



**An analysis of the global adaptation of the Disney theme  
park brand.**

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May 2nd, 2018

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## **Introduction**

The Walt Disney company has succeeded in becoming one of the entertainment industry's leading giants. The company is divided into The Walt Disney Studios, Disney Consumer Products, Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Disney Media Networks and Disney Interactive Media Group (Fleischmann & Mayo, 2014). The company has expanded the reach of their original films through the expansion of product lines. Video games, character figures, clothing, jewelry and more all feature the Disney characters. With all of its expansion the Disney brand remains successful by sticking to its core value of family entertainment. Walt Disney wanted to create a park in which children and their parents could have fun together. Many say Walt was inspired by his own family to create Disneyland (Fischer, 2004). The Parks and Resorts branch of the Disney brand has expanded into a multi-billion dollar enterprise with locations on three continents. These parks all adapt to cater to the traditions of the culture from the country in which the park is located in order to create a Disney experience which all families can enjoy. The parks which Disney fully owns include Disneyland and Walt Disney World. Disney has also licensed the use of their characters and brand to Tokyo Disneyland, Disneyland Paris, Hong Kong Disney and Disney Shanghai. For some of the licensed parks Disney owns a majority share through an umbrella company set up with the aid of the government of each country (McNew, 2016).

Displayed below is the current stake Disney owns in each park:

Theme Park	Disney Ownership	Visitors in 2015 (in millions)	Disney's 2015 Revenue (in billions)
Walt Disney World (All parks, FL)	100%	54	\$13.6
Disneyland and Disney California Adventure (CA)	100%	27.7	
Tokyo Disney Resort	None	30.2	\$2.6
Disneyland Paris	80%	14.8	
Hong Kong Disneyland	48%	6.8	
Shanghai Disney Resort	43%	15 (est. first full year)	

INTERNATIONAL PARK REVENUE DOES NOT INCLUDE SHANGHAI DISNEY RESORT. DATA SOURCE: DISNEY 2015 ANNUAL REPORT, THEMED ENTERTAINMENT ASSOCIATIONS'S [2015 INDEX](#)

## Longevity

Disney has been able to create lasting relationships with their audiences by continuing to find new ways to make their films relevant. Kayleigh Bonner examined the ways in which Disney has continued to make its film, *The Little Mermaid*, relevant in popular culture and in thus ensuring its longevity. The film itself was released in 1989 and with the edition of satellite texts, or products, the film was able to capture fans who may not have yet seen the film (Bonner, 2013). While the sale of toys is still important, the Disney merchandising team continues to release film merchandise to grow with alongside their original 1989 fanbase. Alex and Ani bracelets featuring classic Disney princesses, homegoods and clothing are made to appeal to an older Disney fanbase. Recently, in Downtown Disney the merchandising team launched a store

dedicated completely to homegoods. Plates, cups, bedding and more feature themes from classic Disney films reimagined in an adult taste (Rossiter, 2018). *The Little Mermaid* team recently released merchandise for pool parties. The pool floats, drink holders and bathing suits are aimed at a twenty-something aged audience which grew up watching the original movie. While all of the merchandise varies in type, it all centers around the idea of family and tradition. Items for the home which families can enjoy together and pool party essentials which bring people together, all center around Disney's core values.

Other ways in which Disney continues to connect with old and new audiences is through the use of the Disney Vault. They take classic films and "put them in the vault" taking the films out every few years for re-release. Upon re-release, extra behind the scene content and special features are added to entice audiences to buy the film (Bonner, 2013). Disney also pays attention to the new traditions of the modern family. Originally *The Little Mermaid's* cover was designed to attract a female audience featuring Ariel combing her hair on a rock. When the film was re-released out of the vault, the cover featured the addition King Triton and a ship to entice both a female and male audience (Bonner, 2013).

Another way in which Disney has worked to become a center of family and tradition is through the acquisition of other film franchises which have brought families together. Disney has acquired Pixar, Lucasfilms and most recently, Marvel in order to continue to expand their relevance with a family audience. The acquisition of these franchises has allowed Disney to expand the ride content, park design and character appearances within their theme parks. With the expansion of these films, the park and resorts sector of Disney reported earnings of over \$45 billion in 2013 (Fleischmann & Mayo, 2014).

Whether it is in Walt Disney World, Disneyland Paris or Hong Kong Disney, each park is designed with the culture of the home country in mind. The stories and characters of the Disney franchise appeal to family fun. However, with each park the Disney brand is adapted to cater to cultural traditions. For example, in Tokyo Disneyland the characters wear traditional kimonos at festival time. However, the characters are not so far changed that they would be unrecognizable to park-goers from other cultural backgrounds. These changes are made so that all families can have fun in the park.

The importance of this paper is to analyze the ways in which the Disney company has adapted their brand and marketing strategies to best fit with the countries in which they have expanded their park system. We aim to discover what techniques Disney has used to become the successful global giant it is today.

## Methodology

For this study we chose to look at the Instagram accounts of the five Disney theme parks: Florida, Paris, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Shanghai. Each account has a different posting frequency so our time frame of analysis was from April 25th to August 25th 2017, all together we analyzed roughly seventy Instagram posts on each account.

We focused our attention on five recurrent themes on each of the Instagram accounts: Magic, Kingdom, Seasons, Characters, Celebration, and Indulgence. Many aspects of the Disney parks are set by the already established Disney brand image. The company as a brand uses the idea of Magic, Celebration and Kingdom, usually illustrated by the presence of Storybook Castle, in various ways throughout each brand extension. Magic referring to the narrative of imagination and and fostering creativity in consumers of all ages. The idea of Kingdom, refers to Disney being seen as a place of fantasy and dreams, and like stated before is seen through the centering of Storybook Castle. To analyse each park's account on the same level we used these themes as a reference point.

The Disney theme park is open year round and we were able to see the way in which the seasons and traditions of each country affect the backgrounds and color choices on social media. Some of the countries in which Disney has launched theme parks are cultures in which the people may not have grown up with the brand. We analyzed how this fact has shaped Disney's brand and marketing strategy for these countries in order to connect with the people of these cultures. The final aspect we looked at was merchandising and how the various parks promoted non-attraction items on their social media. While attractions are the main draw of a Disney experience, the brand relies heavily on merchandise to increase their sales.

In each of these themes we analyzed the differences in imagery, language and communication type (Public Relations or Strategic Communication).

## **The Strategic Meaning of Magic: Disney World Florida**

Disney World Florida was the first of the “second generation” theme parks. This park was designed to be larger and more elaborate than the “first generation” park of Disneyland California.

An analysis of 70 Disney World Florida from August 2017-April 2018, following a grounded theoretical approach revealed a series of explicit key themes on the Disney World Florida page (see Appendix B). This analysis will focus on the function of strategic communication, built on themes of magic, kingdom, seasons, characters, and celebration through imagery and language components. For Disney World Florida the notion of ‘magic’ perpetuates as its source of communication to internal and external stakeholders. On this basis it is important to assess the political economy its strategic communication operates in. Strategic communication can be defined as “the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission [ . . . ]. The concept further implies that people will be engaged in deliberate communication practice on behalf of organizations, causes, and social movements” (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007, p. 7). Disney World Florida uses strategic communication to



appropriate its own political economy founded in the notion of ‘magic’ in its ‘kingdom’ and its reliance in creating organizational value.

Hallahan et al. (2007) outline ‘strategic’ as multi-layered concept within communication to create sustainable organizational value. Disney exemplifies this concept by using alliteration and the continual reinforcement of ‘magic’ that aligns with the mission of Walt Disney who strived for an escape where fun and dreams can be fulfilled. This notion is the centre of Disney’s political economy continually reinforced to build organizational value and advance itself as a worldwide cultural institution. In addition to this Disney strategically communicates the value of its economy through the theme of ‘world’. Here Disney World Florida detaches from the standardized reality of work and routine, which as supported by Hallahan et. al (2007) idea to advance its mission to become a ‘kingdom’ independent from anything else. Consequently, this is exemplified by the platforms acceptance and distribution of other pages like ‘@magicandwishes’. Thus, Disney World Florida continues to create and exchange its economy founded in the meaning of ‘magic’ to ensure consistent strategic communication.

From this strategic perspective Disney World Florida has successfully communicated a purpose and economy on the Instagram platform. However, as Hallahan et al. (2007) stress it is important for organizations to become social actors when communicating with stakeholders. Therefore, to enhance its strategic communication Disney could diversify the idea of ‘magic’ into other settings. For instance, using ‘magic’ and ‘kingdom’ to involve stakeholders in defining

and appropriating the idea on social media. This would trigger high involvement levels and present an opportunity to introduce new business strategies away from its traditional channels. On the contrary this could undermine the economy in defining ‘magic’ that Disney continually relies on, perhaps impacting the credibility and legitimacy of Disney as a cultural institution, but this does leave the possibility around ‘kingdom’ to be explored.

### **The Kingdom of Communication**

Walt Disney World utilises Instagram as a primary strategic communication channel to reflect dominant cultural values, beliefs, and systems of the wider American culture. First and foremost, the page uses powerful and iconic imagery associated with Disney, from the castle to its characters that stand as symbols for the American Dream; where anything and everything is possible. Coupled with this is the vibrant and light colours, using Color Psychology (HubPages, 2013) it is evident that Disney World conveys values of life, growth, and environment by using green. In the wider cultural system, informed by Hofstede’s cultural insights (2018), reinforces the notion of low long-term orientation, scoring 26. This shows that the United States, and its cultural institutions like Disney World Florida, are combatting the environmental challenge of global warming through displays of nature and growth in powerful imagery, seen with Woody. Furthermore, the prominent use of pink and blue by Disney World connotes romance, beauty, and confidence within the ‘Magic Kingdom’ and ‘Animal Kingdom’. Not only does this create internal communication value for Disney, but also represents the high external value on

individualism, 91 in the Hofstede model (2018). Disney plays on the dominant liberty value in wider American culture to entrust this value in this cultural institution, promoting geographic mobility to experience the world of ‘magic’ and ‘celebration’. Thus, through the use of powerful light colors Disney World Florida cultural communicates internal and external values as well as systems to promote fantasy through a kingdom of ‘magic’ and celebrate the whole economy of Disney and its cultural standing in America as the home of wishes and dreams.

Furthermore, the language combined with positive imagery adds an overwhelming sense of value to this cultural communication. Falkheimer et al. (2016) outlines the idea that there is a need to prove value in communication ensuring knowledge and awareness. Culturally Disney World Florida frames its own knowledge and awareness of the internal as well as external environment through positive language such as ‘love’, ‘treat’, and ‘wonder’. Also the use of ‘Disney Holidays’ communicates a sense of ownership over a renowned family and social discourse, further reinforcing value in its cultural communication as the author of the ‘holiday’. The use of hashtags to promote the notion of a ‘kingdom’ and ‘magic’ reinforces a cultural discourse centred around the internal environment associated whilst creating an aura around Disney in the external environment. This language and imagery combination strengthens the aura around Disney as an aspirational cultural institution that inherently declares a sense of authority in all its posts. Also, as Falkehimer et. al (2016) points out stimulates dialogue through strengthening the organization's identity. Disney consistently communicates its business strategy, to be the epicentre of imagination, whilst managing goals to promote its aspirational culture for

all age groups, closely aligned to embedded American cultural values. This is also seen with the adoption of wider social activities, exemplified by Disney using the character of ‘Woody’ as a garden artefact to promote environmental activities, this legitimizes the communication and shows Disney uses ‘reflexivity’ (Falkheimer et al., 2016) to diversify its influence as a cultural institution with huge authority on its content.

In light of high internal and external cultural value for Disney World Florida there are areas for improvement in its communication efforts. The Instagram platform detaches the human element from the institution, there is minimal effort to show tourists or fanatics enjoying the haven that is the ‘magic kingdom’. During holiday seasons, such as Easter break, summer vacation, and Christmas, the page could use its consumers to extend its reach in the public sphere giving a sense of fulfilment to its ‘kingdom’. Also, the page could take a more active role in wider cultural tensions, and as Falkheimer et al. (2016) describes manage confrontation. For example, involving itself in social initiatives such as refugee crisis, this would enhance the credibility and legitimacy of Disney World as a haven for magic and paradise enabling the institution to take a leading stand in promoting American ideals and the ideals of Walt Disney. However, this could have limitations in the wider political environment aligning Disney to an activist alignment it may necessarily not be able to sustain due to its impartiality in political and social affairs since its rise as a cultural institution.

Built on the success of Walt Disney World the expansion of the Disney brand developed with international theme parks sharing similar cultural and economic values. All of the international parks were modeled after this second generation park to include more than one land. The similarity to all of the Disney parks is the establishment of a “Main Street” like entrance leading up to the Cinderella castle.

### **The Adaptation of the Disney Brand in Tokyo Disney**

Tokyo Disneyland (TDL) is the first of the international parks, established 35 years ago and owned by Oriental Land Company. They have licensed the Disney brand and in exchange Disney receives 10% of the ticket sales and 5% of the merchandise sales. The Oriental Land Company wanted the park to be a place where the Japanese could take a vacation and feel as if they are experiencing America. Most of the food, music and commercials reflect the American Disney traditions (Raz, 2000). However, the park has done an excellent job in adapting the Disney experience for the Japanese individual. For example, a World Bazaar replaces the typical Main Street leading to the castle. This bazaar is a glass shopping center which caters to the cultural tradition of gift giving. For festivals and New Year’s celebrations the park is transformed with traditional decorations including bamboo, pine branches, straw and paper (Raz, 2000). Even the Disney characters don traditional Japanese kimonos to greet visitors.

In the article by Raz, he discusses three key rides in TDL which have been adapted to the reflect a Disney with which the Japanese can identify. The Jungle Cruise is a staple ride featured in both Walt Disney World and Disneyland. In TDL the ride is very similar to it’s American copy. This ride centers around the themes of adventure and fun. The difference in this ride is the

script used by the safari guide. For example the American version features a joke about a man's lost opportunity to throw his mother-in-law to the mercy of the animals. This joke was left out of the Japanese version due to the cultural tradition of respecting one's elders. The added jokes, such as one about a salesman selling the heads of his employees, are ones which relate to aspects of daily life in Japan. Raz points out that each Disney park caters to the traditions of the country in which it is placed. For example in Disneyland Paris, the Jungle Cruise no longer exists as it "would have reminded visitors of their colonial past," (Raz, 2000).

The ride which has been most adapted to fit the Japanese culture can be found within Cinderella's Castle. The Mystery Tour, is a ride which allows visitors to go on an adventure through the dungeons to fight off Disney villains who have taken over the castle. This ride is completely different from anything in the other Disney parks. Instead of sitting in a people mover, visitors walk through the dungeons and actively participate in the story. At the end a child assists the tour guide in using the "sword of light" to defeat a villain and fulfill the prophecy of "good conquering evil" (Raz, 2000). The Mystery Tour can be described as TDL's version of a Japanese ghost house. These can be found in other theme parks throughout Japan and can be traced through their history back hundreds of years when they were conducted by travelling shows. In Japanese culture there is a lot of respect for the spirits and ghost stories are worked into the culture through animes, comics, films and tv. Disney has recognized the importance of ghost stories in Japanese culture with the 1985 release of a VHS entitled "Scary Tales". This VHS was a compilation of all of the animated Disney shorts or films featuring ghosts. While many of the villains on the Mystery Tour are representative of Disney villains there are instances in which the line between Disney and Japanese culture is blurred. The last

villain to appear in the ride is a black ghost from Disney's *The Black Cauldron*. However, this is a relatively unknown film and the character itself is very similar to the Japanese Oni. The Oni can eat humans and transform into demons and is only destroyed by swords, hence the "sword of light" aspect of the ride. While Raz was on this ride he heard visitors exclaim "Oni-san da yo", which means "wow it's Oni", proving the Japanese recognition of this nod to their culture (Raz, 2000).

The final ride Raz explored was called *Meet the World*. This ride is a carousel through time which allows visitors to re-live Japan's encounters with other cultures. From the start this ride is completely void of anything Disney. The workers wear traditional clothing and the show itself is all in Japanese. The characters are a boy, a girl and a crane which represent figures from traditional Japanese folklore. As the carousel progresses visitors experience Japan's encounter with China, European traders and the enlightenment period of their history. However, there is much controversy surrounding the ride's narrative. World War II is completely left out of the ride and the history portrayed is completely full of mistakes. An Imagineer interviewed by Raz speculates that this ride was originally intended for Epcot (in Walt Disney World) and therefore the story may have been written in part by Americans. He states that in "the Japan pavilion you can see behind a huge, enormous empty building where *Meet the World* was supposed to be shown...but they shipped it here instead" (Raz, 2000). Raz has some doubts that this ride was intended solely for Epcot because it is "too reminiscent of other Japanese accounts of Japan's history" (Raz, 2000). Either way, this ride is a poor way in which OLC and TDL have tried to incorporate the American Disney into Japanese culture. Placing a ride with an American

construed narrative of Japanese history results in a ride that is “half-filled” and one which “practically everybody would like to see abolished” (Raz, 2000).

Raz, looked at three key rides in his examination of the Tokyo Disney park. There are many other ways in which this park has changed to cater to the Japanese Disney fan. Top Disney bloggers have shared their love for cute Disney treats which come from TDL. These include mochi balls shaped like the little green aliens from Toy Story and ramen topped with a hidden Mickey egg. These are traditional dishes which Japanese families enjoy together and a way in which the park connects to the hearts of the Japanese people.

### **Analysis of Tokyo Instagram**

Hofstede's model shows that Japan is high in uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, long term orientation and relatively low in indulgence. We expected the Instagram account of TDL to reflect these values. We found that the account overall felt more feminine in nature. The spring photos featured pastel colors and flowers while the winter photos featured merchandise and romantic photos of Mickey and Minnie. While these may not be entirely feminine, the overall feeling of the page did not scream male. TDL’s Instagram did cater to the relatively low indulgence nature of the Japanese culture. As mentioned in Raz’s article, the act of gift giving is heavily instilled into the Japanese culture (Raz, 2000). During the analyzed time frame, the account posted six pictures featuring merchandise. This amount highlights the available gift items without over posting about indulgent buying options at the park. In terms of long term orientation, the park itself has been around for 35 years. The last post in this analysis featured



35th anniversary celebrations at the park. The recognition of this anniversary showcases to the Japanese people the long standing tradition of a Disney experience while ensuring that the company will be here for many more years to come. One thing the page appears to be doing well is showing more collective group photos. The Japanese are low in individualism and would appreciate that when characters are featured on the TDL feed there are more than one character in each photo. Often the characters are interacting with one another to showcase their focus on community. The one thing which stuck out was the lack of traditional Disney princesses on the TDL's feed. The account mainly featured the original characters of Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Daisy, Pluto and the Chipmunks. The only modern Disney characters featured on the page were the Incredibles, Cars, Frozen, Toy Story & Coco. In order to see Disney princesses we had to search for visitor photos using the Tokyo Disneyland hashtag.

The thing which we believe this account does well is showcasing the fantasy aspects of the park. TDL posted many photos of the castle, shows and landscapes featured within the park. In addition, they posted a few interactive posts featuring Mickey and Minnie such as one which required viewers to like a photo to reveal a hidden heart (Appendix C). However, there are a few things which we believe TDL could implement to boost viewer engagement. During the time of analysis we did not see the account's use of the story feature on Instagram. This feature would allow TDL to post engaging polls to receive consumer feedback on shows, rides or even new food/merchandise options. We also believe the use of more videos on their feed could really boost the page. The videos of Mickey and Minnie posted on November 17th received over a

combined 4 million views (Appendix C). We also would suggest a better use of hashtags, the account seems to use the same five hashtags in every post. Other accounts would #spring or #newbeginnings while TDL simply uses their #tokyodisneyland and a few other park related hashtags (Appendix C).

## **Disneyland Hong Kong**

Like any other Disneyland theme park, Disneyland Hong Kong was formed based on the company's mission statement, "to be one of the world's leading producers and providers of entertainment and information." Ultimately, the theme park in Hong Kong tries to stay true to the core value of family entertainment. However, the park could still benefit from a further understanding of their target consumers, which in this case, are the citizens of Hong Kong.

A conflicting thought that arises from the theme park in Hong Kong is why the park refuses to localize its products in different markets. Given Disney's hegemonic power, why would local consumers be willing to subject themselves to cultural homogenization by a foreign entity (Fung and Lee, 2009). Based off of this, Disney aims to communicate their brand and values to a foreign group of international consumers without acknowledging the culture in Hong Kong.

Fung and Lee, also elaborate on the importance of localization. Localization is a term that defines how transnational corporations do not hesitate to localize their products in the international market. This perspective of Disney can still be seen through the last 70 posts on the Hong Kong Disneyland Instagram page (@hkdisneyland). For example, with the start of the spring season, the Hong Kong Disneyland page posted photos highlighting the events of the

week. They started off with a photo of Minnie Mouse and Katy Perry wearing spring attire. In addition, the next three photos all resonate around the idea of spring, with many other notable Disney characters such as Mickey, Moana, and the characters from Duffy & Friends taking pictures in the green grass or next to blossoming flowers. This was the park's way of announcing that it is a new season and they would like to share this experience with consumers.

Unfortunately, throughout this period of time, Disney still could have done better in localizing their brand image to their consumers. Since the park is set in Hong Kong, Disney should have acknowledged the main group of consumers better by trying to incorporate the culture or values that are respected in Hong Kong to their Instagram posts. Spring season isn't something that is hugely celebrated in Hong Kong so instead of this they should have included some sort of event that was celebrated in Hong Kong during this time of year. Despite Disney being an American company, they should endorse and include more posts of Chinese celebrities. This would create a bigger market base for the company in Hong Kong that local consumers could resonate with. Currently there are a lot of Chinese actors in Hollywood and Disney films and creating a campaign based on this would benefit the company. In December, Stan Lee, the creator of Marvel Comics, visited Disneyland Hong Kong. Disney missed the opportunity to invite a Chinese actor or actress in the Marvel Cinematic Universe for a photo op in the park which would have resonated with Hong Kong consumers.

The concepts of 'globalization' and 'localization' assume that culture and value are static entities and that there is a well-defined boundary between the global and the local (Fung and Lee, 2009). All the Instagram posts are both in Cantonese and English. Since these are the two primary dialogues in Hong Kong, it is essential that each post has captions in both languages.

During the month of February, the park's Instagram did a good job in acknowledging the celebration of the Chinese New Year. They included several posts celebrating the year of the dog by incorporating themes from both the Disney and Chinese culture. In all the posts during this time period, the Disney characters were wearing Chinese traditional attire and some elements of the park were changed to honor the Chinese New Year. During Christmas and Halloween, the theme park was able to execute and deliver their core values of family entertainment. The posts from October all the way until December were very focused towards inviting more people to come visit the park during the vibrant holiday season. With the spirit of the holidays and Christmas, the theme park does use the ideas and beliefs of giving and presents to attract more customers. Since the company was founded on the basis of families having fun together and participating in activities, the Instagram posts during this period of time does resonate with the company's mission statement.

The Instagram page doesn't make a clear distinction between the concepts of globalization and localization but it does try to include both cultures and values. While it is important to understand the culture of the consumers, it is also essential to hold true to the beliefs and foundations that built the company. The @hkdisneyland Instagram page tries its best to post pictures that resonate with the core values of the company while occasionally relating these values with the Hong Kong culture.

## **Disneyland Paris**

Disneyland Resort Paris (formerly known as Euro Disney) is the fourth of the Walt Disney theme parks, built to follow the success of Disneyland in California, Walt Disney World

in Florida, and Tokyo Disneyland in Japan. Strategically placed in the center of France, it is made accessible to more than 300 million people. Construction on Euro Disney began in 1988, and the information center, Espace Euro Disney, opened in 1990, keeping the public informed about the ongoing work. The park itself opened in April 1992. During its first few years the park wasn't as successful as the company anticipated. Attendance was poor, employees were dissatisfied and the French press were furious with the presence of an America-centric park in their country. In 1994, the park was renamed "Disneyland Resort Paris" in order to dissociate it from the negative press surrounding "Euro Disney." In 1995, Space Mountain was added to the park's attractions, and the park turned its first-ever profit. Since then, the park's profits have been on the rise, but the lack of French culture within the park is keeping them from their potential.

In the article by Janice Forman, a French Native scholar was quoted saying:

[the] adoration and error-ridden adoption of the American idiom might result in irremediable loss to the French language and to the mind formed and cultivated by the language: it is very important that our grandchildren sing "Au clair de la lune" in French, that they learn about their traditions in French, in this difficult, subtle, and very refined language, which serves as a model for the deepest part of their psyche. We have lost our scientific language, we are in the process of losing our commercial language and that of our songs. If we're not careful, we will soon lose our philosophical language and even our language for raising our children. It's intolerable. (Forman, 1998).

This statement reports the impact of an American theme park on the French culture. The scholar was accurate in stating that the future generations will over time gradually lose knowledge and

identification with their native culture. This effect can be seen in many first generation immigrants who lose connection with their parent's culture due to being submerged in the more dominant culture. The French wanted to avoid losing a sense of self and Disney did not take this into consideration when creating and marketing the first European Disney theme park.

According to research, when Disney was launching in Tokyo, it was made clear that the theme park should be American. According to Marty Sklar, Vice Chairman and Principal Creative Executive of Walt Disney Imagineering, "The Japanese told us from the beginning, 'Don't Japanese us.' What that meant was, 'we came here for Disney. We came here for America. Don't give us Japan, we know Japan'" (Forman, 1998). Based on this claim, Disney made the connection that their European branch would expect the same. The lack of research led to a park which did not connect with the French and thus resulted in unhappy consumers. The French went as far as believe this may be cultural imperialism.

Due to the lack of target audience research they used American marketing strategies which did not appeal to the French population. The lack of research and understanding of French culture is also very apparent in their Instagram account.

Similar to the several other Disney locations, @DisneylandParis promotes the park as a lively and vibrant theme park welcoming people of all ages. Rather than focusing on the roller coasters and attractions, they focus on the simple joys, such as Mickey shaped food and the face character photo ops. Out of the last 70 posts, they've only had one picture that features a patron. They also focus on scenic pictures of the castle, and souvenirs such as the Disney castle in a snow globe, Mickey Mouse plush toy and *Winnie The Pooh* balloons.

After careful review of both the Disneyland and Disneyland Paris Instagram accounts, we found that the overall style, aesthetic and timing of the posts were very similar. The only thing that separates the two accounts is that Disneyland Paris captions their posts in both French and English. Naturally the French caption comes first and then the translation below. It's also interesting that 99% of the hashtags are in English rather than French. This just shows how cultural imperialism can even be implemented in the slightest of ways.

## **Disneyland Shanghai**

Disney Shanghai is jointly owned by the Walt Disney Company and the Shanghai Shendi Group, it is the youngest of the Disney parks and opened in June 2016. There was high anticipation for the park's opening and within the first year the park was close to breaking even which no other Disney park had ever come close to doing.

Disney Shanghai was created primarily with the promise to be “authentically Disney, distinctly Chinese”. This promise further demonstrates Disney's focus on expanding their brand but keeping things authentic to location. Many of the iconic Disney landmarks which are present in the Walt Disney World Florida, have been altered to fit a Chinese landscape. For example, Main Street USA is Mickey Avenue, the main sections of the park have different names and the Enchanted Storybook Castle has been made more interactive.

For this study we analyzed posts from April 25th, 2018 to October 30, 2017. The Shanghai Disney Instagram account practices a mixture of strategic communication and public relations. The account tries to engage often with its consumer base and also tries to connect by re-posting pictures of those who have visited and have tagged the park. They are utilizing

Disney's wide fan base to create a more engaging consumer experience online. The posting of pictures show that they are paying attention and that they appreciate those who appreciate them. As a new park they use certain social media marketing strategies to further grow their consumer base. For example, on posts they use up to thirteen Disney related hashtags in order to catch the attention of Disney fans. This is in comparison to the other more established parks who are only using three or less Disney related hashtags.

The content of the account is heavily focused on the merchandise which can be bought at the park and the consumer experience, rather than using their large cast of characters' to engage their audience. The characters that are posted are the universal core characters including Mickey, Minnie, Donald and Goofy. However, other characters like Olaf were utilized in relevant themed posts during special events such as the Christmas celebration. This is most likely because many Chinese people didn't grow up on Disney Characters like many Western consumers (Moran, 2017).

From our analysis and our understanding of Shanghai's Hofstede Model, the account's content is more indulgent than the country its broadcasting from. Shanghai is very low in indulgence, but the Shanghai account posts a lot of food, and merchandise trying to entice customers into purchasing items. It seems that while many aspects of the park have been made with the culture in mind, their social media platform does not live up to its potential. The posts from our analysis do not showcase to the fullest extent the Chinese culture. One recommendation is to focus more on family and group outings, as much of the park was actually designed with this in mind.



## Conclusion

After the examination of the ways in which the Disney brand has been adapted to the five international parks, we have seen that their overall marketing strategy is to focus on the core value of family entertainment through strategic communication. As a global company, the Disney brand is an example for other international companies on how to localize and adapt their communication efforts to reflect a company's brand values, while at the same time catering to the traditional values and needs of a new market. However, this study shows that even though the Disney brand remains successful, they still have room to learn how to better engage with the culture of the host country of each park. While the physical parks have been able to integrate aspects of the culture of each country, there are aspects of the park's social media which leave room for improvement. For example, Disneyland Hong Kong seems to be the only park to have clear references to the culture of the host country in their posts. Most of the Disney Instagram strategy seems to still be coming from an U.S. influence where Disney has created, appropriated, and perpetuated its own cultural/political economy. There are ways in which the social media through public relations could integrate more of each country's unique traditions without diluting the Disney brand as a whole.

In March 2018, the Disney Parks and Resorts sector merged with the Disney Consumer Products and Interactive Media division to form Walt Disney Parks, Experiences and Consumer Products (Mucha & Jefferson, 2018). The company is moving towards a more interactive and engaging park experience. With the merger of these two divisions the marketing and

communication strategies of the Disney Park system will become more cohesive and better defined across all platforms.

## **Future Research Direction & Limitations**

In light of our research further steps should be taken to analyze what consumers are saying about the parks as the Disney brand continues to expand and create new family experiences across the globe. Through netnography research could explore and outline a public relations strategy for Disney that takes into consideration the needs of the organization and all relevant stakeholders across the globe. This could be extended with in-depth interviews with communication professionals within the Disney organization to produce an European Communication Monitor report (Falkheimer, 2015) exploring challenges, goals, and evaluations for communication initiatives.

Limitations in our research arise in issues with validity and reliability. Due to the time period, our data is not necessarily reliable in depicting a stable and replicable study. Furthermore, our research does show high levels of internal validity when analyzing Disney on the Instagram platform, yet external validity is questionable with a limited scope in using one platform. Overall, this research has proposed some vital initiatives for Disney to consider in moving forward in an ever-changing global landscape inherent on producing organizational value with communication.

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<https://hubpages.com/education/The-Psychology-behind-colors-and-their-effects-on-modern-Web-Designs>

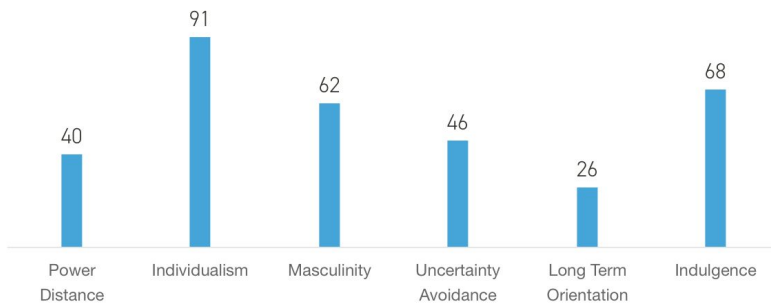
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# APPENDIX

## Appendix A

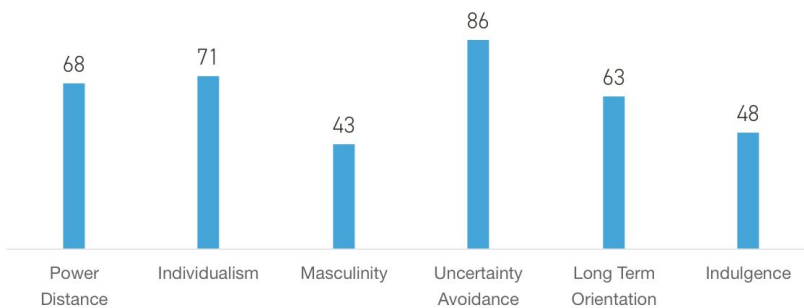
### Hofstede's Models

United States:



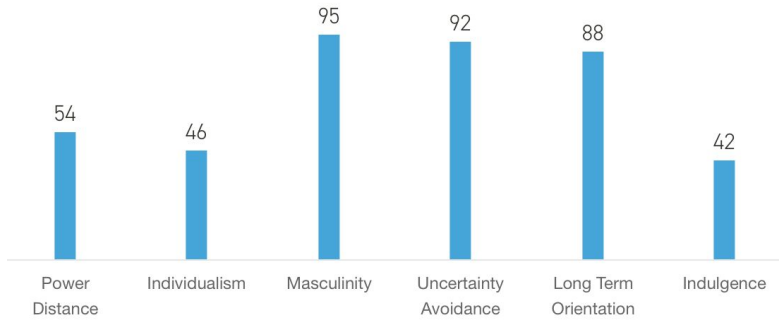
The United States is an individualistic country with high indulgence. We expect the marketing strategy to reflect these values.

France:



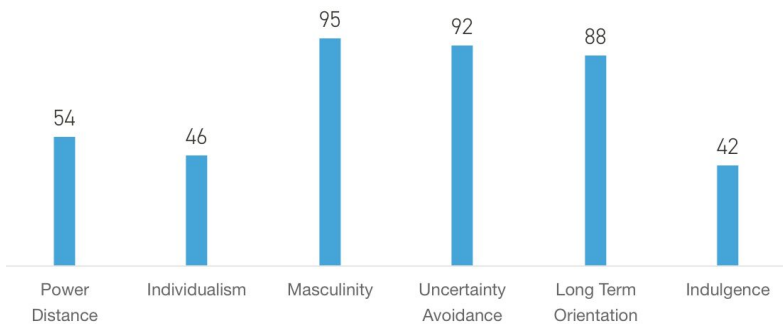
France is high in individualism, uncertainty avoidance and indulgence. We suspect the posts will highlight the features of the Disney resort as a way to guarantee the type of experience a consumer can expect.

### Japan:



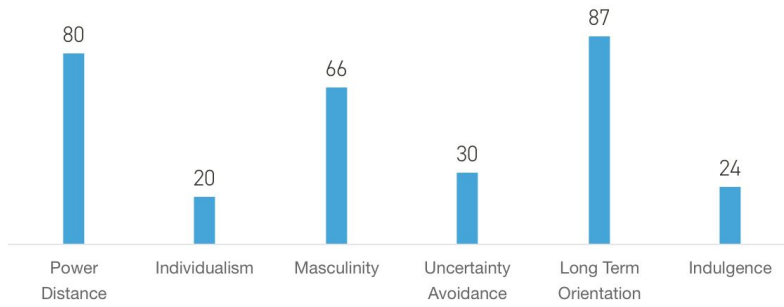
Japan is high in long term orientation, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. They are relatively low in indulgence and individualism and we expect the posts to reflect this.

### Hong Kong:



Hong Kong is high in masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation. We expect their Instagram to reflect these values.

## Shanghai:



Shanghai is high in power distance, long term orientation and masculinity. We expect their posts to reflect these attributes and also be low in indulgence and individualism.

## Appendix B

### Walt Disney World

#### Analysis from August 2017- April 2018

Theme	Imagery	# Language	Communication
Magic	<input type="checkbox"/> Bold colors <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors <input type="checkbox"/> Iconic Structures	<input type="checkbox"/> Magic <input type="checkbox"/> Wishes <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh <input type="checkbox"/> Wonder	Strategic Communication
Kingdom	<input type="checkbox"/> Iconic Imagery <input type="checkbox"/> Nature <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> World <input type="checkbox"/> Magical <input type="checkbox"/> Photography	Strategic Communication
Seasons	<input type="checkbox"/> Bold colors <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Autumn <input type="checkbox"/> Winter <input type="checkbox"/> Spring	Strategic Communication
Characters	<input type="checkbox"/> Statues <input type="checkbox"/> Gardens <input type="checkbox"/> Parades	<input type="checkbox"/> Celebration <input type="checkbox"/> Symbolic	Strategic Communication
Celebration	<input type="checkbox"/> Icons/ Symbols <input type="checkbox"/> Parades <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Love <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty <input type="checkbox"/> Escapism	Strategic Communication & Public Relations
Indulgence	<input type="checkbox"/> Food <input type="checkbox"/> Tours <input type="checkbox"/> Movements	<input type="checkbox"/> Treat <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure <input type="checkbox"/> Travel	Strategic Communication



## Appendix C

### Tokyo Disneyland

Analysis from November 2017 - April 2018:

Theme	Imagery	# Language	Communication
Magic	<input type="checkbox"/> Castle <input type="checkbox"/> Fireworks <input type="checkbox"/> Iconic Structures	<input type="checkbox"/> tokyodisneyre sort <input type="checkbox"/> Wishes <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh <input type="checkbox"/> Wonder	Strategic Communication
Kingdom	<input type="checkbox"/> Iconic Imagery <input type="checkbox"/> Nature <input type="checkbox"/> Classic character rides/attractions	<input type="checkbox"/> Wishes <input type="checkbox"/> Fantasy <input type="checkbox"/> Tokyodisneyr esort <input type="checkbox"/> Movie titles	Strategic Communication
Seasons	<input type="checkbox"/> Dark Colors (blacks, greens, reds) for Winter <input type="checkbox"/> Pastel Colors for Spring	<input type="checkbox"/> Fall <input type="checkbox"/> Spring <input type="checkbox"/> Cherry blossom <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen	Strategic Communication
Characters	<input type="checkbox"/> Statues <input type="checkbox"/> Gardens <input type="checkbox"/> Parades	<input type="checkbox"/> Celebration <input type="checkbox"/> Symbolic	Strategic Communication
Celebration	<input type="checkbox"/> Icons/ Symbols <input type="checkbox"/> Shows <input type="checkbox"/> Park architecture & landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> tokyodisneyre sort <input type="checkbox"/> waterfront <input type="checkbox"/> fantasy <input type="checkbox"/> World bazaar	Strategic Communication & Public Relations
Indulgence	<input type="checkbox"/> Merchandise <input type="checkbox"/> Park locations	<input type="checkbox"/> Tokyodisneyr esort <input type="checkbox"/> fantasy	Strategic Communication
Interaction with viewers	<input type="checkbox"/> Use fan photos as their own post (credit the fan) <input type="checkbox"/> Interactive posts		Public Relations

Tokyo Disneyland features certain themes which differ from the other parks.

- Merchandising is important, 6 posts feature products which you can actually buy
- Focus on classic characters
  - The most posted characters were Mickey and Minnie. They were in 21 posts.
  - Other characters include Pluto, Daisy and Donald Duck, Chipmunks, etc
- Modern Disney characters featured in posts: Incredibles, Cars, Frozen, Toy Story & Coco
- No posts featuring any Disney Princesses or Princes, unlike the Walt Disney World and Disney Paris accounts. The only way to see these characters is by searching #tokyodisneyland and looking for visitor photos
- Interactive posts:
  - On November 17th, 2017 a split video was posted featuring Mickey and Minnie to celebrate their birthday. Viewers had to watch and engage with both posts to get the whole story. However, Mickey received 220,822 likes and 3,240,199 views compared to Minnie's 195,000 views and 2,398,019 views. These videos had the most views of all the videos posted during the time frame of this analysis.
  - February 13th, 2018 featured a picture of Minnie and Mickey leaning over a table, the post prompted you double tap between the characters. When you did a heart appeared (the like symbol). This post received 180,989 likes.

- What they could do better:
  - Better use of hashtags, they constantly reuse the same few hashtags. Usually #Tokyodisneyresort, #tokyodisneyland or #tokyodisneysea. Compared to the other Disney Instagram accounts they could do a better job of utilizing hashtags.
  - Post more frequently, they have begun posting more but at least 4-5 posts a week should be what they are aiming for. I have also not seen them post a story in the 1.5 weeks in which I have been conducting my analysis. The story is a key way in which to engage an audience. They could conduct polls, use geotags and highlight new products in this section.

## Appendix D

### Disneyland Hong Kong

Analysis from April 2018 to October 2017

Theme	Imagery	# Language	Communication
Magic	<input type="checkbox"/> Bold colors <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors <input type="checkbox"/> Iconic Structures	<input type="checkbox"/> Magic <input type="checkbox"/> Wishes <input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese <input type="checkbox"/> English	Strategic Communication
Kingdom	<input type="checkbox"/> Iconic Imagery <input type="checkbox"/> Nature <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> World <input type="checkbox"/> Magical <input type="checkbox"/> Photography	Strategic Communication
Seasons	<input type="checkbox"/> Bold colors <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese New Year <input type="checkbox"/> Winter <input type="checkbox"/> Spring	Strategic Communication
Characters	<input type="checkbox"/> Statues <input type="checkbox"/> Gardens <input type="checkbox"/> Parades	<input type="checkbox"/> Celebration <input type="checkbox"/> Symbolic	Strategic Communication
Celebration	<input type="checkbox"/> Icons/Symbols <input type="checkbox"/> Parades <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Love <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty <input type="checkbox"/> Escapism	Strategic Communication & Public Relations
Indulgence	<input type="checkbox"/> Food <input type="checkbox"/> Tours <input type="checkbox"/> Movements	<input type="checkbox"/> Treat <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure <input type="checkbox"/> Travel	Strategic Communication

## Appendix E

### Disneyland Paris

Analysis from February 2017 - April 2018:

Theme	Imagery	# Language	Communication
Magic	<input type="checkbox"/> Bold colors <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Magic <input type="checkbox"/> Wishes <input type="checkbox"/> Love <input type="checkbox"/> Wonder	Strategic Communication
Kingdom	<input type="checkbox"/> Iconic Imagery <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Beauty <input type="checkbox"/> Magical <input type="checkbox"/> Photography	Strategic Communication
Seasons	<input type="checkbox"/> Bold colors <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Spring	Strategic Communication
Characters	<input type="checkbox"/> Statues <input type="checkbox"/> Gardens <input type="checkbox"/> Live Characters	<input type="checkbox"/> #teamprincess <input type="checkbox"/> #sleepingbeautycastle	Strategic Communication & Public Relations
Celebration	<input type="checkbox"/> Icons/Symbols <input type="checkbox"/> Parades <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Love <input type="checkbox"/> Happiness <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty <input type="checkbox"/> Dance <input type="checkbox"/> Fireworks	Strategic Communication & Public Relations
Indulgence	<input type="checkbox"/> Food <input type="checkbox"/> Merchandise	<input type="checkbox"/> Treat <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure	Strategic Communication

## Appendix F

### Walt Disney Shanghai

Analysis from April 2018 to October 2017

Theme	Imagery	# Language	Communication
Magic	<input type="checkbox"/> Bold colors <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors <input type="checkbox"/> Storybook Castle	<input type="checkbox"/> Perfect <input type="checkbox"/> Wishes <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh <input type="checkbox"/> Wonder	Strategic Communication
Kingdom	<input type="checkbox"/> Iconic Imagery <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Spectacular <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategic Communication
Seasons	<input type="checkbox"/> Bold colors <input type="checkbox"/> Bright colors <input type="checkbox"/> Flowers <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday symbols	<input type="checkbox"/> Autumn <input type="checkbox"/> Winter <input type="checkbox"/> Spring	Strategic Communication + PR
Characters	<input type="checkbox"/> Main Characters <input type="checkbox"/> Special characters seasonally <input type="checkbox"/> Not many pictures	<input type="checkbox"/> Celebration <input type="checkbox"/> Symbolic	Strategic Communication
Celebration	<input type="checkbox"/> Icons/Symbols <input type="checkbox"/> Parades <input type="checkbox"/> Events	<input type="checkbox"/> Love <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty <input type="checkbox"/> Escapism	Strategic Communication + PR
Indulgence	<input type="checkbox"/> Food <input type="checkbox"/> Tours <input type="checkbox"/> Movements	<input type="checkbox"/> Treat <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure <input type="checkbox"/> Travel	Strategic Communication + PR