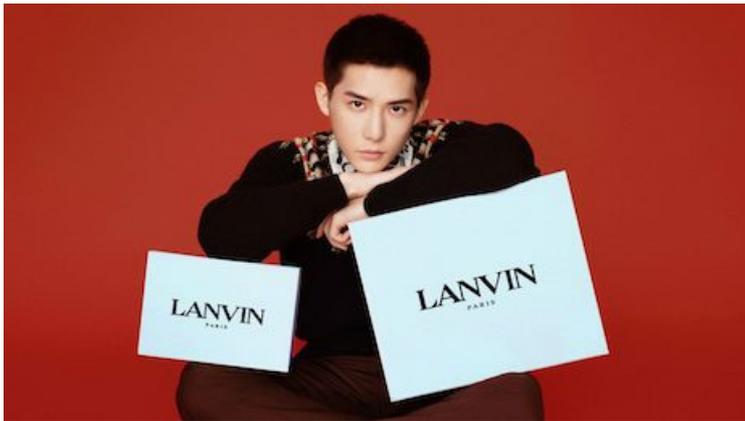


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What luxury brands can learn from Lanvin's blind boxes

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Blind boxes are China's new obsession, so companies from travel agencies to luxury Maison Lanvin are using them to reach local Gen Zers. Image courtesy of Lanvin

By [Lisa Nan](#)

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Jiayi, who lives in Guangzhou, is your average **Gen Z consumer**, addicted to the latest buying craze: blind boxes. She confessed that since acquiring her first innocuous blind box, which she bought at a vending machine in the local supermarket, they soon became a habit. Every week, she would return to buy one or two blind boxes as a treat. "It's so satisfying to open the box," she said.

As China's newest obsession, young consumers crave these surprise boxes, which originally contained hand-sized toys. Some are even spending **millions** of yuan collecting them. While some may be collectors, the attraction goes beyond the product itself: Buyers are paying for the fun of uncertainty and the experience of opening the box.

"It's a trendy kind of promotion, which satisfies the psychology of curiosity and adventure," said **Gu Huimin**, a tourism professor at Beijing International Studies University. KOCs like Wang Doudou, Dan Tong, and Meng Xiaoqi (@@) have gained a massive following on Little Red Book from sharing videos of themselves opening blind boxes.

The Mob Research Institute's 2020 Blind Box Economic Insight Report forecasts that the market will double in size by 2024, reaching \$4.6 billion.

Furthermore, Wang Ning, founder of the blind box market leader in China, POP Mart, has called the sector in China hugely promising.

POP Mart helped make the blind box concept a mainstream sensation in China, but companies from all sectors ranging from travel agencies, beauty concept stores, and fashion brands are now applying this marketing strategy to their offerings with the hopes of attracting experience-driven Gen Zers. Below, *Jing Daily* decodes this new strategy and analyzes how it can be implemented by high-end brands.

Explaining the attraction of blind boxes

Gamified shopping experiences are resonating with today's young shoppers, who have been spoiled with an

overwhelming number of retail choices.

Ultimately, blind boxes trade on their uncertainty, stimulating consumers to repurchase in the quest for rare products. According to POP Mart, most buyers tend to purchase these boxes to increase the probability of getting their desired gadgets. As such, the repurchase rate can be as high as **58 percent**.

Opening the box to discover which item is in it makes for a sharable experience on social media platforms, attracting organic brand traffic. It is clearly working: Tmall's report shows there are nearly 200,000 consumers who spend over \$3,087 (20,000 yuan) a year on blind boxes.

"The new generation of Chinese spenders desire a unique consumer culture," said **iiMedia** consultant Zhang Yi, meaning brands should capture consumer loyalty through innovative strategies. Luckily, China's dynamic market offers a great testing ground for brands.

Lanvin as a blind box luxury pioneer

According to POP Mart, their main consumer group is between **18 and 35** years old and are urban, white-collar and students. Females account for 75 percent of this group.

Although the blind box marketing strategy may sound less luxurious for brands due to the price convenience factor, they can offer a gateway for younger consumers, hence Lanvin's foray into the sector.

So far, it is the first luxury company to leverage the trend.

For **Chinese Valentine's day**, it launched a blind box lottery on its WeChat Mini Program, where, for \$77 (500 yuan), consumers entered a drawing. Fans could redeem their prizes (Lanvin blind boxes) at offline vending machines and receive vouchers for silk scarves, sneakers, and even handbags.

The house succeeded in gaining the attention of young consumers, but it also converted its online traffic: the initiative attracted **50,000** players within a month, which was five times the daily average reading volume of Lanvin's WeChat articles.

Additional routes for luxury

Lanvin's 130-year exclusive collection drove particular attention to its blind box experiment. Therefore, consumers are less concerned about which item they are getting, as any piece of the series is worth collecting, although archive, limited-edition, and collaboration pieces will fuel Gen Z interest the most.

While it is unlikely that purchasing a luxury blind box would become a weekly habit, the strategy offers newness to consumers, making the shopping journey memorable for the buyer and resulting in a stronger connection with the spender.

In an era when **brand collaboration** is no longer new, presentation matters to consumers. Announcing the partnership online through KOLs and placing products in-store may still work, but innovative marketing tools are required to stand out and generate talk online.

Finally, on second-hand platforms such as Xianyu, hard-to-find blind boxes are being sold at exorbitant prices. Some rare pieces have increased their prices by 39-fold (from \$10 to \$390). But the data shows another insight: luxury brand opportunities lay in the rarity of the offers.

What brands need to watch out for

While Blind box scenarios are luring fans, brands should not take this opportunity to move out-of-season inventory because consumers are placing great importance on what's in the boxes. If the price value is low, social media will be awash with complaints, which can severely damage reputations.

On Little Red Book, many users called out companies such as Muji (for selling old-fashioned clothing), Ctrip (for offering midnight departure flight tickets), and, finally, Sephora (for unpopular lipstick colors). Additionally, KOCs are opening blind boxes online to tell consumers what is inside them and whether they are worth buying. @Joey showed his fans the local fashion brand **Peacebird's** 1000 yuan blind box and advised against it, for instance.

But Lanvin's blind box experiment paid off: It received great feedback, partially because the value of the items contained in the box was far above the initial price. Some lucky participants even received a Lanvin Bento Box handbag worth \$1,864.

The French house's price positioning was much higher than the market average. Yet over 200 users still shared their experiences on Little Red Book, helping the brand reach a younger and more valuable audience. Consumers can

hardly purchase anything in a luxury retail store with 500 yuan, so many felt the prize was worth a punt in this case.

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