

Market Analysis and Strategic Recommendations for ChoEarth: Leveraging Arknights IP in the Collectibles Industry

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Abstract:

During the past decades, the global collectibles industry has grown rapidly. It is mainly because of the changing tastes for consumers. More consumers have the demands for emotional engagement, scarcity and personalized products. People begin to show passion for those products such as blind boxes. This article mainly uses ChoEarth which is a new brand of blind boxes (brand related to a smart phone game called Arknights) as an example to examine its positioning, consumer base and market strategies. Using some theories and analysis like SWOT, STP theory and 4P theory to study the market strategy. According to the study, this research would analyze and make some recommendation, including emphasis on IP collaboration, enhancing storytelling and narrative value, increasing community engagement and future expansion of the worldwide market. The purpose of this study is to provide some objective analysis which can be helpful for ChoEarth or other similar blind boxes toy brands.

Keywords: ChoEarth, blind boxes, collectibles industry, marketing strategy, SWOT analysis, STP theory, 4P theory

1.Introduction

With the changes in the world pattern and social situation, people begin to show more interests and passion for collectibles, especially those blind boxes. These new toys contain more sentimental value. It fits the consumer's demands for scarcity and personalization. Some new brands like Pop Mart, ChoEarth become trendy and welcomed among people. According to industry reports, the market size for this

area would exceed USD 60 billion globally by the year 2030.

For this industry, there are some successful companies like Pop Mart in China and Funko in United States. They produce blind boxes or other figurines, cobranding with well-known pop culture IP such as Marvel, Disneyland, Star Wars and so on. Both companies highlight the importance of IP-driven business models. By this model, companies could constantly

attract more consumers to improve their revenue streams. In this context, some new and small companies need to seek to capitalize on the growing market between the collectibles and the gaming sector. ChoEarth is a brand from Hypergryph and Yostar Technology Company. This company developed a successful strategy game named *Arknights*. As the number of fans improved, the ChoEarth appeared. They mainly produced some toys and blind boxes related to the characters in this game which has a deeper emotional connection with players and consumers. Now, ChoEarth develops well mainly because of the global players base, especially in East Asia, North America and Europe. The market expanded mainly because of fans. As a result, ChoEarth faces significant challenges compared with other big companies like Pop Mart and Funko. How to expand the company's scale is the top problem that the company need to solve. The company needs to achieve sustainable growth, strengthen its product differentiation, refine its market entry strategy and expand beyond single-IP dependence.

The purpose of this study is to analyze ChoEarth's market potential, identify opportunities and risks, and propose actionable strategies. Specifically, it aims to assess the demographic, psychographic, and behavioral profile of the target audience, to examine the product positioning and differentiation strategy, to evaluate go-to-market tactics and competitive benchmarking. In the end of this article, strategic recommendations for expansion, brand building, and long-term growth will be given.

By systematically addressing these areas, the study provides ChoEarth with a clear roadmap for building a sustainable and competitive presence in the global collectibles industry.

2. Literature Review

The collectibles and designer toy market has attracted considerable scholarly attention, particularly in relation to fandom culture and consumer behavior. Collectibles serve as both status symbols and emotional objects, providing consumers with a sense of identity and social connection (Belk, 1995). According to previous studies, blind-box products, characterized by their element of surprise and limited availability, further enhance consumer engagement by invoking curiosity, excitement, and the psychological phenomenon of scarcity (Cialdini, 2009).

Some studies have highlighted that gaming IPs and anime brands are particularly effective in driving sales of collectibles. Research by Hamari and Keronen (2017) demonstrates that players are more likely to purchase merchandise that reinforces their emotional connection to game characters, while exclusive or limited editions

amplify perceived value and social capital within fan communities. (Mastromartino et al., 2022). Dimensions of sense of membership in a sport fan community: Factors, outcomes, and social capital implications. *Communication & Sport*, 10(6), 1229-1256.) Competitor analysis shows that brands such as Pop Mart have successfully exploited this model, combining blind-box design, recognizable IPs, and extensive offline distribution channels to capture a broad market segment.

Despite these insights, literature emphasizes that niche IP-based collectibles require careful brand management. Over-reliance on a single IP may limit market expansion, while insufficient community engagement may reduce consumer loyalty. Therefore, strategic recommendations often include diversification, narrative enhancement, and international market exploration (Cheung et al., 2020).

3. Audience Analysis

3.1 Demographic Profile

ChoEarth's primary audience originates from the *Arknights* player community, providing a clear yet niche demographic focus. The main age group is the people between 18–35 years old, overlapping with university students and young professionals who have disposable income and higher exposure to gaming culture. For the gender distribution, *Arknights* attracts a gender-diverse audience, allowing ChoEarth to target a broader consumer base than traditional collectibles that are heavily skewed toward male players. For geographic distribution, the strongest markets are in East Asia (China, Japan, Korea) and Western regions (North America, Europe), where mobile games and anime-inspired merchandise already have established consumer bases. The audience generally falls into the middle-income group, capable of allocating discretionary spending to hobbies and entertainment. These consumers are often "cultural consumers" who value unique designs and fandom identity. However, current styles remain relatively concentrated; how to grow brand awareness beyond the core fan circle is becoming an important challenge.

3.2 Psychographic Profile

The audience is defined not only by demographics but also by shared values and emotional motivations. They show emotional attachment to characters—players are deeply invested in *Arknights*' backstories, aesthetics, and identities, creating demand for physical representations of the virtual world. They also value community belonging, actively participating in online discussions, fan art, and

offline meetups, where merchandise ownership signals membership. A preference for exclusivity and scarcity is evident—limited editions and numbered runs reinforce identity and uniqueness, similar to Pop Mart consumers. Finally, cross-media enthusiasm keeps them responsive to anime, music, exhibitions, and other extensions of the IP, which naturally supports merchandise engagement.

3.3 Behavioral Characteristics

Collectibles are often bought impulsively or to complete collections, with limited editions and event exclusives encouraging repeated purchases. Consumers favor online platforms (official stores, Tmall, Amazon) while also valuing offline experiences such as pop-up stores and conventions. They actively use social media apps, such as Bilibili, Weibo, Twitter, and Reddit, to share experiences, generate user content, and amplify merchandise visibility.

3.4 Audience Segmentation

ChoEarth's potential audience can be divided into three main segments: Core Gamers are highly engaged with Arknights, strong collectors, and a loyal consumer base. Casual Fans appreciate aesthetics but may not actively play the game, thus needing approachable entry-level SKUs. Crossover Consumers are fans of anime, collectibles, or pop culture who are attracted to design even if unfamiliar with Arknights. While core gamers provide stable demand, expansion into casual and crossover markets is crucial for growth beyond the niche gaming community.

4. Product Strategy

The core of ChoEarth's product strategy lies in transforming the Arknights IP into physical collectibles with emotional and narrative value. Rather than simply reproducing game elements, the brand develops a diverse product line—including blind boxes, figurines, and lifestyle merchandise—through in-depth exploration of the game's narrative, visual language, and player resonance. Each product functions as a tangible extension of the game universe, differentiating itself from ordinary toys that merely serve as entertainment or decoration.

For product differentiation, ChoEarth takes narrative-driven design as its core competitive advantage. Each collectible incorporates character backstories, symbols, and plot contexts while maintaining aesthetic coherence consistent with Arknights' sci-fi, dystopian, anime-inspired style. Launch rhythm is synchronized with game updates, anime adaptations, and special events to form cross-media linkage and strengthen the connection between products and the IP—this keeps the product side focused on timing and

coherence without repeating audience motivations already covered above.

ChoEarth's product portfolio follows a clear hierarchy. Blind box figurines stimulate repeated purchases with a "sense of surprise" and meet casual collection needs. Limited editions and event exclusives create purchase urgency through scarcity and serve core collectors. Art-based merchandise such as posters, acrylic stands, and apparel expands usage scenarios and daily visibility. High-end statues target hardcore players, enhancing brand premium with craftsmanship and collectible value.

Benchmarking indicates that, compared with Pop Mart's mass IP strategy and Good Smile Company's focus on high-end figurines, ChoEarth has built a loyal ecosystem relying on Arknights but also faces challenges. Single-IP dependence constrains scale; repeated variants can cause design fatigue; and counterfeit proliferation diverts sales and harms brand value. Therefore, from a strategic perspective, ChoEarth should (1) expand categories and pursue aesthetic-aligned collaborations to gradually reduce single-IP dependence, (2) rotate themes and materials to sustain freshness, and (3) implement serialized anti-counterfeit labels and platform takedowns to protect brand equity—thereby improving resilience while preserving the original narrative-driven positioning.

5. Category Analysis: Industry Positioning

The global and Chinese designer toy and blind box markets are in a stage of rapid growth. Young consumers' demand for collectibles has shifted from mere material possession to identity expression and fandom participation, with collectibles becoming an important carrier for them to showcase their personalities and integrate into interest circles. According to data from Frost & Sullivan, the scale of China's blind box market exceeded RMB 25 billion in 2023, and it is expected to continue maintaining double-digit growth. This market environment provides a favorable development soil for ChoEarth. ChoEarth focuses on the IP-driven niche category of collectibles and occupies a unique position in the industry through the model of combining Arknights' exclusive game universe with physical merchandise.

From the perspective of the competitive landscape, market participants show differentiated positioning. Pop Mart occupies the mainstream market with extensive IP collaborations, large-scale retail networks, and mass appeal; other niche players focus on Japanese anime, Western comic heroes, or cross-industry collaborations respectively. ChoEarth's core advantage lies in its deep binding with

Arknights. Its products can accurately reach game fans due to their rich narrative connotations and emotional value, but this also limits the audience scope, making it difficult to cover a broader mass consumer base like Pop Mart. The current market presents four key trends. First, the fan economy continues to heat up, and the demand for collectibles as “markers” of community identity is growing. Second, the strategy of scarcity and exclusivity has become an industry consensus, and the limited-edition model effectively stimulates repeated purchases from consumers. Third, consumption scenarios are becoming gamified, and the “uncertainty” gameplay of blind boxes simulates gaming experiences, enhancing the fun of consumption. Fourth, retail is transforming towards experientialization, and offline scenarios such as pop-up stores and exhibitions enhance consumer participation through immersive interaction. In addition, the rise of digital collectibles such as NFTs has also attracted the attention of Generation Z, bringing new growth opportunities to the industry.

An analysis of ChoEarth’s own strengths and weaknesses shows that its advantages are concentrated in IP integration capabilities, fan base, product differentiation, and cross-media synergy. Relying on the strong IP attributes of Arknights, products naturally have emotional appeal; the loyal core player group provides stable support for sales; narrative design and cross-media linkage form a competitive barrier different from competitors. However, its shortcomings are equally prominent. For the consumers, the audience limit is obvious. The potential for market expansion is not good. At the same time, the products are only about the game. This kind of over-reliance on a single IP leads to high operational risks. What’s more crucial is that the lack of offline retail channels which reduces the exposure. At the same time, the weak global layout causes it to miss opportunities in the international market.

6. SWOT Analysis

As for the problems and restrictions that the company has, SWOT framework can be used to comprehensively evaluate ChoEarth’s strategic situation from the two dimensions of internal capabilities and external environment. Also, it can provide a key basis for formulating sustainable growth strategies.

6.1 Strengths

ChoEarth’s core competitiveness is first reflected in the in-depth integration of the Arknights IP. By transforming virtual characters, plots, and symbols in the game into physical collectibles, products have inherent emotional added value. This “emotional binding” not only promotes repeated purchases from consumers but also strengthens

fans’ loyalty to the brand. Secondly, the highly sticky fan group composed of core players not only actively participates in online forum discussions and creates fan art but also shows a high willingness to pay for limited editions and exclusive products, becoming a stable consumer cornerstone for the brand. Third, the narrative-driven product design endows each collectible with character lore and game connotations, which can better meet consumers’ emotional and collection needs compared with ordinary blind box brands, forming a unique competitive advantage. The synchronized promotion of product launches with game events, anime adaptations, and online publicity builds a cross-media synergy effect, ensuring that products always maintain high attention. Last but not the least, the hierarchical product portfolio covers the different needs from casual consumers to high-end collectors, ensuring product accessibility while enhancing brand premium through high-end lines.

6.2 Weakness

However, internal weaknesses restrict ChoEarth’s development space. Dependence on a single IP is the biggest risk—if Arknights experiences a decline in popularity, update errors, or player loss, product sales will be directly impacted; compared with competitors such as Pop Mart, the lack of offline stores, pop-up stores, and global retail channels makes it difficult to reach potential consumers outside the core fan base, limiting brand exposure; the small scale of production and distribution leads to insufficient economies of scale, putting it at a disadvantage in supplier bargaining and cost control, which affects its price competitiveness and international expansion speed. What’s more, the continuous launch of figurines with similar characters may trigger design fatigue, and if there is a lack of innovation, fans’ purchasing interest will gradually decrease. In addition, the proliferation of counterfeit products not only diverts genuine sales but also damages the brand image and consumer trust, while the current weak anti-counterfeiting measures are difficult to effectively address this problem.

6.3 Opportunities

Expanding IP collaborations is a key path to break the dependence on a single IP. Cross-border collaborations with other popular game, anime IPs, or cultural symbols can not only enrich the product line but also attract new consumer groups; the international market, especially regions with mature gaming and collection cultures such as Japan, the United States, and Southeast Asia, has huge market potential. Through the linkage of e-commerce platforms and local partners, low-cost market entry can be achieved;

strengthening community operations, such as establishing collector clubs, organizing fan competitions, and offline events, can further enhance fan stickiness, while the spread of user-generated content (UGC) can increase the organic exposure of the brand; product diversification and innovation, such as launching lifestyle merchandise, digital collectibles, and AR interactive products, can expand consumption scenarios and cover a wider audience; the integration of digital and physical collectibles, such as combining NFTs with physical figurines, can cater to the needs of Generation Z and open up new revenue streams.

6.4 Threats

Industry competition is becoming increasingly fierce. Domestic and foreign brands such as Pop Mart and Good Smile Company have more competitiveness in pricing, promotions, and product iteration relying on diversified IPs, extensive retail networks, and scale advantages; the rapid expansion of the blind box market may lead to market saturation, and consumers' sense of freshness towards the blind box model decreases, triggering consumption fatigue; economic fluctuations affect consumers' disposable income, and global supply chain issues and changes in import and export policies may interfere with production and sales; the existence of counterfeit and gray markets not only erodes the brand's market share but also may damage consumers' trust in the brand due to quality problems of counterfeit products; in addition, changes in gaming trends, the rise of new IPs, or the decline in the player base of Arknights will directly affect product demand. Based on the above analysis, ChoEarth's strategic direction should be clear: rely on advantages such as narrative design and cross-media synergy to consolidate the core fan group; make up for internal shortcomings by expanding offline and international channels, promoting IP diversification, and strengthening anti-counterfeiting measures; seize opportunities such as IP collaborations, international expansion, and digital-physical integration to achieve market breakthroughs; at the same time, competition and market changes by continuous product innovation, monitoring market dynamics, and diversifying IP risks.

7. Marketing Mix (4P Analysis)

As for all the conditions analyzed in the previous content, some market techniques and advices need to be given. According to the 4P framework (product, price, place and promotion), market strategies are taken like the following part. In terms of Product, ChoEarth has built a diversified portfolio covering different needs. Blind box figurines, limited-edition products, art-based merchandise, and high-end statues together form a product matrix. All products

take narrative design as the core, maintain consistency with the aesthetic style of Arknights, and strengthen the connection between products, IP, and consumers through emotional collection attributes, distinguishing themselves from ordinary toys.

The pricing strategy adopts a differentiated pricing model, balancing product accessibility and exclusivity. Blind boxes and small collectibles are priced relatively low to attract impulse buyers and casual fans; high-end statues are positioned in the premium market to meet the needs of core collectors for quality and scarcity; limited-edition products enhance the perceived value of products by creating a "sense of scarcity" and stimulate repeated purchases from consumers, further consolidating the brand's high-end image.

The channel layout combines the advantages of online and offline channels. Online channels are mainly official websites, e-commerce platforms such as Tmall and Amazon, and game merchandise stores, meeting consumers' needs for convenient purchasing; offline, through pop-up stores, anime and game exhibitions, and cooperative retail outlets, it provides consumers with immersive experiences. Especially offline unboxing activities not only enhance the sense of ritual in consumption but also effectively increase brand exposure and attract casual consumers outside the core fan base.

The promotion strategy focuses on community marketing, with multi-channel collaborative efforts. In terms of social media marketing, unboxing videos, fan art, and influencer content are released through platforms such as Bilibili, Weibo, Twitter, and Reddit to accurately reach the target audience; community-driven activities such as collector clubs, fan competitions, and limited-edition release events not only enhance fans' sense of participation but also expand the brand's influence through word-of-mouth communication; event marketing closely follows key nodes such as game anniversaries, anime adaptations, and fan exhibitions to synchronize product launches with hot events, maximizing the promotion effect.

8. Strategic Recommendations

Based on the previous market, audience, product, and marketing analyses, ChoEarth needs to formulate systematic strategic initiatives from seven dimensions: IP, content, community, market, channel, product, and brand protection to achieve sustainable growth.

8.1 IP collaboration

In terms of expanding IP collaborations, the core goal is to reduce dependence on the single IP of Arknights. By conducting cross-border collaborations with other popular

game developers and anime brands, the product matrix can be enriched. Specifically, cross-border figurines, limited-edition co-branded sets, and themed merchandise can be launched—for example, collaborating with top game IPs such as Genshin Impact and Honkai: Star Rail, or linking with phenomenal anime IPs such as Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba and Jujutsu Kaisen. By leveraging the fan bases of partners, new consumer groups can be attracted, and at the same time, through differentiated co-branded designs, the consistency between products and ChoEarth's narrative style can be maintained.

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Data-driven collaboration evaluation. To reduce single-IP dependence while preserving ChoEarth's narrative style, candidate partners should be screened with a transparent

scoring model across six dimensions, each rated on a 0–10 scale and combined into a weighted score.

Audience Reach (0–10): scale and penetration (MAU/downloads, followers, search index).

Fanbase Overlap (0–10): shared users with Arknights (survey overlap, co-follow, look-alike conversion).

Social Momentum (0–10): near-term content cadence and buzz (updates/new seasons, engagement growth).

Merchability (0–10): character count and recognizability, design extensibility, secondary-market activity.

Geo Fit (0–10): alignment between the partner's audience geography and ChoEarth's target markets.

Risk (0–10, reverse): licensing complexity, brand-safety/PR volatility, supply and QC uncertainty.

Suggested weights: Reach 0.25; Overlap 0.20; Momentum 0.15; Merchability 0.20; Geo Fit 0.15; Risk 0.05.

Score formula:

$$\text{Weighted Score} = \sum_i (\text{Score}_i \cdot \text{Weight}_i) - (\text{Risk} \cdot \text{Risk Weight})$$

IP	A u d i e n c e Reach (0-10)	Fanbase Over- lap (0-10)	Social Momen- tum (0-10)	Merchability (0-10)	G e o F i t (0-10)	Risk (0-10, reverse)	Weighted Score
Genshin Impact	9.5	7.5	7.5	8.5	8	4	7.9
Honkai: Star Rail	8.5	8.5	8	8	7.5	4.5	7.75
D e m o n S l a y e r : Kimetsu no Yaiba	8	6.5	7	8.5	7.5	3.5	7.175
Jujutsu Kaisen	8	6	7	8	7.5	4	6.975

This framework keeps selection objective, ensures design consistency with ChoEarth's narrative tone, and prioritizes collaborations with the highest near-term conversion potential.

8.2 Storytelling ability need to be improved

Enhancing storytelling and narrative value is the key to strengthening product competitiveness. ChoEarth needs to build richer background stories and lore for each collectible. Supplementary forms such as supporting comics, short videos, or audio stories can be used to add “side plots” of characters outside the game, making products “tangible narrative carriers”; at the same time, limited series launches should be deeply bound to major game events of Arknights (such as anniversaries and new chapter updates), making products “physical extensions” of the game plot, further strengthening consumers' emotional connection and enhancing the collection value and uniqueness of products.

8.3 online and offline community operations

Strengthening community operations requires a two-

pronged approach online and offline. Online, official collector forums and community platforms can be built, with character discussion areas, collection exchange sections, and UGC display areas set up to encourage fans to share collection experiences and fan works; offline, regular fan meetings, collection exhibitions, and figurine design workshops are held to enhance the offline interactive experience of fans; at the same time, UGC creation contests (such as the “My Arknights Figurine Story” essay competition and figurine photography competition) are launched, and limited-edition products are awarded to outstanding works. Through the spread of user content, the brand's influence is expanded, and fans' sense of belonging and loyalty are enhanced.

8.4 International market expansion

International market expansion is an important path to break the growth bottleneck. ChoEarth should give priority to deploying in markets with mature gaming and collection cultures such as Japan, the United States, and Southeast Asia. In the Japanese market, it can cooperate with local toy distributors to enter retail stores in anime

core business districts such as Akihabara and participate in large-scale exhibitions such as the Tokyo Game Show (TGS); in the U.S. market, relying on e-commerce platforms such as Amazon and combining with precise marketing on social media such as Twitter and Reddit, it can reach the North American player group; in the Southeast Asian market, local e-commerce channels such as Shopee and Lazada can be used to launch entry-level blind boxes with high cost-effectiveness for young consumers, gradually establishing brand awareness; at the same time, product design details (such as color matching and packaging language) should be adjusted according to the cultural preferences of different markets to improve localization adaptability.

8.5 Channel changes

Upgrading the offline channel experience requires expanding the coverage of pop-up stores and exhibitions. Regular themed pop-up stores are opened in core business districts of first- and second-tier cities (such as Lujiazui in Shanghai, Sanlitun in Beijing, and Shinjuku in Tokyo), with immersive “Arknights world” scenarios designed, interactive photo areas, figurine trial areas, and customized engraving services set up to enhance consumers’ on-site experience; at the same time, the frequency of participating in international anime and game exhibitions is increased, such as the San Diego Comic-Con (SDCC) in the United States and the Angoulême International Comics Festival in France, to enhance the brand’s global exposure through offline displays; in addition, cooperate with shopping malls, cinemas, and other venues to hold small-scale figurine exhibitions to attract the attention of non-core fans.

8.6 Product diversification

Product diversification requires expanding category boundaries and price tiers. In terms of categories, in addition to existing figurines and merchandise, launch apparel (such as character-themed hoodies and accessories), home goods (such as cushions and desk lamps printed with game patterns), and digital accessories (such as phone cases and earphone covers) to cover consumers’ daily life scenarios; at the same time, explore new product forms that integrate digital and physical elements, such as figurines with AR functions (scanning the figurine can trigger virtual character interactions) and limited-edition products bound with NFT digital certificates, to cater to Generation Z’s needs for a sense of technology and scarcity. In terms of price tiers, add entry-level affordable blind boxes (priced below RMB 50) to attract casual consumers, and launch ultra-high-end customized figurines (priced above RMB 1,000) to meet the needs of hardcore collectors,

forming a product matrix covering low, medium, and high price ranges.

8.7 Brand protection

In terms of brand protection, a sound anti-counterfeiting system needs to be established. Technically, adopt technologies such as QR code traceability, anti-counterfeiting labels, and blockchain authentication—consumers can query the production information and authenticity of products by scanning the QR code; in terms of production, sign exclusive cooperation agreements with high-quality suppliers, strengthen the confidentiality management of the production process, and reduce the risk of counterfeiting from the source; in terms of the market, carry out regular anti-counterfeiting clean-up actions in conjunction with intellectual property departments and e-commerce platforms, remove infringing products and hold relevant merchants accountable; at the same time, popularize the knowledge of authenticity identification to consumers through social media, enhance consumers’ anti-counterfeiting awareness, and jointly maintain the market order and reputation of the brand.

9. Conclusion

ChoEarth occupies a unique position in the collectibles industry, leveraging the Arknights IP to deliver narrative-driven, emotionally resonant products. SWOT, STP, 4P, reveal that while ChoEarth benefits from a loyal fan-base and strong product differentiation, it faces challenges including single-IP dependency, limited retail visibility, and competitive pressures.

Strategic recommendations—expanding IP collaborations, enhancing storytelling, strengthening community engagement, pursuing international expansion, diversifying product offerings, and implementing anti-counterfeit measures—provide actionable pathways for sustainable growth. By executing these strategies, ChoEarth can solidify its brand presence, broaden its market reach, and achieve long-term success in the rapidly evolving global collectibles industry.

The integration of emotional, narrative, and community elements within product and marketing strategies positions ChoEarth to leverage its niche appeal while expanding into broader consumer segments. Ultimately, balancing core fan loyalty with cultural expansion and diversified offerings will ensure resilience and profitability in a competitive, dynamic market.

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