

The Walt Disney Company

Uncovering Opportunities for Disney Parks and Resorts

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Professor Vera

Communications Audit

Key Messages

The Walt Disney Company has been dedicated to creating unforgettable stories and stretching the imagination of individuals since 1923. As stated in their mission, the company seeks to develop the most creative, innovative and profitable entertainment experiences and products in the world. To assume such success and uphold their mission, the Walt Disney Co. has adopted the key messages of remaining socially responsible and having an expanding global business (Walt Disney Co., 2018).

The Walt Disney Co. is dedicated to conducting business and creating products in an ethical manner through corporate social responsibility. Their two main objectives are a commitment to the planet and being philanthropic. One initiative used by the Walt Disney Co. to protect the environment is the Disney Conservation Fund. Here Disney promotes the protection of nature, saving wildlife and using resources efficiently. For charitable work, Disney has a group called "VoluntEARS" where cast members participate in service programs for different organizations all over the world (CSR, 2017).

The Walt Disney Co. also puts great value in reaching every corner of the globe with their stories, characters and experiences. They do this through their multiple media networks, parks, products, and the movies and music produced by Studio Entertainment. They are a business of expansion and improvement (Walt Disney Co., 2018).

Media Coverage

After intensive research, it is safe to safe that the Walt Disney Co. is one of the most reputable and well-covered organizations. Almost all news stories include positive or neutral coverage. Because the Walt Disney Co. is such an expansive business, the media coverage is generally factual and discusses more financial issues such as stocks, net income, acquisitions and shares. Their more defined networks, parks, movies and more have a greater subjection to negative coverage and opinionated journalistic pieces. It seems that most individuals focus on presenting new information surrounding the company and simply speculate about future decisions. With a credible history, there is no reason to doubt Disney's success.

The one notable instance in which the Walt Disney Co. faced negative media attention was during the June 2016 crisis of a 2-year-old boy being killed by an alligator. Many press releases were quick to blame the company for their lack of prevention. For the remaining months of 2016, it was reported that at least 83 alligators were caught on property. President George Kalogridis released a statement on behalf of Disney stating their support for the family (Fears, 2017). To the publics' surprise, the victim's family refused to pursue a lawsuit, stating, "We will solely be focused on the future health of our family" (Egan, 2016).

The organization also puts themselves in a position to gain positive coverage as their websites hosts several pages of news releases, investor relations information, archives and news dating back past 2003. These pieces are created by Disney's communication directors and a great resource when pitching stories to journalists (Recent News, 2018).

Brook Barnes, a New York Times journalist who focuses on the world of entertainment, has already covered the Walt Disney Co. three times since February 2018. When compared to other articles, though, his coverage seems to be the same. He holds strong to his opinion, but focuses heavily on the dissemination of relevant information regarding the topic. The same goes for many other journalists who cover Disney. Disney's superiority establishes them as a well-respected entity and frequent coverage only leverages this (Barnes, 2018).

In comparison to similar organizations, media coverage for the Walt Disney Co. soars above. Smaller organizations and theme parks, such as Six Flags, seem to face more crises that garner attention. More importantly, other organizations do not have a massive empire such a Disney. They are hard to touch and even harder to break. This does, however, make some competitors quick to point out their flaws because of their strategic execution.

Overall, the Walt Disney Company outshines their competitors in all realms of global business and this is displayed by how well the company is covered in the media.

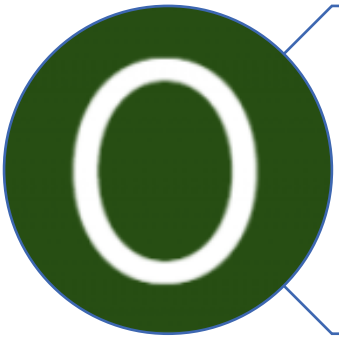
SWOT Analysis



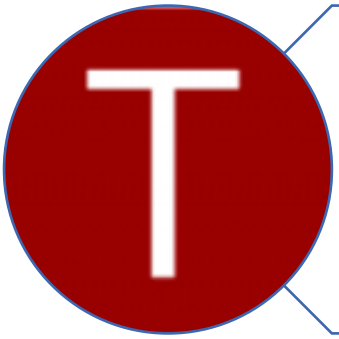
- Brand Awareness: The Walt Disney Co. is a widely recognizable and reputable brand that touches all around the globe.
- Diversified Business: The Walt Disney Co. owns and operates in several different areas including media networks, parks and resorts, studio entertainment and more.
- Profitable: High revenue growth that assisted in the aquisition of several well-known companies.



- Higher likelihood of fault: Becuase of their strong porfolio, The Walt Disney Co. assumes great responsibility in the entertainment industry. For example, ESPN, one of Disney's media networks, has begun to lose income and was the subject of a large layoff this past year.
- Dependence on the United States for income: 70 percent of business income comes from North America.



- Expansion of global business: The Walt Disney Co. can continue to expand their empire globally. They already have parks in Paris, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo, but the future has endless posibilities.
- Production of studio entertainment: The constant creation of movies, music and characters aid to the production of goods and assists the imagineers in the creation of new parks and rides.
- Acquisitions: Disney can continue to buy media networks to increase revenue and diversify business. They have already purchased LucasFilm, Marvel and Pixar.



- High competition: The Walt Disney Co. competes with theme parks, media networks, films, music and much more. Examples include Universal, Time Warner and DreamWorks.
- Cheaper alternatives: Guests may choose an experience that may not cost as much as entrance to the theme parks.
- Declining media statistics: With the strong growth of online streaming services and television, individuals may be less likely to watch movies in the theatre or pay for subscriptions.



Audiences/Key Messages

For the continuation of the research proposal, I will be focusing on Walt Disney Parks and Resorts. This includes all of the Disney destinations around the world specified by park experiences, cruise lines, resorts and consumer products (Our Businesses, 2018). By focusing on one type of business under the Walt Disney Co., there is greater analysis of the key messages distributed to particular audience members.

Primary Audiences

Children and adults make up the two groups of primary audience members. By identifying these target audiences, there will be more effective communication plans and a greater opportunity to target key messages. I will analyze these groups based on four criteria:

I. Desired Behaviors

- *Children*: By targeting boys and girls between the ages of four and 12, Disney hopes to spark imagination and create a desire in kids' hearts. With a little inspiration, the hope is for kids to reach out to their parents and express interest in Disney Parks and Resorts. Disney is a place where kids can experience the magic through multiple theme parks, resort activities, cruise lines, collectibles and more.

- *Adults*: The Walt Disney Co. is hopeful that adults will rediscover the magic they once experienced as a children and, even more, celebrate this magic with their new families. Because adults are generally the ones purchasing the experience, Disney wants adults to see a need for the experience and understand why Disney Parks and Resorts would offer the best vacation possible.

II. Current Mindset/Routine

- *Children*: When it comes to Disney, children perceive very little flaws. Children, unlike adults, stick to pure consumption of media with very little action. Once they express interest in certain movies, shows, rides, characters, and more to their guardians, this is when their mindset turns to the actuality of getting to experience Disney in real life.

- *Adults*: Most adults recognize and agree that Disney vacations are some of the most high-quality experiences, but may disagree with the pricing. For the families in the upper and middle socioeconomic classes, a Disney vacation may be no problem. For those who want the Disney experience, but are struggling financially, there tends to

be an argument that Disney is not affordable for all. This upsets many parents for that fact that they cannot please their kids who long to experience Disney's offerings.

III. Barriers

- *Children:* The main barrier that children face is that they lack the ability to purchase a Disney Parks and Resorts experience. While kids can consume Disney in their home, they do not have the power to travel to a Disney location without parental consent.

- *Adults:* The main barrier that adults face for travel and leisure experiences with Disney are expenses. For example, one park ticket would cost at least $100. When thinking about pricing for a family of four, the cost would be thousands.

IV. Where they access information

- *Children*: At a young age, boys and girls consume most Disney media online and through commercials. They may gather information on Disney Channel, through the Walt Disney World website or on smart phones and tablets.

- *Adults:* Adults also access information online and on television through the same outlets. Disney Parks and Resorts commercials are becoming more frequent on channels such as NBC, CBS, FOX, ABC and ESPN where most adults consume media. Furthermore, adults access Disney through social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. An outlet that sets adults apart from children is mail. If you have previously been on a Disney vacation or have showed interest online, Disney will send promotions and advertisements through the mail, including DVDs.

Adults and children are active publics who remain informed and recognize the opportunities and experiences that the Walt Disney Co. presents. The main problem that needs to be addressed is getting these primary audience members to understand what sets Disney vacations apart from other experiences, why they evoke a sense of magic and memories and why spending money on this vacation is worth every penny.



Secondary Audiences

The two groups that make up the secondary audience are millennials and disabled and critically ill individuals. These audience members are less active in the search for material and information regarding Disney Parks and Resorts, but are still important in the hopes of an expanding business and increasing income. I will also analyze these members based on four criteria:

I. Desired Behaviors

- *Millennials*: As individuals reaching young adulthood, the generation known as "millennials" consume more Disney Parks and Resorts messages than one may think. Teens and young adults have distinct buying habits and high purchasing power. Millennials will vacation to Disney with their families, on graduation trips and often with their schools. By connecting experiences found within Disney to this generations' wants, millennials may have a direct impact on the number of guests visiting the parks each year.

- *Disabled/Critically Ill:* Disney Parks and Resorts has celebrated all individuals from the very beginning by making their parks and other experiences accessible to those who are critically ill or disabled. Since 1981, Disney has partnered with Make-A-Wish to grant every eligible child's wish of a Disney vacation. In 2014 alone, over 7,000 wishes in the United States were granted with the help of Disney (Celebrating, 2018). With this audience, Disney hopes to bring joy, strength and hope to those that struggle on a daily basis. Disney Parks and Resorts wants to continue this partnership and philanthropic venture.

II. Current Mindset/Routine

- *Millennials*: Young adults are more likely to hold a mindset that they are too old for Disney. This can be attributed to the conformity and standard that young adults mold into. They are in a routine of consuming the media, but pushing it aside because it is not normal for millennials to enjoy Disney.

- *Disabled/Critically Ill*: This audience has a routine of relying on Disney to grant one last wish. Whether it is there tenth or first visit, Disney Parks and Resorts can offer those with life-threatening illnesses one last chance at magic and, as heartbreaking as it is, many families view Disney as a last resort for happiness as they make one final memory.

III. Barriers

- *Millennials:* Younger adults may face a barrier of a low salary which prevents them from a Disney vacation. The more prevalent barrier, though, is the stigmatization that

Disney is only for kids. Disney Parks and Resorts needs to find a way to advertise to this audience and meet their desires by making it socially normal.

- *Disabled/Critically Ill*: The barriers with this group is the possibility that they have already used their wish, or that they are even too ill to go. There is intensive planning that goes behind a Make-A- Wish family's travel.

IV. Where they access information

- *Millennials:* Most millennials will access information on social media. Many may even follow Disney on several applications such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat.

- *Disabled/Critically Ill:* This audience accesses information by television and written promotions. For those hospitalized, it is easier to put the information where they have to put in little effort.

Key Messages

Based on Disney Parks and Resorts audience members, I am proposing three key messages that Disney should use to promote their business.

Key Message 1: Through our strong reputation and constant pursuit of magic, we dream, imagine and create experiences for families all across the globe.

- In 2018, the Walt Disney Co. ranked fifth in the Harris Poll Reputation Quotient. This poll identifies who United States consumers view as the most reputable and top-of-mind businesses
- The Walt Disney Co. also holds the fifth spot for the 2018 Global RepTrak among multinational companies.
- Toy Story Land is set to open in June 2018 in Disney's Hollywood Studios.
- Disneyland will open Pixar Pier in 2019.

Key Message 2: We offer a variety of experiences for kids, teens and adults so no member of the family is left out.

- All Disney locations have adult-only offerings from vacation packages and spa offerings to cruises and lounge areas. For example, as a part of Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, Disney Springs offers late night dining and bar experiences for those above the age of 21.
- At deluxe, moderate and value resorts, cast members hold children's activity sessions.
- With 11 theme parks and two water parks, Disney tailors rides, dining, entertainment and merchandise to each age group.

Key Message 3: Creating all-inclusive entertainment, our vacations are accessible to all individuals regardless of their disability or illness.

- Disney Resort hotels offer accessible rooms, service features, parking and service animal accommodations.
- Park guides are available to those with visual, auditory and cognitive disabilities.
- Electric Convenience Vehicle and wheelchair rentals are available at all Disney locations.
- For more than 30 years, Disney has partnered with Make-A-Wish to grant families and critically ill children their wish of a Disney vacation.

Communications Plan

I have developed several opportunities that will help distribute the Disney Parks and Resorts' key messages. The goal is to gain earned media coverage.

Calendar of Events

- *August 2018* – Send out a news release describing Disney's efforts towards the new key messages and campaign to Forbes and Times Inc.. This will also be posted on the Walt Disney Co. website.
- *August 2018* – Increase social media discussion of Disney bringing families together with the new hashtag "#DisneyConnects." On every Tuesday and Thursday for the month of August, Disney Parks and Resorts will post on Instagram encouraging millennials and adults to add hashtags with their pictures.
- *August – December 2018* – Run a contest in which families across that globe can submit videos of their families on Facebook explaining why Disney means so much to them. This shows the family connection created within Disney Parks and Resorts, while also promoting the company. The video with the most Facebook likes will win an all-inclusive 5-day, 6-night stay at Walt Disney World.
- *August 2018* – Attend entertainment, travel and hospitality trade shows in Florida and California to distribute printed pamphlets and promote the key messages.
- *September 2018* – During the first week of September, the public relations team will prepare brochures about upcoming Disney Halloween Parties to be sent out via direct mail. For the next three weeks, the brochures will be sent regularly to homes across the United States.
- *September 2018* – Have Disney's media relations team reach out to the public relations team for Ellen DeGeneres. The hope is to get on a show with Ellen being that she was the voice of Dory in "Finding Nemo."
- *September 10, 2018* – Release an online newsletter for all Disney cast members describing the new efforts and key messages. This will also include the details for the event listed below in the Magic Kingdom.
- *October 6, 2018* – Host an internal event for professional cast members in the Magic Kingdom. CEO Bob Iger will speak on Disney Parks and Resorts' new key messages. The hope is to encourage positive dialogue internally and then see it move outwardly and transform online.

- *December 2019* – Have a traveling Christmas concert series in several cities around the United States. This will show that Disney is meeting families even though they may not have the financial means for a Disney vacation.
- *January 2019* – Have a former Disney Channel star such as Selena Gomez be a spokesperson on behalf of Disney's campaign. This will help disseminate the message to current millennials who watched Disney shows during this time. Other possibilities include Miley Cyrus and Demi Lovato, but in the past three years, they have faced personal crises.
- *February 2019* – With permission, we will send out a media team out to follow and cover a Make-A-Wish family's trip as their wish is granted. This can be turned into a documentary which can be sent back to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, hospitals and educational centers.
- *March 2019* – Have Bob Iger go on the Ellen DeGeneres talk show to discuss how the key messages have played out and to attract even more adults.

Target Outlets/Reporters

1. Make-A-Wish Communications Team
   - Disney can send news releases to their team in hopes of being published on their media/blogging website.
2. Disney Parks Blog
   - All news releases, feature stories and more will be posted to the Disney blog. This is to ensure the active and information-seeking audience members are aware of the new messages.
3. Ellen DeGeneres
   - The outlet would be the Ellen talk show, where Disney could gain millions of viewers.
4. Entertainment Weekly
   - This magazine covers all types of entertainment. Disney could promote new content and key messages through this outlet.
5. New York Times – Brook Barnes
   - As mentioned in the communications audit, Barnes is a journalist for the New York Times who frequently covers entertainment. By targeting him for coverage, we would be engaging a more educated, adult audience.
6. Channel One News
   - A daily news program in which the newscast plays to over six million students in classrooms around the country. These advertisements and broadcast media encourages students to understand global events.
7. Today Show
   - As one of the most viewed American news and morning television shows, Disney could send a spokesperson or release a video on this news outlet. People of all ages

watch the morning news or will see it circulate on social media, so this is a good opportunity for Disney to gain media attention.

8. Snapchat
    - While a social media application, Disney could reach out to Snapchat in order to gain a space on Snapchat's home page. This multimedia application displays information for millions of millennials and children every day.
9. Instagram
    - As stated above, Disney Parks and Resorts will post a picture or video on Instagram every Tuesday and Thursday for the month of August. For the following months, the dates will may change.
10. Orlando Sentinel
    - This newspaper is the primary source of information given to individuals living in Orlando, Florida, right near Walt Disney World. Disney also needs to information all of the local Floridians given that many are annual pass holders to the parks.

Executive Summary

Background

As one of the most reputable and well-known brands in the world, the Walt Disney Company is very promising in terms of expanding new business and entertaining guests. They are philanthropic, socially responsible and in constant pursuit of new ways to inspire individuals from every corner of the globe. The Walt Disney Co. owns a variety of media networks, studio entertainment and theme parks that offers experiences unlike any other vacation. For this report, I have focused on the Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, where we can see direct audience impact through Disney's 11 theme parks, character interactions, consumer products and more.

Target Audiences

The primary audiences for Disney Parks and Resorts are adults and children. By targeting adults from the age of 25 to 35, especially those who have families, Disney is involving adults who are more likely to have previously enjoyed, want to enjoy or are actively seeking information about a vacation. In targeting children from the ages of four to 12, Disney can inspire children to approach guardians about Disney. In turn, parents feel more inclined and more families as a whole will seek a new Disney experience.

The secondary audiences for Disney Parks and Resorts are millennials and those who are critically ill or disabled. Millennials are high decision makers and by targeting social media, Disney can influence their decisions towards new experiences that break the social norm. For those who are ill, Disney can expand on their partnership with organizations such as Make-A-Wish. It is an opportunity to remain ethical and bring happiness to those who struggle.

Competition

Because the Walt Disney Co. stands high above many other companies, there are only a few who stand as noteworthy competitors.

- Time Warner – While also a leader in media and entertainment, Disney ventures into more realms of business with constant acquisition of new media, sponsorships and partnerships that make them recognizable above Time Warner.
- Universal Studios – Also located in Orlando, Florida, Universal is the leading competitor for theme parks and water parks. Disney consistently soars above in terms of park attendance and new entertainment releases such as movies, rides and shows.
- DreamWorks Animation – DreamWorks falls under Universal Studios. Pixar falls under the Walt Disney Company. As long as the Walt Disney Co. continues to produce in the same pattern they have in the past several years, Pixar will not have to worry.

Risk/Opportunity

Challenges:

1. Creation of new parks, rides, movies and more only means rising prices that audience members continue to complain about. They may seek cheaper alternatives.

2. Rising competition, including those listed above, may stand out more in terms of how Disney is stereotyped as a “family park”.

Opportunities:

3. The Walt Disney Co. can continue to expand in terms of global business, parks and resorts.
4. There are several chances to send out news releases, host events and start online conversations to acquire new audience members.

Conclusions

After intensive research, I believe it is in Disney’s best interest to increase the content they put out to adults, children and millennials. Everyone knows about Disney and what they have to offer, but Disney needs to show that they are an all-inclusive vacation where the entertainment can bring any family together. The biggest opportunity would be getting media coverage and finding spokespeople to promote the Walt Disney Co. and the new key messages. It is not about making the audience aware, but encouraging them to act on their desires to undergo a Disney vacation.

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For Immediate Release

ELLEN DEGENERES TO HOST WALT DISNEY COMPANY FOR 2,500TH EPISODE

ORLANDO, Fla. (Jan. 25, 2019) – Bob Iger, CEO of the Walt Disney Company, is set to appear on the Ellen DeGeneres show February 4 to speak on behalf of Disney Parks and Resorts. On the 3 p.m. premiere, DeGeneres will help reveal Disney's newest plans and key messages as part of her 2,500th episode.

The Ellen DeGeneres show is a comedic talk show on the National Broadcasting Company. Fifteen seasons in, Ellen has hosted thousands of celebrities and public figures from across the world on her episodes. In relation to the Walt Disney Co., Ellen voiced Dory in the 2016 Disney film "Finding Dory" with a worldwide grossing of $721.7 million.

Within the past five months, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts has enacted a new campaign that inspires adults, children and millennials to picture Disney as their desired vacation. With new rides, movies and more, Disney hopes to attract all types of families to their entertainment and media. DeGeneres, along with Iger, will promote this by announcing the opening date of the new Star Wars Land in Hollywood Studios.

"Our hope is that audiences will connect real-life with the imagination that Disney entertainment

- More -

encourages, especially through a franchise such as Star Wars. We continue to build bigger so you can dream bigger," Iger says on the goal of the campaign.

One lucky family in attendance will also receive the chance to attend opening week for Star Wars Land. In partnership with DeGeneres, the Walt Disney Co. will fly this family to Orlando, let them stay 4 nights in the new Star Wars motel and see the new land first hand.

The Walt Disney Company was founded in 1923 by Mr. Walt Disney. In 1971, Disney Parks and Resorts became one of the company's four major business segments. This subsidiary is also responsible for the 11 theme parks and over 30 deluxe resorts found in North America, Europe and Asia. Bob Iger has been the chief executive officer for the Disney since 2005.

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