

Research on the Brand Marketing Strategy of Disney Animation Films

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Abstract. This paper examines Disney's several marketing strategies to advance its animation brand. The study emphasizes how Disney uses conventional media, such as TV, newspapers, and magazines, to promote its films and successfully project its brand image. The study also looks at how Disney has used social media and other new media platforms to interact with viewers and create discussion about its animated films. The study also explores Disney's approach to extending the life cycle of its cultural products and characters by adapting animated films into live-action versions. The introduction of Disney, the streaming service, and its effects on audience reach and profitability are also covered in the study. Furthermore, according to the report, Disney has a number of difficulties, including cultural appropriation, political correctness, reaching a diverse audience, and streamlining the streaming media platform. The research findings offer valuable insights into the animation industry and further our understanding of Disney's brand marketing strategy.

Keywords: Brand Marketing Strategy, Disney, Animation Films.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Starting from a simple Mickey Mouse, Disney continues to awaken people's inner childlike world with exquisitely produced and technologically advanced animated films. In the process, Disney commercialized entertainment and tapped the huge commercial value in entertainment.

Disney films are an extremely important part of the global film industry. Frozen 2 in 2019 got about 1.45 billion dollars box office and became the highest in Disney animation movies [1]. According to the data in Table 1, Disney participated in 4 films in the top 5 global animation films at the end of 2019 [2]. In the development of nearly a hundred years, Disney has always insisted on producing movies at high speed and high quality, playing a leading role in the entire industry. In order to pursue a better box office, Disney has carried out a variety of marketing methods for its films, from traditional methods to combining with the modern Internet era, which greatly contributed to its success.

The research on the marketing methods of Disney movies has very important practical significance. Cause China's animation films are still in the development phase, how to stabilize the domestic market and expand overseas markets has become a difficult problem right now. As the top company in the animation film industry, Disney's marketing strategy can provide a reference for developing China's film industry, which is conducive to the production and publicity of Chinese animation films. Moreover, Disney's marketing strategy can also provide a reference operation plan for similar companies in China and achieve success in the market through advanced marketing strategies.

Table 1. Top 5 Animated Films at the Global Box Office by the End of 2019

Rank	Name of Film	Worldwide Box Office (US \$Billion)	Producer	Issuer
1	The Lion King	16.519	Disney	Disney
2	Frozen	12.765	Disney	Disney
3	Incredibles 2	12.428	Disney	Disney
4	Minions: The Rise of Gru	11.594	Illumination	Universal Studios
5	Toy Story 4	10.708	Pixar	Disney

1.2. Literature Review

In terms of film marketing strategy, many researchers are doing related surveys. Through relevant research, Scholar Barletta found that two important factors affect consumers' consumption decisions in the Internet age. One is to go to the store for personal experience, and the other is to search for relevant product evaluations on the Internet for reference [3]. Consumers' attention to the product will greatly increase when a company passes on the official website or through celebrity forwarding and product marketing-related information. Taking movies as an example, audiences will become interested in the movie after receiving information from the Internet and then searching on professional movie websites for relevant information about the movie, such as movie ratings and movie-making teams. After consumers buy tickets and watch movies, they share their viewing experience online, which becomes another part of marketing.

It is crucial to integrate marketing strategies for animation films in the market. Aiping Ding analyzed that the main problem that some animation markets are unprofitable is that there is no industrial chain formed [4]. China, for example, does not lack cultural resources to develop original animation. In the animation film "Mulan" developed by Disney, the entire creation process is centered on China, but the ultimate beneficiary is the American animation manufacturer. The reason is that there is a lack of successful operators in the Chinese animation market who cannot benefit from promoting the marketing of the film industry through the industrial chain.

According to Chongyang Wang, surrounded by international animation giants, Chinese domestic animation films began to focus on marketing. However, there are still problems, such as low product content or vague positioning, which cannot meet market demand, lack of professional marketing methods, and low popularity. Chinese domestic animated films can improve their marketing methods by analyzing consumers, targeting, arranging content, and multi-faceted joint publicity in advance [5].

1.3. Research Gap

Research on Disney animation is roughly divided into four aspects: cultural communication, brand management, image communication, and comparative research.

However, very few marketing strategies specifically study Disney animation movies. As an important research result, "Marketing Communication" provides a valuable reference for many enterprises. However, as a huge success story in the industry, the Disney animation film must use a wise marketing strategy with great reference value. In domestic animation films, the marketing communication strategies in the Internet era are very deficient. Domestic animation companies rarely use effective marketing communication strategies to spread animation films, which leads to the inability to stabilize the domestic market and expand foreign markets. Although China's animation films have made great progress in quantity and box office in recent years, compared with Disney and other big companies, there is still a big gap in the effect of marketing communication. Therefore, this article will mainly study the marketing strategy of Disney animation films, systematically summarize the marketing methods and deficiencies, and improve part of the research on related aspects.

1.4. Research Framework

This article will mainly focus on the research of Disney animation film marketing strategy, firstly analyzing the development status of Disney company, then deeply analyzing and investigating Disney animation film marketing strategy, which can inspire domestic animation film marketing, and select a few decisive factors or comparatively more important strategies for detailed analysis. Finally, aiming at Disney's current marketing strategy, this passage will analyze the deficiencies and flaws of Disney's marketing strategies and puts forward some constructive improvement plans which may be conducive to its future development.

2. Methods

2.1. Bibliography Method

The bibliography method refers to literature reading and research through traditional paper books and online electronic resources. At the same time, search for relevant information reports through search engines, sort out relevant information, and synthesize and summarize literature [6]. This article is mainly a literature survey conducted on CNKI and Google Scholar. This article will sort out the main marketing strategies that helped Disney succeed by analyzing the existing research literature on Disney's animation marketing strategies. At the same time, through the data analysis, this essay can also summarize various problems existing in Disney's marketing strategy. As a result, useful and functional advice can be given for future development.

2.2. Case Study

Case analysis can be defined as a method of conducting an in-depth and specific study of a person, a group of people, or a unit. This research method can make a complex and huge problem concrete and precise. Through the analysis of cases, researchers can obtain representative data to analyze the overall problem. This paper selects Disney animation films in the Internet age as the research object. An analysis of Disney's different marketing plans draws a universal conclusion in animation marketing to apply the law and provide a reference value for other animation markets.

2.3. Comparative Analysis

The comparative research method investigates two or more related things according to certain standards, looks for similarities and differences, and explores general and special laws. This article will compare Disney's animation marketing strategies with those of other markets and come up with a more effective and scientific animation marketing strategy. At the same time, the advantages and disadvantages can be obtained by comparing the effects of different marketing strategies, thus providing scientific guidance for practical application. Specifically, different movies will be compared, too. Those movies with various effects and box office can also provide valuable information on film marketing strategy.

3. Result

3.1. Marketing Strategies

3.1.1 Integrating multiple traditional media

Traditionally, by integrating various traditional media such as TV, newspapers, magazines, etc., Disney has expanded the scope of dissemination of animation films in an all-round way, subtly conveying the image of its animation brand to the audience.

Disney acquired the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), covering most of the television market. Disney has also established its own publishing house, which regularly publishes comic books related to Disney animation films and has obtained a considerable amount of publications [7]. In China, Disney has selected traditional media with great influence for dissemination. By choosing official newspapers with a wide audience and cooperating with CCTV, it has strengthened the image of Disney animation in the hearts of the audience.

In addition, Disney also combines new media for online marketing communication. Through public social platforms such as Douyin and Weibo, Disney publishes marketing content related to animation movies, such as trailers and character introductions, to earn topical attention and leave repeated impressions in the minds of Internet users. Through new media marketing, Disney has gained attention in advance for newly released animation films and provided guarantees for the box office.

3.1.2 Launch of Disney's live-action animated film

Since the live-action version of "Alice in Wonderland" in 2010 successfully opened up the market for animated adaptations of live-action films, live-action animated films have become an important form of cross-media creation for Disney. After that, a number of live-action films adapted from Disney's original animations, such as "Maleficent", "Beauty and the Beast" and "Mulan" etc., have been released continuously, reflecting Disney's pioneering efforts in the field of live-action animation film creation [8]. By remaking animation films, Disney uses new forms to deal with the original IP, establishes the connection between live-action animation films and original animations, and extends the life cycle of its cultural products and character images. This method can maintain the topicality of the original animation IP, consolidate the commercial territory, and create new economic value. And based on the box office performance of live-action remakes.

3.1.3 Build a streaming platform--Disney+

Affected by COVID-19, Disney announced in 2020 to reorganize its media and entertainment department and vigorously develop its streaming media business, launching the streaming media Disney+. According to the chief financial officer of Disney, it is expected that by 2024, the annual content investment on the Disney+ platform will reach 8-9 billion US dollars [8]. By building a streaming media platform, Disney has expanded the way to establish contact with users, which not only maintains the original audience group but also attracts a large number of new audiences. After its launch, Disney+ quickly laid a digital foundation to achieve growth and profitability. Thanks to the massive animation IP that Disney has accumulated over the years, Disney+'s original content already includes some of the most successful franchises in recent years, such as the Marvel Universe, Star Wars, and popular animated films published by Pixar, not to mention Disney's own rich animation film and television collection. A large number of Disney animation movies are online on streaming media, and audiences can watch animation movies that belong to Disney only by paying a low membership fee.

3.2. Problems

3.2.1 Stereotyped cultural appropriation and overkill political correctness

As a leading multinational company, Disney essentially exports the mainstream values of the United States in its animation films. As a result, it cannot cater to the expectations of audiences worldwide and the different cultural values of various countries, leading to possible failures. Disney animation films draw from different countries' cultures, which may diverge or contradict the original culture in the film production process. For example, *Mulan*, inspired by China, under various stereotypes, finally led to an unsatisfactory box office.

In recent years, in the process of Disney remaking animated movies, there have often been excessive political correctness and overkill [9]. The "Little Mermaid" that has recently sparked heated discussions is the most typical example. In order to convey the politically correct spirit of the times, Disney invited African-American actors to play the heroine, which greatly deviated from the image in the original work. Similar incidents have emerged, causing negative comments and influences on Disney animation films' original good IP image, leading to unstable factors in developing some parts of Disney industries.

3.2.2 Difficulties of targeting diverse audiences

Disney Animation Movies are known for their appeal to both children and adults. But reaching such a varied audience successfully presents its own set of difficulties. For Disney animated films, if the film is too simple and tends to emphasize content that is more interesting and understandable to children, it may cause the film to be relatively childish for adults and has no potential for mass communication other than children. It will be too limited; if the film's narrative is strong and it tends to emphasize the deeper spiritual core and philosophy of life, it will make it difficult for children to

understand the film, and they will not be able to gain high popularity among children. It is unfavorable for a series of commercial activities, such as selling IP products supporting movies.

Child-oriented adults and adult-oriented children, two audience groups with great contrasts, put forward higher requirements for producing Disney animation films [10]. In sum, Disney must balance promoting the movie's child-friendly elements and highlighting the deeper themes and emotional resonance that attract adult viewers.

Additionally, in terms of streaming technology, animated movies are known for their stunning visuals and intricate details. However, streaming platforms may compress the video quality to reduce bandwidth consumption, losing visual fidelity and detail.

3.2.3 Problems with utilizing streaming --Disney+

Streaming media, a field that Disney has only recently set foot in, has brought various problems and opportunities for Disney animation movies. First of all, for some animation movies, Disney+ adopts a strategy of simultaneous release, which has led to the proliferation of pirated resources of the movies, which has brought about a decline in the viewing rate of traditional movie theaters and even an unsatisfactory box office. And this is also a challenge to the copyright of Disney's own animation IP. Second, the competition in the streaming media industry is also getting fiercer. In addition to Disney, other film, television, and social media groups, such as Netflix, Facebook, and Apple, are also doing their best to develop streaming media and seize audiences and market share. These companies are undoubtedly Disney's strong competitors, so if Disney wants to maintain and develop the market among them, it needs continuous research and development and innovation.

4. Discussion

4.1. Considering Cultural Differences and Tailoring Marketing Campaigns

Disney Animation Movies have a global reach, and marketing these movies in diverse cultural contexts requires careful consideration. Different regions may have varying sensitivities and cultural nuances that need to be respected and incorporated into the marketing campaigns. Disney must navigate these cultural differences to ensure their movies are well-received and appreciated worldwide. Additionally, the film should balance political correctness and realistic performance effects.

For Disney animation films set in different countries, producers must comprehensively understand the country's culture, from historical events to customs, architectural features, and lifestyles. Only on the basis of comprehensive and in-depth research on the background country can the film present an objective, true and natural effect, and more importantly, can it resonate with the audience groups in those countries where the background is set. Suppose the producer does not understand the country's cultural background, and there are negative cultural stereotypes or cultural prejudices in animation films. In that case, the film will likely be boycotted on a large scale, affecting the box office and Disney's reputation in the region.

For different regions and audiences, the marketing strategy of Disney animation films should be adapted to local conditions, and analysis and decision-making should be made according to the actual local conditions. Combining box office data, streaming media background analysis, movie ratings, and other indicators, Disney should use a variety of methods, such as combining box office data, streaming media background analysis, movie ratings, and other indicators, to obtain the audience's response to animation movies in a specific market. After mastering the basic market conditions, Disney chooses which media to use, and which means to achieve the desired marketing effect.

4.2. Finding a Balance between Large Age Span

In order to solve the problem of the large age span of the audiences, Disney is aware of the importance of emotional storytelling. Disney puts a lot of effort into developing believable stories and characters that connect with viewers of all ages. Disney establishes a deep emotional connection

with viewers by eliciting feelings and a sense of nostalgia, which boosts engagement and word-of-mouth advertising.

For audiences with a large age span, what Disney can do is choose to look at the adult world from the perspective of children. This requires that the content of the film must properly balance educational significance and humorous entertainment content so that every audience can find a fulcrum that resonates in the film. In addition, the marketing of derivative consumption of Disney animation images is also extremely important. Through marketing methods such as setting animation characters in offline physical parks and promoting IP image peripheral products, the audience's attention to the IP image will be strengthened, and common and attractive products will be provided for audiences of all ages.

In sum, the ability of Disney animation movies to attract people of all ages is truly effective and significant, which helps Disney gain a boarder market compared to other animated movies that are limited to children.

4.3. Optimizing Streaming Media System

Facing fierce competition in the streaming media market, Disney must actively formulate and adjust its marketing strategies according to market changes. To be sure, Disney has been drawing lessons from its biggest competitor, Netflix's international expansion strategy in recent years, from licensing animation and film content to directly competing with local media for audiences to explore the international market actively [11]. For Disney itself, streaming media is a field that has only been involved in recent years. To get higher economic benefits, how to rationally allocate streaming media and theater resources and reasonably arrange theater window periods has become a long-term consideration for Disney in the future.

Suppose Disney wants to obtain more revenue while maintaining multiple relationships with theaters and creative teams. In that case, it must rationally allocate streaming media and theater resources and arrange theater window periods reasonably.

It is of vital significance that Disney+, as a streaming media platform, can collect a large amount of data related to user interests and consumption habits. By analyzing the data, Disney can find the commonalities of consumer behavior in a specific region to adopt targeted marketing strategies. With the data, Disney can precisely predict customers' behaviors through digital marketing tools. Besides, in order to solve the problem of animation movies' quality released on Disney+, the platform should prioritize the preservation of visual quality for animation movies. They can deliver animation content with minimal compression artifacts by utilizing advanced video encoding techniques and optimizing their streaming platform. This would ensure that viewers can enjoy the vibrant colors, smooth animations, and fine details that make animation movies so visually captivating.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Key Findings

In summary, the study carried out on Disney Animation Films' brand marketing strategy has illuminated its noteworthy influence on its prosperity and durability. Disney has clearly mastered the art of building a strong brand identity and retaining a devoted consumer base based on a thorough review of the company's many marketing strategies. The research's conclusions emphasize the value of attracting audiences of different ages, as those customers can contribute to different aspects of the company's benefits. The study also shows that optimizing animation movies' content towards various cultural backgrounds may help Disney Animation Films become more popular and influential since people worldwide can receive movies. In addition, the study emphasizes how important it is to embrace digital platforms and adjust to technology changes in order to interact with a larger audience. This study offers insightful information on Disney Animation Films' brand marketing approach, highlighting its capacity to enthrall viewers and hold its position as a pioneer in the animation sector.

5.2. Research Significance

Over many years, Disney Animation Films has developed a strong and recognizable brand. Knowing Disney's marketing tactics can help businesspeople gain important insights into brand positioning, building, and management. Other entertainment sector companies can benefit from this information since it can help them craft compelling marketing plans that connect with their target demographic and establish a distinctive brand identity.

Additionally, the research can help create movie marketing approaches and plans. Disney is renowned for its inventiveness and capacity to evoke strong feelings in its viewers. Businesses can learn how to develop captivating and memorable marketing campaigns that catch consumers' attention and spur company expansion by studying the marketing tactics used by Disney Animation Films.

5.3. Limitations and Future Study

However, there are still several limitations of the study. The study may have a limited sample size and limited movie resources, which may not accurately represent the entire target audience and movies of Disney animation films. Most of the data mentioned in the paper come from previous studies or the second-hand data provided on the official website, not the primary data. To find best practices and potential areas for development, future studies could get primary data through interviewing the audience or directly conducting surveys. It is also possible to contrast the brand marketing approaches used by Disney animation films with those of other animation studios that are Disney's competitors. Furthermore, future studies could examine the success of Disney's brand marketing strategy in the digital sphere and its effects on audience engagement and brand loyalty in light of the growing significance of digital platforms.

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