

From Disney to Lina Bell: Research on IP Incubation and Market Penetration Strategies

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Abstract. Against the backdrop of fierce competition in the global entertainment industry and the constantly changing consumer demands, this paper focuses on the development of Disney's IP ecosystem and its character LinaBell. This paper uses research methods such as comparative analysis and the 4PS model, it analyzes IP incubation and market penetration strategies. The study finds that Disney has built a full-industry chain ecosystem with its century-long history of IP incubation. LinaBell, as a localized and lightweight IP in China, has rapidly risen, and it represents an innovation and development of traditional Disney products in terms of product, price, channel, and promotion. Although LinaBell has achieved success among young groups, it has deficiencies in the depth of its story, product expansion, and global market layout. The research conclusion shows that LinaBell can enhance its influence and commercial value by deepening the story background, optimizing products with new technologies, strengthening the online-offline linkage, promoting fan co-creation, and implementing precise marketing. Its success provides a useful reference for the IP incubation and market penetration of other brands.

Keywords: IP incubation, market penetration strategy, Disney, LinaBell, Lightweight IP.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of Disney's IP Ecosystem

1.1.1 100 Years of Disney's IP incubation history

Disney, as a leading entertainment brand in the world, owns a unique IP ecosystem covering a wide range of fields including film, television, derivatives, parks, and so on. Since the birth of Mickey Mouse in 1928, Disney has created a new era in the globalized entertainment industry. Over time, Disney has continued to launch highly influential IPs such as the Princess series, Marvel, Star Wars. All of these form a cross-discipline IP ecosystem.

1.1.2 Core features: Duffy and his friends Story-driven, whole industry chain development (film and television + derivatives + parks)

One of the core features of Disney is "story-driven" content creation. Each character and story is carefully planned and has a deep background and emotional value. On the other hand, Disney adopts a "whole industry chain development model", which expands from movies and toys to parks and other fields to form a complete industry closed loop so that its IP can continue to be popular [1].

1.1.3 Market positioning: entertainment, fashion peripherals, and global cultural symbols

Disney is not only positioned in the entertainment field but also covers fashion peripherals and the shaping of global cultural symbols, making its IP a symbol of global culture through movies, merchandise parks, etc.

Disney's original characters like Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Goofy have become iconic symbols recognized worldwide, representing the company's cultural influence. Disneyland and Disney World theme parks, featuring these beloved characters, attract millions of visitors annually, further embedding Disney into global culture. Additionally, Disney's animated classics such as Snow White, Cinderella, and The Lion King continue to resonate across generations, solidifying its role as a global cultural phenomenon.

1.2. The Phenomenal Rise of LinaBell

1.2.1 Background: a product of Shanghai Disney's localization strategy

LinaBell is part of Shanghai Disney's localization strategy, which aims to satisfy the Chinese market's demand for cute, interactive characters. Rather than making her debut through animated films, LinaBell was given a deeper emotional dimension through a carefully designed story and emotional setting. Especially in Shanghai Disneyland, Lina Belle enhanced the emotional connection between the brand and consumers through role-playing and interactive experiences and became an "emotional companion" in the hearts of young people. Comparing with the traditional role-playing of other characters, the actresses of LinaBell present a wonderful and lively figure to all audiences. The performance is very consistent with the character's personality. Therefore, this not only represents LinaBell better, but also enables audiences to immerse themselves in the atmosphere.

1.2.2 Product features: building story IP, cute image and interactive experience design

"Building story IP" and "Cute image and interactive experience design": Unlike most of Disney's IPs, LinaBell did not make her debut through a movie animation, but through the elaborate story background and emotional settings, the character was imbued with greater emotional depth, which is particularly important in the current IP development in the entertainment industry. Unlike the traditional standalone character design, as an IP product, LinaBell has a deep emotional resonance and a wide social communication effect. The emotional resonance between LinaBell and customers can be attributed to several strategic policies that enhance consumer engagement and attachment [2].

Firstly, the implementation of immersive storytelling effectively integrates LinaBell into a broader narrative universe, allowing customers to form deeper emotional connections through shared experiences and character development. Secondly, policies emphasizing interactive customer experiences, such as character meet-and-greets and personalized merchandise, foster a sense of exclusivity and personal investment. Additionally, the incorporation of culturally resonant elements and localized adaptations strengthens the character's relatability, thereby enhancing emotional attachment. Lastly, consistent brand messaging and sustained engagement through social media platforms contribute to a continuous and evolving relationship between LinaBell and her audience, reinforcing long-term emotional bonds.

The actors and actresses bring the IP character traits into the interactive experience, enabling consumers to participate in the brand experience through physical interactions and emotional expression, and enhancing the brand's stickiness and user loyalty [3].

1.2.3 Market Positioning: social currency and emotional companionship for generation Z

The market positioning of LinaBell accurately captures the needs of Generation Z for social currency and emotional companionship. Through its cute image and interactive design, LinaBell has become a social symbol and part of pop culture among young people [4].

1.3. Comparative Analysis of Traditional IP and Lightweight IP

Lightweight IP, exemplified by LinaBell, differs from traditional Disney IPs such as Mickey Mouse and the Princess series in its reliance on "persona" and emotional connection rather than complex storylines. Unlike traditional IPs that require extensive content accumulation and long-term marketing strategies, lightweight IPs have shorter development cycles and lower investment, allowing them to quickly adapt to market demands. While traditional Disney characters are deeply embedded in rich narratives and expansive world-building, LinaBell sustains its popularity primarily through its charming image and the emotional bonds it forms with consumers. This shift in content strategy highlights the evolving landscape of character-driven marketing, where emotional engagement increasingly takes precedence over intricate storytelling.

1.4. Comparison of Development Cycle and Cost

While traditional 4Ps usually take a long time to accumulate content and promote in the market, LinaBell quickly entered the market in a relatively short period through a streamlined story background and strong image design, successfully attracting the attention of a large number of young consumers. The shorter development cycle not only allows for a faster response to market trends but also helps control related costs, as it reduces the investment required for long-term content creation, licensing, and marketing. This efficiency in time and cost enhances the feasibility of lightweight IPs, making them a competitive strategy in the modern market. The success of LinaBell is not only an innovation to Disney's traditional IP development model but also demonstrates the potential of lightweight IP in today's fast-paced consumer landscape.

2. Marketing Strategy Analysis- 4PS Model Perspective

2.1. Product (Product) "New Daily Consumption"

2.1.1 Disney: diversified product matrix (home + hand-me-downs + learning)

Disney's product line is very rich in a variety of fields, from home, hand-me-downs to school supplies, and cross-category development is the key to its success. By applying IP images to different fields, Disney not only extends the life cycle of IP but also strengthens the emotional connection between the brand and consumers. Mickey Mouse, as a classic character, has become a cultural symbol in daily life, its IP-related products are available in different categories, increasing its popularity [1].

2.1.2 LinaBell: lightweight peripheral + character performance experience

Compared with Disney's full-category development, LinaBell's product strategy is more "lightweight". Linabell's core products derive from the character's image and narrative design, such as plush toys, key chains, stationery, and other small consumer products. These peripheral products not only extend LinaBell's brand image but also make it easier for consumers to make purchases, thus making it easier for them to form a long-term reliance on the brand. In addition, LinaBell's "character performance experience", especially the immersive IP character interactive experience in Shanghai Disneyland, brings the characters to life. This not only allows consumers to interact with the characters in real-life scenarios but also strengthens the emotional bond between the brand and consumers. Through this innovation, LinaBell avoids the traditional IP model of over-reliance on movie and TV drama content and demonstrates the flexibility of lightweight IP and its appeal to the younger demographic.

Disney's cross-category development has provided a successful template for LinaBell, which has created a product ecosystem that meets modern consumer needs by simplifying the product form and enhancing the interactive experience. Specifically, LinaBell caters to young women and Generation Z consumers, who prioritize emotional connection, personalization, and social interaction in their consumption choices. By designing products that emphasize tactile experiences, collectibility, and shareability—such as plush toys, accessories, and themed merchandise—LinaBell aligns with the lifestyle and preferences of this demographic, reinforcing its role as both an emotional companion and a social symbol [5].

2.2. Price

2.2.1 Disney: premium pricing strategy and membership system

Disney's pricing strategy is based on premium pricing, especially for IP-related premium products (e.g. limited edition headbands co-branded with wedding dress brand Vera Wang, Pandora co-branded series, Chow Tai Fook co-branded series, etc.), which are usually priced at a premium. This strategy not only reflects the premium positioning of the Disney brand but also increases overall revenue by raising the selling price of individual items. In addition to premium pricing, Disney has

also established a "33VIP" membership and an "Annual membership" system. The membership system provides consumers with exclusive benefits, such as limited-edition merchandise, the right to purchase tickets in advance, and a long-term 20% discount on merchandise, while also ensuring the brand's long-term profitability. All these strategies further strengthen consumer loyalty and adhesion to the brand.

2.2.2 LinaBell: tiered pricing (regular + limited edition to attract traffic)

LinaBell's pricing strategy is more "tiered" than that of Disney. The products launched by LinaBell are divided into regular models and limited editions. Regular models attract a wide range of consumers through more affordable prices, while limited editions (such as the 520 limited edition) through a higher price and uniqueness to attract collectors and loyal fans. This price differentiation strategy not only helps LinaBell to quickly open up the market but also attracts traffic through the limited edition, attracting consumers to increase brand awareness and loyalty when purchasing regular models.

Disney's high-end premium pricing strategy provides a reference for Linabell. Linabell avoids excessive market limitations through tiered pricing and successfully attracts groups of different consumption levels.

2.3. Place (Channel)

2.3.1 Disney: globalized physical network + streaming media layout

As a globalized entertainment brand, Disney's channel layout is undoubtedly one of the key factors for its success. Disney's globalized physical network (e.g., Disneyland, retail stores, etc.) and streaming media platform (e.g., Disney+) have ensured that its IPs can reach different markets around the world. Especially in the context of digital transformation, Disney has expanded its reach in digital entertainment through Disney+, which not only breaks the traditional model of film distribution but also further penetrates the daily lives of consumers around the world through content streaming.

2.3.2 LinaBell: offline park scene + social e-commerce fission

LinaBell pays more attention to the combination of "social e-commerce" and "offline park scene" in its channel layout. LinaBell is primarily showcased in the Shanghai Disneyland park, which creates a brand of immersive experience. In terms of e-commerce channels, Disney actively utilizes social platforms (e.g., Weibo, WeChat, Shake, etc.) for marketing, forming an e-commerce model based on social fission. Public share and spread the products of Linnaeus through social platforms, forming a word-of-mouth effect, and through interaction with fans, enhancing the brand's communication power. As young people have many connections with social media, this social platform-centered promotion strategy has enabled Linabell to penetrate the market more rapidly among the younger demographic, breaking through the limitations of traditional IPs that rely on brick-and-mortar retail and large-scale advertising.

2.4. Promotion

2.4.1 Disney: long-term operation of classic IP

Disney ensures long-term exposure to its IP through long-term brand maintenance and cross-category promotion. Through multiple channels such as movies, advertisements, and parks, Disney maintains the influence of its IP in the market.

2.4.2 LinaBell: UGC content-driven + fan co-creation marketing + media promotion

Compared with Disney's traditional marketing approach, LinaBell promotes its brand through user-generated content (UGC) and fan co-creation marketing. In contrast to Disney's traditional marketing approach, LinaBell promotes its brand through "user-generated content (UGC)" and "fan co-creation marketing". By inviting fans to participate in the creation and dissemination of the brand's content, LinaBell not only enhances the brand's sense of participation and interactivity but also rapidly increases the brand's popularity through the diffusion effect of the fans' social platforms. At the same

time, the operators of LinaBell also interacts with fans, to understand their needs, and constantly adjusts and optimizes the product and promotion strategy [3,6,7].

This kind of innovation has enabled LinaBell to rapidly accumulate a large number of fans among young consumers while also enhancing the brand's social attributes and emotional connection in its promotion.

3. Suggestions and Improvements

Based on the previous analysis, Disney and its lightweight IP LinaBell have achieved remarkable success in market penetration and marketing strategies. However, in the face of the continuous changes in market competition and consumer demands, there is still room for further optimization. The following are several suggestions for the operation of LinaBell's IP: 1 Currently, LinaBell mainly relies on its cute image and social interaction to maintain its popularity. Although there is a story of an explorer guiding Duffy, it lacks a more complete story system. This paper suggests enriching its character background through forms such as short animations, comics, or illustrated stories to make it develops a richer narrative universe and improve the sustainable development ability of the IP.

3.1. Continuous Product Optimization and Technological Empowerment

Currently, LinaBell's products are relatively traditional, such as plush toys, clothing, stationery, home furnishings, etc. In the future, on the basis of traditional products, it can be combined with a multi-modal perception system. For example, the popular Ropet AI plush doll in 2025, by implanting a smart chip in the plush toy and integrating visual, auditory, and tactile sensors, it can capture users' expressions, tones, and body temperature changes, etc. It can even have conversations and perform actions, making it more playable. This can also attract more consumers to pay for it [8].

3.2. Channel Layout Optimization and Online–Offline Linkage Enhancement

Currently, LinaBell mainly relies on the offline theme park experience and the social e-commerce model, but the online-offline linkage can be further strengthened. For example, during the Duffy Month every September, virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) technology can be used to enable fans to interact with the dolls online, creating an online-offline interconnected interactive experience, so that consumers can have in-depth interaction with LinaBell even if they are not in the theme park, thereby enhancing brand stickiness [9,10].

3.3. Fan Co-creation Reinforcement and User Stickiness Improvement

The success of LinaBell depends largely on the social sharing of Generation Z users. In the future, through launching UGC (User Generated Content) activities, such as fan-made content competitions, character co-branded customization, etc., users can be more deeply involved in the IP shaping process, further enhancing the sense of belonging of fans and brand loyalty.

3.4. Precision Marketing and Global Influence Enhancement

The success of LinaBell is mainly concentrated in the Chinese market. In the future, it can be considered to create images and stories that meet the preferences of consumers in different regions by combining the cultural characteristics of various places to achieve the global expansion of the IP. At the same time, by cooperating with international brands and launching co-branded products, its popularity and recognition in the global market can be improved.

4. Conclusion

As a successful case of Disney's "lightweight IP", LinaBell has quickly occupied the market in a short period with its unique image design, immersive interactive experience, and social marketing strategy, and has become a social symbol and emotional companion for Generation Z consumers.

However, compared with Disney's classic IPs, LinaBell still has room for improvement in terms of story depth, product expansion, and global market layout. In the future, LinaBell can further enhance the influence and commercial value of the IP by deepening the story setting, expanding the product line, optimizing the channel layout, and strengthening fan co-creation. At the same time, in terms of global layout, through cultural adaptation and brand co-branding, LinaBell can be promoted to become an IP brand with greater international influence. In general, the success of LinaBell not only demonstrates the market potential of lightweight IPs but also provides valuable references for other brands in IP incubation and market penetration strategies.

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