

Hong Kong Disneyland: Differentiation Strategies in a Competitive Theme Park Market



Source: Pexels (2025)

Background

Having recently celebrated its 19th birthday, Hong Kong Disneyland (HKDL) continues to deliver unforgettable Disney experiences to guests of all ages and nationalities (HKDL, n.d.). Following the opening of the new themed area “World of Frozen”, the resort has returned to profit for the first time in nine years with a record performance in the fiscal year 2023/2024 (SCMP, 2025). Despite a history of financial losses, HKDL has successfully differentiated itself from other competitors such as Ocean Park Hong Kong, Shanghai Disneyland, and Universal Studio Beijing.

To enhance product localization, HKDL has consistently incorporated local cultural elements into its offerings. During its 15th anniversary celebration, for example, the park introduced the Hong Kong-style street food snack Mickey Egg Puff (米奇雞蛋仔) (Disney Magical Kingdom Blog, 2021). More recently, HKDL launched a new blind box (盲盒) merchandise series featuring HKDL’s original intellectual property (IP) character, the talking trash can “Push” (冇推) (Yahoo! News, 2024). These culturally infused, HKDL-exclusive items are designed to resonate with local visitors while attracting international tourists seeking unique experiences.

Over the years, HKDL has partnered with various sectors to elevate the guest experience. AIA Hong Kong, a key strategic partner, has supported several major initiatives, including the “Iron Man Experience” in 2017, the annual “10K Weekend” marathon events, and the latest attraction “Frozen Ever After” (AIA Hong Kong, n.d.; Blue Cross, 2023). In addition, retail partnerships with Pandora and Starbucks have brought branded physical stores into the park, offering exclusive HKDL-themed products (HKDL, n.d.). These cross-promotional efforts enrich the park’s value proposition by leveraging expertise from multiple industries.

HKDL also designed seasonal events as part of its differentiation strategy. For example, the park hosts Halloween festivities featuring limited-time appearances by Disney villains (HKDL,

2024a) and Christmas-themed entertainment. Celebrity collaborations further boost attendance during special occasions. Notably, during Lunar New Year, HKDL presented *Disney Classic Live in Concert* featuring world-renowned pianist Lang Lang (HKDL, 2024b). These diverse offerings are aimed at increasing international appeal.

To manage seasonal fluctuations in attendance, HKDL introduced a new tiered ticketing system in 2023. This system includes four pricing levels, ranging from HK\$639 (Tier 1, regular days) to HK\$879 (Tier 4, peak days), allowing the park to balance guest flow and maximize revenue (HKDL, 2023).

Challenges

Despite its creative approaches to product differentiation, concerns remain about HKDL's ability to compete with its regional rivals. Its relatively small physical footprint, especially when compared to Ocean Park and Tokyo Disneyland, limits opportunities for large-scale expansion and the introduction of new attractions. Moreover, the launch of new themed areas such as *Zootopia* at Shanghai Disneyland and *Fantasy Springs* (including their own version of *World of Frozen*) at Tokyo DisneySea is expected to intensify competition and further impact HKDL's market share (CNN Travel, 2024).

Discussion Questions

1. What additional elements of Hong Kong culture could HKDL incorporate to enhance its local and international appeal?
2. In what ways have partnerships with brands like AIA Hong Kong, Pandora, and Starbucks enhanced HKDL's guest experience and financial performance?
3. Given its limited space for expansion, how can HKDL continue to innovate and stay competitive against larger parks?
4. What further strategies could HKDL adopt to mitigate the effects of seasonality on park attendance?

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Keywords

- Product Differentiation
- Localization
- Strategic Partnerships
- Theme Park
- Seasonal Marketing
- Revenue Optimization

Acknowledgement

This case study is based on and adapted from the work of undergraduate students’ CHAN Ngai; CHAN Wing Hei; HUNG Nga Wai; LAM Ka In; MAN Ching Tung; SIU Yan Lam; YAN Kit Mau from the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.