

A Research on the Segmentation Driving Mechanism of Sanrio Brand Symbols from the Perspective of Consumer Psychology-Based on the Psychological and Behavioral Differences Between Students Aged 18-24 and Working People Aged 25-35

Sitong Sun ^a

Department of English, Xi'an International Studies University, 710128, Xi'an, China

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Abstract: In today's consumer era, consumers' demands for emotional value and emotional comfort have significantly increased, and "cute economy" symbols have flourished as a consumption form that carries healing functions. This research focuses on the segmentation and driving mechanism of Sanrio's "cute healing" symbol system on the 18-24-year-old student group and the 25-35-year-old working group. Through questionnaire survey, this paper studies how Sanrio's "cute healing" brand lifestyle positioning dynamically affects the consumption behavior of students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35 through differentiated psychological mechanisms. The research found that the student group takes the emotional resonance of symbols as the core motivation, and exhibits low-frequency, small-amount, impulsive consumption and occasional repurchase consumption behaviors; the workplace group takes the practical scene adaptation and social identity attributes of symbols as the core motivation, and exhibits medium-high frequency, medium-amount, rational decision-making and relatively high repurchase loyalty consumption behaviors. The research aims to construct a dynamic conduction model of "age stratification-psychological motivation-consumption behavior" to provide a theoretical basis for the future segmentation and refinement strategies of lifestyle brands such as Sanrio.

1 INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of globalization and digitalization, Generation Z and Millennials have become the dominant consumer force in today's society. Contemporary youth are in a state of strong social desire and are eager to build good interpersonal relationships in society and gain a sense of belonging. The resulting "herd mentality" has made the symbolic attributes of commodities increasingly concerned by contemporary youth (Wang, Li, 2024). The proportion of socially motivated consumption such as showing off, conformity, socializing, and identity symbol brought about by the symbolic economy and individual motivated consumption such as self-enjoyment and self-gifting is gradually increasing (Wang, Chen, 2023). People's purchasing decisions are often influenced by the above emotions. Emotional consumption has gradually become dominant. In the current consumer market, the

interaction between brand positioning, marketing and consumer psychology is crucial. Sanrio, a global lifestyle brand, seized this opportunity to build an emotional economic ecosystem with its "cute and healing" symbol system, attracting two core groups: students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35. However, its differentiated driving mechanism has not been fully studied. This research aims to answer how Sanrio's symbol system drives segmented consumption behavior through differentiated psychological needs.

From the perspective of consumer motivation, existing research has discussed in depth the purchasing decisions triggered by consumer psychological mechanisms. Hong Qinghui et al. (2025) mainly discussed consumers' purchasing intention and analyzed dimensions such as external emotional factors, emotional arousal and irrational beliefs. Du Yanyan et al. (2024) explained that brands need to explore the inner world of consumers and are

^a <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3751-6339>

not only providers of goods or services, but also communicators of emotions; From the perspective of marketing strategy, He Yuan (2022) analyzed the current status of Perfect Diary's brand marketing, including brand image, communication, promotion and positioning. It pointed out that there were problems with brand spokespersons, social media platform marketing communication, sales channels and price positioning. It provided Perfect Diary with marketing strategy suggestions such as optimizing target market strategy, selecting consumers mainly from Generation Z as the target market, and establishing brand image. Deng Chunli et al. (2021) used the SWOT matrix to analyze the internal and external competitive environment of the Beast brand, analyzed the current status of its content marketing, and proposed marketing strategies such as cultivating key opinion consumers of the brand and telling good brand stories. In summary, in terms of consumer motivation, although existing research focuses on the impact of the connection between brand symbols and psychological factors such as consumer emotional needs on consumer behavior, most of them analyze consumers as a relatively unified group, lacking in-depth and detailed differentiated research on consumer groups of different age groups. In marketing strategy research, although brand operation strategies are generally proposed with contemporary youth as the target market, the deep-seated differences behind the consumer behavior of youth of different age groups are not fully considered, ignoring the important role of age stratification in the consumer decision-making process. In response to the shortcomings of existing research, this research focuses on Sanrio's main consumer market, the 18-24-year-old student group and the 25-35-year-old working group, and constructs a dynamic conduction model of "age stratification-psychological motivation-consumption behavior", filling the research gap in the driving mechanism of symbolic consumption grouping.

2 METHOD

The questionnaire of this research mainly includes three core parts: the first is the basic information of the respondents, covering age, occupation and income, which is used to accurately divide the groups. The second part focuses on the psychological mechanism module, and sets up questions such as emotional resonance, social identity, and aesthetic preference around Sanrio's "cute healing" symbol to explore the psychological cognition and reaction of

different groups to this symbol system; the third part is the consumption decision-making module, which analyzes the driving mechanism of psychological mechanism on the consumption behavior of the two groups through questions such as purchase frequency, consumption scenarios and influencing factors.

The questionnaire covers basic personal information, including age, occupation (divided into students and working people), income level, etc., which will help to conduct subsequent group analysis and understand the consumption differences between the two groups of people, such as the impact of different income levels of different age groups on the consumption capacity and preference of Sanrio products. By setting questions to explore the psychological motivations behind consumer purchasing behavior, the core driving factors of different groups are clarified, and questions such as the frequency of purchasing Sanrio products, the amount of single consumption, the channel and type of product purchase are set to outline the consumption behavior patterns of different groups, providing a basis for analyzing consumption tendencies and habits.

The questionnaire includes mandatory multiple-choice questions, which are convenient for respondents to answer quickly; it includes mandatory scale questions, which are conducive to quantifying the attitudes of respondents, conducting data analysis and comparing the attitude differences of different groups; it also includes non-mandatory open-ended questions, which can obtain more in-depth and personalized thoughts and feelings of respondents. This questionnaire is arranged in order from easy to difficult, from objective to subjective, and related questions are grouped to make the questionnaire structure clear.

The questionnaire clearly targets students aged 18-24 in different grades and majors and professionals aged 25-35 in different industries and positions. The questionnaire was imported through the Wenjuanxing platform, and the questionnaire QR code was shared online through social media such as WeChat and Xiaohongshu to relevant student class groups, interest groups, and personal friend circles for social fission. Students were invited to fill out the questionnaire in places with large traffic on the university campus in their spare time. The questionnaire collected 218 questionnaires in 2 weeks, including 114 from students aged 18-24 and 104 from professionals aged 25-35. Through strict screening of answering time, logical consistency, and completeness, 36 invalid samples were finally excluded, leaving 182 valid samples, including 98

from students aged 18-24 and 84 from professionals aged 25-35.

In the data analysis phase, the statistical software SPSS was used to conduct multi-faceted analysis of valid sample data. Reliability and validity analysis was first conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. The Wenjuanxing platform was used for cross-analysis, with age groups set as independent variables, and psychological mechanisms and consumer behavior-related issues set as dependent variables. The two main self-defined age groups (18-24 years old, 25-35 years old) were compared to reveal data characteristics from multiple dimensions, and the differences between age groups were preliminarily presented through cross-analysis.

SPSS variance analysis determined the significance of the differences, and correlation analysis, cluster analysis, and regression analysis explored the relationship between variables from different angles, segmented consumer groups, and clarified key influencing factors, providing strong data support for studying the market performance of different groups of the Sanrio brand and formulating marketing strategies.

3 RESULT

3.1 Differences in Consumption Ability Among Groups

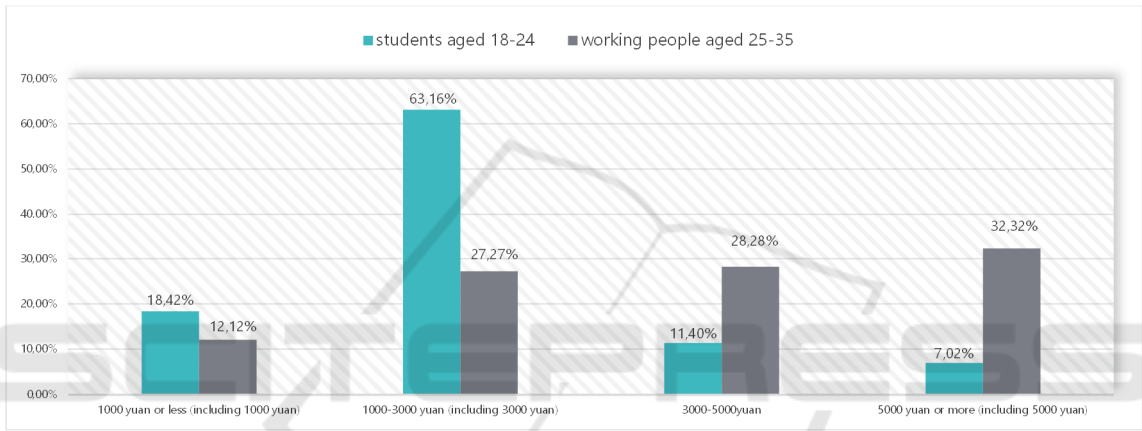


Figure 1: Disposable funds for students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35.

Referring to figure 1, the monthly disposable funds of students aged 18-24 are concentrated in 1,000-3,000 yuan (63.16%), and the disposable funds are limited; the monthly disposable funds of working people aged 25-35 account for 32.32% of more than 5,000 yuan, and the disposable funds have increased significantly.

3.2 Differentiation Mechanism of Psychological Motivation

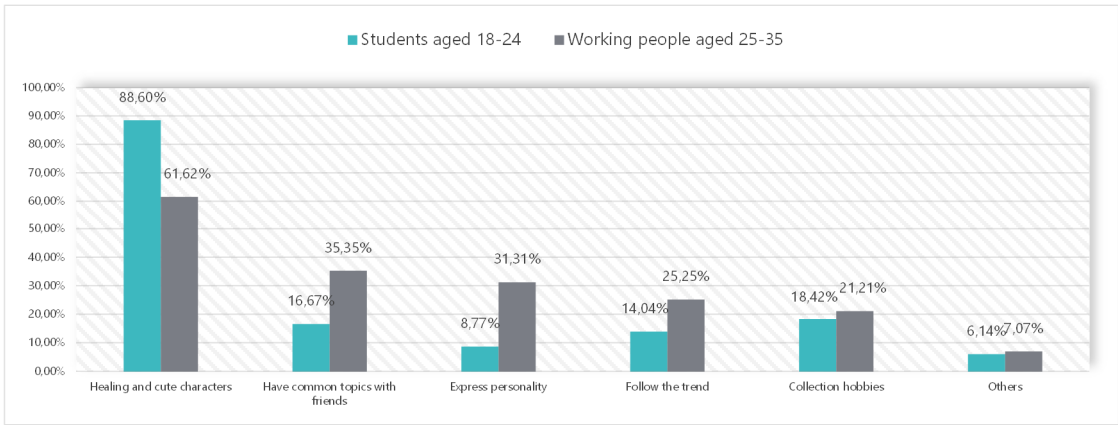


Figure 2: Purchase reasons of students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35.

Referring to figure 2, 88.6% of 18-24-year-old students take emotional healing as the core driving force, and make purchases because of "healing and cute characters"; 35.35% of 25-35-year-old working

people make purchases because of "have common topics with friends" and establish social connections through Sanrio products.

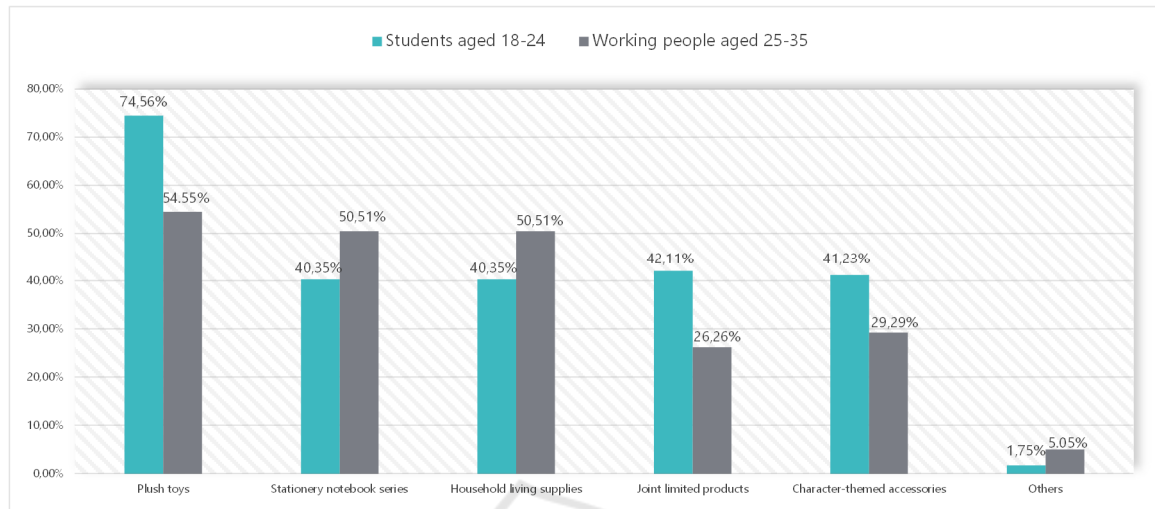


Figure 3: Sources of healing feelings among students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35.

As shown in figure 3, the 18-24-year-old student group prefers the intuitively driven "immediate healing"; 50.51% of working people pursue the healing experience of high-frequency scene

penetration, and believe that daily high-frequency use categories such as stationery notebooks series and household living supplies bring a sense of companionship in daily scenes.



Figure 4: Reasons for repurchasing among students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35.

As shown in figure 4, the repurchase behavior of the 18-24-year-old student group is highly dependent on the "like character design"; the repurchase motivation of the 25-35-year-old working people shows a compound driving feature.

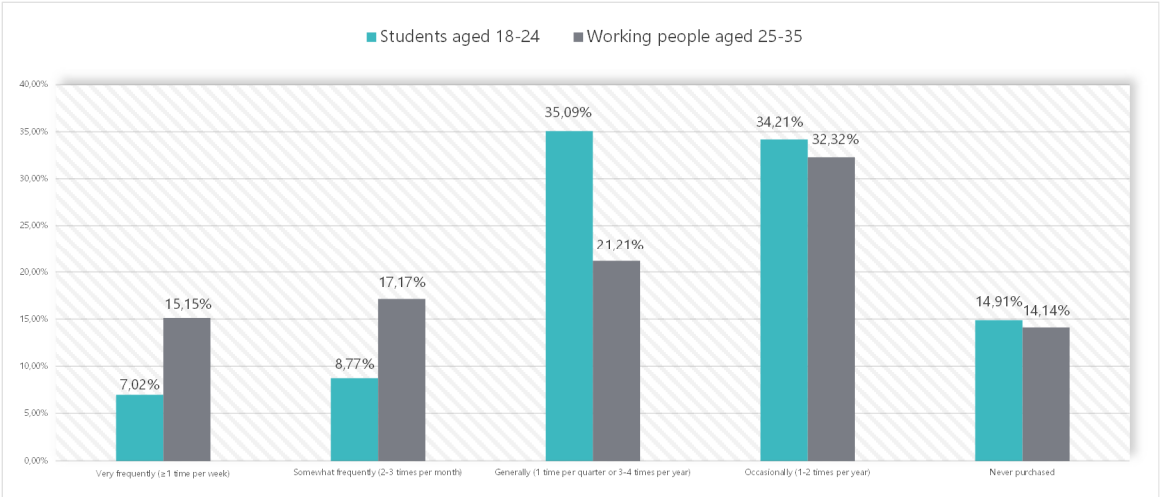


Figure 5: Purchase frequency of students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35.

3.3 Differentiation of Consumer Behavior

Referring to figure 5, the 18-24-year-old student group mainly consumes at a low frequency, with "occasionally (1-2 times a year)" and "generally (1

time per quarter or 3-4 times a year)" accounting for 69.3% of the purchase frequency; the 25-35-year-old working people have medium-to-high frequency consumption, with "very frequently (≥1 time a week)" and "somewhat frequently (2-3 times a month)" accounting for 32.32% of the purchase frequency.

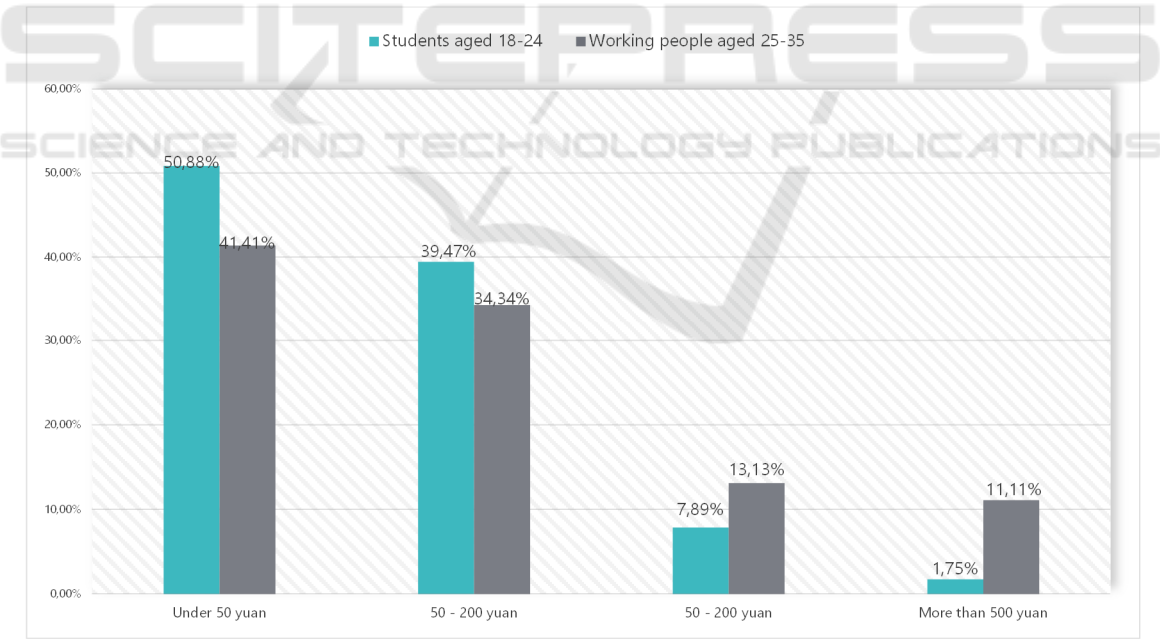


Figure 6: Single purchase amount of students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35.

Referring to figure 6, the 18-24-year-old students mainly spend small amounts, with 50.88% spending less than 50 yuan; the 25-35-year-old working people

mainly spend medium amounts, with 50-200 yuan accounting for 34.34%, and high amounts of more than 500 yuan accounting for 11.11%.

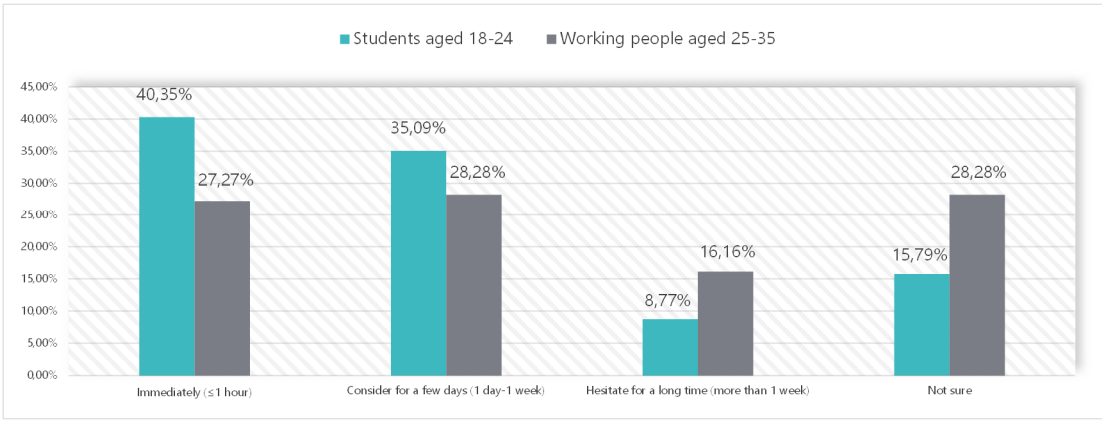


Figure 7: Decision-making speed of students aged 18-24 and working people aged 25-35.

Referring to figure 7, students aged 18-24 show impulsive consumption characteristics, and 40.35% of consumers complete the process from "want to buy" to "place an order" within 1 hour.; the 25-35-

year-old working people are characterized by more rational decision-making, with "considering for a few days (1 day to 1 week)" and "hesitating for a long time" accounting for 44.44% in total.

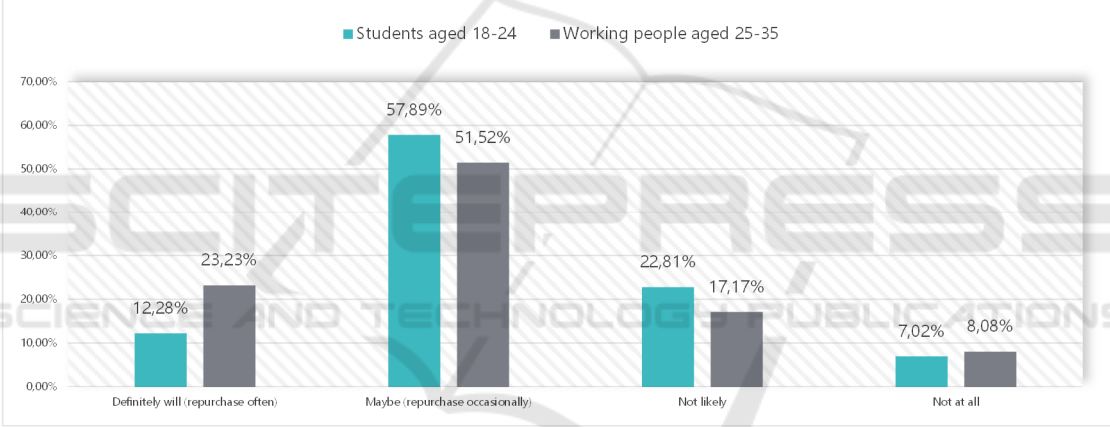


Figure 8: Repurchase behavior of students aged 18-24 and working people 25-35.

As shown in figure 8, the 18-24-year-old student group mainly repurchases occasionally, "may (occasionally repurchase)" accounts for 57.89%, and "definitely (frequent repurchase)" accounts for only 12.28%; the 25-35-year-old working people show higher repurchase loyalty, "definitely repurchase" accounts for 23.23%, 10.95% higher than the student group, and "may repurchase" accounts for 51.52%.

3 DISCUSSION

The psychological motivation of the 18-24-year-old student group is centered on "emotional intuition". Humans are emotional, and emotions are a very important driving factor in human behavior and decision-making. Therefore, people's purchasing

behavior will be affected by emotions and make "emotional consumption" (Du, Zhang, 2024). Consumers will be more inclined to purchase products and services due to positive emotions such as pleasure, excitement, and satisfaction, but may also reduce purchases or choose other brands due to some negative emotions (Huang, 2025). Student consumers often perceive products and services through sensory intuition such as vision and touch. Sanrio's "cute healing" products meet the emotional needs and psychological motivations of such consumers. Emotionally driven purchasing decisions are more direct and quicker, and consumers may make purchasing decisions based on their emotional identification with a brand (Liu, 2025). This type of purchasing decision behavior is influenced by many factors such as emotional factors. Decisions based on

limited rational consumption are affected by non-rational factors such as people's intuitive judgment, psychological shortcuts, emotional influences, and availability bias when making decisions (Liu, 2024). Hence, this type of student group essentially takes the visual and emotional symbol attributes of the character Intellectual Property (IP) as the core starting point, and satisfies emotional value needs through instant decision-making with low thinking costs; The 25-35-year-old working group turns to "social rationalization", integrating social symbols and emotional companionship into practical functions. The essence of human beings is the sum of all social relations. Consumers engage in social interaction by consuming various commodity symbols, and are eager to build interpersonal relationships in society and gain a sense of belonging in social relationships, which triggers the herd mentality (Wang, Li, 2024). "Socialization" is an important consumption motivation for consumers. The vast majority of consumers want to have a common language with their friends, in order to have a common language with friends around them who have already purchased products, maintained social relationships and then generated purchasing behavior (Qi, Liu, 2020). The essence of "practical healing" for the workplace group is to achieve practical, healing and social multi-dimensional satisfaction through the functional embedding of high-frequency practical categories and the superposition of emotional symbols under the pressure of work and life, and to transform the "cute healing" symbols into practical solutions for daily high-frequency scenarios.

Based on the differentiated psychological motivations and consumption behavior characteristics of the 18-24-year-old student group and the 25-35-year-old working group, lifestyle brands such as Sanrio should build a group marketing strategy system based on "emotional intuition drive" and "practical healing orientation". For the 18-24-year-old student group, the core brand strategy should revolve around "strengthening emotional resonance and instant consumption". In terms of product strategy, brands should focus on low-priced, high-frequency items to meet their emotional catharsis needs in fragmented scenarios. In terms of scenario marketing, brands should stimulate visual emotional resonance through cute content, and achieve close contact through campus communities and convenience stores. In terms of user operations, brands need to strengthen the in-depth interaction of character IPs, and continue to stimulate occasional repurchase behavior caused by this group's "liking for character IPs" through rapid iteration of new products

and limited edition scarcity design; For the 25-35-year-old working group, the brand strategy focuses on "the integration of scenario-based practical value and social identity". In terms of product strategy, brands should develop "workplace healing" categories, such as character-themed office stationery and co-branded household products, taking into account both practicality and design. In terms of scenario marketing, brands should create scenario-based content such as "office ritual sense" and "commuting companionship" through workplace Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) to build a link between symbolic value and productivity. In terms of user operations, brands should build a membership system to improve brand loyalty, provide limited peripheral redemption and exclusive services for highly loyal users to improve consumer stickiness, and use the scarcity of co-branded products to meet their social capital accumulation needs.

It should be noted that this research mainly relies on quantitative data from questionnaire surveys. Although it can reveal significant differences between groups and provide group marketing strategies, quantitative data is mainly based on statistical laws, which may mask individual differences and make it difficult to present specific scenarios and emotional details in consumer behavior. Moreover, quantitative research relies on preset age and identity groups and may ignore subgroup differences. Hence, this research still has limitations and needs to be supplemented by mixed methods.

4 CONCLUSION

This research established a dynamic conduction model of "age stratification-psychological motivation-consumption behavior" to analyze the different purchasing decision-making behaviors driven by the differentiated psychological motivations of the 18-24-year-old student group and the 25-35-year-old group. Among them, the 18-24-year-old student group takes the inner emotional needs as the core driving force, presenting low-frequency, small-amount, impulsive consumption and occasional repurchase consumption behaviors. It is necessary to build a marketing strategy of "emotional intuition drive" for them to strengthen emotional linkage. The 25-35-year-old group takes "social identity, practical healing" as the core driving force, presenting the characteristics of medium-high frequency, medium amount, rational decision-making and higher repurchase loyalty. It is necessary to build a marketing strategy of "practical healing orientation"

for them to deepen the penetration of high-frequency scenarios. This research is limited to the use of single quantitative analysis. In the future, mixed methods can be used to deepen the analysis, and eye tracking and other technologies can be combined to explore the subconscious appeal of symbol design. The difference in cultural context between countries may also lead to the division of consumer motivation and behavior, and cross-cultural comparative research can be further carried out in the future.

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