



Research on the Creative Design and Communication Characteristics of POP MART's Trendy Toys

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Abstract. Chinese trendy toys such as POP MART's blind boxes have become globally recognized entertainment and cultural brands, attracting consumers across age groups both domestically and internationally. They have emerged as highly sought-after Chinese brands in many countries, establishing a brand image characterized by trendiness and cultural distinction. POP MART has developed a diversified business model that includes physical retail stores, pop-up shops, and robotic vending machines in countries such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. This paper investigates the international development pathways of cultural and creative trendy toys, using the integration of international cultural design in POP MART's branding as the primary case. Through methods including literature review, interviews, comparative analysis, and social media data study, this study examines a range of POP MART products to analyze the design characteristics that merge international cultures. It also explores POP MART's global strategic layout. By analyzing consumer preferences on social media platforms worldwide, the study further investigates the brand culture of Chinese creative products and their international trajectories.

Keywords: POP MART's Trendy Toys, Creative Design, Communication Characteristics.

1 Introduction

Trendy toys are a category of cultural and intelligent manufacturing, referring to “toys that take popular culture as their main theme and are carefully designed and crafted by artists and designers, infused with rich cultural and fashion-oriented creativity”, argued by Li Yongjian (people.cn, 2025). Chinese trendy toys—such as POP MART's blind boxes—have grown into global brands, attracting fans across all age groups both in China and abroad. They have become popular Chinese consumer products globally, establishing a brand image distinguished by trend-consciousness and cultural identity. In March 2024, People's Daily Overseas Edition reported that POP MART, along with Chinese new-style tea's brands, has established a highly distinctive image through its overseas stores. The *2023 China Blind Box Industry Market Research Report* by Huajing Industrial Research Institute, as well as the jointly released *Trendy Toy*

Industry Development Report (2023) by Xinhua News Agency and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Finance and Economics Strategy, both reflect the growing interest in trendy toys from industry and academia alike. This study therefore investigates how POP MART trendy toy brand integrates cross-cultural design creativity and cross-communication strategies. Through in-depth analysis of POP MART's practices, the research explores how Chinese corporate culture is disseminated globally and engages in intercultural dialogue—offering both theoretical insight and practical cognition.

2 Literature Review

Current research on POP MART primarily focuses on overseas expansion, design aesthetics, and business models, while relatively little attention has been paid to the integration of cross-cultural creativity into brand design and its cross-communication features. Therefore, this study holds significant academic and practical value.

Scholars have explored POP MART's brand design strategies from various perspectives, including store display design, design thinking, and blind box design. For example, Lin (2022) proposed that POP MART-style trendy toy display spaces employ bright color schemes, densely organized and orderly product arrangements, along with decorative installations and sensory appeal, all contributing to the creation of an immersive trendy toy experience [1]. While Li (2022) argued that Pop Mart's intellectual property (IP) is its core competitive advantage, with its youthful design style favored by younger consumers. And he mentioned that the blind box marketing model also enhances interactivity with consumers [2]. Hua & Zhang (2023) pointed out that the primary consumer base for blind box designs consists of Generation Z, who emphasize the aesthetic value of blind box products [3]. Consequently, Pop Mart's Molly, Pucky, and Skull Panda series have become trendy designs due to their fashionable packaging, hidden content, and fashionable appearance. Meanwhile, Scholars have conducted in-depth analyses of POP MART's business positioning, strategic approaches, and the development of new productive forces. Wang et al. (2024) stated that POP MART's business model succeeds through its detailed segmentation of target customers, value propositions, distribution channels, customer relationships, source of income, core resources, core business activities, partnerships, and cost structures [4].

These articles expand the research methods and theory of POP MART and trendy toy. Its cross-cultural design needs to be further studied due to the fast development of POP MART from 2024 to 2025.

3 Research Methods

This research employs multiple methods including literature review, interviews, case study, and so on. First, this study collects and organizes evaluations and research on the domestic and overseas dissemination of Chinese trendy toy brands, identifying new questions and perspectives. Second, a digital research approach is adopted to examine the developmental and methods of cultural creativity in trendy toys, using data from

online store and social media platforms such as Taobao flagship Store, Douyin (Chinese TikTok) and Amazon. The study also discussed the top-selling products and number of likes on these social media platforms. Third, the study conducts questionnaire and interview methods with young individuals who collect POP MART trendy toys to understand their perceptions and reflections regarding POP MART and products that incorporate cultural design. The study found four young POP MART buyer from WeChat Group and conduct ten survey questions and some interview questions in May, 2025.

4 Analysis and Findings

4.1 Creative Design Analysis of Specific Products of POP MART

According to an official report of POP MART (April 22, 2025), revenue in the first quarter of 2025 increased by 165%-170% with overseas market growing by 475%-480% and online channel by 140%-145% compared with the first quarter of 2024, demonstrating robust overseas market expansion and effective online promotion strategies. POP MART's creative design is characterized by four key elements: shape, color, material and cultural value. Based on data collected from the POP MART Taobao flagship Store, the recognized top-selling toy products include SKULLPANDA THE WARMTH series, *NE ZHA 2* series, *SPY X FAMILY* series, *Hirono × Le Petit Prince* series, POPBEAN series, LABUBU THE MONSTERS FOREST SECRET BASE, DIMOO WORLD series, and others on June 17, 2025. The Top ranked on Amazon delivered to UK are THE MONSTERS HAVE A SEAT, THE MONSTERS TASTY MACARONS, THE MONSTERS BIG INTO ENERGY series, SKULLPANDA WINTER SYMPHONY Series, THE MONSTERS COCA-COLA series, *CRYBABY X POWERPUFF GIRLS* series, THE MONSTERS FALL IN WILD series, THE MONSTERS LET'S CHECKMATE series, PUCKY BEANIE BUBBLE UP series, PUCKY FOREST PARTY, and others on June 17, 2025. Therefore, the most popular series is SKULLPANDA and THE MONSTERS.

According to Table 1, a childlike appearance with large eyes forms the core design of POP MART series, resembling small-size versions of traditional dolls. Using this size as prototype, POP MART's designs incorporate multicultural connotation, such as eyes in red, blue, black, and green, and hair colors like pink and gold, aligning with modern youth preferences for trendy dyeing. In terms paint color, POP MART employs similar color hues to enrich the layering of its color design on single product (Figure 1). The combination of shape, color, and name enable people to remember the IP as a cohesive whole to create a sense of familiarity. In terms of cultural value, POP MART collaborates with international comic characters, such as *NE ZHA*, *SPY X FAMILY*, *POWERPUFF GIRLS* to enhance its cultural appeal.

Table 1. Size and Design (Based on official label)

Name	Material	Size (cm)	Design
SKULLPANDA THE WARMTH series	PVC/ABS	6-9	Closed-eye girl dressed in warm color
THE MONSTERS HAVE A SEAT	PVC/ POLYESTER/ABS	8*7*15(3.2 x 3.9 x 5.9 inches)	Rabbit ears, shark teeth, bare feet
NE ZHA 2	PVC/ABS	7-11	Animated movie collaboration
SPY X FAMILY	ABS/PVC	7.3-9.7	Pink hair sweet girl with big green eyes
CRYBABY X POWERPUFF GIRLS	PVC/ ABS	6cm-9cm (3.94 x 3.94 x 4.72 inches)	Animated movie collaboration

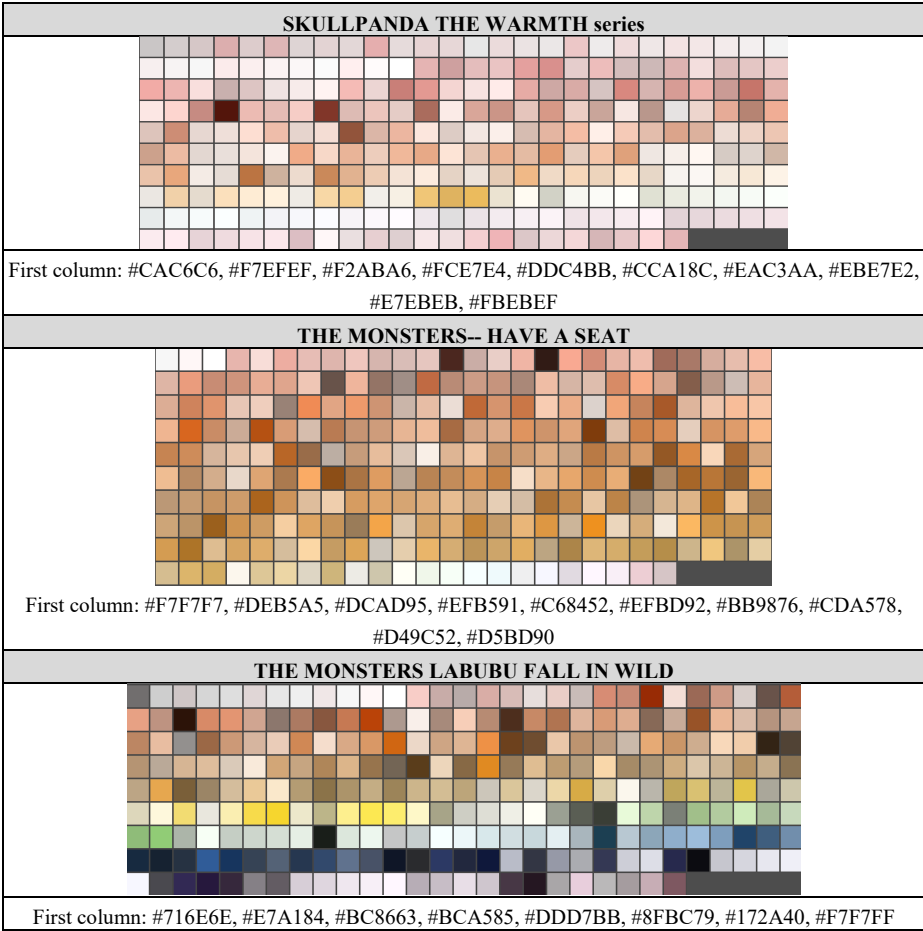


Fig. 1. RGB Value of POP MART (Based on products of Taobao, Amazon, POP MART Store, June 17, 2025)

4.2 Questionnaire and Interview Analysis of Purchasers

This study first adopted a combined method of interviews and questionnaires to gain detailed insights into existing purchasers. In June 2025, four young Chinese individuals aged 20 to 30 were interviewed. Among them, the main purposes for purchasing POP MART series toys were personal collection. The number of toys owned ranged from 2 to 100. The earliest purchase was made in 2016, and the most recent case involved a first purchase in March 2025. When asked why they liked POP MART blind boxes, the majority cited the design and appearance as the main reasons for purchase. Common responses included "visually appealing," "uniquely delightful design," and "cute appearance." One respondent noted enjoying the thrill of the blind box experience. In terms of favorite POP MART series, Dimo and Labubu was the most popular, and even those planning to make a future purchase expressed a desire to own a Labubu figure. Other series mentioned included Molly and Sweet Bean. When asked about color preferences, responses varied—light colors, yellow, and blue were among those mentioned—indicating no dominant color preference. Respondents generally stated that they intended to keep their POP MART toys as permanent collectibles, with most expressing a willingness to pass them down to the next generation. They also enjoyed showing their collections to friends and indicated that they would continue purchasing the brand. They felt that POP MART toys brought them happiness and were willing to pay for good design. The interviews revealed that young consumers value the visual appeal of the product most. The trendiness of trendy toys remains central to their attraction. Moreover, emotional attachment plays a significant role, as evidenced by the desire to collect for oneself and pass items on to future generations.

4.3 Analysis of Online Reviews

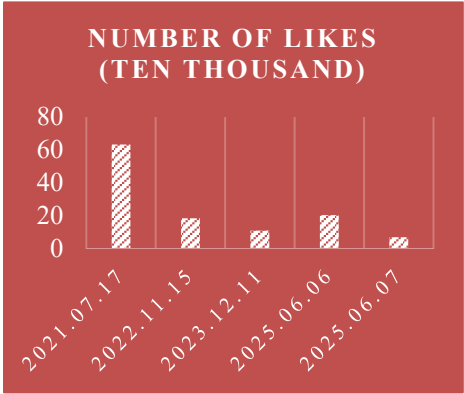


Fig. 2. Top 5 Most-Liked POP MART Short Videos on Douyin (Search Date: June 8, 2025)

This study also conducted an analysis of online reviews, primarily focusing on social media platforms on Douyin. As of June 8, 2025, a search of the top ten most-liked POP MART short videos on Douyin showed that the highest number of likes—633,000—

came from a video posted in 2021. A recently posted video on June 7, 2025, had already received over 71,000 likes, indicating POP MART's sustained popularity in China (Figure 2). It shows a strong motive force of the market.

5 Discussion

Some interviewees said that they used to collect many Japanese anime dolls and now have changed to POP MART as a recent personal collection, indicating a shift in trendy toy preferences. Those early trendy toys collection was influenced by Japanese comics characters. POP MART breaks through this emotional connection method connected by comics, captivating buyers with cute, quirky or dark cute appearances and IP, creating a POP MART global trend. The diversity and cross-cultural design on shape, color, material, cultural value, and name are key factors for both its creative design and global communication.

6 Conclusion

As Mr. Yang wrote in *China News Weekly* about POP MART founder Mr. Wang Ning, "The emotional connection between the customer and the product can be affected by every detail [5]." The cultural creative product attracts buyers not only based on its shape, but the combination of shape, color, material, cultural value, and name, as well as the media communication strategies suitable for this time. This study analyzes the cultural and creative design of the POP MART trendy toy to study the reason behind its success. Its trendiness and cross-cultural fine design are significant factors in its target buyers.

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