Disney Digital Marketing Strategy Analysis in China

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Abstract. With the rapid rise of the entertainment industry in the Chinese market, it is becoming increasingly important to understand how an international company is adapting their marketing strategies to better fit into the local market. This study examines The Walt Disney Company's marketing strategy in the Chinese market, focuses on its changes in products, marketing methods, and how it supports the brand's local expansion and consumer engagement. Using the 4Ps marketing paradigm, the study first explains Disney's product supply, segmentations, pricing, and promotion in the Chinese market. Furthermore, by using digital marketing strategy analysis approach, the effectiveness of the three digital marketing channels adopted by Disney in the Chinese market is broken down in details. The findings show that search marketing effectively converts high-intensity leads, while display advertising focuses on raising brand awareness and local social media platforms like Douyin and Red Book improve engagement through narrative and user-generated content. The paper indicate that Disney is able to position itself in China's competitive entertainment industry by combining localized brand experiences with data-driven digital marketing. In order to improve the marketing efficacy and brand competitiveness, this research also offers some potential modifications to digital tactics based on the research findings.

Keywords: Disney Company, Digital Marketing Strategy, Search Marketing, Display Marketing, Social Marketing, Customers.

1 Introduction

Over the past ten years, China's entertainment business has grown quickly due to urbanization, increased disposable incomes, and the widespread use of digital technologies. China's media and entertainment sector, which is among the biggest and most dynamic in the world, offers multinational corporations a number of opportunities as well as particular difficulties, such as stringent regulations, fierce local rivals, and specific cultural preferences.

Walt Disney and Roy O. Disney founded the company in 1923, and it has since expanded from a little animation studio to become one of the most significant entertainment companies in the world. The company reaches millions of customers worldwide with a portfolio that includes well-known brands like Marvel Studios and 20th Century Studios. Through projects like Hong Kong Disneyland and Shanghai

© The Author(s) 2026
L. C. Yoong (ed.), *Proceedings of the 2026 2nd International Conference on Financial Innovation and Marketing Management (FIMM 2026)*, Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research 408,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6239-801-6_118

Disneyland, Disney has increased its footprint in China in recent years. The company has also used digital channels to interact with local audiences.

Disney's varied business encompassing cinema, television, streaming, merchandising, and digital media is based on its purpose to inspire, educate, and amuse people through storytelling. Because it offers insights into multinational brand localization and digital marketing integration, comprehending how Disney has modified its global brand and marketing strategy for the Chinese market is both practically and academically relevant. Disney's marketing strategy in China will therefore be examined in this article, with particular attention paid to market segmentation, positioning, 4P marketing mix, and digital marketing platforms. This study demonstrates how worldwide entertainment companies may effectively negotiate the challenges of foreign markets while preserving brand identification and customer loyalty by assessing Disney's strategic strategy.

2 Case Background

2.1 Company Overview

Founded in 1923 by Walt Disney and Roy O. Disney, the Walt Disney Company is one of the biggest and most significant entertainment companies in the world. Disney started as a small animation studio and has since expanded into an international entertainment company with an extensive collection of prominent trademarks and subsidiaries, such as Marvel Studio and 20th Century Studio. Today, Disney had brought over 900 million people into its narrative, expanding its journey into important economic markets, such as the Chinese market, which is the main focus of the analysis of this paper [1]. The examination of the company’s theme park and product segments through digital marketing analysis perspective will be the main objective of the research.

2.2 Vision and Mission

The core value of the Walt Disney Company was established a century ago. It is mission is to use the power of unparalleled storytelling, to inspire, educate, and amuse people worldwide. And this illustrates how Walt Disney become one of the top entertainment companies in the world because to its iconic brands, inventive technologies, and creative minds [2]. Since then, Disney has worked hard to fulfill this central objective by translating it into a variety of commercial sectors, including consumer goods, theme parks, movies and television, streaming services, and digital media. Together, the Walt Disney Company uses these platforms collectively to increase the reach and rationale of its stories across all of the markets it serves.

2.3 Segmentation

Market segmentation is a tactic used by businesses to split the broader market into more manageable groupings based on shared traits, enabling the brand to provide certain goods and services to particular customers within that divided segment [3]. According to this, the three major segmentation of Disney's China market are families with children, young adults aging between18 to 35, and adults without children. Families with children represent an important segment for animated films, merchandised IPs, and Disney's theme parks. Young adults are the major audiences for streaming engagement on Disney+ and popular franchises such as Marvel Studios and Star Wars. In addition, the segmentation of adults without children tends to focus on engaging with premium experiences of Disney's products.

2.4 Targeting Group

In China market, The Walt Disney Company not only focuses on online platforms and websites content advertising but also established two major theme parks: Hongkong Disneyland and Shanghai Disneyland. Its primarily targeting group is urban middle-class families. Specifically, those with stable disposable income and have high willingness to pay for the park tickets, themed experiences, and merchandized products. Meanwhile, Disney also lists female consumers as their major targeting group, as they demonstrate high purchasing power and high willingness to pay for character-related products, especially popular figures such as LinaBell [4].

2.5 Positioning

Disney positions itself as a premium, globally recognized entertainment brand that delivers high-quality storytelling and experiences for its consumers. Compared to its competitors in the Chinese market -for instance, the Wanda Groups- its high quality animations, emotionally driven storytelling, and consistent brand messaging across digital platforms and offline theme parks, Disney maintains a strong family-friendly and culturally influential entertainment figure in the market.

3 Strategy Analysis Based on 4Ps Theory

3.1 Product

In terms of product, Disney's product converge is diverse in the Chinese market, including theme parks, films, television, music, merchandise, and online media such as Disney+. This allows the brand to reach to a wide range of consumers, from children and families to young adults, overcoming the challenge of age gap that many products from its major competitors faced in the market. Furthermore, Disney emphasizes its high-quality entertainment experiences for their customers, incorporating technologies like VR and AR to enhance their engagement. In addition, Disney's extensive IP

portfolio allows it to spread brand and icon awareness across media networks, driving its success in theme park attractions and merchandise sales. Lastly, local traditions featured at Shanghai Disneyland, such as culturally inspired food, shows, and architecture, demonstrate Disney's commitment to maximize its localization while retaining global brand awareness [5].

3.2 Place

Disney reaches to their customers through both online and offline channels. For Disney's online placement, tickets and related Disney merchandise can be obtained through their official website, mobile app, travel agencies and their own e-commerce on various local platforms such as Taobao. Simultaneously, Disney merchandise's offline placement is typically in authorized stores in branded stores, shopping malls, and shops outside the Disney theme parks. This increases accessibility, market convergence, and brand presence by allowing Disney content to connect with their audience in a variety of ways [6].

3.3 Price

Disney employs a value-based pricing approach. Disney has two major theme parks in China, one in Shanghai and the other in Hong Kong. According to Shanghai Disney Resort's price information, a standard theme park ticket at Shanghai Disneyland costs between 475 and 699 yuan per day, depending on the season, day type and special events. Similarly, Hong Kong Disneyland uses the same pricing structure, with prices ranging from HK$669 to HK$759. It can be seen how Disney strictly rules the basic principles of economics to price brand products: when demand increases, prices also rise, allowing companies to maximize profits.

3.4 Promotion

Disney's main promotion strategy in its Chinese market involves a blend of digital media, traditional advertising, and unique experiential experiences for local customers. In recent years, Disney has increased its presence on popular Chinese social media platforms such as Douyin and Red Book. This attracts many young customers through frequent live streaming and advertising videos. Despite putting a lot of efforts on reinforcing the image through online platforms, Disney did not abandon the traditional way of physical advertising. In terms of physical advertising, Disney has greatly increased its influence on potential customers in the local market by producing offline electronic screen posters or videos with special themes on specific festivals [7]. In addition, Disney has also created unique themed areas in two major parks in China. For example, Shanghai Disney's Zootopia Park and Hong Kong's Frozen Park. The new theme areas enhance the freshness of tourists in the park and increase the flow of visitors to the park on weekdays. This significant milestone further solidifies Disney's overall brand influence by providing a fresh and engaging experience for local Chinese audiences.

4 Disney's Digital Marketing Strategy Analysis

4.1 Searching Marketing Strategy

The first prominent strategy used in digital marketing is the search marketing strategy. In order to effectively target customers looking for entertainment products, theme park tickets or streaming subscriptions in the Chinese market, Disney uses a lot of search engines in its overall marketing tactic. This includes search engine platforms such as Baidu that are frequently used search engine in China. In search marketing strategies, the usefulness and importance of keyword targeting are important. Customers will be targeted based on the keywords they entered on each search engine, such as "Shanghai Disney Resort tickets" and "Shanghai Disneyland". Thus, brands are willing to spend a fixed cost on the search engine platform to ensure the visibility of their articles that contain these keywords. This paid search campaign is usually measured in terms of CPC (cost per click), which is what companies pay for each click on an ad. According to Table 1, the average cost per click (CPC) for entertainment-related searches is $1.72 and the conversion rate is 4.22% [8]. This set of data shows that while CAC (consumer acquisition cost), calculated by dividing the total cost by the number of customers, is moderate due to competitive bidding fees, search marketing is highly effective at attracting consumers with high intent. In fact, Disney is already adapting search advertising as their main channel for high-intent conversion in the Chinese market.

Table 1. Search Advertising Benchmarks 2024: Arts & Entertainment Industry

	Click-Through Rate	Cost Per Click	Conversion Rate
Arts & Entertainment	13.04%	$1.72	4.22%

4.2 Display Marketing Strategy

Display marketing is another important digital marketing strategy. Display marketing strategies primarily include banner ads, video placements, and programmatic marketing campaigns on popular websites, apps, and video platforms. In Disney's marketing strategy, display marketing is primarily used to promote seasonal promotions and movie releases while increasing brand awareness in the market. Compared with search advertising, display marketing is generally more focused on building brand awareness and generating widespread exposure rather than directly driving conversions. As a result, Disney's display strategy is designed to work in tandem with other digital marketing channels to maximize audience reach while directing interested consumers to high-converting platforms such as social media and search advertising.

4.3 Social Marketing Strategy

Last but not least, social marketing strategy is another digital marketing strategy that Disney incorporated. By utilizing local popular social platforms like Douyin and Red Book, social marketing is a key component of Disney's Chinese digital network that

allows it to further expand its brand image in China. Disney uses user-generated content, influencer partnerships, and paid initiatives to attract viewers and increase conversions. Depending on the platform, the average cost per click varies from $0.70 to $3.50. Because of its robust recommendation culture, Red Book frequently outperforms other platforms for purchase-oriented ads, with conversion rates ranging from1.5% to 7.5% [9]. Thus, the calculated CAC for social marketing is moderate to low. Based on this data, by encouraging community involvement and brand loyalty, social marketing promotes long-term engagement, which makes it very successful at increasing conversions and bolstering Disney's narrative-driven storytelling.

4.4 Content Marketing

Table 2. CPC, Conversion Rate, and CAC of Search, Display and Social Marketing Strategy

Marketing Strategy	CPC	Conversion Rate (in %)	CAC
Search Marketing	$1.72	4.22%	Moderate
Display Marketing	$0.49	0.75%	Low-Moderate
Social Marketing	$0.70-$3.50	1.5% - 7.5%	Moderate-Low

By analyzing the cost per click (CPC), conversion rate, and calculated consumer acquisition cost (CAC) of these three digital marketing strategies, Disney identifies the focus of content to maximize engagement and conversions in Chinese market. According to Table 2, transactional and educational materials, including ticket guides, Marvel movie release announcements, and Disney+ subscription offers, are based on search marketing, targeted to high-intent users, and have a moderate CAC. Showcase marketing promotions emphasize how to effectively enhance the visual appeal and visibility of Disney's brand image in the Chinese market, as they have both low cost per click and conversion rates. On the other hand, social advertising will be focusing on finding influential KOLs to collaborate on Chinese social platforms and drive sales on social media. By balancing these marketing strategies, Disney ensures that content marketing is data driven and tailored to the specific audience and platform characteristics of each channel. As a result, searching advertising accounted for 45%, display-driven marketing takes around 15%, and the rest 40% relies on social marketing strategy for interaction and narrative. By doing so, Disney maximizes long-term audience engagement in the Chinese market through this content marketing, maintaining its narrative-driven brand image and enhancing the effectiveness on different channels.

5 Strategy Optimization Suggestions

5.1 Optimize Search Marketing

First, Table 2 shows that search marketing remains Disney's most effective high-intent conversion channel. Therefore, Disney should make search marketing the main source of revenue in the Chinese market. Among them, Disney + subscription promotions, Marvel movie release updates, and Shanghai Disneyland reservation tips are all examples of highly transactional and situational content. In addition to this, keyword localization is particularly critical to tackle the Chinese market since there is a great cultural difference between the Chinese market and the US market. Disney should extract highly repetitive web pages from past user browsing data, identify highly repetitive keywords that appeared, and highlight these keywords in their future website designs. Furthermore, Disney should also implement dynamic search ads that are associated with personalized landing sites, temporary discounts, and real-time ticket inventory. Disney may also further reduce their consumer acquisition costs to improve their marketing effectiveness.

5.2 Suggestion on Digital and Social Marketing Strategy

In general, Disney's IP success depends on transmissible storytelling, emotional connection, and creative design—turning IPs into culture rather than ephemeral phenomena. Therefore, strong marketing and original narratives are essential for sustained influence since emotions are erratic [10]. Disney should use social media and display marketing into a full-funnel approach in order to accomplish this. While social marketing strategy promote emotional connection through short-form tales, influencers, and user-generated content on Douyin, WeChat, and Xiaohongshu, display marketing (low CPC, low conversion) increases IP visibility through visual ads. Retargeting display audiences with social media material increases cost effectiveness and engagement.

5.3 Data-Driven Channel Coordination

The third suggestion is that search, display, and social channels should all be strategically connected through content marketing. Disney should diversify content formats with performance weights based on channel goals, i.e., 35% increase conversion rates with search-driven content, 20% increase awareness with display content, and 45% promote engagement with social-driven content. Showcase content should emphasize aesthetic and emotional cues, social content should promote interaction and community engagement, and search content should focus on education and conversion. To enhance relevance and maintain Disney's global brand consistency in the Chinese market, regional narratives and culturally appropriate themes should be incorporated into all content types [11].

6 Conclusion

This study covers the analysis of segmentation, targeting, and positioning, which shows that Disney Company effectively segments the China market by age group and lifestyle, targeting urban middle-class families, young adults and female consumers. Additionally, the 4Ps research shows that Disney effectively strengthens its brand presence in the local Chinese market by combining a variety of entertainment products, integrated online-offline distribution channels, value-based premium pricing, and storytelling-driven promotion. Above all, the examination of search, display, and social media marketing tactics demonstrates how Disney uses a data-driven digital marketing strategy in the Chinese market. The consumer acquisition cost estimate shows that the best strategy for attracting high-intent visitors and increasing conversions is search marketing. In the meanwhile, display marketing strategy and social media sites like Douyin and Xiaohongshu are crucial for developing the story, fostering community involvement, and fostering brand connection. Controlling marketing expenses, drawing in new audiences in the face of competition, and striking a balance between gloval uniformity and local relevance are still difficult tasks. Disney's marketing strategy in the Chinese market should focus search-driven conversions and incorporate social media and display channels into a full-funnel approach in order to address the problems.

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