

The Research on Bubble Mart Brand Foreign Trade Marketing Strategy Based on SWOT Model

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Abstract: Bubble Mart, a leading Chinese designer toy and pop culture collectible brand, has achieved remarkable domestic success driven by its innovative "blind box" model, strong IP portfolio, and immersive retail experience. Its ambitious global expansion, however, faces unique challenges inherent to diverse international markets. This thesis employs the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analytical framework to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Bubble Mart's current foreign trade marketing strategy. The study identifies key internal capabilities and limitations, alongside critical external market dynamics. Findings reveal significant strengths in IP assets, and retail expertise, counterbalanced by weaknesses including limited brand awareness in the West, high pricing, over-reliance on blind boxes, and localization gaps. Major opportunities lie in the growing global "kidult" market, while threats encompass intense competition, regulatory scrutiny on loot boxes, cultural differences, and economic volatility. The analysis evaluates the alignment of Bubble Mart's existing international strategy with these factors. Based on the SWOT matrix interactions, the thesis proposes actionable, optimized marketing strategies focusing on hyper-localization, strategic diversification beyond blind boxes, tiered pricing, hybrid distribution models, community-centric engagement, and proactive risk management.

Keywords: bubble mart, international marketing, foreign trade strategy, SWOT analysis

1. Introduction

The global collectibles market is experiencing unprecedented growth, fueled by the rising economic power and nostalgic consumption patterns of the "kidult" demographic. At the forefront of this revolution stands Bubble Mart – a Chinese pioneer that transformed from a niche retailer into a cultural phenomenon. Founded in 2010[1], Bubble Mart leveraged its innovative "blind box" sales model, a diverse portfolio of original and licensed intellectual property (IP), and immersive retail experiences to achieve meteoric success within China and has embarked on an ambitious foreign trade expansion. Its footprint now extends across key markets including South Korea, Japan, Singapore, North America, utilizing a mix of directly operated flagship stores, partnerships, and e-commerce platforms. However, replicating its domestic triumph internationally presents formidable challenges. Significant hurdles include profound cultural differences in consumer preferences, brand awareness from scratch in competitive Western markets, regulatory scrutiny surrounding "loot box" mechanics[2], complex global logistics for fragile collectibles. These complexities raise critical questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of Bubble Mart's foreign trade marketing strategy. This thesis directly addresses this research problem by SWOT framework and aims to propose actionable, optimize marketing strategies focusing on hyper-localization, strategic diversification beyond blind boxes, hybrid distribution models, community-centric engagement, and proactive risk management to delivering a structured strategic analysis directly applicable to Bubble Mart a strategic framework.

2. The SWOT Model

SWOT Analysis is a foundational strategic planning tool used to evaluate the competitive position and future prospects of an organization, project, or business venture. Developed at Stanford Research Institute in the 1960s-70s and refined by management theorists[3], this framework provides a systematic approach to identifying and analyzing critical factors that influence strategic decision-making. It represents four key dimensions:

1) Strengths lies the Internal, positive attributes within the organization's control that provide advantages over competitors counterbalanced with Weaknesses of internal, negative factors within the organization's control that place it at a disadvantage; and the Opportunities of External, favorable factors outside the organization's control in the broader environment is alongside with threats, the External, unfavorable factors outside the organization's control.

3. The SWOT Analysis of Bubble Mart's Foreign Trade Position

Bubble Mart's global expansion hinges on the dynamic interplay between its internal capabilities and external market

forces. A systematic SWOT analysis reveals critical factors shaping its international trajectory.

3.1 Internal strength

Bubble Mart enters foreign markets armed with formidable advantages. Its core strength lies in a powerful and diverse IP portfolio (S1), featuring iconic original characters. This fuels its proven and highly engaging "blind box" business model (S2), which drives repeat purchases, fosters collecting communities, and generates buzz through rare variants. The brand enjoys significant equity in core Asian markets (S3), particularly China, South Korea, and Singapore [4], Complementing this is expertise in creating immersive flagship retail experiences (S4), that elevate brand perception and drive engagement.

3.2 Internal Weaknesses

Despite these strengths, significant internal vulnerabilities challenge its global ambitions, including Limited brand awareness in key Western markets (W1); over-reliance on the blind box model (W2), creating exposure to regulatory crackdowns, potential consumer fatigue, and ethical criticisms; The W3 is Insufficient localization, which is evident to the culture-across products, marketing communication, and store experiences, often failing to achieve deep cultural resonance beyond superficial translation. The 4th weakness, undermining revenue and brand integrity. While expanding, Bubble Mart may still lack granular local market knowledge.

3.3 External Opportunities

The external environment presents compelling avenues for growth. The rapidly expanding global "kidult" collectibles market (O1), offers a vast target audience. Concurrently, the rising global influence of Asian pop culture (O2) creates fertile ground for Bubble Mart's aesthetic. The explosive growth of social commerce and influencer marketing (O3) (via Instagram, TikTok, Xiaohongshu) provides ideal platforms for visually showcasing products and leveraging unboxing culture. Continued e-commerce and cross-border shopping expansion (O4) lowers barriers to global reach.

3.4 External Threats

The external threats, alongside with opportunities are Intense global competition (T1) looming from established giants, local collectible brands, and other Asian entrants, Profound cultural differences in aesthetics, character preferences, collecting habits (T2) risk misalignment with Bubble Mart's core IPs [5], and increasing regulatory scrutiny on "loot box" mechanics (T3), threatens fines, restrictions, or outright bans on its core model.

3.5 the SWOT Matrix interaction

Based on the SWOT I analysis of bubble Mart's internal external position, this section proposed a SWOT matrix interaction for strategic implications: Leveraging the strengths to seize opportunities, overcoming weaknesses to capitalize on opportunities, using strengths to mitigate treats, minimize weaknesses to avoid treats.

4. The Strategies of Bubble Mart Foreign Trade under SWOT Model

4.1 Hyper Localization as a Core Principle to overcome the threat of cultural differences

To hyper localize the product, the Bubble Mart in China should Deeply co-creating with local artists for region-specific IPs, localizing variants of popular characters, exploring themes resonant with local culture or history and Offering localized packaging or language. The Marketing & Communication location should be done through developing market-specific social media content calendars, partnering with local micro or macro influencers, Additionally, the Retail channel management should adapt store design aesthetics and layouts subtly to local preferences, train staff on local culture and language and hosting local community events.

4.2 Strategic Diversification Beyond Blind Boxes to minimize the weaknesses of over reliance of blind box

To minimize the blind box reliance, the increasing of non-blind box products is a necessary move, including Opening edition figures, mini-series sets, apparel, accessories, home goods featuring core IPs. Introduction of different price tiers should also be applied. Simultaneously, the promotion of these non-blind box products should be developed through communication shift, focusing more energy on artistry, design, storytelling, and community, alongside the fun of blind boxes.

4.3 Hybrid, Agile Distribution to mitigate risk misalignment with Bubble Mart's core IPs

Develop Flagship Stores is a major strategy to Continue in major global cities as brand temples and experience centers. Strategic Partnerships should be built to deepen relationships with key local retailers including high-end department stores,

specialty toy or comic shops and trendy lifestyle store, for wider reach and local credibility. E-commerce Excellence is a critically supplemental through the ways of Optimizing localized websites for UX, payment, and delivery, Leveraging major local marketplaces, such as Amazon, Rakuten [6] but driving traffic to owned channels and Investing in robust, local way to ensure speed and reduce damage.

5. Conclusion

This analysis of this thesis has systematically by the SWOT model illuminated the critical internal weaknesses, particularly concerning brand awareness in the West, pricing, over-reliance on blind boxes, and localization gaps, alongside potent external threats from intense competition, regulatory headwinds, cultural differences, and economic volatility.

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