

People-Pleasing Personality and Blind Box Purchasing in Social Media Contexts: The Mediating Role of Need for Social Acceptance

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Abstract. Blind box consumption has become a new consumption model that combines emotional experience and social interaction among young people, and the widespread use of social media platforms further amplifies the role of peer influence, social comparison, and conformity behavior in consumer decision-making. There are few studies that combine personality traits with social psychological mechanisms to examine their impact on blind box purchasing behavior. Based on this, this study aims to explore the relationship between pleasing personality traits and blind box purchase frequency in the context of social media, and examine the mediating role of social acceptance needs in this relationship. This study used a mixed research method combining questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews, collecting 258 valid samples through an online platform and conducting in-depth interviews with some participants. The research results indicate that the pleasing personality is not only significantly positively correlated with blind box purchase frequency and social acceptance demand, but also significantly positively correlated with social acceptance demand itself; Further mediation analysis shows that social acceptance needs partially mediate the relationship between pleasing personality traits and blind box purchase frequency. The purchasing decisions of participants are deeply influenced by social identity, group belonging, and online social pressure, and blind box consumption has become a tool for individual identity expression and social connection to a certain extent. This study reveals the psychological pathway through which the pleasing personality enhances social acceptance needs and drives blind box consumption.

Keywords: Blind box consumption, people-pleasing personality, Social acceptance needs, Social media.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the blind box consumption of Generation Z young consumers has increased. The unknown content of blind box packaging creates an emotional experience composed of excitement, surprise, and stimulation. The consumption of blind boxes has shifted from individual purchases to socially influenced behavior, which is created by online social interaction and group behavior [1,2]. Social awareness, social comparison, and social community can influence purchasing behavior and impulse buying. The phenomenon of blind box purchases has generated social pressure and satisfaction in response to people's entertainment needs. In addition, people are increasingly concerned about likable personality types, which are considered a crucial individual difference variable in social behavior. People who please themselves seem to prioritize the needs of others over their own, gaining people's recognition. People with this personality trait often find it difficult to refuse requests and may change their behavior to avoid tense situations in social environments. People with a strong tendency to please others have been shown to be more emotionally fragile. Although extensive research has been conducted on pleasing others in clinical psychology and interpersonal relationship studies, there is little research on pleasing others in consumer and socially driven consumption behavior.

From the perspective of social psychology, social acceptance helps to integrate personality traits and behavioral consequences. According to the theory of belongingness needs, people are born with the drive to create and maintain important interpersonal relationships. When this driving force is activated, people may exhibit behaviors that are more likely to gain social recognition.

The current literature lacks research that combines psychological pleasure personality with blind box purchasing. Most studies tend to focus on the marketing, emotional satisfaction, uncertainty, and purchasing motivation of blind boxes [1,2]. Research on likable personalities mainly focuses on individuals' mental health, interpersonal relationships, and their performance at work [3,4]. In a study, there is little literature that intertwines personality, social psychology, and consumer behavior.

This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the relationship between pleasant personality types and blind box purchase frequency in the context of peer pressure and social recognition needs triggered by social media as influencing factors. This study adopts a mixed method, including survey questionnaires and qualitative interviews, attempting to capture the complexity of the interaction between personality traits and social background in driving consumer behavior. This research contributes to both theory and practice. This study emphasizes the role of psychological processes in social psychological consumer behavior by integrating personality psychology and consumer behavior theory, contributing to the perspective of social psychology. And this article can provide information for consumer education, mental health, and ethical marketing.

2. Literature Review

2.1. People-Pleasing Personality and Psychological Well-Being

Likable personality types tend to emphasize the needs of others at the cost of sacrificing their own needs. They also exhibit a strong desire for social recognition and sensitivity to social criticism. Recent research has focused on the impact of the tendency to please others on individuals. Kuang et al. [4] found that a higher tendency to be likable is associated with a decline in a person's mental health. Seeking recognition is a common tendency to please the public, which may have a negative impact on a person's mental health. Ou et al. [5] studied likability as a personality type and explained it as a result of self-restraint, high interpersonal sensitivity, and rigid obedience. One of their research objectives is to create a scale to measure people's likable cognitive and behavioral aspects, which reflect a person's long-term focus on the social and interpersonal aspects of a relationship. From the perspective of organizational behavior, Georgescu and Bodislaw [3] studied the behavior of seeking recognition due to early social phenomena and cultural conditions, which may have adverse effects on individuals' autonomy and choices. A pleasant personality type is the result of an individual's desire for external appreciation and concern for social exclusion.

2.2. Social Influence, Social Media, and Consumer Behavior

Social influence has always been one of the most important factors in personal decision-making. Solomon Asch's conformity study was the first to show that people often change their decisions to conform to the group, even going against their personal beliefs. Social media has enhanced all previous research on social impact, as it can increase visibility, social comparison, and real-time feedback on the impact. They found that social influence in the online world is one of the main factors that change people's attitudes, intentions, and purchasing behavior. Ozuem et al. [9] demonstrated that social media interaction can increase collective purchasing behavior, particularly in situations where uncertainty and emotional burden arise. The highly abrasive nature of the digital environment leads to rapid adoption of consumer behavior and social integration through feedback loops. These studies indicate that the influence of social media is a situational perspective, where individuals' psychological characteristics are overexposed and play a more dominant role in driving consumer behavior.

2.3. Blind Box Consumption and Uncertainty-Based Reward Mechanisms

Blind box products have reward mechanisms based on uncertainty. Consumers have no way of knowing what they might get until they buy one. This reward system mimics psychological variable-ratio reinforcement schedule methods that encourage a behavior to be repeated over and over [1]. The SOR framework has been applied to blind box consumption by Chen [8] and found social components

and uncertainty of products play a significant role in the increase of purchase intentions through trust and perceived value. Wang et al. [2] constructed a validated questionnaire that measures the experience and motivation for blind box purchasing and highlights dimensions that include emotional satisfaction, social engagement, and excitement. The social and emotional aspects of blind box consumption have been detailed in case studies of Pop Mart and LABUBU.

2.4. Need for Social Acceptance as a Mediating Mechanism

Most of the time, the motivation to accept people socially is known as the 'need to belong.' Humans are wired to create and foster relationships with other people. People with strong approval-seeking behavior are more likely to be impacted by social cues and group assessments [9]. In cooperative settings, Kuang et al. [4] states that people-pleasing individuals have a greater social approval orientation and a greater fear of social exclusion. The need to belong can be greater in online settings because of the public nature of the interactions and the social feedback. Recognition of peers can cause social behaviors that are more likely to result in the establishment of social ties. In blind box consumption, social acceptance can cause participants to take part in social trends, post about their purchases, and trade items with their peers. However, there is little to no proof regarding social acceptance as a mediator in the personality traits and blind box consumption behavior.

3. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

3.1. Integration of Theoretical Foundations

The current research adopts a comprehensive framework that includes personality psychology, social psychology, motivation theory, and consumer behavior. This study mainly focuses on likable personality theory, social influence theory, and belongingness needs theory to understand blind box purchases in the context of social media. People who are likable exhibit a high level of recognition seeking, are conflict avoidants, and prioritize the expectations of others [3,4]. People who are likable often exhibit a high tendency to change their behavior, resulting in social harmony and being less likely to be rejected by others in interpersonal relationships. Previous studies on high pleasing behavior, social evaluation sensitivity, and motivation have shown that people strongly desire external validation. From the perspective of motivation, the theory of belongingness holds that people fundamentally hope to establish and maintain stable interpersonal relationships.

In addition, social influence theory focuses on how peer, observational learning, and compliance pressures shape individual behavior [9]. The consumption behavior of others and the speed of trend dissemination are influenced by social media platforms. Unboxing videos, internet celebrity marketing, and videos shared by peers may raise social expectations for blind box consumption and increase herd behavior. From the perspective of consumer psychology, the behavior of purchasing blind boxes is driven by emotions, psychological uncertainty, and reward frameworks. The blind box system adopts a variable ratio reward, which leads consumers to purchase more boxes because they are uncertain but hope to receive positive results. The social verification mechanism further enhances psychological and emotional stimulation. Based on these theoretically supported phenomena, this study suggests that likable personality traits are associated with increased social acceptance impulses and strongly influence blind box buying behavior in environments inspired by social media. The influence of social media has increased its comparability, popularity, and normative social pressure [10].

3.2. Research Model

This study derives from the previous literature an extended mediation model to capture how the people-pleasing personality affects blind box buying behaviour and the social motivational processes involved. The proposed research model is illustrated as fig 1:

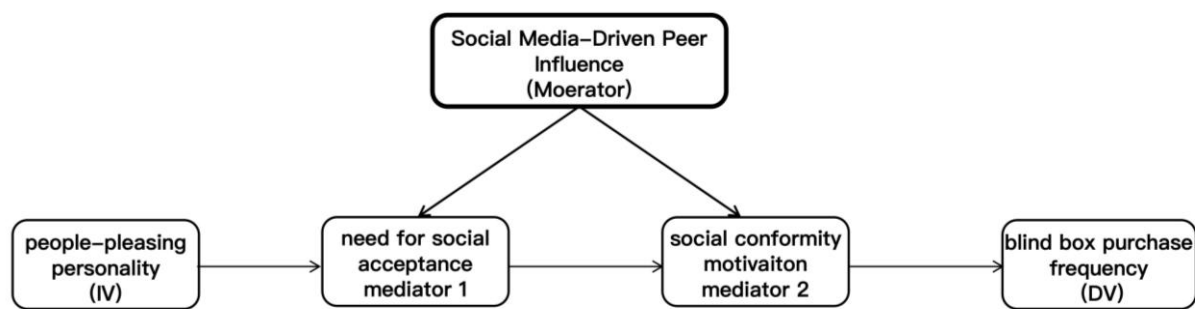


Figure 1. Proposed Moderated Serial Mediation Model

In this model, people-pleasing personality is treated as the independent variable, blind box purchase frequency as the dependent variable, and need for social acceptance as the mediating variable. Social media context provides a socially salient environment that intensifies the effects of interpersonal motivation on consumption behavior.

3.3. Research Hypotheses

Considering the theoretical framework and previous empirical studies, the following hypotheses are formulated. People-pleasing individuals are known to practice social harmonization and approval [3]. In the context of socially visible consumption, especially social media and peer-influenced consumption, people-pleasing appears to trigger participation in trendy consumption.

Hence, H1: People-pleasing personality has a positive correlation to frequency of blind box purchases. People pleasers are sensitive to the evaluations of others and have a strong desire to be accepted [4].

Hence, H2: People-pleasing personality is positively correlated to need for social acceptance. Socially valued behavior is used to cope with an individual's longing to fit in [5]. From this, engaging in popular forms of consumption can be an act of social assimilation, albeit at a symbolic level.

Hence, H3: Need for social acceptance has a positive relationship with the frequency of blind box purchases. Of the most relevant relationships, a people-pleasing personality has an indirect effect on blind box purchasing through an increased need for social acceptance. Thus, H4: Social acceptance need is a mediator in the people-pleasing personality and blind box purchase frequency relationship.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The current research employs a mixed-methods methodology integrating quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data. The quantitative data focuses on the relational aspects of the people-pleasing personality type, social acceptance, and blind box buying behaviors in the context of social media-driven peer influence. The qualitative data seeks to analyze the context of the emotional experiences and motivations of participants while consuming blind boxes. The research design captures the psychological characteristics and the purchasing behaviors of the participants through self-reporting, and this is done at a given instant in time. The cross-sectional survey design is the most appropriate to first and foremost test the relationships and then explore the variables of a total mediator within the realm of consumer behavior.

4.2. Participants and Sample Description

Respondents were chosen based on their knowledge of social media blind box culture and blind box related content. The method of recruitment was conducted through digital means. This made it possible for consumers with varying degrees of buying experience to be recruited. The final total count of the dataset consisted of $N = 258$ valid answers. For this sample 57.36% were female participants ($n = 148$) and 42.64% were male participants ($n = 110$). Age representation was diverse

in this sample. The largest age groups were 12 - 31 years of age. The sample in this range is representative of the population engaging in the purchase of blind boxes. Qualification levels in this sample ranged from primary school to some university and beyond. Economic backgrounds were also diverse. Participants were categorized on the basis of their monthly disposable income. 36.82% of the sample was in the income range of monthly disposable income greater than RMB 5000. This means that the sample was overwhelmingly representative of consumers with high buying power. The dataset had overwhelming representation of consumers experienced in the purchasing of blind boxes as 96.12% of the respondents had previously bought blind boxes. Conversely, first time purchasers were essentially absent.

4.3. Measures and Instruments

This research focused on the three primary constructs described in the following paragraphs: people-pleasing personality, need for social acceptance, and blind box purchasing behavior. **People-Pleasing Personality.** "People-pleasers" tendencies were measured using self-reported items from research on approval seeking and interpersonal sensitivity [4]. This scale captured some concerns of participants who found it difficult to refuse others, were worried about social evaluation, and tended to prioritize other people's needs before themselves. Participants were asked to respond to the items using a 5-point Likert Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and higher scores reflected people-pleasing tendencies. **Need for Social Acceptance.** Using the need to belong framework [5], participants' need for social acceptance was measured using items reflecting desire for social belonging, worry about being socially excluded, and desire for social approval. This would mean the higher the score, the higher the need for social acceptance. **Blind Box Purchasing Behavior.** Blind box purchasing behavior was measured using items from prior studies that investigated blind box consumption [1, 2]. The scale measured purchasing frequency, and impulse and social purchases. All scales used a five-point Likert format to ensure consistency across measures.

4.4. Questionnaire Structure

To examine the behaviours of participants with respect to purchasing blind boxes, the questionnaire was broken into five parts to study the demographic details, the psychological aspects, and the purchasing behaviours of the participants with respect to blind boxes. Part A gathered the demographic details and the social media usage patterns to create a base understanding of the participants' online surroundings. Part B evaluated people-pleasing traits, especially in the instances of approval seeking and refusal inability. Part C evaluated social acceptance and this served to study the psychological aspects in the mediating position in the envisioned research model. Part D assessed the blind box purchasing behaviours of participants, including the motivation, the context, and the situational factors that trigger a purchasing behaviour. Part E consisted of open-ended questions that asked for the participants to reflect on the emotional experiences that they went through with unboxing blind boxes so that the subjective interpretation of the phenomenon could be better understood. The structure of the questionnaire provided the study the ability to combine the qualitative thematic interpretation with the quantitative statistical analysis to study the relationship between personality traits, social motivation, and consumption behaviour in a detailed way.

4.5. Data Collection Procedure

An online questionnaire was used for this survey. Participants received a link to the survey and completed it without revealing their identities. Before beginning the questionnaire, participants were shown an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study. Data was collected over a two-week period. Participants' responses were checked for completeness and consistent responses prior to analysis. Submissions that were incomplete or showed signs of invalid data were removed to improve the quality of the data.

4.6. Interview Procedure

In addition to the quantitative results, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who had blind box purchasing experience. The interviews aimed to understand the participants' feelings, social motivations, and the perceived pressure they felt regarding blind box purchasing. Questions posed to participants were centered around their memorable unboxing experiences, the purpose of their purchase, and how much they felt social media drove the purchase. All interviews were done online, and permission to record the session was obtained from the participants. The recordings were then transcribed, and a thematic analysis was conducted to identify psychologically relevant themes that appeared in the responses. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the interview participants.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants

ID	Gender	Age Range	Occupation / Education	Blind Box Experience	Social Media Usage Level	People-Pleasing Tendency	Interview Duration
1	Female	16	Highschool Student	Low Level	Intermedium	Medium	13min
2	Female	15	Highschool Student	High Level Of Experience	High	Low	13min
3	Female	20	Undergraduate Student	High Level Of Experience	High	High	17min
4	Male	20	Undergraduate Student	Intermedium Level	High	Medium	17min

5. Results

5.1. Sample Characteristics

The study collected 258 valid responses. The sample consisted of 57.36% female and 42.64% male participants. Approximately 70% of respondents were between 12 and 31 years old, indicating a predominantly young consumer group. Participants reported diverse educational backgrounds and income levels, with 36.82% earning more than RMB 5000 per month. Notably, 96.12% of respondents reported prior blind box purchasing experience, ensuring the behavioral relevance of the data for the present analysis.

5.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

In total, 258 responses were collected, where sample characteristics were 57.36% female and 42.64% male. 70% of current respondents were aged 31 years or younger, indicating a young cohort of consumers. Participants were from a range of educational backgrounds, and only 36.82% reported an income of more than RMB 5000 a month. Also, 96.12% respondents reported previous experience buying blind boxes and were therefore behaviourally relevant to the analysis. Participants reported relatively high levels of people-pleasing personality ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.64$) and need for social acceptance ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.59$). The mean reported level of engagement with buying blind boxes was moderate ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.71$). Correlation analyses showed that people-pleasing personality was positively correlated with social acceptance ($r = .47$, $p < .001$) and blind box buying behaviour ($r = .29$, $p < .01$). The need for social acceptance was also positively correlated with the behaviour of buying blind boxes ($r = .41$, $p < .001$). The analysis of the correlation relationships showed quantitative data to support the hypotheses, thereby justifying the further testing of the hypotheses.

5.3. Preliminary Analyses

Prior to hypothesis testing, descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were conducted. People-pleasing personality, was positively correlated with blind box purchase frequency ($r = .29, p < .01$) and social acceptance ($r = .47, p < .001$). Additionally, social acceptance was significantly correlated with blind box purchase frequency ($r = .41, p < .001$). These findings begin to substantiate the theorized relationships. All scales' internal consistencies were assessed via Cronbach's alpha, which reflected adequate reliability with people-pleasing personality ($\alpha = .88$), social acceptance ($\alpha = .86$) and blind box purchase frequency ($\alpha = .81$). All reliability coefficients surpassed the .70 criterion.

5.4. Hypothesis Testing

Regression analyses were performed to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. In accordance with H1, blind box purchase frequency was positively associated with people-pleasing personality ($\beta = .26, SE = .07, t = 3.71, p < .001$) accounting for 14% of the variance in purchasing behavior ($R^2 = .14$). Thus, H1 was confirmed. According to H2, people-pleasing personality predicted social acceptance ($\beta = .51, SE = .05, t = 9.83, p < .001$), explaining 26% of the variance ($R^2 = .26$). This result sustained H2.

To evaluate hypotheses H1 to H3, hierarchical regression analyses were performed. H1: People-Pleasing Personality and Blind Box Purchase Frequency In line with H1, people-pleasing personality showed a positive correlation with blind box purchase frequency ($\beta = .26, SE = .07, t = 3.71, p < .001$), explaining 14% of the variance in buying behavior ($R^2 = .14$). This means that people with a strong people-pleasing personality tend to purchase blind boxes more. Thus, H1 is supported. H2: People-Pleasing Personality and Need for Social Acceptance As stated in H2, people-pleasing personality was a strong predictor of the need for social acceptance ($\beta = .51, SE = .05, t = 9.83, p < .001$) and the model accounted for 26% of the variance ($R^2 = .26$). This indicates that people with strong people-pleasing characteristics tend to have a more intense need for social acceptance. This means that H2 is supported.

Need for Social Acceptance and Blind Box Purchase Frequency Regarding H3, need for social acceptance positively correlated with blind box purchase frequency ($\beta = .34, SE = .08, t = 4.22, p < .001$), accounting for 18% of the variance ($R^2 = .18$). This means participants with a greater need for social acceptance were more likely to blind box purchase so H3 is proved.

To test need for social acceptance as a mediator (H4), bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted using PROCESS Model 4 [6]. These results indicate that the identified connections are robust and are not the result of a demographic confounding variable.

6. Discussion

Firstly, many people mention that they find it difficult to refuse others and are particularly eager for recognition. More than half of the participants scored 4 or 5 in this area, indicating a clear tendency towards a "please oriented" approach, which is consistent with previous research - people tend to restrain their behavior in order to maintain harmony and receive positive feedback. Secondly, participants are generally concerned about social acceptance. Many people worry about being excluded, crave a sense of belonging, and value emotional support from others. This indicates that social motivation plays a significant role in behavior, especially factors related to "acceptance". Finally, buying blind boxes is more driven by social and emotional factors rather than rational choices. Many people tend to make impulsive and blind purchases, even if they don't need them, and the exposure and interaction on social media further amplify this behavior.

The study illustrates social-media driving peer environments. Strong levels of agreement were found on unboxing video exposure, peer sharing, and online comments. Digital environments are strong social influences. Marketing social platforms encourage users to make social comparisons and interact with social norms. Using social psychology, the focus on social norms and the need to belong is evident. People with a strong need to please, act on perceived online community expectations, increasing the group consumption. Many participants reporting emotional intensity related to peer

presence and platform feedback drives this further. Overall, there is emerging support for the framework of a people-pleasing personality driving social acceptance to purchasing.

This study cannot derive causal relationships between variables due to the use of a cross-sectional survey design. Although statistical results show a correlation between pleasant personality types, the need for social acceptance, and blind purchasing behavior, these relationships cannot be confirmed in the temporal dimension. Therefore, future research may consider using longitudinal tracking or experimental design to more accurately explore causal pathways and trends in behavior over time. The data source relies on participant self-report, which may introduce certain biases. Future research can introduce methods such as behavior tracking records, purchasing data, or experimental simulations to enhance the objectivity and accuracy of measurement results.

7. Conclusion

In this study, psychological characteristics, social motivation theory, and consumer motivation were combined. Proposed and tested a hypothesis linking personal characteristics with socially driven consumer behavior. The data shows that having a likable personality has an impact on blind purchasing. Individuals seeking recognition are more likely to engage in consumption behaviors that conform to social norms and are expected by social groups. In addition, the need for social acceptance is the main psychological mechanism that influences people's tendency to please. This study combines likable personality traits with consumer behavior literature and psychology, and demonstrates how internal psychological factors and social backgrounds influence behavior. By treating social acceptance as a mediating variable, this study explains motivational phenomena related to personality and how these factors translate into compelling purchasing behavior. Social incentive marketing techniques will attract individuals' social recognition and attention. Understanding these factors will enhance socially responsible consumption, encourage marketing, and reduce the social exploitation of marketing. In future research and practice, it is worth paying attention to the psychological aspects that motivate people to participate in emerging consumer communities.

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