

Marketing Communication of Disney Brand Against Cross-Cultural Background Taking Disneyland as an Example

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ABSTRACT

As a world-renowned media and entertainment company with decades of history, The Walt Disney Company (TWDC) includes multinational enterprises specialized in animation, movies, theme parks, games and so on, and achieved great success. From the perspective of theoretical and empirical research, this paper summarizes the articles on cross-cultural communication and marketing communication written by many scholars in China and abroad in recent years, and makes clear the importance of marketing communication in the context of cross-cultural communication. It is concluded that Disney brand adjusts its marketing strategy according to its own changes, and forms a set of effective marketing communication system, which provides a reference for multinational enterprises to conduct marketing communication against the cross-cultural background.

Keywords: Disney, cross-cultural communication, marketing communication

I. INTRODUCTION

As economic globalization picks up, culture has gradually become globalized. Some local brands no longer rely on the local market, but to explore foreign markets. However, due to the differences in culture consisting of factors as economy, humanities and language, the effective means to conduct cross-cultural communication have become a priority. After a hundred years of development, Disney has become an influential international brand. Thanks to the continuous development of global economy, Disney has started to devote itself to cross-cultural marketing communication in the fields of theme parks, films and games of its own brand. Marketing communication in a cross-cultural context is the key.

II. ANALYSIS OF DISNEYLAND MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

A. Analysis of economic environment

According to *Yellow Book of World Economy: Analysis and Forecast of World Economic Situation in 2019* published in Beijing by the Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the growth of world economy in 2018 failed

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to maintain the strong momentum of simultaneous recovery of countries in 2017, and the growth rate has shown signs of decline. The report predicts that the world economic growth rate in 2019 will be about 3.5%. [1] According to annual *Report on Global Theme Parks and Museums* jointly released by American Theme Entertainment Association (TEA), world's leading research institute on theme parks, and American AECOM Group, a third-party tourism industry research and consulting organization, the world's top 10 theme park groups received 476 million visitors in the whole year, an increase of 37.5 million over 2016 and a year-on-year growth rate of 8.6%. It is expected that global theme parks continue their growth trend in 2018, with the TOP 10 groups attracting 517 million visitors. [2]

With the development of global economy and the improvement of productivity, tourism and entertainment industry is rising rapidly. Tourism and entertainment are increasingly favored by more and more modern people who are facing huge pressure, and become a carrier for people to relieve pressure, entertain and relax themselves. It is the huge demand that places entertainment projects such as theme parks in a good position for marketing communication.

B. Analysis of social and cultural environment

"Social and cultural environment refers to various codes of conduct recognized by society such as beliefs, values, religious beliefs, moral standards, aesthetic concepts, and customs and habits passed down from

generation to generation under a social form." [3] Each country has its own unique culture, which affects the way of thinking and behavior of its citizens. Any enterprise will face one or more social and cultural environments, and its marketing communication activities will be bound to be influenced and constrained by the environment. Therefore, when carrying out marketing communication activities, companies must fully understand and seriously consider their own social culture to understand consumer behavior and needs. Disneyland formulates different marketing strategies in a variety of social and cultural environments. Through different marketing communication activities, it correctly establishes the target market to solve the obstacles brought about by social and cultural environment.

C. Analysis of technical environment

The continuous development of modern society drives the progress of science and technology. The development and industrialization of science and technology in recent years have provided a useful tool for Disney theme parks. The emerging new technologies have not only improved customer satisfaction and convenience, but also highlight the image of brand and its interaction with customers. For example, customers can purchase tickets online instead of queuing for tickets on the spot, and buy Disneyland-related products in online flagship stores. The new interactive channel allows Disneyland to better communicate with customers and form an effective communication environment.

III. ANALYSIS OF DISNEYLAND MARKETING COMMUNICATION METHODS

A. Global expansion model

The current international environment and globalization provide opportunities for every group that wants to do business across borders. By strengthening global connections, developing overseas markets and attracting new consumers, companies can further promote the development of localization, enhance the brand influence and communication effect. Disneyland recognizes that many people do not have the opportunity to visit Walt Disneyland in the United States. Therefore, Disneyland has developed theme parks around the world to occupy the market and adapt it to local culture. Ranging from the native Orlando Walt Disney theme park to the Shanghai Disney theme park, Disneyland continues to expand in the world, bringing Disney's culture and brand to other host countries for dissemination. With the global expansion, Disneyland has expanded its market to enhance brand influence, and further carried out marketing communication through global expansion.

B. All-round publicity model

Media communication has been increasingly favored by enterprises since the 20th century. Disneyland has established a comprehensive publicity mode through the dual communication channels of traditional media and new media. Its distribution channels include newspapers, magazines, the most popular online social media and so on. It follows the trend of fashion and technology and creates hot topics through online and offline interaction.

C. The cartoon star effect and IP of Disneyland

IP is the abbreviation of intellectual property. Some define it as "a community with an independent personality and the same interests or values, in which users' sense of participation eventually translates into consumption". Disneyland is positioned as the "happiest place in the world". It boasts many cartoon stars including Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Lion King and Mermaid. Disneyland is using these cartoon stars to build its own IP kingdom. It constantly designs new cartoon characters to interact with customers, then maximizes IP from a series of peripheral products, amusement programs and other projects to attract visitors in this way. The integration of cartoon stars and their story background into the park has narrowed the distance between them and visitors, and constructed the key features that distinguish them from other theme parks and are exclusive to Disneyland.

IV. ANALYSIS OF DISNEYLAND MARKETING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

A. Traditional media used in marketing communications

1) *TV commercials*: Disney deeply understands the business opportunities behind TV commercials. It established its own TV channel in 1983, and then acquired a number of TV media including ABC and FOX Media to improve its strength in the TV media field. Advertisement is also very popular among customers. Before the opening of Shanghai Disneyland, Shanghai Disneyland released the first TV commercial, which was broadcast on Shanghai's first-line TV stations. In addition, this commercial also appeared on the mobile TVs of buses and subways in Shanghai, promoting Shanghai Disneyland in all aspects.

2) *Outdoor advertising*: Outdoor advertising refers to a means of communication that directly faces consumers' lives. It can permanently display the company's brand and image, and can effectively increase the company's brand awareness. Disney has also put a lot of effort into outdoor advertising. In Hong Kong, Shanghai and Tokyo, Disneyland theme subway

decoration has been set up, and the carriage layout has highlighted the characteristics of Disneyland, so that customers can feel the atmosphere before arriving at Disneyland.

B. New media adopted in marketing communications

The new media adopted in marketing communications is mainly the network media platforms. Two local Disneyland parks in the United States and Disneyland Paris have opened their own official websites and social accounts such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to share information about their parks. The Tokyo Disneyland resort is operated by a company that owns it and does not have a social account. The Hong Kong Disneyland resort has also opened its own official website, Facebook, blog and WeChat public account, and the Shanghai Disneyland resort has opened its own official website, WeChat, weibo, APP and other rich social platforms in China. Disneyland leverages all major media channels/platforms to attract potential customers, and all channels allow people to participate and share all their content in a conversational way.

V. ANALYSIS OF THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF DISNEYLAND

A. Product innovation strategy

People's demand is constantly upgraded with the progress of the society. Enterprises need to meet this demand through product innovation and conduct an effective communication through such behavior activities. The famous slogan of Disneyland is "Disneyland never finished", thus creating a Disney style of Disneyland. This refers to Disney's production and operation model, which adopts the "three-three system", i.e. replacing one-third of the hardware equipment and creating one-third of the new projects each year. This mode helps to understand customer satisfaction, provide freshness, adjust product value, and provide new selling points for the park, so as to further attract customers. The Shanghai Disney resort, for example, recently announced plans to build a mine for its Zootopia theme park on New Year's day in 2019, due to the stormy popularity of *Zootopia*. Disney's official concept map of the park fully reflects the scenes in the movie, allowing fans to experience the scene of *Zootopia*.

B. Price strategy

Price is an important factor for attracting customers. Flexible pricing based on factors as different people, products, time of purchase ensures that the ticket is affordable for the vast majority of consumers. For example, on the basis of single ticket, Shanghai Disneyland has set up ticket categories such as ticket

package and two-day ticket to further meet the needs of consumers. In addition, the ticket price is appropriately raised during periods with large passenger flow, such as holidays, winter and summer holidays, to distinguish between regular and peak tickets and further refine the market. It also sets up tickets with different prices for different groups of people, such as student tickets, senior tickets, to implement differential pricing.

C. Service strategy

With the increasingly fierce market competition, its service quality has increasingly become one of the considerations of the majority of consumers. Only meticulous and high-quality services can win the favor of customers. Disneyland has been adhering to the "SCSE" business philosophy for a long time to ensure the implementation of the business philosophy, thus forming high-quality service and good customer reputation.

Disneyland has always provided high-quality services and has a good reputation among consumers. What's more, its service concept and measures have also been sought after by other companies. The connotation of the "SCSE" management concept in Disneyland is as follows: safe, civility, show and efficiency. In Disneyland, there is an unwritten rule that all the staff must keep in line with the eyes of customers, especially children. The staff must squat down with a smile and keep in line with the eyes of children, so as to avoid making children hold up their heads to talk to the staff and form a good interaction with children. In Disneyland, an underground delivery channel is also set up, and no tracing call is provided to ensure that customers are not disturbed. It is this humanized and meticulous service that satisfies the diverse needs of customers.

D. Brand positioning strategy

Disneyland is very clearly and precisely positioned to provide pleasure to its visitors. Employees are a very important part, because employees tend to face customers first and provide services and products to them. Therefore, Disneyland inculcates the value of the enterprise to its employees and integrates the concept into the recruitment and training period. It also has its own set of languages: customers represent "VIP", people represent "actors", work represents "performance", job represents "roles", uniforms represent "costumes", and so on. Disneyland employees know their own role credo and play their part in the park to create a happy atmosphere.

Disneyland is open to the public and brings happiness to people of all ages, such as the popular saying "everyone is urging you to grow up, but Disneyland is trying to bring back your childhood". In the park, visitors can enjoy themselves as children,

including those who have not yet grown up. Disneyland is not only an entertainment world for younger people, but also a childhood for adults.

E. Cross-cultural communication of localization strategies

When enterprises conduct transnational marketing in different regions with unique culture, they will encounter many diverse ideas and behaviors, which will lead to conflict and collision of cultures. Cultural differences hugely affect the marketing communications of multinational companies. Adjusting to the cultural habits of the host country and adapting its strategy is an important step. Disneyland, as an international brand, cannot afford to ignore the cultural heritage and sense of belonging of local consumers if it wants to grab market.

Disneyland achieves brand benefits by cooperating with local brands. For example, Disneyland has partnered with American jewelry brand Pandora to launch a Disneyland style. Visitors can purchase Pandora products at Disneyland. Shanghai Disneyland also signed a strategic alliance agreement with Pepsi Group and Master Kong Group. The two companies will become the premier beverage suppliers in the park. They also jointly launched marketing activities: Disney Limited Filling, bottom with "Mickey" and "Minnie" images to further promote Shanghai Disneyland. Shanghai Disneyland has reached strategic cooperation with more than 10 top companies, covering industries including finance, transportation, entertainment, catering, consumption, daily chemical and other fields.

VI. PROBLEMS IN MARKETING COMMUNICATION AGAINST THE CROSS-CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF DISNEYLAND

A. Failure to fully understand the culture of various countries and regions

Language is the most important tool in cross-cultural communication, and language differences will directly affect cultural communication. In the process of communication, the two communicating parties will have different thinking and values due to their different backgrounds, which leads to language differences. The first step for Disneyland to get out of the United States and into the world is the language difference. In the case of Disneyland Paris, it was stipulated at the beginning that the common language in the park was English, while the French people mainly spoke French and seldom spoke English, which brought great inconvenience to tourists and reduced customer satisfaction.

In addition, Disneyland Paris is not fully aware of the impact of cultural conflicts in the cross-cultural

context. Disneyland was resisted by the French masses when it entered France. Paris is the center of European culture and art, while the American culture with a short history cannot be promoted and recognized here. The French people are sexually romantic and have a high self-esteem, which makes them quite identify with their own culture and reject the invasion of foreign culture. They boycotted the opening of Disneyland, resulting in the loss of Disneyland Paris. [4]

B. Inadequacies in localization

First of all, Disney park ignores the impact of local culture on foreign cultural boycott, and its marketing attitude is arrogant. Disneyland Paris, for example, suffered heavy losses because of its arrogant management philosophy, believing that it could copy its model in Tokyo Disneyland and Disneyland in the United States. The IP of cartoon stars in Disneyland not only brings great economic benefits, but also causes serious cultural barriers and thresholds. Visitors will not be able to see Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and various Disney princesses in theme parks other than Disneyland, which inevitably hamper the localization of Disney's marketing.

VII. THE INSPIRATION OF THE MARKETING COMMUNICATION OF DISNEYLAND IN THE CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT FOR MULTINATIONAL ENTERPRISES

A. Advocating cultural docking

The classic cartoon stars created by Disneyland, the leading entertainment and leisure brand, are also deeply sought after by everyone. The American culture contained in the cartoon stars is integrated into the world, but the local culture and customs are still maintained. It is precisely this kind of cultural connection that has made the six Disneyland establish their own unique culture. In the face of different cultures, multinational enterprises should actively seek the greatest common divisor of cultures to reach a balanced state, and adopt appropriate cultural integration to reduce the problems caused by cultural conflicts.

B. Launching localization actions

Globalization and localization are contradictory, opposite and unified, forming the contradiction and tension in the market. However, it is this kind of contradiction and tension that can better facilitate effective communication and dialogue in the context of different cultures. For multinational enterprises, cultural difference is the biggest problem they have to face. Only by solving this problem can they gain a foothold in the international market. Efforts can be made in the localization of talents and of R&D innovation. The

localization of talent selection is the first step in the basic development of multinational enterprises, which promotes the effective integration of enterprise culture with the culture of the host country, greatly reduces the operation cost, and makes efficient use of labor resources of the host country. The implementation of localization marketing must be supplemented by an international vision. Only a combination of the two can make the most of it.

The reason why Disneyland is popular among people is that it always believes in the global thinking and carries out the strategy with a national vision when implementing the localization strategy. The combination of globalization and localization, the maintenance of its own unique cultural characteristics, and the integration of local culture in the process of cultural communication together form a unique Disney style.

C. Valuing global marketing

In today's international environment, no multinational enterprise is immune to global marketing, which requires them to flexibly employ marketing strategies and marketing channels in the face of different national cultures and national conditions. Nowadays, with the increasing transactions and exchanges among countries, multinational enterprises should adopt a variety of ways to enter the international market and use flexible global marketing strategy to gain a position in the international market. The global market tends to be similar. In order to survive, multinational enterprises should attach importance to the dominant position in the world market and pay attention to global marketing.

Disneyland recognizes that not everyone can afford to visit Walt Disney world in person in the United States. As a result, it has developed theme parks around the world to capture the market and adapt them to local cultures. Whether it's the Orlando Disney theme park or the Shanghai Disney theme park, Disney parks continue to open around the world while spreading Disney's culture and brand in host countries. Global expansion allows Disneyland to enhance its brand influence and further promote its marketing communication globally.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The marketing communication of Disneyland under the cross-cultural background enables more people in the world to know the culture of Disneyland and the Disney brand. The establishment of Disneyland has realized the long-cherished dream of Walt Disney to become one of the world's top entertainment brands, providing a unique marketing communication program for multinational enterprises around the world. Based on animation, it develops other industrial chains such as books, toys, TV, theme parks and so on, and promotes

its products to international market. The success of Disneyland is a lesson for all multinationals. The author hopes that the above analysis and discussion can prompt multinational enterprises to learn Disney's global operations, marketing and communication strategies, and provide them with reference and ideas.

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