

A Study on the Path of Creating Emotional Premium through Healing-Oriented Design-Based on the Influence Mechanism of Jellycat Plush Toy Design Innovation on Consumers' Willingness to Pay

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the emotional consumption trend, consumers are increasingly willing to pay for healing-oriented products with comforting functions. Taking Jellycat plush toys as the research object and based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, this paper adopts literature research, questionnaire survey and empirical analysis methods. A total of 162 valid questionnaires were collected for data analysis via SPSS software. This study explores how design innovation influences consumers' willingness to pay a premium through the mediating effect of emotional value. The empirical results show that the questionnaire has good reliability with Cronbach's α of 0.946 and favorable construct validity with KMO value of 0.950 and total variance explained of 73.547%. All variables are significantly positively correlated, and emotional response presents a significant partial mediating effect. The findings aim to provide empirical references for product innovation and differentiated pricing strategies in the plush toy industry.

Keywords: Plush Toy Design Innovation; Emotional Value; Willingness to Pay a Premium; Healing-Oriented Plush Toys

1. Introduction

With the upgrading of consumption structure and the rapid development of emotional economy, consumers no longer focus only on practical functions when purchasing products, but increasingly attach importance to emotional comfort and psychological satisfaction. In this context, Jellycat has gained widespread recognition through its highly recognizable healing-oriented design. Its revenue reached 200 million pounds in 2023, with a gross profit

margin stable above 60%. In the first three quarters of 2024, year-on-year sales growth on Taobao platform reached 154.09%, 135.68%, and 46.47% respectively, and its products are sold in 77 countries and regions worldwide.

From multi-platform online layout and premium offline store cooperation, to unboxing reviews by online influencers and immersive pop-up stores, the company continuously optimizes marketing strategies. By creating emotional premium through healing-oriented product design, it motivates more consumers to purchase healing-oriented plush toys.

A review of domestic and international research on healing-oriented design and emotional value shows that most scholars focus on the impact of functional attributes or brand loyalty of healing-oriented products on consumption decisions. Few studies explore the creation path of perceptual value driven by healing-oriented product design innovation in plush toy consumption. Therefore, this study takes Jellycat plush toys as the research object, focuses on the main influencing factors of consumers' purchase of healing-oriented products based on SOR theory, and deeply examines how healing-oriented design stimulates consumers' emotional responses through design innovation, thereby forming emotional premium and increasing willingness to pay. This study provides a theoretical basis for enterprises to optimize emotional product design and formulate differentiated pricing strategies, as well as new empirical support for research in consumer psychology and plush toy design fields.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Design Innovation and Willingness to Pay a Premium

Existing literature confirms the relationship

between design innovation and willingness to pay a premium. Scholars have explored how emotional triggering mechanisms enhance consumers' willingness to pay through innovative design. Hao Jingjing argues that effective visual communication design endows works with distinctive characteristics and attracts young consumers. Liang Qiuyu and Li Chenglu take MUJI as an example: during Japan's economic boom in the 1980s, when luxury brands were popular, MUJI stood out with Kenya Hara's design philosophy, proving that its core competitiveness lies in design philosophy and global brand development.

Based on the above discussion on innovative design variables related to consumer willingness, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: The degree of design innovation of plush toys has a significant positive predictive effect on consumers' willingness to pay a premium.

2.2 Design Innovation and Emotional Response

Donald Norman divides healing-oriented product design logic into three levels: visceral, behavioral, and reflective, meaning emotional needs serve as input data to trigger emotional output through product features. Based on the design practice of Silva white noise players, Liu Shang proves that multi-sensory experience plays a key role in regulating users' negative emotions in healing-oriented design. Yin Zehe argues that color creates atmosphere and audience perception in digital media art, triggering strong emotional resonance.

Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Design innovation can significantly and positively stimulate consumers' positive emotional responses.

2.3 Emotional Response and Willingness to Pay a Premium

Emotional premium refers to consumers' willingness to pay beyond functional value for emotional needs. Constructing the path "healing-oriented design → emotional response → willingness to pay a premium", this study reveals how Jellycat's design innovation enhances consumers' willingness to pay through

emotional triggering. Li Fangxuan and Peng Cheng, using digital cultural tourism products as examples, verify a significant positive correlation between social presence and willingness to pay a premium. Wang Luqing finds that willingness to pay for tourism souvenirs is influenced by social expression and reciprocity, with emotional responses acting as a mediator.

Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Consumers' positive emotional responses can significantly increase their willingness to pay a premium.

2.4 Mediating Effect of Emotional Response

Based on previous research, consumers' emotional response refers to subjective emotional experience after purchasing plush toys.

H4: Emotional response plays a significant partial mediating role between design innovation and willingness to pay a premium.

3. Research Design

3.1 Model Specification

Based on Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, this study constructs a research model: Design Innovation (Stimulus) → Emotional Response (Organism) → Willingness to Pay a Premium (Response).

3.2 Data and Variables

A questionnaire was developed drawing on existing research on plush toy consumption. The questionnaire consists of three parts: measurement of latent variables, screening of participants, and collection of demographic information.

Data were collected online via Wenjuanxing, distributed across Xiaohongshu, WeChat, and other social media platforms. A total of 162 valid questionnaires were collected. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistical results of demographic variables and annual consumption status of respondents. Descriptive statistics are as follows:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sample Information

Descriptive Statistics	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Dev.	Variance
Annual plush toy purchases	162	1	5	2.93	.083	1.058	1.120
Gender	162	1	2	1.78	.032	.413	.170
Age group	162	1	7	2.93	.124	1.573	2.474

4. Empirical Results and Analysis

4.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Table 2 shows the reliability test results of the questionnaire. Reliability (Cronbach's α): $\alpha = 0.946$, indicating good internal consistency.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	Cronbach's α	Cronbach's α (Standardized)	Items
	.946	.946	16

Table 3 displays the results of KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test. Validity (KMO & Bartlett's Test):

KMO = 0.950

Bartlett's $\chi^2 = 1557.247$, $df = 120$, $p < 0.001 \rightarrow$

Table 4. Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
1	8.857(55.355%)	8.857(55.355%)	2.937(18.357%)
2	.815(5.095%)	.815(5.095%)	2.638(16.488%)
3	.747(4.668%)	.747(4.668%)	2.489(15.554%)
4	.737(4.609%)	.737(4.609%)	2.087(13.041%)
5	.611(3.820%)	.611(3.820%)	1.617(10.108%)

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Tactile softness	.194	.224	.227	.323	.775
Color comfort	.310	.547	.427	.266	.266
Rounded shape pleasure	.205	.317	.704	.189	.106
Anxiety relief	.397	.152	.708	.155	.254
Emotional attachment	.641	.262	.467	.201	.201
Premium acceptance	.278	.681	.230	.421	.421

Table 6. Correlation Matrix of Variables

	Tactile	Visual	Narrative	Pleasure	Security	Attachment	Premium	Purchase	Empathy
Tactile	1								
Visual	.665**	1							
Narrative	.733**	.647**	1						
Pleasure	.722**	.624**	.623**	1					
Security	.742**	.704**	.725**	.622**	1				
Attachment	.632**	.686**	.615**	.685**	.662**	1			
Premium	.608**	.636**	.622**	.476**	.551**	.584**	1		
Purchase	.592**	.621**	.585**	.616**	.586**	.590**	.523**	1	
Empathy	.722**	.721**	.730**	.704**	.726**	.668**	.606**	.649**	1

0.891, $p < 0.001$

4.2 Correlation Analysis

All variables show significant positive correlations ($p < 0.01$). The specific correlation coefficients are listed in Table 6.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Model 1: Design Innovation $\rightarrow$ Emotional Response

The regression results are shown in Table 7. $\beta =$

Suitable for factor analysis.

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.950	
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	Approx. χ^2	1557.247
	df	120
	Sig.	.000

Exploratory Factor Analysis:

As shown in Table 4, five common factors are extracted. total variance explained = 73.547%. All factor loadings > 0.5 .

The rotated component matrix of each measurement item is shown in Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix (abbreviated)

Table 7. Regression Results of Design Innovation on Emotional Response

	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.452	.125		3.621	.000
Design Innovation	.878	.035	.891	24.819	.000

Model 2: Design Innovation $\rightarrow$ Willingness to Pay a Premium

Table 8 reports the corresponding regression results. $\beta = 0.774$, $p < 0.001$

Table 8 Regression Results of Design Innovation on Willingness to Pay a Premium

	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.142	.213		.667	.506
Emotional Response	.940	.060	.780	15.745	.000

Model 3: Emotional Response $\rightarrow$ Willingness to Pay a Premium

The relevant regression data are presented in Table 9. $\beta = 0.780$, $p < 0.001$

Table 9. Regression Results of Emotional Response on Willingness to Pay a Premium

	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.142	.213		.667	.506
Emotional Response	.940	.060	.780	15.745	.000

Model 4: Mediation Test (Design Innovation + Emotional Response $\rightarrow$ Premium)

The mediating effect test results are summarized in Table 10.

Design Innovation: $\beta = 0.387$, $p < 0.001$

Emotional Response: $\beta = 0.435$, $p < 0.001$

$\rightarrow$ Partial mediation confirmed (H4 supported).

Table 10. Results of Mediating Effect Test

	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	.009	.208		.044	.965
Design Innovation	.460	.125	.387	3.686	.000
Emotional Response	.524	.127	.435	4.142	.000

5. Conclusions, Implications and Outlook

5.1 Conclusions

- 1) Design innovation significantly enhances emotional value and willingness to pay a premium. Jellycat's design innovation effectively evokes emotional perception and increases premium willingness.
- 2) Emotional value positively drives premium payment. Emotional comfort and attachment promote consumers' willingness to pay extra.
- 3) Emotional value plays a partial mediating role. Design innovation fosters emotional responses, which in turn drive premium willingness.

5.2 Implications

- 1) Strengthen multi-functional design innovation. Create diverse features to meet broader emotional needs.
- 2) Build narrative-driven emotional attachment. Develop unique brand stories to enhance consumer emotional connection.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

Limited sample diversity and insufficient focus on narrative-driven emotional attachment. Future research may explore the influence of storytelling and brand narrative on emotional premium.

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