

Analysis of the Marketing Strategy of Universal Studios Beijing under the Cross Cultural Background

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Abstract: This paper uses marketing strategies to analyze Universal Studios Beijing under a cross-cultural background. After the pandemic, in the case of economic depression, people are trying to seek comfort and relaxation of emotion, so some entertainment industries such as Disney and Universal Studios are expanding globally. After analyzing the market of foreign enterprise amusement parks in China, this paper selects Universal Studios Beijing as its representative. This paper will find out the advantages and disadvantages of Universal Studios Beijing from its basic background, some cases and comparisons with other amusement parks, using the cases analysis and comparing to the local amusement parks in China such as Fronte and Chimelong and some foreign enterprises amusement park like Shanghai Disneyland to find out what areas does Universal Studios Beijing still need to improve. This paper concludes that Universal Studios Beijing needs to build up a major core to strengthen the contact between different IPs, establish more parks with Chinese elements and cooperate with more local entertainment industries in China.

Keywords: Universal Studios Beijing, Entertainment, Globalization, Marketing Strategy

1. Introduction

After COVID-19, in the case of economic depression, people are trying to seek comfort and relaxation of emotion to release their pressure. People have turned their attention to the amusement industry such as Disney and Universal Studios, because they create a world without worries and far away from reality. It is of great sensibility for Disney and Universal Studios to cooperate with the Chinese government to explore their amusement kingdom, which Shanghai Disneyland and Universal Studios Beijing have built. Since both two amusement parks were established, they have brought greater passenger traffic to Beijing and Shanghai and improved the economy. However, there are some differences between Shanghai Disney and Universal Studios Beijing.

Previous studies have investigated some marketing strategies for Universal and Disney. However, many of them summarized the development status, the problems Universal and Disney faced currently and the future goals in a single way. Hou has shown that Beijing Universal can take a sustainable development path through the IP localization of its different stories, forming diversified development, and aiming to attract more local people [1]. Chang and Pang have found out that Universal Studios Singapore has also shown the concept of globalization, which shows how to combine community and local characteristics simultaneously and discuss whether it should do this [2]. What's more, Kong compares the marketing strategy of Universal with Huaqiang Fronte Group,

a local entertainment park in China [3]. Obviously, the differences between Universal and Fronte are the main points that Universal is trying to make. Fronte insists on creating traditional cultural products and telling Chinese stories to the world [3]. However, there lies a successful marketing strategy behind a prosperous enterprise. Taking an example of Universal Pictures, the head office of Universal Studios, Zhang et al.'s article analyses its development after COVID-19 hit the world, which led to the transformation of people's daily lives [4]. In this article, it uses SWOT, 4P and 4C to provide a reference for the subsequent transformation and development of Universal Pictures [4]. However, most viewpoints believe that globalization is the main point that Universal Studios Beijing should insist on [2]. We can see that Chang et al. explain in their article why Universal Studios Japan can become successful after the impact of economic depression in Japan through marketing models and data comparison [5]. Chang holds the perspective that due to its marketing innovation, USJ aims to combine Universal with local characters such as Nintendo [5]. Just like what Kong mentioned before. The reason why Fronte has become a famous theme park in China is that it joins up with the local characters [3].

Not only can we get some ideas from Universal Studios in the world, but we can also learn from other amusement parks such as Disney.

When it comes to Sung, although the article takes Shanghai Disney as an example, it still emphasizes the importance of "authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese" [6]. It also reveals that globalization is the key factor in promoting transnational interests [6]. Weiss et al. emphasize that the original purpose of Walt Disney is to create a magic kingdom for everyone [7]. Actually, Weiss's article displays that some classical Disney characters combine with Chinese elements, attempting to integrate into China [7]. While Shen et al. analyzed the customer experience, marketing strategy and the atmosphere and culture of Disney, it gives Universal a good example of building up its own culture and special atmosphere through the analysis of many articles and examples [8]. Furthermore, Bai et al. show how Disney tackles problems based on the globalization view by analyzing the STP and SWOT and giving some suggestions [9]. Apart from the above strategy, Robbins' article clearly explains how Disney achieved globalization during this year, Disney works with the local government and realizes global labor distribution to achieve the target [10]. What's more, it also offers a good way to expand the global market [10].

No matter the methods of Disney or Universal Studios, they can both give Universal Studios Beijing a new idea to replan its future position and development strategy.

2. Development of Universal Studios Beijing

Located in Tongzhou District, Beijing Universal Studios Beijing is the fifth Universal theme park in the world. Its headquarters is located in Hollywood, which is called Universal Pictures, one of the major producers of global film and television studios. However, Universal Pictures is a subsidiary of Comcast and one of the largest film companies in the United States, which has released many well-known movies since it was established. Universal Studios has built many entertainment parks on Earth such as Universal Studios Singapore, Universal Studios Japan and so on. When it comes to 2001, the Beijing Municipal People's Government and the Universal Theme Park Resort Group signed a letter of intent for cooperation. In 2015, the Joint Venture Agreement was signed, which means Universal Studios Beijing is no longer a purely foreign enterprise but is more controlled by the state. Beijing International Resort Co., Ltd. was officially established in 2017. The park is officially open on September 20, 2021, and the Universal Studios theme park, two resort hotels and Universal Beijing City Avenue will be officially opened to the public.

The Beijing Universal Resort includes 7 major themed scenic spots, including Harry Potter, Jurassic Park, Transformers, Waterland, Kung Fu Panda, Minions Park and Hollywood Boulevards. In addition, it also has 37 riding and entertainment facilities and landmark attractions, 24

entertainment performances, 80 restaurants and 30 retail stores, with a total area of over 4 square kilometers. Actually, it will be expanded in the future. In 2022, Universal Studios Beijing won the “Outstanding Achievement Award of Theme Park” in the 2022 “Thea Award” awarded by the Global Theme Entertainment Association, becoming the only theme park that won this medal in the year. Going on the consistent style of Universal, it holds various large-scale events at different festivals. For example, in the first spring after its opening, Universal Studios Beijing cooperates with Honor of Kings, a famous game in China, in order to attract more Chinese tourism and expand its popularity. Actually, its Halloween series activities have been a big success. During this period, people can dress up in fancy clothes and enjoy the special Ghost House in the theme park. On the 3rd March of 2025, Universal Studios Beijing joins up with another famous game Genshin Impact to celebrate the spring that coming soon. Until now, Universal Studios Beijing has been 4 years already. Its daily pedestrian flow can approximate 30000 to 50000 during the peak season such as weekends and small festivals, but for National Day, Spring Festivals and other special activities such as Halloween, it can exceed more than 60000 people per day. It means that the queue time for the popular riding is close to an hour or even 2 hours. However, in the off-season, the pedestrian flow is lower than that in the peak season, which is close to 10000 to 20000 people each day. The popular queue time can only be 20 to 60 minutes. What’s more, the ticket price is shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: The ticket price of Universal Studios Beijing

Type (Singal Day Ticket)	Adult Ticket	Child/Elderly Ticket
Off Season	¥418-¥528	¥315-¥560 (discounted by height or age)
Peak Season	¥638-¥748	

The price of the annual card of Universal Studios Beijing can be also seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Universal Studios Beijing annual pass type and price

Type (2023 standard)	Price and Restriction
Universal Studios Beijing Annual Pass- Premium	¥2690-¥3588 (Applicable throughout the year)
Universal Studios Beijing Annual Pass- Plus	¥1865-¥2488 (Excluding Saturdays, holidays, separately charged activities and non-public events)
Universal Studios Beijing Annual Pass- Regular	¥1265-¥1688 (Excluding some Fridays, weekdays, holidays and surrounding time periods)
Universal Studios Beijing Annual Pass- Light	¥995-¥1188 (Suitable for most weekdays)

3. Marketing strategy case analysis

3.1. Seasonal activities

Since Universal Studios Beijing was established, it held many seasonal activities to attract more visitors such as the Winter Ceremony, Cool Summer Splashing Party and so on. Taking the Winter Ceremony as an example, it aims to attract more people during the off-season, which will hold special performances, artificial snowfall and a Christmas fare for food and drinks. Compared to that in Disney, the audience of Universal Studios Beijing is much wider, targeting many young people who love exciting and film lovers such as Harry Potter, Transformers and so on. However, the price of food

and drinks is cheaper than that in Disney, due to a cup of hot chocolate is ¥45 in Universal Studios Beijing rather than ¥50 in Shanghai Disney. What's more, the Christmas fair in Universal Studios Beijing provides customers with more Christmas cuisines that combine Chinese and Western flavors. On the other hand, the ticket price is much cheaper in Universal Studios Beijing than that in Disney during the Christmas month.

3.2. Festivals limited activities

Festivals limited activity is one of its major features, including Halloween Horror Night, Chinese New Year Party and so on. During this period, Universal Studios Beijing will launch special entertainment projects. For example, in 2024, Universal Studios Beijing set up 3 haunted houses, a Halloween parade and food and drinks. The special night tickets had sold out, with the highest daily passenger flow exceeding 50000 people. And the topic of Universal Studios Beijing Halloween views more than 200 million. Moreover, during this month, customers can dress up as vampires or clowns to participate in this party. Compared to in Disney, customers can dress up more fashionably in Universal Studios Beijing, although they can wear fancy clothes like princesses or other characters in Disney. However, the ticket price of Universal Studios Beijing this month is ¥693, which is more expensive than that in Disney. But it targets a wider audience, which purchases stimulation and fashion.

3.3. Collaboration events

Various IP collaboration events are also a kind of attractive ways to magnetize young customers and those with high-level consumption capability.

On one hand, Universal Studios Beijing will hold corresponding activities in combination with its own IP such as Harry Potter, and Minions. For example, the ceremony of Harry Potter Magic, which was held in November 2022. On this day, the light show of Hogwarts is updated. Customers can also use their magic wand to engage in limited magic interaction.

There are also many seasonal products related to Harry Potter to attract people to participate in this carnival.

On the other hand, Universal Studios Beijing also collaborates with other famous IPs, the most typical IP collaboration event is the Honor of the King. Actually, at that time, the average daily passenger flow during the off-season increased by 30%, and the sales of surrounding products increased by 50%. No matter the local or international IP, they both intend to raise cultural resonance and attract locals and tourists with strong stickiness.

4. Prospect

4.1. Promotion advice

Although Universal Studios Beijing has been open for 4 years, it still needs to promote itself in some aspects. Compared to Disney, the parks with different themes in Universal Studios Beijing don't connect as tightly as Disney. All the parks in Disney have the same core, which encircles the main elements of fantasy and magic. However, Universal Studios Beijing only divides its parks into different themes of the movie except for a park with the same core. What's more, there are also many advantages that Universal Studios Beijing can learn from the characteristic amusement parks in China such as Chimelong and Fantawild. As it is well known for animals, Chimelong does its best in opening an animal-themed kingdom park. In the global 2023 theme parks and museums index report from the American Theme Entertainment Association TEA, Zhuhai Chimelong Ocean Kingdom is among the top 10 Chinese amusement parks surrounded by Disney and Universal Studios. The reason why it

becomes famous is that all the parks in Chimelong Ocean Kingdom serve as a main factor and face to the family and the children. It is not based on virtual animated characters like Disney, but on cartoon characters derived from real animals as the theme, advocating the protection of animals while also allowing people to have a closer understanding of these magical animals. Moreover, there are some advantages Universal Studios Beijing can learn from Fantawild. Fantawild is an amusement park characterized by science fiction and interactive experiences. It also combines many Chinese traditional fairytales and cartoons such as Journey to the West, and Boonie Bears Appear. There are also many Chinese characters in this park. Above all, Universal Studios Beijing can learn from other amusement parks that it should build up a major kernel. A major core can link all the movies and parks together, instead of being an independent individual. What's more, Universal Studios Beijing can develop a series of peripheral products centered on this main concept. In addition, as a foreign company that has launched in China, Universal Studios Beijing needs to incorporate localized elements into its parks. For example, it can integrate Chinese IP and thematic elements. Except for the Kungfu Pandas, it can also cooperate with Monkey King or some famous traditional game in China and offer some traditional Chinese food such as Beijing roast duck buns or hotpot flavored meals.

4.2. Development potential

As a world-famous theme park brand, Universal Studios Beijing has huge development potential in the future, but it needs to make strategy layouts in combination with industry trends, market characteristics and emerging technologies. First of all, with the development of technology, Universal Studios Beijing can set up some virtual check-in points in the park created by AI and VR, which can be recognized by its own application, adding fun while controlling costs. Second, it is crucial for Universal Studios Beijing to clearly define its position since Shanghai Disneyland is not far away from Beijing. In order to avoid direct competition with Disney with fairytales and family as the core, Universal Studios Beijing should strengthen its own film characteristics, defining the position of adults and teenagers, and strengthening the characteristics of stimulating adventure and film immersion. Last but not least, the scale of the entertainment industry is expanding continuously. It is a great chance for Universal Studios Beijing to expand its popularity. Accelerate the expansion of new parks and introduce well-known IPs. For example, expand Harry Potter, the most popular park of Universal Studios Beijing, and introduce more new scenes and immersive riding projects.

The future development potential of Universal Studios Beijing is unlimited, but how to develop well needs to be further combined with the actual development. Grasp the current trends, and combine its own advantages and local characteristics to win with good service and quality, so that people can have a satisfying sense of experience in Universal Studios Beijing.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the advantages and disadvantages of Universal Studios Beijing and the improvements it left to be done by analyzing the cases and comparing them to the different amusement parks both at home and abroad. The studies contribute to the theoretical understanding of marketing strategies of amusement parks and give potential suggestions for Universal Studios Beijing for future development. What's more, through analyzing the various events that have already been held at this stage, the comparisons with Shanghai Disneyland, Chimelong and Fronte and artificial technology, the studies find out that only building up globalized parks for tourists from all over the world, incorporating the application of artificial technology in the park, a major core and localization incorporating local characteristics elements can Universal Studios Beijing has a sustainable future development. Future research could explore the further possibilities of development and

competitiveness compared to other amusement parks in the world and consider more complex variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Universal Studios Beijing.

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