

MENTAL ACCOUNTING AND ITS IMPACT ON PURCHASE DECISIONS FOR POPMART BLIND BOX PRODUCTS

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Abstract. The blind box phenomenon, such as Pop Mart, is becoming increasingly popular among young consumers because it offers elements of surprise and collectibility that can trigger emotional responses in purchasing decisions. This study aims to analyze the influence of mental accounting on purchasing decisions for Pop Mart blind box products. The four main variables from mental accounting theory examined include the framing effect, specific account, self-control, and self-report. This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method via the distribution of an online questionnaire to active members of buying-and-selling communities and discussion groups for blind box products on the social media platform X through public posts. Data collection took place over 35 days. The sample consisted of 135 respondents who had purchased Pop Mart blind box products within the past 6 months to 1 year. Data analysis employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) using SmartPLS software version 4.0. The results indicate that all four mental accounting variables have a positive influence on purchase decisions. These findings support the relevance of mental accounting theory in explaining consumer behavior toward surprise-based products and provide practical implications for industry practitioners in designing more effective marketing strategies.

Keywords: Blind Box; Mental Accounting; Purchase Decision

I. INTRODUCTION

Current trends in consumer behavior are undergoing significant changes with the emergence of blind box product marketing strategies—a phenomenon where consumers purchase products without knowing their exact contents until they are opened (Sugden, 2021). This concept shifts from conventional consumer habits, where people typically want to know the product they are buying beforehand. This strategy has grown rapidly in countries such as Japan, South Korea, and China, and is now beginning to expand into global markets, including Indonesia. Popmart, as one of the pioneers in the toy industry with the blind box concept, has successfully captured the attention of the younger generation who enjoy consumption experiences centered on surprise, exclusivity, and collecting (Zhang & Zhang, 2022). This phenomenon highlights the urgency of understanding how consumers make purchasing decisions regarding blind box products—which are inherently uncertain—and how this strategy influences their spending patterns.

Several studies indicate that the element of uncertainty in blind box products can lead to consumer behavior similar to gambling (Mazon, 2024). Consumers tend to be driven to continue making purchases in order to obtain rare characters or complete their collections, which can ultimately lead to financial waste or addictive behavior (Bauer et al.,

2022). The concept of mental accounting is crucial, as it describes how individuals psychologically categorize and manage their spending. If not managed properly, allocating funds to mental accounts such as “entertainment” or “collectibles” can trigger harmful impulsive purchases. Previous research by Sari & Ismawati (2022) and Chaerul & Triyuwono (2024) demonstrated that elements of mental accounting—such as the framing effect, specific accounts, self-control, and self-report—influence purchasing decisions in the context of digital products and online games; however, these have not been extensively studied in physical contexts, such as Popmart’s blind box products.

Popmart is a toy retailer that has successfully popularized an innovative blind-box strategy in China. The brand has successfully penetrated international markets and received a positive response, including in Indonesia. The opening of the first Popmart store in Jakarta and support from e-commerce platforms signal enormous market potential (Rahayu, 2024). Popmart appeals to the younger generation, who have high purchasing power and a strong interest in collectible products featuring novel elements and offering challenging experiences (Zhou et al., 2020), making it a relevant subject for analysis from the perspectives of consumer purchasing behavior and financial management.

Previous studies still have gaps, as they only highlight the aspect of purchase intention toward blind box products without further explaining how that intention manifests in the form of actual purchasing behavior. The studies by Zhang et al. (2022) and Zhang & Zhang (2022), for example, place greater emphasis on the influence of curiosity and the element of surprise on purchase intention. On the other hand, the studies by Sari & Ismawati (2022) and Chaerul & Triyuwono (2024) discuss mental accounting, but their context is limited to digital products such as in-game items. Therefore, further research is needed to link mental accounting to purchase decisions for physical products such as Popmart blind boxes.

This study aims to fill the existing research gap by analyzing how the four variables in mental accounting theory—namely, the framing effect, specific account, self-control, and self-report—influence purchasing decisions for Popmart blind boxes. This study is expected to contribute to expanding the literature on consumer behavior, particularly in the context of products with high elements of uncertainty. The results of this study are also expected to serve as a basis for developing more responsible marketing strategies and for raising consumer awareness regarding personal financial management. Specifically, the objective of this study is to test the influence of these four components of mental accounting on purchasing decisions for Popmart blind boxes.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Mental Accounting Theory*

Mental accounting was introduced by Thaler (1985, 1999) to explain how individuals categorize and manage their finances based on specific mental account categories. This process helps simplify decision-making and is influenced by cognitive limitations. Rospitadewi and Efferin (2017) identified several of its components, such as the framing effect, specific accounts, self-control, and self-report. Hoch and Loewenstein (in Arafah et al., 2023) add that mental accounting supports self-control through the separation of funds. This concept is relevant in understanding the behavior of blind box consumers, who tend to allocate specific funds for the purchase of these products.

B. Purchase Decision

The purchase decision is the final stage of the consumer's decision-making process (Sugito, 2023). According to Peter and Olson (in Murty et al., 2015), this decision involves a combination of knowledge that shapes considerations when selecting a product. Sari and Ismawati (2022) state that mental accounting influences purchase decisions. In the case of blind boxes, this decision is often driven by emotional benefits and collectible value (Belk, 1995).

C. Framing Effect

The framing effect is a change in an individual's perception resulting from the presentation of information in different ways, even though the content is the same (Berto & Özgün, 2023). In blind box purchases, promotions or compelling information can influence consumers' evaluations of products. Rospitadewi & Efferin (2017) explain that framing shapes initial thought patterns that influence purchasing decisions. This framing stage serves as the first step in the decision-making process, where consumers' thought patterns are formed through a quick glance, compelling promotions, or recommendations from others.

D. Specific Account

A specific account is the allocation of funds based on a specific purpose (Rospitadewi & Efferin, 2017). Blind box consumers often set aside specific funds for entertainment or collections. Sari and Ismawati (2022) emphasize that this process helps make spending more focused and controlled. When purchasing blind boxes, this is not merely a consumptive activity but also part of a personal strategy for managing finances to meet entertainment needs or long-term investment goals.

E. Self-Control

Self-control is an individual's ability to exercise restraint to keep spending in line with priorities (Silooy, 2019). Rospitadewi and Efferin (2017) state that self-control supports effective financial management. Self-control helps consumers avoid impulsive purchases; consumers also align their spending with their allocated budget without sacrificing other needs.

F. Self-Report

Self-report is an evaluation of decisions that have already been made (Rospitadewi & Efferin, 2017). This reflection determines whether an individual will repeat or change their purchasing patterns in the future. With blind boxes, positive or negative experiences from previous purchases influence subsequent decisions; thus, this evaluation serves as the basis for strategic changes or corrective actions that continuously shape consumers' decisions regarding blind boxes.

G. Blind Box

A blind box is a product with random contents that are only revealed after opening (Liu, 2024). A single blind box theme typically includes several regular-edition products and one limited-edition product. This strategy supports sales through a robust probabilistic system (Wang, 2021), efficient inventory management (China Daily, 2024), and social media promotions (Mvondo et al., 2023).

H. Research Framework

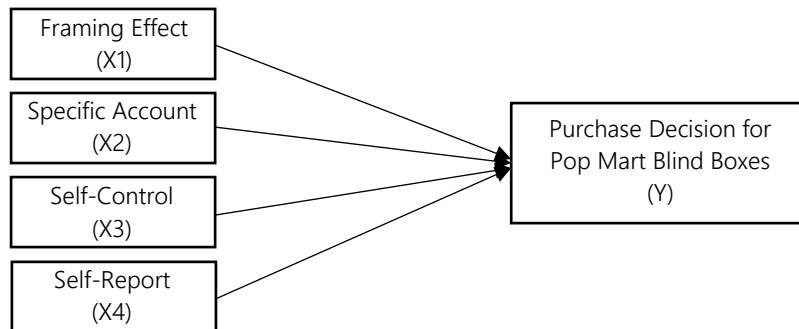


Figure 1 Research Framework

I. Hypothesis Development

The Effect of Framing on Purchase Decisions

The framing effect explains how the presentation of information influences consumer perceptions and decisions (Beratšová et al., 2016). In Popmart's blind box, a marketing strategy that highlights the opportunity to obtain rare items can increase purchase interest. Consumers focus more on potential emotional benefits than on risks. Several studies have found a positive effect (Sari & Ismawati, 2022; Chaerul & Triyuwono, 2024), suggesting that the value of a physical collection has the potential to strengthen the impact of the framing effect on Popmart purchase decisions.

H1: The framing effect has a positive influence on purchasing decisions for Popmart blind box products

The Influence of Specific Accounts on Purchase Decisions

A "specific account" refers to the allocation of funds into specific categories (Rospitadewi & Efferin, 2017). Popmart consumers generally set aside a specific budget for entertainment or collectibles, which makes purchases feel more planned. Previous studies have shown a positive effect (Sari & Ismawati, 2022; Chaerul & Triyuwono, 2024), indicating that structured fund allocation supports purchasing decisions in surprise-based contexts.

H2: A Specific Account has a positive effect on the decision to purchase Popmart blind box products

The Effect of Self-Control on Purchase Decisions

Self-control is an individual's ability to manage desires and balance needs and wants (Rospitadewi & Efferin, 2017). When purchasing blind boxes, consumers with high self-control tend to rationally consider the product's benefits before buying. Although its influence has varied in previous studies—by Sari & Ismawati (2022) and Chaerul & Triyuwono (2024), self-control remains a key factor in responsible purchasing decisions.

H3: Self-control has a positive effect on the decision to purchase Popmart blind box products

The Influence of Self-Report on Purchase Decisions

Self-report refers to consumers' reflections on previous purchasing decisions (Rospitadewi & Efferin, 2017). Evaluations of past experiences—whether satisfying or disappointing—influence future purchasing decisions. Previous studies have shown a positive influence (Sari &

Ismawati, 2022; Chaerul & Triyuwono, 2024). In the context of Popmart, these evaluations serve as the basis for repeating or changing purchasing behavior.

H4: Self-reports have a positive effect on purchasing decisions for Popmart blind box products

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study is a quantitative study using an explanatory research approach aimed at explaining the causal relationship between mental accounting variables (framing effect, specific account, self-control, and self-report) and purchasing decisions for Popmart blind box products.

B. Population and Sample

The population in this study consists of active members of the “Dolliesthings” community on the social media platform X, with the data collection period lasting 35 days. Sampling was conducted using purposive sampling, with the criterion for respondents being consumers who had purchased Popmart blind box products more than once in the past six months to one year. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, resulting in a minimum of 100 respondents.

C. Data Source and Collection Method

The data used were primary data collected through an online survey using a Google Forms-based questionnaire. Measurements in this research instrument used a Likert scale, with each statement measured on a five-point scale.

D. Data Analysis Method

Data analysis was conducted quantitatively using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The software used to run the SEM-PLS technique in this study was SmartPLS version 4.0.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Respondent Characteristics

Based on a total of 147 data points obtained through the distribution of questionnaires, 12 data points did not meet the established criteria. Thus, the number of valid data points used as the sample in this study was 135 respondents who met the criteria of having purchased Popmart blind box products more than once within the past six months to one year.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	127	86.4%
Male	20	13.6%
Age		
12–14 years	9	6.1%
15–17 years	24	16.3%
18–21 years	62	42.2%
Over 21 years old	52	35.4%
Reason for Purchase		

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Personal Enjoyment (Non-material)	67	45.6
To increase the value of the collection (Material)	16	10.9
Both (Enjoyment and the value of the collection)	64	43.5%

B. Descriptive Statistics

Convergent Validity

All variables had an average above 3, indicating a positive response. "Specific Account" had the highest average score (3.813), followed by "Purchase Decision" (3.726) and "Self-Control" (3.687). These scores reflect the respondents' tendency to purchase Popmart blind box products.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Notes	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
Framing Effect (FE)	135	1	5	3.510	0.0627
Specific Account (SA)	135	1	5	3.813	0.0472
Self-Control (SC)	135	1	5	3.687	0.0366
Self-Report (SR)	135	1	5	3,515	0.0872
Purchase Decision (PD)	135	1	5	3.726	0.0721

C. Measurement Model Evaluation

The following are the validity tests conducted in this study, which yielded Outer Loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) as results of the convergent validity test, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion as a result of the discriminant validity test, and Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values as measures of reliability.

Table 3. Outer Loadings

Indicator	Outer Loading
Framing Effect	
FE1	0.899
FE2	0.885
FE3	0.849
FE4	0.908
FE5	0.859
Specific Account	
SA1	0.907
SA2	0.878
SA3	0.910
SA4	0.901
SA5	0.853
Self-control	
SC1	0.879
SC2	0.822
SC3	0.878

SC4	0.905
Self-Report	
SR1	0.910
SR2	0.916
SR3	0.885
SR4	0.888
Purchase Decision	
KP1	0.969
KP2	0.966

Based on Table 3, all indicators for each variable have Outer Loadings above 0.70. This indicates that all instrument items are suitable for use because they meet the criteria for convergent validity.

Table 4. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	AVE
Framing effect	0.775
Specific account	0.792
Self-report	0.760
Self-control	0.810
Purchase Decision	0.936

Based on Table 4, all variables have AVE values exceeding 0.50. This indicates that the instruments used meet the criteria for convergent validity and can be considered valid in measuring the intended constructs.

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Code	FE	KP	SA	SC	SR
FE					
KP	0.856				
SA	0.827	0.793			
SC	0.790	0.776	0.725		
SR	0.848	0.797	0.692	0.754	

Based on the results in Table 5, all HTMT values are below 0.90, so it can be concluded that the model meets the criteria for discriminant validity.

Table 6. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability

Code	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
FE	0.945	0.927
SA	0.950	0.934

Code	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
SC	0.927	0.894
SR	0.944	0.922
KP	0.967	0.932

Based on the test results in Table 6, all variables in this study have composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70; therefore, it can be concluded that the instrument used meets the reliability criteria.

D. Structural Model Evaluation

Coefficient of Determination (R-Square)

Based on the R-Square test using SmartPLS software, an R-Square value of 0.716 was obtained, indicating that the model falls into the moderate category according to Ghozali (2021) because it lies within the range of $0.50 \leq R^2 \leq 0.75$. Thus, the variables framing effect, specific account, self-control, and self-report explain 71.6% of the purchase decision variable, while the remaining 28.4% is explained by other variables outside this research model.

Path Coefficients

The following results are derived from the analysis of path coefficients for each relationship between variables.

Table 7. Path Coefficients

Description	Original Sample	Sample Mean	T-Statistics	P-Values
FE => KP	0.310	0.314	2.874	0.002
SA => KP	0.244	0.244	2.478	0.007
SC => KP	0.176	0.174	2.688	0.004
SR => KP	0.219	0.215	2.380	0.009

Based on the test results presented in Table 7, it is evident that H1, H2, H3, and H4 are accepted. This indicates that the variables framing effect, specific account, self-control, and self-report have a positive influence and have met the hypothesis testing criteria regarding the purchase decision for Popmart blind box products.

E. Discussion

The Effect of Framing on the Purchase Decision for Popmart Blind Box Products

The results of the first hypothesis test show that the framing effect has a positive influence on the purchase decision for Popmart blind box products, thus H1 is accepted. This finding is consistent with the research by Rospitadewi & Efferin (2017), which states that the way information is presented can influence individual decisions. Conversely, studies by Sari & Ismawati (2022) and Chaerul & Triyuwono (2024) found that the framing effect on digital products—such as in-game items—is not as strong as on physical products, due to differences

in characteristics and perceived value of ownership. These results are supported by Thaler's (1999) mental accounting theory, which explains that consumers tend to respond emotionally to information presented in a certain way.

Marketing strategies that emphasize elements of luck, scarcity, and visual appeal can encourage consumers to make purchases, even without full rational consideration. This study is also consistent with Rodrigues et al. (2021) and Zhang et al. (2022), who demonstrated that positive framing can increase interest in surprise products by triggering emotional and social expectations. Thus, the framing effect is a key factor in shaping consumer purchasing behavior toward blind box products.

The Influence of Specific Account on Purchase Decisions for Popmart Blind Box Products

The results of the second hypothesis test indicate that a specific account has a positive effect on the decision to purchase Popmart blind box products, thus H2 is accepted. This finding is consistent with the research by Chaerul & Triyuwono (2024), which found that mental budgeting influences purchasing decisions in gacha-based transactions. Consumers who have set aside funds for specific purposes, such as hobbies or collections, tend to be more prepared and motivated to purchase products like blind boxes. This is also supported by Shen et al. (2015), who revealed that collectors often set aside special funds separate from their primary expenses. Although the study by Sari & Ismawati (2022) showed a similar direction of influence, its strength was weaker in the digital context, likely due to differences in emotional value between physical and digital products. These findings reinforce Thaler's (1999) mental accounting theory, which explains that the psychological categorization of funds can justify non-essential purchases. Thus, a specific account has been proven to be a key factor in supporting more deliberate purchasing decisions regarding blind box products.

The Effect of Self-Control on Purchase Decisions for Popmart Blind Box Products

The results of the third hypothesis test indicate that self-control has a positive effect on purchasing decisions for Popmart blind box products, thus H3 is accepted. This finding aligns with the research by Chaerul & Triyuwono (2024) and Rospitadewi & Efferin (2017), which states that individuals with good self-control tend to make more rational and planned purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, the study by Sari & Ismawati (2022) showed a weaker positive effect, likely due to differences in product characteristics. Consumers with high self-control are able to assess long-term benefits, compare them with their financial plans, and avoid impulsive purchases. Theoretically, self-control is an important component of mental accounting, as it helps individuals manage their personal finances and set priorities. The fact that the respondents were predominantly in early adulthood also reinforces these findings, as they tend to exhibit greater maturity in making financial decisions. Thus, self-control has been shown to play a role in shaping responsible purchasing behavior toward products with emotional value, such as blind boxes.

The Effect of Self-Report on Purchase Decisions for Popmart Blind Box Products

The results of the fourth hypothesis test indicate that self-report has a positive effect on purchasing decisions for Popmart blind box products, thus accepting H4. This finding is supported by Chaerul & Triyuwono (2024), who state that self-report plays a role in shaping purchasing decisions through reflection on past experiences. Conversely, Sari & Ismawati

(2022) found a weaker effect in the context of digital products, suggesting that the physical form of a product elicits a stronger emotional impact. In the context of blind boxes, self-report helps consumers evaluate whether previous purchases were emotionally and aesthetically satisfying, which in turn influences subsequent decisions. This aligns with mental accounting theory, particularly during the evaluation stage, where consumers assess the alignment of their decisions with their initial goals. Positive evaluations encourage repeat purchases, while negative experiences can trigger more cautious purchasing strategies. Thus, self-report is a critical factor in the purchase decision-making process for surprise-based products such as blind boxes.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of mental accounting components on purchasing decisions for Popmart blind box products. The results of the analysis show that all independent variables—namely, the framing effect, specific account, self-control, and self-report—have a positive influence on purchasing decisions. This confirms that psychological factors in personal financial management play a significant role in consumer behavior, particularly for surprise-based products with emotional value such as blind boxes.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the concept of mental accounting proposed by Thaler, demonstrating that the way consumers process information, mentally allocate funds, control impulsive urges, and evaluate past experiences all contribute to purchasing decisions. Practically, these results can be utilized by businesses to design more personalized and emotionally engaging marketing strategies, and by consumers to enhance their awareness in managing their spending more wisely.

This study also has social implications by promoting the understanding that financial decisions are not always rational and can be influenced by various psychological biases. Education on the importance of self-control, the framing effect, and personal financial management is expected to help individuals become more conscious and responsible consumers.

This study has limitations regarding the scope of products and the specific characteristics of the respondents. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the population, consider a wider range of demographic factors, and include additional variables such as perceived value, brand loyalty, or fear of missing out (FoMO) to enrich our understanding of consumer purchasing behavior.

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