

The Contributing Factors of High Consumer Loyalty to Jellycat Brand

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Abstract. E-commerce platforms and social media have made brand-consumer connections easier in China. Jellycat has gained social media traffic due to its innovative product design. Jellycat brand products usually attract youthful consumers, who buy them consistently and build brand loyalty. This study examined Jellycat's brand loyalty factors. Consumer behavior, psychology, and marketing theories were used to draw conclusions from Jellycat's purchase data. Factor one: Jellycat's product design, which uses personification and inspiration from everyday objects to make toys, refreshes and gains customers. The essay advises the corporation to closely regulate product quality to attract long-term customers. Second, an emotional bond Jellycat's anthropomorphic toys help consumers who feel stressed and lonely during societal growth form profound emotional bonds. The article advises that the brand formally establish social media discussion groups to strengthen the emotional tie, increase brand-customer interactions, and boost loyalty. Brand recall comes in third. Due to its high traffic and visibility, the brand has a large social media following and is ready to buy. The report suggests Jellycat use social media influencers to boost brand awareness and loyalty.

Keywords: Jellycat, Brand, Marketing, Brand loyalty.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

The year 2018 is crucial for Chinese growth. The economy and people's lifestyles changed dramatically this year, with technological innovation driving economic growth. Artificial intelligence, blockchain, and 5G are popular. The Chinese government invested in and supported technical innovations like artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing. Internet culture has become vital to the cultural industry. Short films, live streaming, online novels, and other formats became popular entertainment and leisure activities. Famous social media platforms like Douyin (TikTok) and Meipai helped China's internet sector grow rapidly, with hundreds of millions of members. Small-scale, high-growth e-commerce has also grown. E-commerce is growing rapidly despite its small size. Meanwhile, the competitive employment market puts career pressure on young people. Technology has increased the importance of higher education, specialized skills, and work experience as job requirements, causing many young people to worry about their jobs. In 2018, Jellycat, a soft toy brand, sold well in China via e-commerce. Recent Chinese internet growth gives Jellycat a considerable foothold in the Chinese market. Jellycat entered China in 2013 and opened a T-mall flagship in 2015. By capitalizing on the e-commerce boom, the brand increased sales in China in 2018. With the rise of Chinese social media sites like Douyin (TikTok), Xiaohongshu, and others, Jellycat advertisements, suggestions, and posts expanded online. With its distinctive design, Jellycat gained popularity in 2018 on the Internet and among Chinese clients.

Chinese youth also feel pressure and anxiety from the Internet. They need company and healing. China's urbanization and changing ideas regarding relationships and marriage have increased the younger generation's desire for emotional comfort, especially outside of work. Stress and worry increased the urge for connection. This link has emotional value and has created a "companion economy."

The Jellycat customer base spans all ages. Interestingly, mainland China's Jellycat customers are adults. Figure 1 shows that kids buy most soft toys. Figure 1 suggests Jellycat's main purchasing

power is in the 25-34 age range, which accounts for 30.17% of the population [1]. Then came the 18-24 age range, showing Jellycat's customer demographic [1].

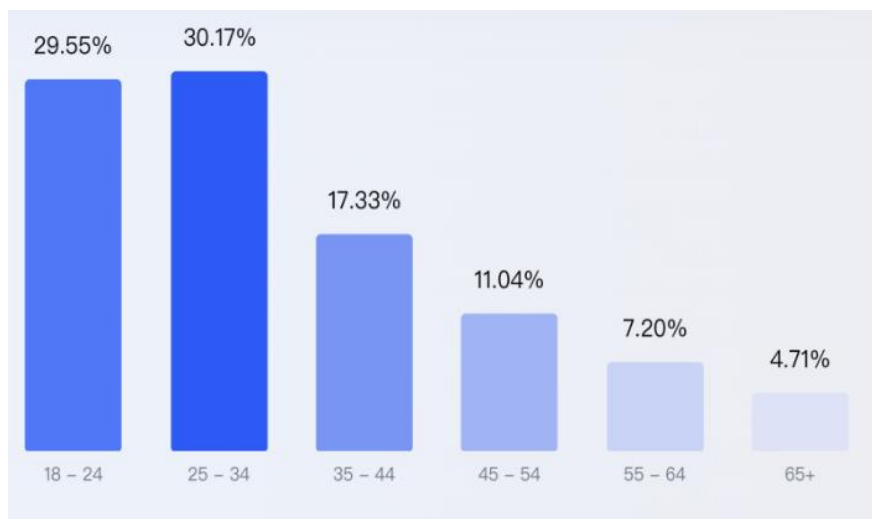


Figure 1. Demographic of Jellycat's consumer [1].

In this context, Jellycat's series-based sales strategy has won over Chinese consumers. This marketing tactic has created a desire for soft toys with comforting and friendship features, promoting repeat purchasing.

After trying Jellycat items, many customers become collectors. With a rising sense of reliance, many people say they never considered ceasing Jellycat product purchases and never will. Over 180,000 Chinese social media users have shared Jellycat stories, and over 30 million Chinese short video views have been generated. Analysis of social media debates and likes shows that more people are following the trend [2].

1.2. Research Gap

Many scholars have studied the consumption of toys from various perspectives and approaches. Christopher Byrne, for example, researched how to develop items that appeal to both children and adults in this day and age while increasing their willingness to spend [3]. He stated that previous popular screen IPs appear to have lost their appeal [3]. Toys for children should embody features of the adult world, allowing adults to enjoy playing with them as well, increasing sales and effectively marketing items. Marianne Szymanski investigated the qualities that toys for different age groups should have and how to promote items based on these qualities [4]. She concluded that survey methods can be used to identify things that children enjoy and that parents are willing to buy [4]. Hogan, the researcher, addressed the importance of "trust" in the children's consumer market, highlighting that trust is the foundation of consumption [5]. Because of the distinctiveness of the children's market, consumer-product trust is more fragile, and trust drives product usage [5]. Various researchers also analyzed various marketing strategies and methods for increasing purchases.

However, there is currently a scarcity of studies on consumer purchase behavior regarding Jellycat. Jellycat, a brand with exceptionally high consumer loyalty, has yet to be investigated and evaluated as a research subject. It's time to look into Jellycat's most noticeable purchasing behavior, which is the addictive nature of their purchases. This study attempts to fill this research vacuum by focusing on Jellycat as the research subject in order to investigate "What factors contribute to the inability to quit and the desire to continually purchase the series products from Jellycat, which form high brand loyalty?" It's worth investigating Jellycat's high brand loyalty. What variables lead to a brand's extraordinary consumer devotion while also generating large profits? This is precisely the type of marketing strategy that the present market requires. Many businesses can learn from Jellycat's success, decode their techniques, and replicate their activities to achieve comparable success.

1.3. Fill The Gap

Through study, this article will explore such a question. An investigation and observation will be carried out using data and information from e-commerce platforms and social media related to the brand Jellycat. First, the particular variables that lure Jellycat customers irresistibly to its items, causing them to "can't stop buying them," will be identified. Then, examine the extent to which they have affected the brand and make recommendations for future improvements and opportunities for the brand.

2. Case Description

Jellycat got its name from a toddler who liked both jelly and cats; two unrelated things came together to generate the brand's moniker. The company was formed in 1999 in London with the goal of developing new and unique soft toys out of luxury fabrics. Jellycat's soft toys are adored companions for both adults and children because of their adorable and unusual designs, expressive face emotions, and lifelike features. The company's product portfolio includes animals, plants, home decor items, and unusually shaped toys. To suit the needs of consumers of all ages, Jellycat's toys frequently fluctuate in size from mini to giant. Jellycat products are designed with safety and quality in mind. The toys are gentle, skin-friendly, and safe because the brand only employs the best materials. All of our goods are tested and certified in accordance with European safety standards. Because the toys are non-irritating, non-shedding, and hypoallergenic, users can enjoy maximum comfort and safety. They do not fade or deform, even after washing. Jellycat's therapeutic powers and high-quality standards have led to remarkable popularity worldwide, particularly in China.

Beginning in 2018, the brand sparked a major social media sensation in China. Barcelona Bear, Jellycat's first "internet-famous" product, skyrocketed the company's popularity (Figure 5). That year, it seemed like every internet celebrity bought one. The Barcelona Bear was quite popular, with many girls in their twenties and thirties obsessed with this teddy bear. According to online rumors, the romanticism of the Barcelona Bear is incomparable. A keychain-sized bear cost 299 RMB, while the 56-centimeter bear cost a whopping 1399 RMB. Despite the exorbitant costs, purchasers were not put off; instead, the brand sold over 2000 units per month [6].

Furthermore, Jellycat has designed a plethora of plush toy characters that elicit distinct emotions and stories through their innocent and endearing expressions. Rough numbers show a tremendous increase in Jellycat's presence on the Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu: the number of postings increased from 70,000 to 130,000 in just six months, and the hashtag #Jellycat received an amazing 130 million views. Around 40,000 Jellycat customers started a "quit support group" on the Chinese social media platform Douban to help them stop purchasing. However, due to the effect of more ardent Jellycat fans sharing their experiences, several buyers who intended to stop purchasing ended up acquiring more Jellycat soft toys. This even changed the basic "quit group" into a "temptation group. Jellycat has boosted purchase behavior and emotional relationships.

And such great loyalty is uncommon in plush toy sales. Thus, how does Jellycat make adult clients difficult to resist, unable to break the habit of purchasing their items on a regular basis, and so increase consumer loyalty?

3. Analysis on The Problems

3.1. Reason on Product Design

Jellycat's product designs draw significant influence from the essence of life itself. The range of products encompasses a variety of objects, such as crops, plants, backpacks, crossbody bags, food-themed merchandise, animals, baby products, and further offerings. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that all of these items possess a common attribute, namely the incorporation of human expressions

and qualities, so imbuing them with a sense of vitality. Personification is the central element of Jellycat's product design.

Furthermore, individual products are assigned distinct names and backstories, enhancing their distinctive character. The official platform of Jellycat also includes the practice of assigning individual names to each plush toy, accompanied by the implementation of a personified emotional marketing campaign. Jellycat, a prominent brand in the plush toy industry, implements a marketing strategy wherein they showcase a designated "Star of the Month" on a monthly basis. This initiative presents consumers with a restricted window of opportunity to make exclusive purchases. Presents distinct narratives for every product.

The Barcelona Bear, for example, is marketed as a companion sleep toy [5]. Consumers are encouraged to interact with the plush toys, such as by telling them stories, which fosters a sense of wonder. This type of anthropomorphic connection bridges the gap between stuffed animals and customers, inspiring significant customer involvement and innovation. According to Hazel H. Huang's research, which shows that personifying brand items increases customer imagination, strengthens the brand-consumer relationship, and ultimately increases sales, this strategy has produced a strong customer loyalty base [7]. As a result, client loyalty is strong [7].

3.2. Reason on Emotional Attachment

The communication between Mixue Ice Cream & Tea and customers is very positive, which has a positive impact on brand loyalty.

The outstanding product design and current setting have built a strong emotional connection between Jellycat and its customers. People are facing increased feelings of loneliness and anxiety as a result of the contemporary era and increasing societal demands. Jellycat, with its soothing and therapeutic properties, resonates strongly in this setting. Psychologist Donald Winnicott proposed that fuzzy toys can function as "transitional objects," creating a sense of softness and stability that people of all ages may desire [8]. Plush toys can become an inseparable "companion" for grownups, providing comfort. The official Jellycat account frequently reveals details about the plush toys' existence, such as Cruny the Rooster's workout image following the Spring Festival, the panda plush taking cute sticker shots, and animated movies of the snail heading to the laundry room. They also give the duck plush second jobs, like assisting the hen mother in caring for fun water-boiled eggs and happy water-boiled eggs, and so on. Under the supervision of the official account, customers are utilizing their imaginations to create stories for their Jellycat plush toys, resulting in stronger emotional ties. Heiner Evanschitzky and his colleagues confirm that emotional relationships between customers and products result in repeat purchases [9]. This emotional attachment to a brand fuels shoppers' desire to buy. According to research, when the emotional connection is very strong, it leads to ultimate loyalty, leading customers to "overcome difficulties and spare no expense" to buy [10].

3.3. Reason on Brand Recall

One of Jellycat's qualities is that it has a lot of traffic and visibility on social media. Customers' propensity to buy grows dramatically when new and existing products are constantly exposed on the internet.

By ensuring that buyers are consistently exposed to the product. First, it captures the attention of the clients, piquing their interest and urging them to make a purchase. Following the purchase, joining online forums discussing Jellycat and sharing photographs, articles, comments, and other content on social media produces a certain amount of debate. This cycle fosters a sense of social affiliation in customers, resulting in great brand memory. For recurring purchases, brand memory is extremely valuable.

According to research, brand memory is significant in the purchase of any product category and is favorably connected with purchasing behavior [11].

4. Suggestion

4.1. Suggestion on product Strategy

In order to further increase customer loyalty, the article suggests that improving the product itself is essential.

The designs of Jellycat's items are already of exceptional quality, effectively capturing attention and stimulating consumer demand. One aspect that requires enhancement pertains to quality. Depending exclusively on an impeccable physical presentation as the primary means of attracting customers is inadequate. The inherent functional value of the product plays a pivotal role in ensuring the continuity of consumer purchases. This article proposes that Jellycat should improve the quality of its products, exercise greater caution in the selection of materials for its textiles, and ensure that the product offers clients a satisfactory experience, thereby meeting their psychological demands and establishing a sense of value for the price.

Research has shown that the functional value, performance, and features of a product greatly influence the customer replacement rate and satisfaction with the product [12]. Coupled with advertising, highlighting the improvements made to the product and attracting both new and returning customers to make purchases [12]. Resulting in increased profits for the company, creating a stronger connection between the brand and customers, and further elevating customer satisfaction and loyalty [12].

4.2. Suggestions on Emotional Connection

In order to strengthen the emotional connection between the brand and customers, this article believes that developing community-based marketing is a good choice.

By initiating groups through official social media or online communities, customers and the brand can form a community with shared language habits, communication preferences, and adherence to community rules. This initiative will help the brand achieve higher loyalty, give customers a sense of belonging, and further enhance sales. Customers, through the rights of product usage and ownership, feel a greater sense of self-worth and have more opportunities to communicate with both the brand and the product, forming a deeper emotional attachment.

Research indicates that community marketing is more potent compared to traditional methods; it enables communication between customers and consumers and allows the brand to gain consumer trust through their product evaluations [13]. This aims to multiply popularity and enhance customer loyalty [13].

4.3. Suggestions on Social Connection

The article suggests that Jellycat should search for influencers on the internet to maintain brand exposure and attract more customers. In this context, influencer refers to a user with a large following on social media.

Collaborating with influencers allows for further promotion of the product. Influencers play a role of social identification within their communities. They often share similar interests with their followers and represent the followers' desired lifestyles, among other aspects. Research suggests that because influencers and their followers already have a foundation of trust, followers are willing to follow their lead and recommendations, making them an ideal target audience for product promotion [14]. An online survey conducted with 467 Instagram users showed that influencers have a positive impact on followers' purchasing intentions [14]. This influence can be achieved through storytelling and posting content [14]. By adopting this suggestion, Jellycat will attract more potential consumers and enhance customer purchasing intentions and brand loyalty through consistent exposure.

5. Conclusion

This research examined the market and customer behavior of the brand Jellycat within the framework of the internet era in mainland China. This era is distinguished by technological breakthroughs, a flourishing social media landscape, and the rise of a youthful consumer demographic. The main aim of this study was to examine the characteristics that contribute to the strong consumer loyalty towards the brand. By adopting a consumer psychology approach and building upon relevant academic theories, the study has derived the following conclusions: The characteristics that were found to have a significant impact on consumer loyalty to the Jellycat brand are product design, emotional attachment, and brand memory. Furthermore, recommendations for further augmenting the brand were made.

This study, focused on Jellycat, reexamined prior theories and confirmed that both product design and emotional attachment are key factors in determining customers' long-term purchase intentions. The proposed enhancements provided significant insights for the brand's future undertakings. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the article possesses certain constraints.

The analysis primarily concentrated on the Chinese mainland market, neglecting the potential customer segments in the worldwide market. Moreover, the approach predominantly had a theoretical orientation and was deficient in empirical substantiation. In order to overcome these constraints, it is recommended that future scholarly investigations expand their scope and integrate empirical data to facilitate a more thorough study.

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