



# Study on the Communication Effect of Disneyland Lina Bell's Image Among University Students in Shanghai

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**Abstract.** Lina Bell is the latest Duffy family character announced by Shanghai Disneyland. On September 17, Shanghai Disneyland's official account "Duffy with you" released a video featuring Lina Bell for the first time. According to the setting, Lina Bell is a curious, adventurous little fox. On September 29, Lina Bell made her first global debut at the Shanghai Disney Resort, and then the internet public opinion skyrocketed to a peak and remained high. Under the aura of Disney and Duffy family IP, the little pink fox captured the hearts of a large number of netizens in a short period of time. This article was conducted to study what makes Lina Bell so popular and explore the general rules behind similar successful IP. A total of 60 questionnaires were conducted to the college students at Shanghai University. Analysis of the questionnaire data reveals that young people consider cute appearance and lively and interesting personality as the primary reason for fond memories of Lina Bell. This paper concludes that humans are emotional creatures, and they need emotional bonding to bring them a sense of security and pleasure. As long as the emotional needs of the target audience can be met, the IP marketing cases can achieve success.

**Keywords:** Lina Bell · IP marketing · Disneyland

## 1 Introduction

Disneyland is the umbrella term for the theme parks owned by the Walt Disney Company. Since it first appeared in 1955, it has grown to earn its status as the nation's pop culture capital [1]. Disneyland is dedicated to bringing back innocence, joy and unforgettable experiences. Disneyland is more of a circulation of the Disney IP chain, which amplifies the value of the IP and strengthens the association. 60% of Disneyland's revenue is derived from the consumption of derivatives. Mickey's balloons, hats and other items are everywhere at Disneyland, and gift stores are set up at the exit of any game program. Park tickets and the hotel accommodations, as well as food and beverage service in the parks, are all significant sources of revenue for Disney as well.

In 2016, the world's sixth Disney resort opened in Shanghai. The Shanghai Disneyland discussed in this article is located in Chuansha Town, Pudong New Area, Shanghai. Disney is in itself a variety of industrial agglomeration. The Disney theme park will

promote the rapid development of Shanghai's tourism and modern service industries and bring huge economic benefits [2]. Before the park opened, Shanghai Shendi Group, which owns 57% of Shanghai Disneyland, had forecast that the resort would attract 10 million to 12 million people in its first year of operation. Now, before the one-year deadline, Shanghai Disneyland is about to welcome its 10 millionth visitor, which is expected to exceed the optimistic expectations of Walt Disney and Shanghai Shendi Group. In its q2 2017 results for the year ended April 1, Released on May 10, Walt Disney said its park business posted a 20% year-over-year increase in revenue of \$750 million, and that Shanghai Disneyland was "the growth engine for its global park business this quarter." With an area of nearly 1,000 acres and a cost of \$5.5 billion, Shanghai Disneyland is currently the scale of Disney's largest and most invested International Park. The impressive operation data of Shanghai Disneyland so far is another proof of Disney's strong IP strength.

This spirit continues in new and special ways at Shanghai Disney Resort, where the Walt Disney Company's dream lives on and thrives. Lina Bell is the IP image released by Shanghai Disney on September 29, 2021, with the appearance of a plush pink fox girl. Since her debut at Shanghai Disney Resort, Lina Bell has captured the hearts of all audiences and nicknamed 'Chuansha Daji' by netizens due to the location of Shanghai Disneyland in The Town of Chuansha in Pudong District. Not only did she take over from Universal Studios' Megatron as one of the most popular social media searches for Disney, but she also won over a lot of people who were attracted to Universal Studios. Her popularity continues to soar, gaining new fans and becoming "Disney's big weapon". Searches for Lina Bell on Weibo, Tik Tok and Bilibili have been so hot that the dolls have been sold out since the first day of sale, with visitors queuing up for eight hours without being able to buy any. On a LOMO fashion platform called DEWU, the price of Lina Bell, originally 219 yuan, was raised to 2,299 yuan, and 57 people paid for it. A Lina Bell Christmas pendant has also skyrocketed in value, with the average unit price approaching 1,500 yuan. On a second-hand platform XIANYU, some sellers even bid the whole set at 12,000 yuan. On December 15, 2021, Lina Bell appeared on the cover of The Magazine, which has sold 5,604 copies as of press time. It's worth noting that a few months ago, Youjia's cover featured one of China's hottest male stars, Bai Jingting, and the issue sold 6,473 copies. For her avid fans, everything related to Lina Bell has sparked a buying frenzy, and she has become almost as popular as a popular actress.

## 2 Literature Review

As one of the most popular theme parks worldwide, Disneyland is a huge piece of pop culture in terms of audience engagement and a major part of the influence of American culture worldwide, constantly repackaged to appeal to audiences in the United States and other countries and evoke a sense of connection. Many scholars have carried out research on Disney character image design. According to Azmi, Disney's cartoons have always been linked to beauty. She emphasizes that leading characters in movies possess all the positive traits such as attractive appearance and moral excellence [3]. Martz and Bazzini also adopt regression analyses to demonstrate that the appeal of the role is an important factor in predicting the image of that role [4]. Moreover, a vivid character image can

have a strong positive effect on Disney films [5]. Cai Yingdi finds that the vivid female characters are typical in Disney's animated films. From Snow White to Beauty and the Beast, the female characters in the works often have distinct personalities [6].

Not only the scholars, but also the entrepreneurs pay attention to Disneyland, while they focus more on its strategy. According to Tas, Disney's marketing strategy is to leverage the feeling of nostalgia to generate and develop customer loyalty. Disney has been increasing its global audience through the creation of emotional impressions. In order to preserve customer loyalty, Disney has revived its older classics, such as *The Jungle Book*, *The Lion King* and *Beauty and the Beast*, re-sharing old content long after its first release [7]. However, her research still has several limitations, such as her study argues that Disneyland can encourage people to think of their beautiful past memories, but she ignores the fact that Disneyland is constantly changing throughout the year, developing fresh themes, events and other temporary trends. This is emphasized in Avada's article. He analyses that Disneyland is more than just being a trip and watching the past, it contains fresh and exciting stories. Such strategy creates a unique experience for customers, as it ensures that everyone enjoys the new content [8].

These studies and theories can help us understand some background information in advance. But there are still some research gaps. Although there are many literatures about Disney image analysis, most of them focus on Disney animations and have little relevance to Disneyland. The existing research on Disneyland focuses on some macro aspects, such as the analysis of the overall marketing strategy, and does not subdivide into a specific point, such as Lina Bell in this paper. This article aims to gradually analyse the marketing effect of Lina Bell to young people, and why she is so successful. This study is helpful for Disney to further utilize such IP image to expand the Chinese market. As Disney CFO Kristin McCarthy told the first financial reporter, Shanghai Disneyland contributed 20% to Disney's overall theme parks and resorts revenue growth [9]. The Chinese market can bring a huge economic boon for Disney. This article will also analyse how Shanghai Disney successfully created Lina Bell in to such a popular IP, which bring itself tremendous discussion and attention online.

### 3 Methodology

This paper takes a questionnaire approach to study young people's perceptions of Shanghai Disney and its IP Lina Bell. This questionnaire was created on a professional online questionnaire platform--- questionnaire star (<https://www.wjx.cn/>). Shanghai Disneyland crowd's age distribution is dominated by younger users, with 77.1% of users aged 35 and under, indicating that there is greater enthusiasm for Disney among young people. Therefore, this questionnaire was distributed to university students in order to better fit the customer profile of Shanghai Disney. 2022 On March 1, this questionnaire was distributed in the WeChat group of 2019 students at Shanghai University, with a distribution period of 3 days, and a total of 60 questionnaires were collected, 53 of which were valid and 7 were invalid. The criteria for determining invalid questionnaires are: 1. If the number of missing questions reaches 2/3 of the total number of questions in the questionnaire, the questionnaire is considered invalid. For example, if there were 10 questions but more than 6 questions were missed, the questionnaire was invalid. 2. If

the whole questionnaire had the same checkbox, such as “agree”, the questionnaire was invalid. 3. If the whole questionnaire presents a clear regularity in the options ticked, then the questionnaire is invalid.

## 4 Results

More than half of the respondents live between 2,000 and 5,000 yuan per month and have heard of Lina Bell, with 62.26% saying they like Lina Bell so much that they actively search for it online, and 56.6% have used Lina Bell emojis and WeChat profile pictures and bought Lina Bell dolls. In terms of how they got to know Lina Bell, Weibo ranked first with 58.54%, Xiaohongshu second with 48.78%, and 46.34% mentioned Lina Bell through chatting with friends. In terms of why they like Lina Bell, the most popular choice is that Lina Bell has a lively and interesting personality (63.41%), followed by her high popularity, scarcity and cute appearance. As for the reasons for buying Lina Bell-related products, 78.05% said they are memorable and worth collecting, followed closely by the pursuit of fashion and the love of Disney. In addition, a whopping 90.57% said Lina Bell helps them relieve stress, has healing powers, and brings peace of mind, followed by emotional sustention, satisfaction and happiness. On a scale of five, people agreed that Lina Bell’s success was “paying for cuteness,” with an average score of 3.79. Finally, most people agree that watching Lina Bell’s videos is a way to relieve stress. It is worth mentioning that 75.47% of respondents were female, which is also in line with Disney’s customer orientation. Young women are the main customers of Disneyland, because women’s identity in male-female relationship and family relationship has special attributes. And women naturally like to share interests and follow suit; This plays a direct role in the publicity and promotion of Disneyland. In other words, women often share information about their visit to Disney in the after-dinner chat, which is the best way to spread the word of Disney.

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Subtle and Scientific Exterior Design

It’s been less than three months since Lina Bell was introduced, but Disney visitors have to wait in line for hours to interact with her for 30 s. Peripheral products were snapped up within seconds of launch, causing the official website to crash several times and resale prices to be jacked up to dozens of times. In addition, she has gained dozens of hits and hundreds of thousands of followers on Weibo. Why a doll character is so popular can also be concluded from the results of the questionnaire, the cute appearance and personality disposition is the direct reason. With round face, big eyes, high forehead and small chin, Lina Bell has the perfect “doll face” to capture people’s affection. Studies have shown that people prefer faces characterized by large eyes, short noses and round faces because these remind people of something closer to themselves - babies [10]. This causes the human brain to release dopamine, which makes people want to take care of them. Researchers also found a significant positive correlation between facial symmetry and health. In other words, the more symmetrical the face, the more genetically superior it is. Lina Bell’s large, round eyes, small, pink nose, and symmetrical face combination give her a typically cute appearance.

## 5.2 Unique Character

In the questionnaire, respondents mentioned that the main reason they liked Lina Bell was that she was lively, fun and adorable.

When people say a person has a 'cute' personality, it means, first, that he'll be agreeable, and second, that he'll be approachable, preferably with a dash of naivete and vulnerability. By contrast, people rarely associate strong or powerful personalities with 'cute'. For example, the famous Megatron of Universal Studios is mostly described as 'funny' and 'chatty' by tourists. Lina Bell belongs to the Duffy family line, and Duffy family certainly fit the traditional definition of cuteness: they are kind, innocent and obliging. Although they all have their own unique settings—— Duffy loves to travel, Shellie May is ingenious, Gelatoni loves painting, and StellaLou dreams of becoming a dancer. But it's rare to see these characters react in a particularly personal way when interacting with visitors. Some psychologists have argued that when people think of an object as cute, it is not so much possessing a quality as lacking it [11]. For example, innocent is actually ignorant, affability is actually lack of independent ideas, fragile is actually incompetent. In other words, their 'cuteness' is based on their incompleteness. Lina Bell's personality is unique in the Duffy family. Different from other partners, she will be angry, will act in petulance, will make trouble, which makes a deep impression. Some hot online videos show that when tourists jokingly call her 'Chuansha Daji' 'Internet celebrity', she twisted her little finger firmly and taught the visitor to read after her 'Lina Bell', word for word. When a tourist menacingly 'ordered' her to interact with him, she did not cooperate, but drew out her toy knife to show her anger. Such a performing effect is intended by Disney. Not naive, much less effeminate, she was even a bit rebellious compared to her peers. The essence of Lina Bell's cuteness lies precisely in her exposed true temperament. Rich and subtle body language gives her cute appearance more personalized meaning.

## 5.3 Mere Exposure Effect

When Disney promoted Lina Bell online, many netizens commented 'Originally, people did not feel much for Lina Bell. But while browsing TikTok videos about Lina Bell, people somehow fell in love with her...' This is known in psychology as the mere exposure effect. Most people would not fall in love with Lina Bell at first sight, but it is hard to be sick of her 'standard cute' pink face. Experiments have shown that repeated exposure can increase a person's favourable opinion of the object if their initial impression of the object is positive or neutral [12].

## 5.4 Meet Emotional Needs

Another reason why the Lina Bell IP has captured the hearts of audiences and consumers is the immersive emotional labor of the staff behind the "dolls". She has frequent interaction and communication with visitors in the park and has made friends with them. In the fast-paced business era, contemporary consumers are no longer satisfied with material needs, but pay more attention to the consumption that can meet their emotional needs. Even though Lina Bell has a simple personality and six basic characters that Disney

gave her. Close contact with her in reality has become the desire of many consumers. This makes Lina Bell more appealing than the average virtual dolls, tourists are actually interacting with the staff playing Lina Bell. Based on Lina Bell's cute appearance, such emotional interaction satisfies people's need for human communication and social interaction. Shanghai Disney has also been keenly aware of this, and precisely launched amusement facilities, shows, catering and peripheral products with the theme of Lina Bell to meet consumers' need to interact with their "idol" Lina Bell. In particular, Lina Bell's performance show brought her from a fairy tale to reality, walking among the audience. In the show, Shanghai Disney even designed a scene in which Lina Bell and other doll characters compete for the audience's affection, making the image of Lina Bell richer and livelier. In addition, when Lina Bell interacts with visitors, it can be observed that her most common gestures are waving, blowing kisses and hugging. This is a continuation of how Disney friends interacted before the outbreak. When greeting with tourists, they will open their furry arms and give a tight and warm hug. This makes up for the lack of modern opportunities to touch others. Studies have shown that high levels of skin hunger can make people feel lonely. Severe cases are more likely to experience depression and stress and have difficulty forming stable relationships with others [13]. Technology has simplified the cost of communication but has also enabled people to live a touch-free lifestyle, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is fair to say that everyone is suffering from 'skin hunger'. Linabel's success fills up the affection deprivation of people during the epidemic. The consumption of cute goods relieves loneliness and meaninglessness. At this particular time, consumers may not have the ability to meet and develop relationships with other people, but cute designs fill that gap. Nenkov and Scott speculated that consumers would unconsciously associate a series of fun memories after being exposed to whimsically cute products, thus making more indulgent choices. In other words, cute goods can give us the emotional experience we desire [14]. Lina Bell brings a sense of participation to the audience through her daily performance and gives people a friendly impression by interacting with fans. Through a series of operations, Lina Bell has won a lot of audience popularity, and quite a number of fans are willing to make second creation for her. Some celebrities have also posted photos with Lina Bell on social media.

### **5.5 IP that Takes a Shortcut**

The main reason why previous Disney characters gained much affection and had a high degree of spread and discussion on the Internet is that they have accumulated their own story lines in Disney's film cartoons, and further improved the shaping of their characters' personalities through the vivid unfolding of the stories in the cartoons. Audiences form a common memory of animated characters, and when they see the same characters in any place in the future, they will immediately form an emotional resonance and affinity rely on the existing memory of the story line. In this way, Disney's marketing objectives can be achieved. Unlike before, Lina Bell has no story background, but directly appears in the public with the offline image of the physical doll and the online image of the picture. Disney only needs to invest in the image design cost of the characters, the cost of promotion and publicity, and the cost of the production of peripheral products, instead of the capital consumption of several rounds of script production, shooting and

postproduction of “story production” to achieve the purpose of character IP profit. It can be said that Lina Bell is an IP that has taken a shortcut. It is an industrialized product without any core connotation and cultural support. What people love is only her appearance, cute movements, and the pleasure she brings to them immediately after interacting with her, which actually reflects another background of the times, or a deep emotional value turn. Nowadays, it seems that people do not need too deep, noble, meaningful emotional experience and story content, instead, they need quick, direct and sensory instant interactive experiences. People need the infectious and spreading power of that loud carnival to build up some waves of scenery for their lives.

Lina Bell adopts simple and blank setting plus lovely external image, allowing tourists to participate in the writing of its story, background and character. Through vigorous marketing and publicity in the later stage, it gives the IP rich imagination and space for second creation. Under the arrangement of Shanghai Disney, Lina Bell forms rich interaction with tourists, allowing the audience to participate in it and witness the growth of Lina Bell. The emotions of tourists are bound with it, which endow this IP character with their own emotions. It can be said that Lina Bell is a “cultivation” IP. Product differentiation is a crucial part of commercial competition, and the reason why Lina Bell is different from other IP is that Disney has created a malleable commercial value for her. Without a backstory, the marketing method of relying solely on persona gives more room for imagination and play for Lina Bell. She can step out of the frame and become the image she wants to be. In this case, everyone who comes to interact with her is the one who creates memories to create new stories. In the progressive tense, everyone is in the play. Just because of the flexibility, the audiences have more ways to contact Lina Bell and connect with her, which can eliminate the distance between the audience and Lina Bell and make her more amiable and approachable. Moreover, with cartoon appearance, Lina Belle has a strong extensibility and enough space for second creation, which can give play to its advantages in online communication, break the inherent presentation mode, and bring ever-changing visual effects to the audience. Lina Bell itself is set to be a cuddly plush fox. Based on this, Disney has designed many types of peripherals, from stuffed toys to plush backpacks to mobile phone accessories. In addition, there are makeup bloggers created the same style of makeup for her and artists drew fan illustrations for her, which earned her a lot of love and popularity from all walks of life.

## 6 Conclusion

Although Lina Bell is different from Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse, who have appeared in animation and comics in the past, she is popular with tourists and netizens simply by her cute image. Bubble Mart's founder, Wang Ning, once responded to doubts about the “lack of story”, he saw this as a charm of the tide play, like 100 Hamlet in the hearts of 100 people, “it empties itself of its soul, then you can put your soul in”. Lina Bell's popularity has a similar logic with the tide play. For the younger generation who value personal experience and emotion, Lina Bell's simple image seems to be easier to relate to themselves. Coupled with high-frequency and fragmented Internet communication, netizens can feel the cuteness of Lina Bell through short videos without

leaving home, and quickly develop the idea of going to Disneyland, which completes a cycle. Although Lina Bell does not have cartoons like Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck, she is an “open work” to be completed and has handed over her co-creation pen to her fans. Every interesting offline interaction with tourists at Shanghai Disney is a “second creation” that enriches the setting and image of Lina Bell. Such co-creation also goes out of Disneyland and into different media by means of emoticons, short videos and so on, and easily completes the disruptive communication. It can be said that the popularity of Lina Bell is a cultural communication with the participation of the audience under the radiation of mobile Internet and social media. Her rise to fame is no accident. In addition to her combination of beauty, personality, and emotional connection, she is backed by Disney’s marketing power. Previous hits like Line Friends’ Brown Bear and Kony Bunny, Sanrio family’s Hello Kitty and Melody, they come from different series and have different settings. As some critics have pointed out, trendy toys are not really scarce products, the number of products will change according to the willingness of the publisher to supply them, and they are rapidly updated and fungible. Lina Bell is a typical case of successful IP marketing, which provides people with an analysis of how Disney wins the market from various angles such as grasping mass psychology, utilizing social media features, leveraging group social relations and saving investment costs when creating an IP. In the final analysis, the soul of IP is emotional compensation and emotional connection. No matter from any point of view, as long as it can meet the emotional needs of the current audience most effectively and directly and identify the emotional stress points of the audience, most IP marketing cases can be a great success.

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