

Streaming Plus or Plus Streaming: An investigation centered on the IP operation strategy of Disney's streaming media platform

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Abstract. As one of the most well-known media groups in the world, Disney has been pursuing an extreme IP operation strategy in recent years. In November 2019, Disney launched its own streaming platform, Disney+, which attracted much attention. Judging from Adorno's "cultural industry" theory and Baudrillard's semiotic analysis of consumer culture, from the perspectives of Disney's IP operation strategy, Disney+'s "schematic" operation, and capital solidification and consumption symbols, the Analysis of the background and reasons for Disney's streaming media platform to choose the current operating strategy, whether Disney+ is a real "streaming media+" or a simple "+streaming media" for Disney, and give suggestions.

Keywords: consumer culture; cultural industry; Disney; streaming media.

1. Disney's IP Operation Strategy

As one of the most well-known media groups in the world, The Walt Disney Company has always attracted attention for its business operation strategy. As early as in the company flowchart drawn by Disney in 1957, centralized IP development and operation has become Disney's long-term strategy for development and expansion. Disney's IP strategy is centered on the IP image produced by theatrical films, and is mainly divided into four stages: creating popular IP with high-investment film and television productions, and winning the first round of income in the film and television industry chain such as the box office; relying on film and television works The IP influence brought by the company will develop extended businesses such as theme parks, expand the drainage of the secondary creation of IP images, and complete the second round of income; in addition to the sale of official peripheral products such as inside the park, it will produce and authorize brand printing on a global scale. Logo products, further build brand effect and revenue dividends; Finally, through the paid licensing of well-known IP products in TV, radio and other media channels, especially video playback platforms, to obtain greater publicity effects and brand income. Since Robert Iger became the CEO of Disney in 2005, this strategy (also known as the franchise strategy) has been re-regarded as the core path of the company's development, leading the IP boom in the film and television culture industry, and Robert himself is even more Known as the "Father of Global Super IP". Under the leadership of Robert Iger, Disney has never concealed its IP expansion intentions. In 2006, Disney acquired Pixar animation studio (Pixar), regaining the head position of Hollywood original animation film production; in 2009, the acquisition of Marvel Entertainment Co., Ltd. made it obtain more than 5,000 IPs under Marvel. Copyright; acquired Lucasfilm in 2012 and obtained the IP copyright of Star Wars; in March 2019, Disney acquired about 2/3 of the assets of 21st Century Fox for \$71.3 billion, which in addition to the film IP rights, also Including National Geographic and Fox's stake in Hulu. It can be said that with the many classic images that Disney itself has and the expansion of its IP in more than ten years, it has become an IP owner that is difficult to surpass on a global scale.

The strong business value of Disney's IP operating strategy is clear. However, the reason for redeploying and launching such a strong film and television creation mode at the beginning of the 21st century may also be attributed to the weakness of its own creativity, the risk assessment of business, and the popularity and expansion of the mobile Internet in the information age. impact and many other reasons. First, in terms of own creativity. Among the 55 films released by Disney from 1970 to 2019 that entered the top ten of the North American annual box office list, only 16 were

original films, and the vast majority were animated films produced or jointly produced by its Pixar animation studio. It is not enough for such a business empire to produce an original work in the top ten of the box office in an average of 2-3 years, and the development of the original IP on a large scale is the best choice. Second, in business risk aversion. Through market research and financial analysis, Disney found that under normal circumstances, when the production cost reaches a certain scale, its risk of loss will be greatly reduced, and low-cost trial and error has become what content providers try to avoid. This also prompted Robert Iger to cut almost all businesses that were not in line with the company's development strategy. For example, the famous Touchstone Pictures was announced to be officially closed in July 2020, and the 2020 National Geographic-produced American historical TV series "Space Pioneers" series was also canceled because it was contrary to the franchise strategy. The most important point is that in the context of the information age, the rapid development of the mobile Internet has led to the dispersion of consumers' viewing areas, increased viewing requirements, and reduced viewing needs, which has made the entire film and television industry precarious and investment risks significantly increased. Under this kind of internal and external troubles, Disney adopts a more extreme IP expansion operation strategy, which can be regarded as a conservative choice that tends to benefit.

2. The "schematic" operation of Disney+

Facing the competition for online consumption, Disney launched its own streaming media platform Disney+ in November 2019 to counter the rapid development of emerging media such as Netflix and Amazon. The series of performances after Disney+ went online are objectively quite good. It gained 10 million subscribers on the first day of its launch, and reached 60 million user growth within a year. For Disney's overall business, the addition of Disney+ can help it better build the daily interaction between its audience and the brand, and deepen the impact of its agenda setting on consumers. And through the use of data on the platform, user data can be directly accessed and analyzed, and more accurate brand business pushes and cinema previews can be carried out to promote the improvement of offline traditional business. The launch of Disney+ is undoubtedly a breakthrough strategy for Disney to face the changing times. As a huge commercial media giant, Disney's IP operations can be seen as the most typical representative of the "culture industry" proposed by Adorno. The so-called IP operation strategy is to integrate and incorporate, develop and expand various IPs under the "Disney" label in line with Disney's style. In 2019, Disney also acquired the famous documentary brand "National Geographic" channel in the Fox merger case, and redesigned the distribution focus of its works, trying to make this old documentary brand become an important output of non-fiction works on the Disney+ platform. support. Although National Geographic Channel adopts the strategy of launching some programs on Disney+, in addition to the classic business cards, the documentary filmed by National Geographic Channel for Disney+ is completely different from the original style and concept of the brand, and the purpose of creation is also determined to a certain extent. Social to commercial transformation. Such as the National Geographic documentary series "The Magic of Disney's Animal Kingdom" on Disney+ on September 25, 2020. Its content is to introduce the animals in a Disney park in Florida with the theme of animals and their protection, and the narration is Josh Gad, the voice actor of Xuebao in the hit IP "Frozen". Obviously, this documentary series has a typical Disney character and is a "more or less planned cultural product, which is tailor-made for mass consumption and largely determines consumption. "Nature" is not only a direct propaganda for Disney parks and even Disney cultural symbols, but also unabashedly attracting audiences and inducing consumption through the use of the label of the fire IP. Whether it is shooting content or film configuration, the film reflects Disney's cultural industry everywhere. production traces.

Disney's Earth Day 2021 National Geographic documentary "The Secret of the Whale" will be narrated by Sigourney Weaver and executive produced by James Cameron. It is Disney's consistent blockbuster star signature product. This creative tendency is not only reflected in the original works

produced after National Geographic joined Disney. In the face of National Geographic's earlier nature documentaries, Disney+ officially edited a short video that is joyful, relaxing and full of childlike fun for promotion and dissemination. The original seriousness, science orientation and strong social attributes are also eliminated under the editing of schema.

Collins pointed out in "Interactive Ritual Chains": "The core mechanism of interactive ritual theory is a high degree of mutual attention, that is, a high degree of mutual subjectivity, and a high degree of emotional connection... The associated sense of membership." (Randall Collins, 2009) Disney clearly defined its own consumption objects, deliberately "cute" the content subject, and incorporated National Geographic on the streaming media platform into the subject cognition and Disney culture. The corresponding "industrial product" makes it easier for audiences who have long recognized Disney's cultural symbols to complete emotional interaction in the face of the newly added brand, and further improves the traffic attraction of the documentary section on the platform.

The most prominent position on the Disney+ homepage is the juxtaposition of five Disney brands: Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and National Geographic. In addition to these five brands, the content presentation of the platform is almost completely classified in the form of IP, such as Princesses, Mickey Mouse, Spider Man, etc. And on the first day of the launch, it released the tidbits of many popular IPs in order to attract consumers to the greatest extent, and Disney has more detailed operation of IP in streaming media. It makes good use of the image that "Disneyland" has been operating for decades, and completes the pre-exclusion of differences in consumer subjects in advance. Therefore, the output content of the streaming media platform is completely processed according to "schematic or conceptual tools, so that the subject can perceive, process, manipulate and produce a world as he wishes". For example, the brand documentary "Fantasy Project Story", which was launched simultaneously with the Disney+ platform, tells the behind-the-scenes stories of the company's design and development and the creation of Disney parks around the world. In less than a month, Disney+ launched "A Day at Disney" on December 3, 2019. The two have a clear tendency to homogenize their creative content, both of which are a direct result of the "nature" of Disney's cultural industry. output and implementation.

In terms of fictional works, almost all of the series of episodes that Disney+ focused on after its launch revolved around well-known movie IPs. The Marvel Universe alone has many episodes such as "Wanda Vision", "Falcon and the Winter Soldier", "Rocky"; under the Star Wars IP not only the very popular "The Mandalorian", but also "The Mandalorian". There are extended animations such as "Star Wars: Defective Squad" launched in May this year; "High School Musical" will also be updated for the second season... The interactive form of streaming media obviously helps Disney to control its inestimable IP. Resources are systematically integrated, developed and disseminated. Disney first defines the existing cognition of the target consumers, and uses conceptual tools to guide and control them before they face the perception of the content theme. That is to say, Disney "consciously does what the sensory organs do unconsciously, namely, manipulating consumers' cognition and understanding of the perceptual material provided by the cultural industry"⁵. In the traditional form, the dynamic film and television series, which can only be organized and paid attention to by consumers, can be fully recorded and summarized on Disney+. The platform's strong dissemination and collection capabilities help further improve traditional businesses. This highly centralized integration and push of resources is essentially the "schematic" of the consistent IP operation method to the emerging streaming media, and the operation essence of its cultural industry has not been changed or innovated.

3. Consumption symbols and capital solidification

"Disney", whether it is the image of Mickey Mouse it has created, or the Disney princess series that accompanied several generations of girls' childhood, has successfully made people build a more positive inherent impression of the brand. The most important commercial symbol of Disney is the

so-called "Disney Castle", and the logo of the documentary brand Disneynature is also the image of the castle frozen by the glacier.

In the dissemination of contemporary Internet words, the praise of "Disney's princess and prince at large" emerges one after another. If you think about the core of its concept, the meaning of the state of "at flight" is really paradoxical. It signifies detachment from what was once and what is present, suggesting both an ongoing state and the possibility of returning. People seem to still have the right to belong to Disney, and the current runaway is just an active "escape" like a princess in a fairy tale. Therefore, the dual meanings of "Disney's princess and prince at large" exist in the relative meanings of belonging and betrayal at the same time, and its essence reflects what people have constructed for Disney, which is separated from the purity of the real experience world. A high degree of recognition of the utopian fantasy of beautification and beautification.

This explains why Disney's corporate symbol choice was the castle. This kind of field construction with an obvious fairy tale color is precisely against the rapid modernization of civilization. When people are lost in the irresistible high-paced life of the real world, they are easily separated from reality and virtuality, and lose their sense of belonging and place. That is, in a fragmented world, we insist on yearning for the continuity of idealism represented by fairy tales. Disney's consumption symbol from its landing and spread to the influence that can't be ignored today interprets Baudrillard's complete process of "how things go from symbolic objects to purely functional objects, and then to functional objects (symbols)", this thirst and yearning will eventually become a weapon for capital to guide and manipulate consumers.

The animated image of the sub-supply direction can be separated to the greatest extent from the unstable changing factors such as the creative team, actors, and times, so that the continuous development value of IP is sustainable in a sense. At the same time, the animation image does not involve copyright disputes (such as actor remuneration) of real-life images, which constitutes a huge contrast with the current advancement dilemma of the Marvel Universe. For the company, the animation image with complete ownership is obviously a commercial cost. lower, and more room for development. In addition, the output of "sub-supply" symbols can deeply influence consumers' understanding and cognition of the real world, and maximize their high recognition of the symbolic world constructed by Disney. As a symbol system that includes both language and images, "the representation of the real world is a process of homogenization and abstraction". Disney uses the symbol system of "sub-supply" to run through the growth stage of the target audience, homogenizes and abstracts their cognitive development in line with their cultural tendencies, and creates a simple romantic feeling called "Disney", which makes In the process of cognitive independence, people's connotations of their symbolic representations have changed from addiction and love to recognition and nostalgia. Even adults who no longer believe in fairy tales still consume the symbolic products produced by Disney, largely driven by the purest memories and identifications of childhood.

The form of streaming media enables Disney's many IPs to be efficiently and fully integrated, and the content output becomes more and more schematized. This is not only the screening and solidification of the consumer group itself, but also the digestion and fixation of the cognitive thinking of individual consumers. Adorno, in discussing the schematizing role of the culture industry, argues that this operating mechanism "preliminarily obliterates the autonomy, spontaneity and individuality of consumers, thus leading to the degradation of consumer acceptance. People prefer those Procedural, pre-digested, easy-to-swallow, or already-familiar products. This reflects the "deconcentration" of consumers' perceived behavior, that is, they have lost the ability to focus, perceive, and think. "Baudrillard once proposed in his "surreal" theory that "simulation is no longer a simulation of a region, no longer a simulation of a reference or essence, it is a reality without originality or reality. The product of the model, that is, the surreal. It is no longer that the region precedes the map, and it is no longer that the region maintains the map. In the future, the map will precede the region, the simulacrum will come first, and the map will produce the region... Today, simulation The author tries to make a certain real thing or all real things conform to its simulated model." In Disney's capital operation, the solidification of product content and the solidification of consumer groups are

essentially determined by the form of capital seeking profit. But at the same time, today's capital needs to try its best to adapt to the symbol system that consumers have shaped by itself. It is in the mutual simulation and closeness of this kind of region and map that the logic of capital is in turn enslaved by public consciousness, and the completed form of capital has to be solidified. From this point of view, it is not surprising that Disney+ takes a "schematic" approach to its IP strategy. When consumers are living in the information world of streaming media, if they want to make trial and error at low cost, they must first pay attention to familiar cultural symbols. For a behemoth like Disney, if they want to shift their strategy to innovative operations, it means creating a lot of unfamiliar cultural symbols, and they must sacrifice part of their profits, which they cannot afford.

4. Discussion

To sum up, the dual solidification of consumption symbols and capital forms means that consumption subjects, consumption objects, and object producers are constrained and influenced by each other in the entire shaped cultural industry, making it difficult to escape. This makes Disney still adopt the ultimate IP operation strategy on the new streaming media platform, and just use the new media to integrate, amplify and highly diffuse the influence of the original IP in a "schematic" way. It can be said that Disney+ is essentially a streaming media platform where Disney's IP resources are simply superimposed. It can even be said that it is more like a paid and public Disney Vault, rather than a new Disney operating in the form of streaming media. Therefore, it is more like [+Streaming] rather than [Streaming+] based on streaming logic. Nowadays, commercial profits seem to be rising all the way, but what cannot be ignored is that when the existing consumption symbols are continuously superimposed with more value, the intention of capital to control the main body more secretly and deeply is not only exposed, but the main body faces these The proliferation of specific symbols will inevitably lead to boredom. The meaningless "schematic" collage of various IPs with cultural industry style will cause consumers to question the consumer society dominated by symbols. In today's booming streaming media field, it remains to be seen where the IP giants led by Disney should go.

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