

Research on the Marketing Strategy of Zootopia 2 Based on the 4P Marketing Theory

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Abstract. The entertainment industry is booming nowadays. It is believed that a film's success depends on both the quality of its content and its marketing strategies. As most people are already familiar with the films' interesting content, this essay will further analyse from the perspective of commercial marketing in various dimensions. Based on some of the current successful cases in the film industry, this essay will conduct a detailed analysis of Zootopia 2 from Disney movie studio. The research method in this essay is Marketing Mix Theory, which is an analysis of marketing strategies within product, Price, Place, and Promotion aspects. Through analysis, it was found that Zootopia 2's marketing performed well in each aspect. While there were still some issues, such as voice cast problems, regional price setting, lack of publicity and so on. This essay will provide reasonable recommendations to better solve these issues. Above all, it is hoped that this in-depth analysis can provide effective assistance in the promotion process of future similar high-quality films.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Zootopia 2, 4P Marketing Theory, Marketing Mix Theory, Animation Film

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the global animation film industry, the development of sequels based on mature intellectual property (IP) and the adoption of refined marketing strategies have become a core approach for Disney's film and television business to sustain commercial vitality and maintain stable profitability. Since its release in 2016, Zootopia has gained widespread global audience recognition and outstanding brand influence through its sophisticated visual production and positive core values, establishing itself as a phenomenal animation IP. As the 2025 sequel to the classic franchise, Zootopia 2 faces an increasingly competitive global film market compared with the original work, which raises new and higher standards for the film's overall marketing arrangement. Nevertheless, existing academic studies on film marketing mainly focus on empirical analyses of individual promotion channels and marketing outcomes, lacking systematic and theoretical exploration of the full-cycle marketing system for animated sequel films, thereby failing to provide sufficient support for the long-term market-oriented operation of classic animation IPs. Taking the classic 4P Marketing Theory covering product, price, place and promotion as the fundamental theoretical framework, this paper selects Zootopia 2 as the research subject. It systematically sorts

out the film's current marketing practices, identifies prominent deficiencies in its marketing strategies, and explores optimized solutions for the market communication and commercial operation of Disney animated sequels. This study also summarizes universal marketing principles for high-value animation IP sequels and derivative products.

2. Theory review

2.1. Marketing Mix Theory

The Marketing Mix Theory includes four different forms, which are Product, Price, Place and Promotion. Product is based on the product's individual development, which involves the item's performance, quality, package, brand and so on. From a film aspect, the basic content and post-production with technology will mainly become the development of product. From a price perspective, it tends more to some price strategies, namely skim pricing, penetration pricing, competitive pricing and so on. In the film industry, corporations will normally use penetration or differentiated pricing to attract target consumers. The Place part is highly focused on the medium to get in touch with the target consumers. These different channels will mainly be divided into online and offline. The majority of film companies will use online social media, and offline theatres to increase the fame of a certain film. Nevertheless, in the promotion section, it also has physical and digital aspects, that will promote the products. This function can highly increase the fame of the product and reduce the information barriers between target consumers and the product or brand itself. IP co-branding and Actors' meetups will be typical examples for film marketing.

2.2. Film marketing

Wilson noted that the task of Marketing Management is "Integrating the organisation with the opportunities in the changing environment" [1]. It is generally understandable that all brands can be promoted in the market. In this way, when one movie is produced, it is also necessary to be promoted and catch its fame opportunity through society. There are four main elements in film marketing content, namely Trailer, Poster, Press Kit and social media [2]. Trailers and Posters will mainly be created to serve the Press Kit and social media, that when attractive and mysterious trailers and posters are produced and packaged into the Press Kit with other information, synopsis and cast and crew involved, and delivered around the world, they provide information to local entertainment journalists and better promote or do publicity. At the same time, post trailer and posters directly on social media will also attract close attention from the target consumers.

3. Current situation of film marketing

3.1. Product: film content and versions diversification

Zootopia 2 is a sequel movie of Zootopia 1, which is 9 years apart. This movie was released on November 26, 2025, which is Thanksgiving Day. In terms of revenue, Zootopia 2 got around \$1,866,647,950 at the box office around the world, which ranked second on the highest box office movie list. It got 92% fresh and 95% on the Popcorn meter in Rotten Tomatoes and 7.3/10 in IMDb. With the data mentioned above, it is highly noticeable that Zootopia 2 got a big success at the box office in 2025.

From the plot setting aspect, Zootopia 2 continued the innovative concept of the animal utopia feature as Zootopia 1 did. At the same time, its ingenious plot design not only enables audiences to

continue experiencing the warming friendship between Judy and Nick but also narrates around the theme of breaking prejudice and promoting equality and inclusiveness. This content design highly considered both the entertainment needs of children and the realistic portrayal of adult audiences.

Nevertheless, Zootopia 2's producers chose snakes and horses as the new main characters, with the intention of aligning with the celebrations of Chinese zodiac years [3]. In addition, the post-production team adopts the Hollywood animation industry standards, which provide various screening versions, namely 2D, 3D, IMAX, and Dolby. The animal fur colour was also handled through the Pesto tool system.

Last but not least, Zootopia 2 invited the original classic voice cast, which ensured a more authentic fit with the characters. Also, the production team invited some high-profile actors such as Dwayne Johnson and Ke Huy Quan to lend their voices. This decision significantly enhanced the film's quality and sincerity.

3.2. Price: tiered pricing models and package strategies

At the Price session, the film industry implemented differentiation in prices across various regions worldwide. Price differentiation is normally influenced by geographical, time and product quality factors, that in different countries or regions, ticket prices are different, as shown in the graph below (including New York, London, Shanghai, and Neijiang). This is due to the fact that the different price levels are based on the various residents' income levels and living expenses on a daily basis. It is highly noticeable that the price difference between the highest and the 100th-ranked markets is nearly \$23.43, which is a substantial gap. In addition, the graph below also notes three types of film quality presented, namely 2D, 3D, and IMAX. These three typical quality movies had distinct price structures, with IMAX got relatively higher price level than the other two.

Besides the price differentiation, Zootopia 2 also strategically collaborate with theatres in regions. The brand will mainly provide viewing packages to consumers who attend to watch the movie, these packages normally involve either peripheral gifts or certain price coupons. For example, nice designed popcorn bucket in AMC and Regal, a special foil card in Cinemark, \$2.95 group-buying price on Douyin.

Table 1. Prices in different regions and versions

Film Versions/Regions	American-New York	England-London	China-Shanghai	China-NeiJiang
2D	\$6-\$12	\$10-\$18	\$5-\$9	\$4-\$9
3D	\$14-\$20	\$10-\$20	\$8-\$12	\$7-\$12
IMAX	\$16-\$22	\$17-\$29	\$13-\$17	\$12-\$17

3.3. Place: online and offline channels distribution

According to the channels that Zootopia2 resealed will be mainly divided into online and offline. In the offline part, around 50 countries released this film at the end of November and the start of December 2025, the most well-known chain cinema companies, for instance AMC, Cinemark, Regal, Cineworld, and Wanda Cinemas, all took the order and started to show the movie to the audiences who come to the offline theatres. In this way, it shows that Zootopia 2 achieved access to almost all famous offline theatres, which made the first step to success at the box office.

On the online platform, in the film play section, PVOD and Disney+ released Zootopia 2 one after the other in date on January 27th, 2026, and March 11th, 2026, respectively. This time selection not only gave this film enough time for offline screening but also fulfilled the demand from customers who prefer to watch online. In the social media promotion section, several Disney social media platforms, like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Douyin, RedNote and so on, all debuted trailers, posters and movie cuts through these platforms. This action can effectively catch the attention of target consumers

3.4. Promotion: external and internal promotion strategies

Zootopia 2 promoted a lot in the promotion part, which can mainly be divided into external promotion and internal promotion. In the external aspect, Zootopia 2 actively collaborated with various international brands in order to increase the impact in the world [4]. TikTok and Snapchat added AR and AI-related Judy and Nick filters. This action can help make the characters that audiences like integrated into their real life. In the meantime, the joint effort by Jazwares, POP MART and Funko to produce and sell movie-related mystery box, which also increases the curiosity among consumers and further boosts the revenue for both companies. Apart from that, different Zootopia 2 characters will be co-branded and printed on various daily items in popular brands around the world. For example, cups in MINISO, T-shirts in Uniqlo, cans in Pepsi Cola and so on.

Nevertheless, from the internal field, regarding the production and sales of Zootopia 2-related products in Disney Theme Park is also relatively high [5]. There are over 76 products inside the park, which include themed dolls, bags, clothing, foods, drinks, toys and cups. Last but not least, the Zootennial Gala Fashions was organised from November 18th, 2025, to January 27th, 2026, in Shanghai Disneyland (the only Zootopia-themed land among Disneylands). Consumers can get close to Judy and Nick in close proximity and communicate with them. It is also highly noticeable that the new main character Gary De'Snake appeared in different Disney Theme parks as a hidden Mickey, like Hong Kong Disneyland and Shanghai Disneyland. These Promote action can effectively fulfil the curiosity of moviegoers and provide immersive experiences.

4. Weaknesses existed in process of film marketing

4.1. Product: the negative impact caused by content deviation

Although in terms of the film quality part, it expressed clear plot logic and interesting comedic elements, the majority of audiences like this film as mentioned above. However, some consumers reflected that some details in this movie that is not fully make sense and will bring negative influence on children. One detail is that Zootopia 2 still stuck in the cop myth [6]. There are several instances where the police were chasing suspects, which disturbed the daily lives of the residents and brought them into trouble. Moreover, the Zootopia Police Department and Mayor Winddancer acted as puppets for the Lynxley family for years until they were brought to justice, while the Police Department was not punished. This plot may pose a risk to the child's intellectual development and critical thinking ability.

Furthermore, the participation of celebrities in the voice cast can often be a double-edged sword, that when bring the high fan effects, some dubbing issues may arise [7]. These issues will reduce the quality and reputation of the film. For instance, in the voice cast team in China, the voice actor for Mayor Winddancer dubs with unclear pronunciation. The voice actor for Pawbert Lynxley dubs without emotional expression.

4.2. Price: regional ticket prices misallocation

According to the diagram shown above, it is highly noticeable that there are very small differences between Shanghai and Neijiang at the price level in various standards. However, Neijiang is a city in Sichuan and is rated as a third-tier city in China in 2025 [8]. There is no doubt that Shanghai is one of the most well development city in China, while both of their ticket prices are similar to each other. Meanwhile, this ticket price set in non-development cities may relatively raise the expectation from the residents, as the ticket price may take a greater percentage of their income. Then, after watching this film, the complaints about the disproportion between price and quality will be higher than those in well-developed cities.

4.3. Place: mismanagement in supply and demand

In the place aspect, the strategic plan from the brand can be sufficiently comprehensive and highly successful. However, based on success, the issue of supply-demand management was overlooked. When a great number of consumers were drawn to watch the movie, the venue may be overcrowded. A similar situation occurred in Shanghai, China. Since many consumers purchased 4D movie tickets in order to have an immersive movie experience, which resulted in the 4D screening was fully booked [9]. Under this condition, an increased number of scalpers sold tickets on third-party platforms online, for around \$23 per ticket. This situation caused a period of disorder inside the film industry and Zootopia 2 also gained a lower reputation indirectly.

4.4. Promotion: lack of strategic autonomy and publicity ability

There are a couple of limitations in the promotion aspect. Since Zootopia 2 is collaborating with MINISO, MINISO opened pop-up stores in different countries around the world during the release period. However, these pop-up stores are all owned by MINISO, which may lead to some hidden limitations. Granting the direct authorisation to MINISO would cause the Disney official team to lose the opportunity to interact with target consumers who love the Zootopia IP. At the same time, Disney would reduce the chances of understanding the loyal consumers' preferences and find it hard to plan for future IP marketing strategies.

Last but not least, the public relations ability of Zootopia 2 is relatively weak. As mentioned above, several audiences were unhappy with the Chinese voice cast team and had spread negative comments via the internet. This led to one critical word of mouth started to spread online. However, in this situation, the film's official team did not respond to these bad comments or provide proper solutions. Thus, the official publicity was not successful.

5. Targeted recommendations for the identified marketing weaknesses

5.1. Product: film quality improvement in content and voice cast team

As mentioned above, there are some limitations in the content area about the Zootopia Police Department. It is suggested that the police station can be prominently included in the law enforcement system, and that they are encouraged to apologise publicly for the negative consequences they caused. This can effectively cultivate children's sense of responsibility and personal values.

In voice cast team selection field, it is highly recommended to consider the actor's voice features and professional abilities. A few ideas are offered to consider for the corporate team, such as

providing a voting section through the internet during the casting process. This can allow the public to choose the most suitable candidate and also take advantage of this online interaction to generate high attention and popularity before the film release.

5.2. Price: region-based price differentiation and package bundling

Based on the similar ticket price setting between non-development cities and well-developed cities, several recommendations are offered to the brand. First of all, it is recommended to offer differentiated pricing in first-tier cities. This is because customers from these developed cities have better economic status and lower sensitivity to high ticket prices. Leisure time will be comparatively low due to the high working pressure. In this way, a higher-priced movie ticket can be released around dinner time or during holidays. This strategy can bring the company greater profits and revenue.

Secondly, for some developing cities, it is suggested to attract more potential consumers and gain high revenue in quantity. For example, launching early bird or family package tickets and encouraging companies or schools to purchase discounted screening packages during working days [10]. These ideas can achieve the lower prices that consumers demanded, the utilisation rate of cinemas, and profits for the Disney brand, thus reaching a win-win-win situation.

5.3. Place: management in supply and demand in price adjustment and facility establishment

In order to solve the problem of scalpers and the supply-demand management problem, there are two basic methods. The primary method is to increase the supply from the theatres. As the demand from customers is too high, it is advised to increase the 4D screening daily or facilitate more 4D required equipment to meet the demand from consumers. Nevertheless, Zootopia 2 can increase the price of 4D screening, which meets the differentiation pricing strategy. Only increasing greatly in 4D level can not only fulfil the customers who pursue high film quality, but also reduce the number of scalpers, since both cost and risk are much higher than before.

5.4. Promotion: official immersive experience and sincere public relations management

Based on the original MINISO pop-up stores, it is recommended to increase Disney official pop-up stores in well-developed cities, namely New York, Washington, London, Paris, Beijing, Shanghai and so on. These stores will closely replicate the scenes from the movies and sell limited-edition Zootopia IP items. Furthermore, by presenting the movie ticket stubs, attendees can enjoy free experiences such as VR glasses or a Zootopia Resident ID Card.

In disposal the argument in the Chinese voice cast team, it is highly important for the official production team to respond quickly and sincerely on the internet. It is welcome to start a Douyin live streaming with all related Zootopia Chinese cast members. Since it is already too late to adjust the cast team in the post-production stage, responding and apologising to the purchasers quickly can also minimise several poor feedback online and keep the high reputation effectively.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is undeniable that Zootopia 2 is a highly successful film. Its extremely high box office clearly indicates that its success is not only attributed to the high quality of the film content, but also to the efforts in film marketing. In the product part, it offers different movie levels, with enhanced influences by famous cast actors. In terms of pricing, it implements differentiated pricing

for different versions and countries, offering various movie packages with different add-ons or discounts. In the place section, it holds the screening rights for most of the large chain cinemas around the world and promotes them in its own theme park. In terms of promotions, it not only collaborates with major international brands, but also sells official movie merchandise in Disney Theme Park.

However, there are some drawbacks in this marketing implementation, such as film details, the professionalism of the voice actors, the price differences in regions, the prevalence of third-party ticket sales, the absence of official direct stores, and the weak public relations capabilities. For each of them, this essay has provided creative suggestions, which included refining the story content, allowing the public to vote for the voice actors, supply and demand management, implementing regional pricing strategies, managing the direct sales stores, and taking public relations measures.

After this deep analysis of marketing strategies in Zootopia 2, the 4P theory can fully assist future similar animated films in their marketing efforts and achieve greater success.

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