tier urban samples in terms of budget constraints, retail access, and peer-network dynamics. This study addresses these gaps by examining how Pop Mart’s 4P strategies influence Blind-box Purchasing Behavior among students at GAVTU and by identifying the relative importance of each 4P dimension. (Du, 2024; Fan, 2023; Zhang, 2024).

Accordingly, this study pursues two objectives: first, to examine the effects of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion on Blind-box Purchasing Behavior among students at GAVTU; second, to compare the relative importance of these four marketing-mix elements.

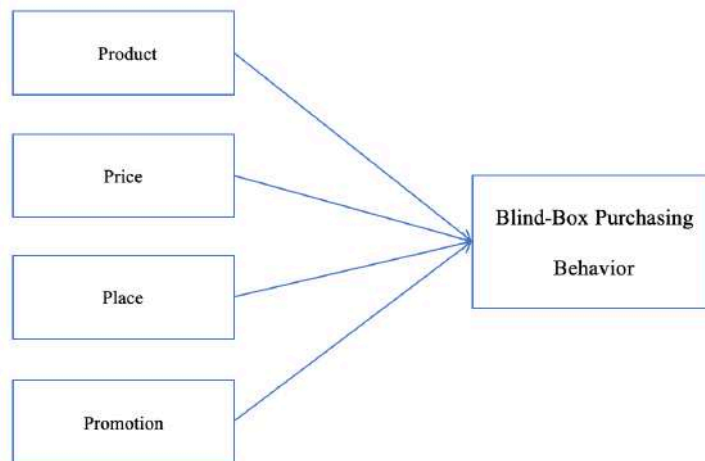


Figure 1. Research framework.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Blind-box Consumption as a Hedonic and Probabilistic Market

Blind-box consumption refers to a retail model in which the exact item inside a package is concealed before purchase. Its appeal lies not only in the item itself but also in the experience of uncertainty, the excitement of unboxing, and the possibility of obtaining hidden or rare editions. In practical terms, blind-box products are utility-light and experience-heavy. Consumers evaluate them through a combination of perceived design quality, emotional anticipation, rarity value, and symbolic meaning. Prior studies suggest that blind-box consumption is often associated with novelty seeking, hedonic value, emotional attachment to branded IPs, and social comparison behaviors. In this sense, the product category occupies a hybrid position between toy retailing, fashion-oriented symbolic consumption, and chance-based entertainment. (Hu, 2023; Miao & Guo, 2023; Zhan, 2024).

2.2 The 4Ps in the Blind-box Context

The 4P marketing mix—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—remains one of the most widely used frameworks for analyzing how controllable marketing strategies shape consumer decisions. Product refers to the design, quality, features, and symbolic benefits that consumers perceive in an offering. Price concerns not only the monetary amount charged but also consumers’ judgments of affordability, fairness, and value-for-money. Place refers to the accessibility and convenience of distribution channels, including the ease with which customers can find, order, and receive products. Promotion includes communication activities such as advertising, social-media exposure, endorsements, campaigns, limited-time offers, and event-based stimulation. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

Although the 4P framework was originally developed for broad consumer markets, it is still highly relevant in niche or experience-driven categories. In blind-box consumption, each P may operate through both rational and emotional pathways (Ibrahim et al., 2025). Product can create aesthetic attachment and collectibility; Price can act as both a practical constraint and a fairness signal; Place can reduce friction at the point of desire; and Promotion can amplify anticipation, scarcity, and peer influence. Therefore, applying the 4P framework in the blind-box context is theoretically justified and practically meaningful. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Lin, 2024; Zhao, 2024).



2.3 Purchasing Behavior as a Behavioral Outcome

In this study, Blind-box Purchasing Behavior refers to students' actual or behavior-oriented tendency to buy blind-box products, including willingness to purchase, frequency-related tendencies, and the likelihood of continued participation in blind-box buying. The concept is positioned as a behavioral outcome rather than a purely attitudinal intention. This distinction is important because blind-box products often involve impulse elements and situational triggers, so actual behavior may differ from stable preference alone. By focusing on Blind-box Purchasing Behavior, the study captures whether marketing strategies can move students beyond favorable perception toward actual buying action. (Chen & Assawasirisilp, 2024; Li, 2024).

2.4 Prior Studies on the Relationship Between Marketing Factors and Blind-box Purchasing Behavior

Previous studies have shown that blind-box purchasing can be influenced by a combination of internal motivations and external marketing conditions. Product-related variables such as perceived design appeal, character recognition, product quality, and collectibility often have positive effects on buying decisions because consumers form attachments to specific IPs or wish to complete a series. However, the strength of product effects may depend on whether consumers are collectors, casual buyers, or socially influenced participants. (Du, 2024; Hu, 2023; Shi, 2024).

Price has also been shown to matter, particularly for student consumers and younger buyers with limited disposable income. Because blind-box purchases include uncertainty, consumers do not evaluate price only in relation to the physical product; they also judge whether the price feels fair relative to the chance-based nature of the purchase. Therefore, perceived value and price fairness can be especially important in determining repeat buying or hesitation. (Zeithaml, 1988; Li, 2024; Wang, 2024).

Place and channel convenience are also highly relevant. Because blind-box purchases can be triggered by short-lived emotions such as excitement or fear of missing out, easy access through vending machines, nearby stores, and mobile commerce can increase actual purchasing. When access is inconvenient, the motivational impulse may fade before a purchase occurs. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Lin, 2024; Xie, 2024).

Promotion and social communication have emerged as especially powerful in blind-box markets. Social-media narratives, influencer exposure, livestreams, new-release countdowns, and unboxing communities can create urgency, normalize repeated purchases, and strengthen symbolic consumption. Existing studies suggest that these forms of communication can quickly move consumers from awareness to action, especially in youth segments. Taken together, prior research supports the expectation that all four 4P dimensions may influence Blind-box Purchasing Behavior, though the relative strength of each factor is likely to differ. (Fan, 2023; Miao & Guo, 2023; Zhan, 2024).

However, existing studies have rarely incorporated all four 4P dimensions into a single empirical model focused on actual purchasing behavior, particularly within the context of vocational university students in less-studied regions such as Guangxi.

III. Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine how Pop Mart's 4P marketing strategies influence Blind-box Purchasing Behavior among students at GAVTU. A quantitative design was appropriate because the research sought to test specific hypotheses, compare effect sizes, and estimate the relative contribution of the 4P variables using statistical methods. The study focused on measuring students' perceptions and responses at one point in time rather than manipulating the environment experimentally. (Chen & Assawasirisilp, 2024; Ait Abdelkader, 2023).

3.1 The Population and Sample Group

The population consisted of 26,784 full-time students enrolled at Guangxi Agricultural Vocational and Technical University. The minimum required sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula with a 0.05 margin of error, resulting in an estimated minimum sample of approximately 395 respondents. To improve representativeness, the study used a stratified sampling approach across faculties and year levels, with attention given to gender balance across strata. After data collection and screening, 413 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis, exceeding the minimum requirement and supporting stable regression estimation. (Chen & Assawasirisilp, 2024; Zhang, 2024).

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire composed of three parts. Part 1 included screening and demographic items, such as gender, faculty, year level, age range and monthly living allowance. Part 2 measured the four independent variables—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—using 40 items in total, with 10 items allocated to each construct. Part 3 measured the dependent variable, Blind-box Purchasing Behavior, using 10 items. All attitudinal items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly



agree. (Li, 2024; Lin, 2024; Xu, 2023). The attitudinal items were adapted from prior studies and reworded to fit the Pop Mart and GAVTU context.

In operational terms, Product items measured perceptions of IP design, visual appeal, product quality, and overall attractiveness. Price items assessed affordability, price fairness, and the perception that the cost was appropriate relative to the expected experience. Place items measured convenience of access, availability through online and offline channels, and ease of purchase. Promotion items captured the influence of campaigns, social-media exposure, limited editions, and communication stimuli. Blind-box Purchasing Behavior items measured respondents' reported tendency to buy blind-boxes and engage in related repeat-purchase behavior. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Li, 2024; Shi, 2024).

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a combination of online and offline distribution. Offline questionnaires were distributed in campus areas with substantial student traffic, while online distribution was conducted through digital sharing channels relevant to the student population. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their answers would remain anonymous and be used only for academic purposes. Completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and consistency, and invalid or incomplete responses were excluded before analysis. (Chen & Assawasirisilp, 2024; Xie, 2024).

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Content validity was assessed by expert review using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC). The final instrument achieved $IOC = 1.00$, indicating excellent alignment between questionnaire items and the study objectives. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The overall alpha value was .957, indicating excellent reliability for the full scale. Construct-level reliabilities were also high: Product (.923), Price (.932), Place (.928), Promotion (.931), and Blind-box Purchasing Behavior (.934). Corrected item–total correlations were acceptable, and alpha-if-item-deleted values did not exceed the original alpha levels in a way that would justify removing items. (Lin, 2024; Shi, 2024).

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0. Descriptive statistics—including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation—were used to summarize the respondent profile and the levels of the study constructs. Pearson correlation was used to test the direction and strength of bivariate associations between the 4P variables and Blind-box Purchasing Behavior. Multiple regression was then used to estimate the joint effects of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion on Blind-box Purchasing Behavior and to compare their standardized effects. Model diagnostics included variance inflation factors (VIF) to assess multicollinearity and the Durbin–Watson statistic to examine residual autocorrelation. (Ait Abdelkader, 2023; Chen & Assawasirisilp, 2024).

IV. Research Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarizes the basic information of respondents ($N = 413$). The sample was nearly gender-balanced, with a slightly higher proportion of female respondents than male respondents. Participants were drawn from all eight faculties, providing broad coverage across the university. The largest faculty shares came from Urban and Rural Construction, Information Engineering, and Food and Pharmaceutical Engineering. In terms of year level, second-year students formed the largest group, followed by first-year, third-year, and fourth-year students. Most respondents reported monthly living expenses concentrated in the lower-to-middle student range, and the majority were between 18 and 22 years old. These patterns indicate that the sample covers the major demographic subgroups relevant to the study context. (Zhang, 2024).

Table 1. Respondent profile

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	202	48.91
	Female	211	51.09
Faculty	Economics & Management	42	10.17
	Information Engineering	60	14.53
	Urban & Rural Construction	62	15.01
	Intelligent Equipment Engineering	50	12.11
	Animal Science & Technology	47	11.38
	Food & Pharmaceutical Engineering	56	13.56



Variable	Category	n	%
	Agricultural Engineering	47	11.38
	Humanities & Arts	49	11.86
Year of study	1	112	27.12
	2	136	32.93
	3	91	22.03
	4	74	17.92
Average monthly allowance (RMB)	≤500	1	0.24
	501–1000	9	2.18
	1001–1500	229	55.45
	1501–2000	156	37.77
	>2000	18	4.36
Age	Under 18 years old	0	0.00
	18 - 22 years old	291	70.46
	Over 22 years old	122	29.54

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Table 2 reports the mean and standard deviation of the study variables. All constructs scored above the midpoint of 3.00, indicating generally positive perceptions. Price recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.442$), followed by Product ($M = 3.407$), Place ($M = 3.372$), and Promotion ($M = 3.346$). Blind-box Purchasing Behavior also showed a moderate-to-high mean ($M = 3.300$), suggesting that blind-box consumption is a noticeable behavior among GAVTU students rather than a marginal activity. The standard deviations were moderate and relatively similar across constructs, indicating stable but meaningful variation in responses. (Huang et al., 2022; Xu, 2023).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of study variables.

Variable	Mean	SD
Product	3.407	.819
Price	3.442	.860
Place	3.372	.847
Promotion	3.346	.858
Blind-box Purchasing Behavior	3.300	.878

4.3 Reliability Results

As shown in Table 3, the reliability results were strong. The construct-level Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .923 to .934, and the overall questionnaire alpha reached .957. These values indicate excellent internal consistency according to widely used social science benchmarks. Because the item-level diagnostics also supported retention of all items, the instrument can be considered stable and suitable for inferential analysis. (Chen & Assawasirisilp, 2024; Wang, 2024).

Table 3. Reliability statistics (Cronbach's alpha).

Construct	Cronbach's α
Product	.923
Price	.932
Place	.928
Promotion	.931
Blind-box Purchasing Behavior	.934

Note. Overall scale reliability: Cronbach's $\alpha = .957$.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

Table 4 shows that Product, Price, Place, and Promotion were all positively and significantly correlated with Blind-box Purchasing Behavior. The correlations with Blind-box Purchasing Behavior were $r = .389$ for Product, $r = .449$ for Price, $r = .437$ for Place, and $r = .478$ for Promotion, with all p-values below .001. These results provide preliminary evidence that each marketing-mix dimension is associated with stronger buying behavior. Promotion showed the strongest bivariate association, suggesting that communication and campaign-related stimuli may be particularly salient in this context. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Fan, 2023; Li, 2024).

Table 4. Correlations among study variables

Variable	Product	Price	Place	Promotion	Blind-box Purchasing Behavior
Product	1	.341***	.425***	.351***	.389***
Price	.341***	1	.356***	.458***	.449***
Place	.425***	.356***	1	.416***	.437***
Promotion	.351***	.458***	.416***	1	.478***
Blind-box Purchasing Behavior	.389***	.449***	.437***	.478***	1

Note. Pearson correlations are reported. * $p < .001$.

4.5 Multiple Regression Results

To address the research objectives more directly, multiple regression analysis was conducted with Blind-box Purchasing Behavior as the dependent variable and Product, Price, Place, and Promotion as predictors. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F = 56.766$, $p < .001$, indicating that the set of predictors jointly explained a meaningful portion of variance in the dependent variable. The model fit statistics were $R^2 = .358$ and Adjusted $R^2 = .351$, meaning that the four 4P variables explained about 35.8% of the variance in Blind-box Purchasing Behavior. This level of explanatory power can be regarded as meaningful in social-science research, especially given the complexity of student consumption behavior. (Ait Abdelkader, 2023; Chen & Assawasirisilp, 2024).

The standardized coefficients show that all four predictors had significant positive effects on Blind-box Purchasing Behavior. Product had a positive effect ($\beta = .145$, $p = .001$), Price had a stronger positive effect ($\beta = .217$, $p < .001$), Place also had a significant positive effect ($\beta = .196$, $p < .001$), and Promotion had the largest standardized effect ($\beta = .247$, $p < .001$). In comparison, the influence of the predictor variables is ranked as follows: promotion has the greatest impact, followed by price and channel, with product having the weakest impact. (Fan, 2023; Li, 2024; Lin, 2024).

Model diagnostics further support the validity of the regression results. VIF values ranged from 1.312 to 1.424, which are well below commonly used multicollinearity thresholds. The Durbin–Watson statistic was 2.034, indicating no problematic autocorrelation in the residuals. These diagnostics suggest that the regression estimates are stable and that the model assumptions are reasonably satisfied for interpretation. (Chen & Assawasirisilp, 2024; Ait Abdelkader, 2023).

Table 5. Multiple regression results predicting PB.

Variable	B	β	t	p	VIF
Product	.156	.145	3.197	.001	1.312
Price	.221	.217	4.692	< .001	1.356
Place	.203	.196	4.190	< .001	1.385
Promotion	.253	.247	5.212	< .001	1.424

Note. Dependent variable: Blind-box Purchasing Behavior. Model fit: $R^2 = .358$, Adjusted $R^2 = .351$; $F = 56.766$, $p < .001$, Durbin–Watson = 2.034.

V. Discussion

The findings indicate that the 4Ps marketing-mix framework remains meaningful in a probabilistic and hedonic micro-market such as blind-box consumption. Promotion exerted the strongest effect because blind boxes rely heavily on uncertainty, anticipation, and scarcity-driven excitement; in this setting, limited drops, social-media hype, and peer signaling can quickly convert attention into purchase behavior. Price ranked second, reflecting the financial constraints faced by vocational-university students for whom perceived fairness and value-for-money are especially important under uncertain outcomes (Xu, Song, & Li, 2025). Place also mattered because convenient access—such as near-campus touchpoints, vending machines, and fast delivery—reduces friction and enables students to act during short purchase windows created by promotional stimuli.

A noteworthy finding is that Product had the weakest effect. Contrary to traditional product-centric assumptions in marketing, Pop Mart’s IP design and perceived quality may already function as a broadly accepted baseline, leaving less additional variance to explain once promotion, price, and channel convenience are considered. This pattern suggests that, in the Guangxi vocational-university context, emotional activation and practical constraints are more decisive than product appeal alone. Overall, the results extend the 4P framework by showing that, in blind-box consumption, promotion activates desire, price constrains repetition, place supports conversion, and product serves as a foundational but less differentiating factor.



VI. Practical Implications

The findings offer several practical implications for Pop Mart and related retailers. First, because Promotion has the strongest influence, campaign design should be treated as the primary strategic lever in the campus market. Limited-time releases, event-based drops, interactive online content, and social-media amplification are likely to be especially effective. However, because these tactics can intensify impulsive behavior, firms should also communicate clearly and ethically to avoid undermining trust. (Fan, 2023; Miao & Guo, 2023).

Second, pricing strategy should emphasize transparency, affordability, and fairness. Student-friendly bundles, membership rewards, and clearly communicated pricing rules may help reduce the perceived risk associated with blind-box uncertainty. Because Price was the second strongest predictor, even modest changes in fairness perception may affect both trial and repeat purchasing. (Zeithaml, 1988; Li, 2024).

Third, Place should be optimized to reduce friction at the point of desire. Convenient campus-adjacent distribution, vending machines in high-traffic areas, smooth mobile ordering, and fast delivery can increase conversion by enabling immediate action. Fourth, Product strategy should continue to support strong IP design and perceived quality, but the weaker Product effect suggests that additional differentiation may be needed. More explicit rarity information, richer series narratives, and authenticity cues may help deepen product-based engagement beyond general visual appeal. (Lin, 2024; Xie, 2024).

For universities and student-affairs stakeholders, the findings also imply a need for balanced consumer guidance. Blind-box products are legitimate entertainment goods, yet their probabilistic reward structure can encourage repeated spending. Financial literacy programs or rational-consumption guidance may therefore be useful, especially in student communities where social influence can intensify participation. (Yang & Yang, 2024; Zhang & Chen, 2023).

VII. Conclusion

This study examined how Pop Mart's 4P marketing strategies influence Blind-box Purchasing Behavior among vocational-university students at Guangxi Agricultural Vocational and Technical University (GAVTU). The results show that all four elements—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—have significant positive effects on Blind-box Purchasing Behavior. The regression model explains 35.8% of the variance in Blind-box Purchasing Behavior ($R^2 = .358$; Adjusted $R^2 = .351$), indicating a meaningful level of explanatory power in the context of student consumption behavior.

In terms of relative importance, Promotion was the strongest predictor, followed by Price, Place, and Product. This pattern suggests that in blind-box consumption—characterized by uncertainty, anticipation, and social sharing—promotion-driven communication and campaign activities play a particularly powerful role in converting consumer attention into actual purchases. At the same time, pricing fairness and channel accessibility remain essential practical conditions that enable students to translate interest into real purchasing behavior.

Overall, the findings indicate that blind-box purchasing among Guangxi vocational-university students is shaped by the combined influence of product appeal, promotional stimulation, price acceptability, and channel convenience. The study extends the traditional 4P framework to a probabilistic and hedonic consumption context and provides empirical evidence for understanding how marketing strategies influence Blind-box purchasing behavior among student consumers.

VIII. Limitations and Future Research

Although the study provides meaningful empirical evidence, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the data were collected from a single university, which means the results may not fully represent all Chinese student populations or blind-box consumer groups. Future studies could improve generalizability by including multiple universities across different regions.

Second, the research employed a cross-sectional survey design, meaning that perceptions and purchasing behavior were measured at the same time. As a result, strong causal interpretations should be made with caution. Future research could adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to better capture changes in consumer behavior over time.

Third, the present model focuses primarily on the 4P marketing mix and does not directly test psychological mediators such as fear of missing out (FOMO), hedonic value, peer pressure, collecting motivation, or perceived risk. These factors may further explain why consumers repeatedly engage in blind-box purchasing. Future research could extend the model by incorporating these psychological variables and examining how they interact with marketing strategies.

Finally, comparative studies between vocational and non-vocational universities, or between different regional markets, would provide deeper insight into how demographic and contextual differences shape Blind-box



Purchasing Behavior. Such research could help refine marketing strategies and improve understanding of emerging youth consumption patterns. (Ait Abdelkader, 2023; Wang, 2024; Zhang, 2024)

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