

Emotional consumption mechanism of game merchandise from the perspective of customer perception: taking *Genshin Impact* as an example

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Abstract. By reviewing existing relevant literature, this paper finds that prior studies have made progress in the research on game merchandise, emotional consumption mechanism and customer perception perspective, yet there remains a gap in the research on the emotional consumption mechanism of game merchandise from the customer perception perspective. Taking *Genshin Impact* as an example and adopting the research perspective of consumers' emotional consumption of game merchandise, this paper collects relevant public online information as well as user posts and post-purchase reviews on Xiaohongshu, Douyin and Taobao for analysis. The findings indicate that consumers' emotional consumption of merchandise products stems mainly from four dimensions: the connection between products and game characters, official or community recommendations, the intrinsic functional value of products, and basic guarantee factors such as return and exchange services. Among them, the connection between merchandise and game character-related elements serves as the primary motivation for players to make emotional purchases. This paper analyzes the drivers of players' emotional consumption, enabling game companies to better understand the elements that players truly expect from products, which is also a critical factor influencing merchandise sales. Therefore, this study provides guiding implications for game companies in developing merchandise products from the customer perception perspective.

Keywords: customer perception perspective, game merchandise, emotional consumption mechanism, influencing factors of emotional consumption

1. Introduction

In recent years, the fanatical purchasing phenomenon of game enthusiasts for creative products derived from major game IPs—game merchandise—has become a widely discussed topic. According to surveys, China's game merchandise market was approximately 75.3 billion yuan in 2025, and its market size is expected to reach 120–122.6 billion yuan in 2026; the global market exceeds 400 billion yuan, entering a period of rapid growth. Taking *Genshin Impact* as an example, the estimated annual omnichannel sales from 2024 to 2025 are conservatively in the range of 3–5 billion yuan; during the Double 11 period in 2024, the sales of the *Genshin Impact* flagship store exceeded 100 million yuan in a single hour. Such merchandise that drives emotional

consumption stirs up the emotions of game enthusiasts through marketing strategies such as deep character binding, scarcity creation, online community traffic exposure and cross-brand cooperation with major manufacturers, making consumers willing to pay. Not only that, game developers will also launch new in-game events and gameplay to increase player stickiness, so that players will actively follow the latest news of the game. Moreover, miHoYo has specially developed a platform called HoYoLAB. This platform has comprehensive functions: it not only allows players to learn about the latest game information, but also enables them to purchase game merchandise directly within the platform. There is even a check-in function, where daily check-ins reward players with in-game items that are distributed directly to their game accounts. In addition, players can also use the platform as a niche game community to discuss game-related content. A further question arises: why do consumers engage in emotional consumption of game merchandise?

Game merchandise refers to derivative products developed with game IP as the core, which turn in-game characters, scenes or props into real-world items, allowing players to bring their affection for the virtual world into daily life. The categories of such merchandise are very extensive, including but not limited to badges, pendants, plush dolls and character-inspired outfits. In recent years, as growing attention has been paid to the phenomenon of fans' fanatical brand consumption, a number of papers and research reports on this topic have been published, such as *Empirical Research on Consumption Behavior of Accessory Luxury Goods: Based on Consumer Groups in the Pearl River Delta* [1] and *The Psychological Cognitive Basis of Luxury Consumption Behavior Among Materialists: From the Perspective of Mental Accounting* [2]. It is generally believed that the purchasing behavior of game merchandise is a concentrated manifestation of emotional consumption—a decision-making and behavioral closed loop in which consumers take psychological comfort, emotional resonance or self-expression as the core driving force, downplay the practical function of products, and regulate emotional states, build identity or fill emotional gaps through purchasing behavior. However, such studies are mostly focused on luxury brands or electronic brands, and research targeting the audience of game merchandise remains to be expanded. Therefore, this paper will examine game enthusiasts' emotional purchasing behavior toward merchandise from the perspective of game merchandise.

Accordingly, this paper explores the emotional consumption mechanism of game merchandise based on the customer perception perspective. Taking reviews and posts by consumers who purchase merchandise of *Genshin Impact*, a popular game developed by miHoYo, as research samples, this paper investigates why consumers engage in emotional consumption of their favorite game merchandise. This study will provide new incremental insights into the consumption behavior of game merchandise.

2. Literature review

Existing literature on game merchandise falls into three categories. The first category is research on game merchandise itself. For example, Wu Shuangfeiyan and Zhou Meiyu [3] focused on narrative design principles applicable to game merchandise products. Through literature review and physical product analysis, they found that integrating narrative design elements such as form, color, material and backstory into game merchandise design can enhance the playfulness and richness of products. In addition, relevant research starting from the concept of game merchandise and user needs explores how current game merchandise design can be integrated with games, especially video games, and proposes design concepts such as situational modeling, virtual-real interactive experience and immersive secondary experience [4]. Later, Yin Lizhen [5] studied new trends in the development of the game merchandise derivative industry. By analyzing the current situation of China's game merchandise derivative industry, the motivations and paths of IP value chain reconstruction, and specific practices of business model innovation, the study found that a new business model centered on "IP incubation

+ ecological co-construction + data-driven" is reshaping the industrial landscape, and attempts to put forward strategic suggestions for industrial development.

The second category is research on emotional consumption. For example, Lian Si [6] studied the role of emotional consumption among youth groups, including positive functions such as identity confirmation, social connection and cultural transformation, and pointed out potential risks of this consumption mechanism such as detachment from reality and weakened time penetration. The paper argues that it is necessary to promote the sound development of emotional consumption that benefits youth growth and social progress by optimizing content supply and standardizing platform mechanisms. In addition, Luo Ziwei and Chen Siyun [7] examined the influence of nostalgic emotion on nostalgic tourism intention and price sensitivity. Their research shows that consumers' nostalgic emotion has a positive impact on their nostalgic tourism intention but a negative impact on price sensitivity, and price sensitivity plays a partial mediating role between nostalgic emotion and nostalgic tourism intention. Therefore, they suggest that enterprises should attach importance to and leverage the effect of nostalgic emotion on consumers. Furthermore, Wang Xujing and Zheng Xi [8] took blind box trendy toys as a typical case to explore the mechanism of youth emotional consumption and identity construction in the e-commerce environment. The study found that with uncertainty, IP culture and community exchange value, blind boxes have become an important consumption channel for young people to pursue novel experiences and social identity. However, this model also faces sustainability risks stemming from over-reliance on emotional stimulation and IP innovation, which may lead to consumption fatigue, addictive behavior and capital exploitation of emotional labor.

The third category is research from the customer perception perspective. For example, Zhang Changsen [9] constructed a structural model by associating three-dimensional customer perception factors (product perception, service perception and website perception) with customer satisfaction and loyalty. Based on 260 valid samples of online shoppers, he analyzed the key factors affecting customer loyalty in online shopping, as well as the interrelationship and relative importance of each factor. The results show that the three-dimensional perception factors are significantly positively correlated with satisfaction, and customer satisfaction is highly correlated with loyalty. In addition, quality, price and user reviews also have potential impacts on customer loyalty. The paper concludes that measures such as quality assurance, product variety expansion and strengthened user review management can be adopted to improve customer loyalty in online shopping. Later, Yu Bailian and Luo Xia [10] studied how to create nostalgia in homestays. By collecting online review texts of 5 homestays in Zhangjiajie, Hunan Province, and conducting analysis through coding and word frequency statistics, they identified 7 main categories of nostalgia creation in homestays. On this basis, they concluded that tourists' perception of nostalgia in Zhangjiajie homestays mainly comes from natural and humanistic dimensions, and put forward suggestions for nostalgia creation based on tourists' experience evaluation.

However, although the above three streams of research on game merchandise have yielded certain achievements, there is still insufficient understanding of the emotional consumption process of game merchandise consumers. Therefore, this paper examines the emotional consumption mechanism of game merchandise from the customer perception perspective.

3. Research design

The main reasons for selecting *Genshin Impact* as the research case are as follows:

First, it has a large and solid user base. As of 2026, its global cumulative player count has exceeded 300 million (official related data as of July 2025), with domestic and overseas players accounting for about 50%

each. In May 2026, it ranked second on the global mobile game bestseller list (second only to *Honor of Kings*), and exerts a strong influence on young people.

Second, its merchandise is representative. Game merchandise consumption is typical emotional consumption, whose core driving force is not practical value, but emotional projection onto characters, community identity and instant gratification. According to reports, more than 70% of purchasers list "gaining inner pleasure", "awakening emotional memories of the game" and "social display and sense of belonging" as their main motivations. Low-priced *Genshin Impact* merchandise (such as 60–120 yuan standees and 10–60 yuan badges) is more likely to trigger impulsive purchases due to low psychological threshold and strong emotional value.

Third, data is accessible. Multiple third-party platforms continuously track and disclose public information related to *Genshin Impact*. In addition, the official merchandise team has open rules for fan-made merchandise sales. Sales data and single-product transaction data on major e-commerce platforms are publicly queryable. Combined with industry-recognized reference values of merchandise revenue share, a complete profit profile can be constructed without access to internal data.

This paper focuses on consumers of *Genshin Impact* merchandise. By screening posts and reviews based on view count, like count and key words including after-sales service, character design restoration, packaging, symbolic meaning, quality control, logistics and craftsmanship, valid samples were finally selected: 6 posts from Xiaohongshu, and 31 reviews from e-commerce platforms including Taobao and Douyin.

4. Research findings

Based on the analysis of 37 user reviews, the study finds that the main drivers of emotional consumption of game merchandise fall into the following four aspects, as detailed in Table 1.

First, the direct connection with game content is the core attribute of products, reflected in aspects such as faithful restoration of game design and special symbolic meaning to players. Through the analysis of post-purchase reviews across major platforms, this paper finds that the deeper the connection between a product and game elements, the stronger the purchasing intention of players. Even when complaining about high prices, many players still make purchases simply because the product carries elements of their favorite game characters. For example, some consumers mentioned that they immediately bought a ring themed after their favorite character the moment they saw it, completely unable to resist, regardless of the high price. On the contrary, many players give negative reviews when merchandise fails to faithfully restore character designs. For instance, a Xiaohongshu post discussed an officially released character-themed nightgown, arguing that changing the original halter neck design to a camisole was highly unreasonable. The post pointed out that nightgowns for other characters in the same series all strived for design restoration, so this particular product was not worth the high price—even less restored and more expensive than fan-made products. In addition, some consumers noted that the "Pyro Vision" has special meaning to them because both their own and their girlfriend's favorite characters wield Pyro Visions, hence their purchase. Furthermore, some players collect all merchandise featuring a certain character out of affection, known as "completionists" in the community.

Second, group interaction in game communities, including official promotions, player recommendations and social media sharing. For example, there are numerous "warning posts" and "recommendation posts" for various game merchandise on Xiaohongshu. Warning posts are dedicated to sharing shortcomings of game merchandise, such as poor batch quality control or unfaithful character design that is not worth buying. Recommendation posts share the merits of game merchandise—for example, players may praise a product for its faithful design and high emotional companionship value. Players who come across these posts may adjust

their consumption plans accordingly. Official promotion also exerts a huge influence on players. For example, *Genshin Impact* operates an official account "Genshin Impact Official Flagship Store" to preheat new products, including introducing product functions, design concepts and origins, and showcasing new products in all aspects under carefully arranged scenes. In addition, the official account releases display videos of upcoming products in advance to attract potential consumers and create a sense of urgency. Many consumers even set alarms to snap up products right on sale, triggering a shopping frenzy.

Table 1. Main manifestations and typical examples of consumer evaluations of *Genshin Impact* merchandise

Main Manifestations	Typical Examples
Connection with the Game	Positive example 1: Such exquisite jewelry! The same style as A-Liu is absolutely beautiful. It is packed with elements of the Wanderer—truly exclusive jewelry. So many delicate details, lots of tiny pave diamonds, and the blue stones are brilliantly translucent. (Taobao)
	Positive example 2: This Wanderer figure is finely crafted. The material feels solid, the details are well-executed, and the color scheme is highly faithful to the character's original design. (Douyin)
	Positive example 3: Hahaha I don't even have a cat, but this cat bed has A-San elements! I'm buying it. (Douyin)
	Positive example 4: Diluc was my first 5-star character, so I picked the Mondstadt Pyro Vision. What's more, my girlfriend's favorite is Klee. I'm an Aries, a fire sign, and my Heavenly Stem in the birth chart is Bing Fire. So this Pyro Vision holds extremely special meaning to me. (Douyin)
	Positive example 5: Bought the official version. It's quite pricey but I had to get it. One step closer to completing my Yae Miko merchandise collection. (Douyin)
Group Interaction in Game Communities	Negative example 1: The Fatui cloak from before was made perfectly faithful to the original. Why can't they do the same for a simple nightgown for this female character? The halter choker could have been detachable—someone even proposed a detachable design. All other characters in the same series are highly restored, only Columbina's nightgown has flaws in design restoration. (Xiaohongshu)
	Positive example 1: I'm absolutely obsessed with this Slime storage box! It holds my craft supplies perfectly, and works as a chair or footrest too. The Slime top comes off and can be used as a cushion. It's surprisingly sturdy. (Xiaohongshu)
	Positive example 2: Highly recommend the Faruzan and Zhongli mugs! I've had mine for almost three years and they hold so much liquid. Best of all, you can drink cold beverages and make coffee in them. Really practical. (Xiaohongshu)
	Negative example 1: A serious warning about Genshin's after-sales service. I ordered something in August, it was stuck in transit for 3 months, and when it arrived the bag had defective accessories. I contacted customer service and they agreed to an exchange, but the replacement had the exact same defect in almost the same spot. It was like no exchange happened at all. I've applied for another exchange and it still hasn't been reviewed. (Xiaohongshu)

Table 1. Continued

Group Interaction in Game Communities	Negative example 2: Why can't the Marionette nightgown be both faithful to the design and comfortable to wear? This short skirt costs about the same as the Servant outfit and the Marionette cotton long dress next to it. It's way less cost-effective than the fan-made version at 109 yuan, which even comes with a headpiece, ribbon and leggings. I'm definitely not buying this. (Xiaohongshu) Positive example 1: This water bowl is great. My dog started using it the day it arrived. (Douyin) Positive example 2: Finally found the perfect storage for the badges from my birthday gift box. The chain is long enough for two acrylic badge cases, so you don't see the back of the badges—you can admire my favorite character's gorgeous design from both sides. (Douyin)
Functional Value	Positive example 3: Works as a badge holder and a wobble standee. So good! (Douyin) Positive example 4: I bought this brooch to match my character-inspired outfit. (Douyin) Positive example 5: The ice building blocks arrived yesterday, and I brought them out to assemble today. Once built, this Cryo Hypostasis feels like Ayaka is right here with me. (Douyin) Positive example 1: Why is miHoYo's after-sales service always so amusing? Customer Service No.9 is hilarious. I'm in the middle of an exchange... they sent me a chubby Shi Shao as a replacement, so cute. (Xiaohongshu) Positive example 2: User: Can you believe this? Customer Service: There's a dent, we'll send you a replacement. (From screenshot) I feel so spoiled by mhy's customer service hahaha. (Xiaohongshu)
Basic Guarantee Factors	Negative example 1: I had to exchange Xiao's work jacket three times from the Douyin store. The first two times they just sent me the exact same defective item back. I only got a proper replacement after contacting their specialist directly the third time. (Xiaohongshu) Negative example 2: Terrible after-sales service. They refuse to exchange a product with major defects. I asked Taobao customer service to intervene, and they said I could only get a refund. But a refund would make my order fall below the minimum spend for free gifts, and then they asked me to send the free gifts back. (Taobao)

Third, the intrinsic functional value of products, that is, whether the merchandise has practical attributes. A conclusion can be drawn from post-purchase reviews across platforms: many game merchandise purchases are driven by derivative demands. For example, a consumer who buys a badge is very likely to purchase a dedicated acrylic storage case for it, which protects the badge while maintaining aesthetics, and can even be hung on a backpack with a chain for display. Other "practical" merchandise such as clothing, backpacks, keyboards, mice and shoes are also very popular. Many players stated that such game merchandise is not only practical, but also brings a strong sense of companionship and emotional value as character-related elements

are visible in daily life. Although expensive, players consider them good value for money, which easily triggers emotional consumption.

Fourth, basic guarantee factors such as logistics and after-sales service. Game merchandise merchants generally promise a long delivery cycle of 6 to 7 months. This is done to reduce inventory risks and deliberately extend the buffer period to avoid breach of contract compensation, and is also due to small order quantities for single products and complex craftsmanship (such as brushed silver finish and special coatings). Observation from reviews shows that many consumers are dissatisfied with this, but most have grown accustomed to it as it is common practice across the industry. However, this is also one of the reasons for the frantic snapping up of new releases: all consumers want their merchandise to be shipped as soon as possible, and earlier orders are prioritized for shipment. After-sales service is also an important factor influencing emotional consumption orders. It can be seen from posts that *Genshin Impact* has a relatively sound after-sales system, with 7-day no-reason return guarantee for every order. Moreover, instant refund before shipment provides consumers with great peace of mind—they can get a refund at any time if they change their mind shortly after purchase. This guarantee is exactly what fuels impulsive ordering. However, many Xiaohongshu posts reflect problems with product exchange services. Sometimes consumers receive defective products and apply for a flawless replacement, but many players report issues such as receiving the same defective product back, perfunctory handling or rejected exchange applications. This problem has disappointed many players and made them decide not to buy official merchandise anymore, resulting in the loss of a large number of customers. It can be seen that after-sales service is a crucial factor in emotional consumption decisions.

5. Conclusion

This paper studies the emotional consumption mechanism of game merchandise, taking *Genshin Impact* as a case to examine the process of consumers' emotional consumption of game merchandise. Through the analysis of 37 user reviews, the study finds that four factors—direct connection with the game, community group interaction, functional value of merchandise, and basic product guarantee—are the key drivers of consumers' emotional consumption. This paper supplements the existing research gap in this field.

For game companies, rational utilization of the above four factors can effectively boost game merchandise sales and increase revenue. As can be seen from the reviews in the table, merchants have already made some progress in these four aspects, but there is still room for improvement, such as enhancing exchange efficiency and improving product quality control. In addition, listening more to players' suggestions and taking corresponding improvement measures can better improve player satisfaction and reduce the number of "warning posts".

However, this study also has limitations. The case is limited to *Genshin Impact*. Although it is a typical representative among games, analysis of a single game is far from sufficient. Follow-up research should include more games as research samples. Moreover, this paper does not conduct primary survey research, and all data sources are from public online platforms. Future research should complement field surveys instead of relying solely on existing public data.

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