

Analysis of Disney's Marketing Strategy from a Full-Industry-Chain Perspective

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Abstract: The Walt Disney Company, as a global entertainment leader, exemplifies the successful integration of innovative marketing strategies. Studying DISNEY enriches both the theoretical understanding and practical experience reference of marketing strategies in the entertainment industry. This study analyzes the overall marketing strategy of DISNEY using the STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) theory and the 4P (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) theory. DISNEY's dynamic pricing, omni-channel distribution, and emotional marketing campaigns effectively foster brand loyalty and maximize revenue, while its focus on IP lifecycle management and cultural adaptation demonstrates its agility in navigating diverse markets. However, challenges such as cultural missteps and reliance on traditional pricing models in evolving markets are identified, with recommendations provided to enhance personalized experiences, deepen digital transformation, and integrate sustainability narratives to ensure DISNEY's continued success in the rapidly changing entertainment industry.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Walt Disney Company, founded in 1923, is a global entertainment giant. Its business spans media networks, theme parks, resorts, film and television entertainment, consumer goods, and interactive media. Through strategic acquisitions and brand expansion, DISNEY has built a strong IP portfolio and diversified business. In recent years, it has made significant progress in streaming with platforms like Disney+, strengthening its digital media position. However, DISNEY faces new challenges and opportunities amid intensifying market competition and changing consumer demands, such as income fluctuations in the Asia-Pacific market and a decline in traditional television business. Studying DISNEY's business, market performance, and strategies is crucial for understanding its role and future in the global entertainment industry.

Nowadays researches of DISNEY's marketing strategy mainly focus on global marketing, IP marketing, and feminism. A study shows how DISNEY try to convey a different definition of female lead through media in order to gain identity of people from diverse backgrounds (Schiele et al., 2020). Also, study of marketing strategy analysis of

female group is also deeply explained (Lyu, 2022). What's more, DISNEY, as a famous IP creator, Chai (2023) did a research about its IP derivative product marketing strategy through LinaBell—a hot IP character. As for its media department, Luo (2024) did a detailed analysis on its streaming service—Disney+, using R language.

Current DISNEY research lacks comprehensive analyses of its marketing strategies, focusing mainly on its theme parks rather than the overall company. Therefore, this paper uses STP analysis and 4P theory, emphasizing the collaborative roles of DISNEY's various business departments, to provide a detailed analysis of DISNEY's marketing strategies from a holistic corporate perspective.

Studying DISNEY enriches the theoretical understanding of business models and marketing strategies in the entertainment industry. DISNEY's success in IP development, full-industry-chain operations, and cross-cultural management offers valuable research cases. Analyzing its business and market strategies deepens the understanding of entertainment industry business models and supports theoretical development. Studying DISNEY also has practical significance. It provides reference and inspiration for other entertainment enterprises. DISNEY's experience in IP cultivation, brand

management, and cross-cultural marketing helps other companies tackle market challenges and enhance competitiveness.

2 CASE INTRODUCTION AND STP ANALYSIS

2.1 Company Overview

In the 1920s, an unknown cartoon studio might never think of growing into a preeminent name in the entertainment industry, today, DISNEY proudly continues its legacy of creating world-class stories and experiences for every member of the family. In 2022, Disney's media and entertainment business generated revenues exceeding 55 billion US dollars, while its theme park business also achieved revenues of 29 billion US dollars.

DISNEY's core business segments are Entertainment, Sports, and Experiences. Entertainment includes cable TV, film distribution, and streaming (Zhu, 2024). With Disney+'s subscriber and revenue growth, DISNEY shows its digital media competitiveness. Sports centers on ESPN, covering event broadcasting and content creation. Experiences includes theme parks, resorts, cruises, and merchandise. DISNEY's theme parks, like Shanghai's "Zootopia" zone, drive visitor growth through innovation. This business also offers park-related merchandise and food services for a complete entertainment experience.

In its development, DISNEY has shown a clear trend of film and television company mergers and IP expansion. In 2006, DISNEY acquired Pixar Animation Studios; then in 2009, it bought Marvel Entertainment, in 2012, Lucasfilm joined DISNEY. Between 2017 and 2019, DISNEY completed the acquisition of 21st Century Fox. Through these acquisitions of well-known IPs, DISNEY has established a profit model based on the IP full-industrial-chain development.

2.2 Segmentation

From the demographic perspective, children and teenagers are key consumer groups for Disneyland and animated films, which also make parents main group to target. Given DISNEY's focus on fantasy and fairy tales, young females form a large part of its audience. For Disneyland, families are the most important market segment. Conventionally, Chinese theme parks are more likely to focus on family

visitors due to traditional family values. However, with changing times and concepts, these parks now attract visitors of all ages. According to a 2024 report from the China Tourism Academy, about 50% of visitors do not bring children, and over 30% of these are aged 30 or older. Moreover, the silver economy is evident here, with senior visitors to Shanghai Disney increasing by about 75% in 2023. Geographically, Disneyland in different regions adapt to local cultures. For example, Disneyland in China launch activities and products during traditional Chinese festivals.

2.3 Targeting

DISNEY's broad target market and distinctive IP style lead it to adopt differentiated marketing strategies for diverse park themes and audiences. DISNEY opts for localization strategy to deal with theme parks with significant regional and cultural differences. Shanghai Disneyland's Lina Bell exemplifies this, attracting young females and broadening the age range from children/teenagers to adults in Chinese market. In Chinese media marketing, DISNEY's official accounts are only active on RedNote, a female-dominated platform, while other social media platforms only have commercial accounts for Disneyland and Disney Store. This indicates that DISNEY want to convey their value proposition to young people and female.

2.4 Positioning

DISNEY's business segments target all-age customers and focus on brand loyalty. It owns movie IP from fairytale animations that attract children to action movie that allow adult to relax. Disneyland is positioned as a place of magic, joy, and dreams, appealing to young people and offering comfort and happiness. Its slogan "ignite the dream" reflects this brand positioning.

DISNEY's products aim at the high-end market. As shown in table 1, Disneyland's ticket prices in China are on par with Universal Studios', both being high-end products. The in-park food and merchandise prices are also higher.

Table 1. Comparison of ticket prices for famous theme parks in China.

Name of theme park	Ticket price range (Yuan/person)
Shanghai Disneyland	399-699
Universal Studios Beijing	418-749
Zhuhai Chimelong Ocean Park	395
Shenzhen Happy Vally	200-250
Fantawild Series Theme Parks	200-500

3 ANALYSIS OF MARKETING STRATEGY

3.1 Product

DISNEY's product portfolio is diverse, spanning theme parks, film, TV, music, merchandise, and online media, offering options for all ages. It adheres to a high-end, high-quality approach. For instance, VR and AR are used in theme parks to create immersive entertainment. DISNEY also has a robust membership program to boost brand loyalty and holds a significant market share in streaming media (Disney+), further solidifying its brand influence.

Disneyland is renowned for high-quality service, but what truly captivates visitors is more than that. It emphasizes product lifecycle management, which will provide a continuous influx of customers. For example, Tokyo Disneyland's design allows visitors to experience only two-thirds of the attractions in a day. With annual updates, steady visitor flow can be maintained.

DISNEY's IP pool is built through in-house development, classic adaptations, and acquisitions. It maximizes IP value through multi-stage development, leveraging its five business segments - media networks, theme parks, film and TV, consumer products, and interactive entertainment-to create synergy. A successful animated film, for example, can spur related theme park attraction development, merchandise sales, and interactive entertainment offerings.

3.2 Price

DISNEY applies a dynamic pricing strategy based on variable value assessment. Firstly, Disneyland uses a multi-tiered ticketing system, adjusting prices according to seasons, dates, and entry times to

balance supply and demand and optimize revenue. For instance, Shanghai Disney Resort's new four-tier ticket system sets varying prices from 399 to 699 yuan for regular days, specially regular days, peak days, and special peak days.

Moreover, In-park merchandise is generally priced high to maintain brand consistency, regardless of the product's value-for-price equivalence.

In addition, leveraging its rich IP resources, DISNEY has developed numerous derivatives like toys, clothing, stationery, and electronics. It also collaborates with partners through IP licensing to launch related products. Their prices, influenced by product type, quality, and brand licensing fees, usually carry high added value and profit margins. This strategy capitalizes on DISNEY's strong fan economy, completing the IP full-industry-chain development.

3.3 Place

DISNEY has achieved a blend of direct and indirect channels, and OMO omni-channel integration. Disneyland's tickets are sold not only on-site or via official platforms, but also through travel agencies, and some hotel agencies. Online, besides its website and app, DISNEY also sells physical movie-related products on Amazon, eBay, Tmall, and others. Offline, DISNEY has cinemas, dedicated merchandise stores, reseller stores, food and beverage outlets, general retailers, and specialty retailers.

This multi-channel approach boosts market coverage and sales volume, allows consumers to access DISNEY products in various ways, and better meets evolving consumer needs. It also helps DISNEY integrate resources, leverage each channel's strengths, and maximize brand value.

However, the multi-channel strategy may cause issues like price inconsistencies across channels, which can confuse customers and lead to conflicts

with the distribution department. Therefore, DISNEY needs to focus on coordination and integration in multi-channel management, ensure synergy among channels, optimize resource allocation, and enhance operational efficiency.

3.4 Promotion

DISNEY uses diverse ad formats and media like TV, online, and outdoor ads to enhance brand awareness and product exposure. Ad content focuses on storytelling to evoke audience emotions and build brand recognition and affection.

In the new media age, social media marketing is essential. DISNEY actively promotes on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, posting park events, new movie trailers, and special offers to attract fans and boost brand loyalty. Moreover, DISNEY adopts an emotional marketing approach, which is highly effective in the short-video era.

Emotion marketing lacks a clear definition in academia but is a hot topic among marketing scholars. Ruth (2001) explained the mechanism of brand emotions, believing that brand emotion regulation mediates the relationship between emotion benefit congruence and favorable brand attitude. Hasford et al. (2015) examined the role of emotion contagion in marketing channels, which can impact consumers, especially during brand recommendations. James Agarwal (2005), based on the interaction of emotion and cognition, proposed an integrated model of attitudes and choices using the research on emotions and attitudes. From these studies, emotion marketing can be understood as a strategy that leverages consumer emotions to create resonance with brands or products, thereby stimulating purchasing behavior and brand loyalty.

DISNEY's emotional marketing is divided into many segments, including the use of character stories, special festivals, and heartwarming tales. DISNEY's official accounts periodically release snippets from specific character stories, leveraging themes such as the wisdom contained within the stories or nostalgic childhood memories to attract consumers. During special festivals, DISNEY uses specific characters to create holiday greetings and convey warm values. On a daily basis, DISNEY typically employs character dialogues or heartwarming short essays to continuously capture the attention of consumers. DISNEY has a significant advantage in emotional marketing due to its complete character storylines. Additionally, with its long history, DISNEY can evoke memories for multiple generations. In the era of short videos, they spread quickly, allowing people

to learn about a character's story and quickly trigger group resonance. This emotional marketing enhances brand loyalty, increases brand value, and helps navigate public relation crises. For example, when Shanghai Disneyland's Lina Bell faced feminism-related controversy for treating female and male visitors differently, her high popularity led most people to defend her authenticity instead of criticizing.

4 SUGGESTION

4.1 Balancing Globalization and Localization

When entering new markets, DISNEY can collaborate with local IP creators to develop products that incorporate local culture. This approach helps avoid the controversy of "cultural transplantation" and makes products more acceptable to local markets as they better align with local aesthetics and values.

For instance, DISNEY's *Mulan*, based on a traditional Chinese story, faced criticism in Chinese market for being overly influenced by Western culture in its play, which diluted some of the original story's meaning. Recently, DISNEY has faced public criticism over its film casting choices. This is largely due to its focus on promoting progressive ideals like racial equality while neglecting local aesthetic preferences. Both of the example demonstrate the significance of balancing globalization and localization.

To balance globalization and localization, DISNEY should maintain its promotional model as an international brand to preserve a consistent brand image, such as using international spokespersons and leveraging flagship stores (Liu, 2016). However, in order to enter more diverse national markets, it should conduct more in-depth market research tailored to local conditions and prioritize marketing efforts in developed cities.

4.2 Seizing the Experience Economy Trend and Moving from Mass to Personalized Offerings

Despite its current market dominance, DISNEY should consider niche markets. According to the long-tail theory, these markets offer significant opportunities. As noted in *The Experience Economy* by Pine & Gilmore (2011), consumers are moving away from mass-produced goods towards

personalized experiences. Unlike in the service economy era, people now pay more for experiences than just services. Feelings have become more important than traditional transactions.

The JELLYCAT toy company is a good example. It gained popularity through unique sales processes. Without many unique IPs, it won consumer love via emotional marketing and high-emotional-value experiences. With its strong emotional marketing and well-developed IP backstories, DISNEY can explore similar innovative sales strategies. Additionally, attractions of Disneyland should shift from traditional sightseeing to immersive experiences to better meet visitor expectations.

4.3 New Technology-Enhanced Experiences and IP Lifecycle Management

Although DISNEY has made some attempts to integrate products with new technologies, overall technological maturity is still pending improvement. As a top-tier entertainment company, DISNEY can keep exploring new technologies. Apart from existing AR and VR, it can adopt the metaverse concept to create virtual parks, enhancing visitors' immersion in virtual spaces. In the future, metaverse-built virtual spaces may also facilitate DISNEY's transition into fields like gaming.

With new-technology support, not only can visitor immersion be enhanced, but classic IPs can also regain attention and extend their lifecycles through new digital experiences.

4.4 Deepening Digital Transformation and Building a Brand Ecosystem

DISNEY should further integrate online and offline channels to create a brand ecosystem, enhancing the omnichannel experience. For instance, it can incorporate streaming content recommendations into its park app. A brand ecosystem boosts loyalty and offers marketing advantages.

In China, DISNEY+ has a low profile due to regional legal differences. DISNEY can optimize its streaming platform and partner with local services to enter the market and form an ecosystem for better marketing.

By building an online brand ecosystem, DISNEY can leverage DISNEY+ to collect user data for precise cross-business ad recommendations, such as park events or merchandise, improving ad conversion rates.

4.5 Dynamic Price Strategy Adjustment

DISNEY's current dynamic pricing is somewhat traditional. To adapt to market changes, DISNEY should adjust its pricing strategy. For example, in the changing market environment in China, DISNEY can offer more price options for the silver-haired group. Also, to differentiate itself from competitors like Universal Studios, DISNEY can provide more price advantages for family visitors, reinforcing its "family-friendly" image and enhancing customer loyalty.

With the development of its brand ecosystem, DISNEY can integrate with DISNEY+ to improve its membership system, offering more price discounts and boosting user retention. Additionally, DISNEY can bundle its memberships with other brands, such as combining DISNEY+ with SPOTIFY, to drive traffic to its streaming platform by offering a discount price.

For markets of developing countries, DISNEY should provide more favorable price packages across various dimensions. At the same time, it needs to strengthen digital management to prevent revenue loss from geographical arbitrage.

4.6 Strengthening the Sustainable Development Narrative

DISNEY has built a good brand image through continuous public welfare activities, but sustainable development is now a key concern. The heavy asserts tourism industry is under particular scrutiny in this context. Emphasizing sustainable development in future promotion strategies will help DISNEY establish a socially responsible brand image and enhance brand value.

DISNEY can integrate environmental protection into physical products, using renewable materials to boost their green appeal and add value. This eco-innovative production can be promoted on social media and through documentaries on DISNEY+, showing the process to convey DISNEY's sustainability stance and improve its public image.

DISNEY's parks can also introduce customer education on environmental protection. For example, introducing a carbon emission points system could encourage public transport use, promoting sustainability while providing marketing content by turning emission reductions into tangible achievements. In this way, DISNEY will gain both attention with high commercial quality and good reputation.

5 CONCLUSION

The Walt Disney Company, as a global entertainment leader, exemplifies the successful integration of innovative marketing strategies, diversified business models, and cross-cultural adaptability. This study analyzed DISNEY's marketing approach through the STP framework and 4P theory, revealing how its synergistic business operations, centered on intellectual property (IP) development, enable sustained competitive advantages. DISNEY's ability to balance globalization with localization—evidenced by initiatives like Shanghai Disneyland's Lina Bell and culturally adaptive products—demonstrates its agility in navigating diverse markets while maintaining brand consistency. Furthermore, its dynamic pricing strategies, omni-channel distribution, and emotional marketing campaigns highlight a customer-centric approach that fosters brand loyalty and maximizes revenue across business segments.

The findings underscore DISNEY's strengths in leveraging its IP ecosystem to drive cross-departmental synergies. From blockbuster films to theme park attractions, merchandise, and streaming platforms like Disney+, the company capitalizes on the full-industry-chain model to extend IP lifecycles and enhance consumer engagement. However, challenges persist, including cultural missteps and reliance on traditional pricing models in evolving markets. The proposed recommendations—such as embracing personalized experiences, deepening digital transformation, and integrating sustainability narratives—aim to address these gaps while aligning with trends like the experience economy and metaverse innovation.

Theoretical contributions of this research lie in its holistic analysis of DISNEY's marketing strategies, enriching academic discourse on entertainment industry business models. Practically, DISNEY's strategies offer actionable insights for enterprises seeking to enhance IP management, emotional branding, and omni-channel integration. However, due to the limitation of information, this study lacks of quantitative data analysis and big data statistics. Future studies could explore emerging markets in depth, assess the impact of AI and metaverse technologies on consumer behavior use quantitative data analysis, or evaluate the long-term efficacy of sustainability initiatives. As consumer expectations and technological landscapes evolve, DISNEY's continued success will depend on its ability to

innovate while staying rooted in its core mission: creating magical, inclusive, and enduring experiences for audiences worldwide.

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