Asia Pacific and Chinese Market Analysis: The Future Direction of Development for Disney in the Next 10 Years

Haoyang Dong, Qingzhen Du, Jiyu Jiang, and Ruihe Tian

Abstract—Disney's cross-segmental businesses have created great synergies that helped the company maintain its leading positions in multi-industries for decades. The outbreak of the global epidemic in recent years is also a major test of the current development strategy of Disney Company. Therefore, based on the current operation and development status of the company, this paper analyzes the development problems faced by Disney through operational data analysis. SWOT analysis and other strategic analysis tools are used to make a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the company's internal and external environment, and finally we put forward some suggestions for Disney's strategic goals implementation plans in the next five to ten years under the current background. In terms of the overall strategy, Disney should continue to adhere to the three-pillar strategy proposed by former CEO Robert Iger and continue to strengthen the synergistic effect between various departments. In addition, in terms of development, Disney can pay more attention to the Asian market, mainly north China, and strengthen cooperation to improve its core competitiveness. In the environment of both opportunities and crises, our strategy expects to provide several accessible ways for the company to better cope with the global epidemic and other emergencies so that to achieve better development of the company.

Index Terms—Business strategy, China, Covid-19, Disney.

I. INTRODUCTION

Disney, founded 80 years ago, came to the world through a variety of cute cartoon characters. In addition, Disney, as a very successful entertainment brand, involves multiple industries and has a large scale. Disney consistently ranks high in Business Week's list of the World's 100 most valuable brands. Overall, Disney has been on a very good trend. As for the reason for Disney's rapid development, its superior corporate strategy cannot be ignored.

However, the global economy has suffered a significant impact due to the outbreak of COVID-19 since 2020. WHO data shows that, globally, as of September 24th, 2021, there have been 230,418,451 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 4,724,876 deaths [1]. The accelerated spread of COVID-19 in the global scope resulted in a dramatic increase in uncertainty of the financial and capital market because of

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severely undermining investors' confidence. On the other hand, most nations strictly restrict the population flow and transportation to control the spread of the pandemic, which led to the pressure of economic operation from both sides of consumption and production [2].

Therefore, in this context, Disney, as a large-scale international enterprise, has clearly reflected the impact of COVID-19 on the global economy. The offline entertainment industry is particularly affected. Since the outbreak of the epidemic, Disney has shut down all its theme parks, related businesses such as cruise ships, as well as most of the offline theaters. Disney's financial report for the third quarter of the fiscal year 2020 (October 2019 to September 2020) showed that under the impact of the epidemic, the total revenue of the quarter fell 42% compared to the previous year, and the net loss was 4.718 billion US dollars. Revenue from theme parks, experience products, and consumer products fell 85% compared to the previous year, and operating losses were \$1.96 billion. Film and television entertainment revenue fell 55% and operating profit was down 16% from the same period last year. Direct-to-consumer and international revenue increased 2% from the last year, but an operating loss of \$706 million widened by 26%. From the data, Disney's streaming media, advertising, and IP operational businesses are less affected by the epidemic.

This paper studies Disney's business model, development strategy, business plan, and other aspects, analyzes Disney's successful experience and problems encountered, makes a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the strategic methods adopted by Disney in market competition, and puts forward suggestions for the developmental strategies of Disney by using the business models. At the same time, the research group intended to find out the prospects of enterprises in the media and entertainment industry through an in-depth understanding of this example, so as to provide some reference for their future developmental strategies.

Strategic management can be divided into broad and narrow scenes. The broad scene of strategic management means using strategic management ideas to manage the whole enterprise, while the narrow scene of strategic management includes strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy control. The work of strategy formulation mainly involves organizing forces to formulate strategies according to necessary procedures and methods. The work of strategy implementation is mainly to carry out the strategy through the organizational system and make it into the action of all staff. The main work of strategic control is to evaluate the results of strategic implementation, so as to prompt employees to implement the established strategy correctly or modify the strategic plan in time according to the actual situation.

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The evolution of strategic management always closely links with market competition. Different strategic management thoughts are all about how to formulate and implement competitive strategies and obtain competitive advantages. On the other hand, technological change will also promote the change of strategic management thinking [3].

II. DATA AND METHOD

A. Data

The Walt Disney Company was founded in the 1920s by Walt Disney and Roy Disney. Headquartered in Burbank, US, the Walt Disney Company has been one of the most successful media and entertainment enterprises in the world. The enterprise was once famous for animation production and then started to develop cross-segmental business, gradually realizing the comprehensive development from single film production to multi-industry businesses. Since 1955, Disney has established 6 theme parks around the world. While expanding its business territory, Disney has a very clear development strategy. Through coalescence, acquisition, investment, and cooperation, Disney has successively owned a bunch of well-known studios and cooperated with several well-known media and internet companies. With the rapid development of science and technology, Disney has further expanded its scope that realized self-transformation and improvement in the new environment with the help of various intelligent terminals and open platforms. One of the greatest breakthroughs was the acquisition of BAM Tech and Fox and the entry into the streaming business through homemade media content. Nowadays, Disney has developed into an integrated entertainment and media company with various fields including film, animation, TV, science and technology, games, theme parks, film entertainment, consumer products, etc. It has become a typical multinational group with offices or branches in the United States and many countries in Latin America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region [4].

B. Method

SWOT analysis, also known as situation analysis, SWOT is a method that can objectively and accurately analyze the actual situation of an organization. The four letters of SWOT stand for Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat. SWOT can be divided into two parts: the first part is SW, which is mainly used to analyze internal conditions; the second part is OT, which is mainly used to analyze external conditions. Using this method, we can find out the favorable factors' worth carrying forward and the unfavorable factors to avoid, find the existing problems and corresponding solutions, in order to clarify the direction of future development.

SWOT analysis can also be divided into four strategies: SO, WO, ST, WT. SO strategy: rely on internal strengths and take advantage of external opportunities. WO Strategy: overcome internal weaknesses and take advantage of external strengths. ST Strategy: rely on internal strengths and avoid external threats. WT strategy: overcome internal weaknesses and avoid external threats.

After completing the analysis of environmental factors and

the construction of the SWOT matrix, the action plan can be developed. The basic idea of the plan is to give play to the advantages, overcome the weaknesses, take advantage of opportunities, and resolve the threat factors Considering the past, based on the present, focusing on the future. Then, using the method of system analysis and combining the factors that need to be considered, a series of countermeasures for the company could be drawn [5].

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Earlier in 2005, Robert Iger, Disney's ex-CEO, proposed his three-pillar strategy based on his vision for Disney's future: 1) generate the best creative content possible, 2) foster innovation and utilize the latest technologies, and 3) expand into new markets around the globe [6]. Specifically, Disney enhances the creativity of its brands by acquiring or cooperating with quality companies around the world. They also invite technical experts to join in, so that the company in some emerging industries such as the streaming media industry can occupy an important position. In addition, Disney has expanded the market globally, such as setting up theme parks, studios, and so on in various countries.

In recent years, Disney has also adopted some new strategic measures in response to the impact of the epidemic worldwide. Disney issued nearly \$6 billion in bonds to deal with the pandemic crisis on March 19, 2020. In the SEC's (SEC: U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission) disclosure, Disney admitted that "Our production has been interrupted on a variety of fronts, including the cancellation of major sporting events and the suspension of most film and television content production. We have closed many theme parks, suspended parades, and theater shows, and delayed the release of domestic and foreign films. Disney is suffering from supply chain disruptions and reduced advertising sales" [7].

However, in the long term, whether Disney will continue to adhere to the three-pillar strategy and whether it should make changes in any aspects will be discussed in detail in this article

A. SWOT Analysis



Fig. 1. SWOT analysis for the Walt Disney Company.

1) Strengths

The first is brand awareness. Disney has established a good brand reputation through its original high-quality films and film characters, as well as the development of a series of related industries in various aspects, making Disney world-famous. As a result, they have a huge consumer base. The company is perceived as the primary family entertainment provider and was the 13th most valuable brand (valued at \$27.4 billion) in the world in 2012 [8].

Second, after 80 years of continuous development, Disney now has a large company size and market share. Their high market share gives them sufficient capital and some ability to control the market. It's easier for Disney to expand or acquire other companies than other entertainment companies. The Walt Disney Company has acquired Pixar Animation Studios in 2006, Marvel Entertainment in 2009 and Lucasfilm in 2012. The former 2 acquisitions have already proved to be very successful in terms of revenue and profit growth. The third acquisition is expected to be just as successful because Disney has acquired rights to all the Lucasfilm previous works including Star Wars. Few other Disney competitors have had such record of successful acquisitions [8]. More importantly, they have the innovation and trial and error capital to lead the market, lead the trend and attract consumers first.

Third, Disney has its own original story. As we all know Disney's story is the foundation of all Disney's other industries, so the Disney have their own original story means that they have a complete industrial chain, so will not easily be limited by other factors such as copyright, this is the reason why they can develop more rapidly and freely in the competitive entertainment market.

Last but not least, the diversity of the Disney industry is among the best in the entertainment market. Disney operates a strategy based on the "round revenue model", also known as the "profit multiplier model", which means that Disney creates an interlocking wealth production chain of film and television entertainment, theme parks, and consumer products through the production and packaging of its source product — animation [9]. This kind of comprehensive marketing model is very rare in the market, few companies have the scale or enough capital to implement this model. But Disney has managed to create an entire chain that is valuable, rare, inimitable, and impossible for other brands to organize. As a result, this resource is a sustainable competitive advantage. Disney should develop it the more perfect, the better to expand the advantage.

2) Weaknesses

First, Disney's localization needs to be improved. As we all know, Disney is globally famous, and the Disney industry is worldwide. However, Disney's advantages of industry scale cannot be fully demonstrated due to the fact that all parts of the world are similar. Take Disneyland for example, most consumers choose to go to Disneyland only once, even though they may have been to other areas with Disneyland because they believe that the facilities and contents in Disneyland are similar. The so-called localization means that if Disney makes Disneyland in each region with local characteristics, consumers will be attracted to make multiple consumptions and earn more profits. Disney, on the other hand, is always willing to collect stories from different countries to inspire its original films. This is a good practice, but it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the national culture when making such films, so as not to have any deviation in the story due to cultural differences. This kind of mistake will cause some consumers who know the culture of the country or the background of the story to be dissatisfied, thus causing unnecessary losses.

The second weakness is Disney's rigid marketing strategy. With the popularity and promotion of new media and short videos, advertisements of many other entertainment brands appear in consumers' eyes. In contrast, Disney's lack of efforts to promote, especially in new media, may have led to the loss of millions of media network users. Most of these users are not ignorant of the Disney brand, but just because they have not received some of the latest information about Disney, which makes Disney unattractive to them. For other entertainment brands, such as Fantawild, its massive publicity and scenario advertising on short videos make consumers see a lot of novel things and attract them greatly. Thus, it seems that Disney should act on new media promotion as soon as possible to attract more consumer groups.

3) Opportunities

First, Disney should focus on overseas expansion, because Disney doesn't really focus on markets outside of North America. The North American market is only a small part of Disney's global market, and the overseas consumer group is huge and cannot be ignored. If Disney wants to grow further, it must start focusing on the markets it has previously neglected, expand its business, and reach as many places as possible where there is consumer demand.

Second, Disney needs to make innovations or introduce new technologies on the original basis to avoid consumers' aesthetic fatigue and bring them freshness. In the entertainment market there are more and more Disney-like brands, so if Disney wants to keep consumers having to keep their own characteristics under the situation of innovation, let consumers in Disney always can feel or see something different, not only different from other brands in the market, but also different from the past. Only in this way can we give consumers sensory impact and build their own attraction.

Third, Disney can take advantage of some of the regional festivals to hold events to attract consumers. Most people have the habit of celebrating festivals. On the day of festivals, most people think that festivals need a sense of ceremony, especially some important festivals such as The New Year. Disney can launch themed activities or holiday-specific activities to meet consumers' demands for a sense of ritual. For example, Disney's fireworks on New Year's Day were very successful. Many consumers came to Disney on New Year's Day only to enjoy the fireworks with their families at the castle in the evening. From this point of view, this is a very successful consumption strategy, Disney can design activities for more festivals such as Halloween to get the same result.

4) Threats

The strongest threat to Disney is local competitors elsewhere. They are strong competitors because local rivals tend to get more support from local governments and policies. These local competitors, as local brands, are related to the development of the regional and even the national entertainment industry. Of course, as entertainment industry companies, they also bring considerable income to the country and improve national GDP to a certain extent. Therefore, for the entertainment industry that is beneficial to

the region or the country, especially when there is a strong competitor like Disney in the market, the government will certainly give great support and help to make local brands more competitive.

B. Quantitative Analysis

The three-pillar strategy [6] can be analyzed as creative contents, new technologies, and global expansion. Disney has been doing outstandingly well in the former two directions. Acquisitions of excellent studios that could be potential competitive threats have been in progress as Marvel and Pixar are good examples. Meanwhile, the Research Department of Disney has been innovating new technologies such as "real-time motion capture" and applying them to its film industry. However, Disney's international expansion seems stagnant over the last 10 years and is incompatible with the outstanding performance in other directions.

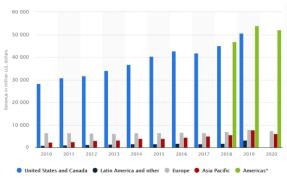


Fig. 2. Revenue of the Walt Disney Company from 2010 to 2020, by region (in million U.S. dollars).

Note: An obviously incompatible performance of Disney between revenue and purchasing power & populations in Asia Pacific region.

According to Fig. 2 [10], Disney has been overly laying particular emphasis on North America, which to a certain extent, ignores the rapid development of Asian Pacific economies. Although Tokyo Disneyland was built in 1983 and resulted in a fantastic marketing performance over years, Disney failed to extend its roots to other Asian countries in that golden time of the 1980s. On the contrary, the upper limit of the Japanese market determines its inability to reach the size of the North American market. Such loss of opportunities might be irreversible since with the gradual saturation of the markets in developed countries such as Japan and South Korea, Disney has gradually lost the opportunity to occupy a favorable market position compared to competing with local companies. Therefore, an unsaturated Chinese market will be the best entry point for completely opening the Asian Pacific strategy of Disney.

It can be predicted that China will be the focus of the future development of Disney. The greatest advantage of Disney China is that China has a massively huge population, insanely rapid economic development, and proliferated expansion of its entertainment industry, which also makes it possible to generate huge profits in the case of unfavorable box office share. If we separate China into North and South, Disney indeed had paid attention in the Southern market that mainly manifested in Hongkong and Shanghai Disneyland that were respectively established in 2005 and 2011. However, with the great success of the Southern Market in the first two decades of the 21st century, Northern China has been also growing at

a steady speed but somehow, neglected by the strategic development of Disney. Due to historical and cultural factors, the North has always been the core zone for almost every dynasty in China that accumulated approximately half of the population, most of the national heavy industries, as well as the unsaturated market capacity.

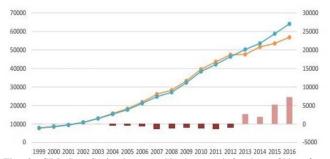


Fig. 3. GDP Per Capita between Northern and Southern China from 1999-2016 (in Yuans).

Note: Yellow Line: GDP Per Capita in Northern China. Blue Line: GDP Per Capita in Southern China. Red lump: Difference of GDP Per Capita between Northern and Southern China.

Fig. 3 shows the economic development in China by region, even if the South possesses a slightly higher developmental speed due to more harbors and international cooperation, which also means the potential for the North has not been entirely excavated. Building a park after the pandemic will be the entry point of the Northern Chinese market, and Beijing would be the prior choice since it has developed at a surprisingly high speed. The economic indicators of Beijing from 2010 to 2020 can be best expressed in GDP Per Capita that proliferated from just over 10 thousand dollars to over 24 thousand, which guaranteed the high purchasing power; meanwhile, the population growth of Beijing is also an indispensable factor that from around 13.5 million in 2000 to over 21.9 million in 2020 - 8.4 million of population growth in just 20 years [11], [12]. It is predictable that only through tickets income from Disney parks will provide a steady considerable income for the Disney company. From the macro perspective, Beijing has been expanding. Earlier in 2015, Beijing annexed Tongzhou as a new district that is also the administrative vice capital of China, meaning new opportunities for cooperation. The increased area will resolve the possible occupation worries for building up a Disneyland, for which the Universal Studio is a precedent. Beijing Universal Studios began to enter the construction phase in 2016 and will be put into use in September 2021 [13], although the opening time of the park has been repeatedly delayed due to Covid-19. Such cooperation with celebrated international enterprises is unquestionably a win-win pattern that is beneficial to the brand building of a city and will escalate the prestige and popularity of the city. Besides, famous parks such as Universal or Disney landing in a city will bring more tourists that promote the development of tourism, stimulate economic growth, which means more employment opportunities and consumption so that they promote urban development in a variety of ways. In addition, the arrival of Disneyland will also improve the quality of life of the people in entertainment. According to the distribution map of Disneyland worldwide, Northern China that owns permanent residents for approximately 581 million has not yet owned a Disneyland.

A new Disney Park constructed in Northern China will provide convenience for local citizens that can take their family and friends to the park to visit novel attractions and experience different cultures without traveling.

The park business of Business was pounded by the pandemic during the entire 2020, for which the loss in the Park & Resort segment of 2020 due to Covid-19 reached over 2600 million dollars globally [14]. It will take quite a while for Disney to rejuvenate so that finding more partners globally will help Disney exploit its strengths and avoid its weaknesses. As the second-largest economy in the world, there are in total 143 Chinese companies that reach the World Top 500 companies, which holds the dominant position since 2020 [15]. Bellwethers of these companies in the entertainment industry marked by Tencent that could result in potential cooperation with Disney should be considered as the primary business partner of Disney rather than direct competitors. Throughout the development history of Disney, content IP is its true engine.

The cohesion of fans of Disney is gorgeous, which is mainly due to its huge IP manufacturing chain that benefited from the perennial goal of the brand to reach beyond just entertainment thus intentionally facilitating a "close association with and appropriation of childhood innocence as a personal and cultural memory for several generations of parents and children in many countries" [17]. With the Little Mermaid (1989) being an outset, Disney has begun its unique Animation Renaissance in the period of 1989-1999, which created a dozen of indelibly high-quality animation IP and reflected the "phase of aesthetic and industrial growth at the Studio" and becoming the key factor for the later resurgence of the "resplendence of the artistic ideologies of the Disney-Formalist period" [18]. After a long history of acquisitions, Disney and its sub-studios have created many internationally renowned IPs, such as Avengers of Marvel, Star Wars of LucasFilm, Monsters, INC. of Pixar.

Streaming subscribers 250 150 100 2019 Q1 2019 Q2 2019 Q3 2019 Q4 2020 Q1 2020 Q2 2020 Q3 2020 Q4 Netflix Disney ViacomCBS Lions Gate Entertainment

Fig. 4. Streaming Subscribers of Disney Worldwide (2019-2020) [16]. Note: The company wishes to see around 230-260 million subscribers by 2024, which means that there will be more room for Asian Pacific subscribers.

According to Fig. 4, Disney had been developing its streaming services as a brand new media that expectedly will produce much closer attention and cohesion of its users than traditional media. The key that opens the gate of streaming to Disney is its firm grasp of raw materials from its film IP, which makes the subscribers growth lightening fast and adhere to the brand– from around 25 millions in 2019 Q1 to approximately 150 millions in 2020 Q4. The studio model can also flatten R&D organizations to improve

decision-making and execution efficiency. Taking Tencent as a potential partner, the similar Acquisition & Studio model for Tencent has also been creating outstanding, original video game IPs such as League of Legends, Arena of Valor, and other original video game IPs has gathered a large fan base all over the world. Therefore, a strong alliance is an optimal solution for Disney after the heavy punch of the Covid-19. Disney needs to cooperate to attract more different customer groups around the world, and sometimes even directly develop customers from partners, in order to maintain its financial advantage for many years and have more creative content to make Disney's story get rid of "cliche". Cooperating with local companies can also avoid unnecessary troubles and losses. Disney has been stressing out creating more localized contents for the overseas market, but the result is unsatisfactory. The main difficulty is to endure the local government policies that always protect local companies in competition while creating attractive content that fits the local preferences. As an example, Disney's "Mulan" was based on a famous female hero in Chinese history, but both the animated and live-action movies of Disney have somehow deviated from her original image, which consequently resulted in a dismal performance in the Chinese market. To resolve the issue, cooperation with local brands and giving them a high degree of freedom in IP creations is necessary to ensure the core values of the film being accepted by the preponderance of people.

addition, there are many possibilities cross-segmental cooperation. Disney should not be limited to the development of its partners in the industry chain but expand the magnitude of its business empire. One way to engage in expansion is advertisement that the income will be considerable for Disney credits to its own creative contents. Disney should maintain this privilege as in its new movie "Cruella" as the original Disney's IP, has gathered many globally famous brands from different aspects like the cosmetic company MAC. Such bold attempts centered around its distinctive IPs should be suggested and applied more in the future development of its global strategy.

The synergy in cross-segmental businesses is the ultimate goal of the three-pillar strategy and innovating new technologies is the cornerstone that helps maintain this effect.

With the development of science and technology, customers have become more and more demanding in the entertainment industry. The pressure of competition in the entertainment industry is also way higher than before, hence for Disney, developing new technologies implies maintaining core competitiveness. Applying new technologies in parks & resorts will ensure better experience and stronger competitiveness. Customers always prefer to see new things and get bored of the convention, in other words, the lack of development of the amusement park will reduce its playability. Disney has been aware of this threat so that it can keep improving the scale and the quality of its parks. On top of that, new technologies in Media networks and films mean resolutions towards previous technical issues that provide more specific efficacy and a smoother viewing experience. Taking the "real-time motion capture" as an example, Disney has utilized this technique in various superhero films and received excellent market responses. New technologies will attract more customers even those who were not potentially

interested in Disneyland so that will create more profits. Disney's movies were mainly developed for kids and adolescents, but in recent years, we have seen more older customers become fans of Disney movies due to its overwhelming propaganda supported by tremendous innovations and applications of new technologies. These successful market cases of Disney undoubtedly prove the significance of new technology for market competition.

IV. CONCLUSION

Through a comprehensive and deep analysis of Disney in terms of the current situation, we explore that Disney is supposed to launch the Disney Plus series, the series led to more films being released and more money being made for Disney. The key point of Disney plus is to regionalize films and televisions of Disneyland. This means that Disney parks should conform to local cultural characteristics. Specifically, they are expected to hold more Mulan-themed elements of Shanghai Disneyland. Meanwhile, Disney needs to master innovative technologies as an attempt to optimize customer perception and experience. This approach provides Disney with more benefit.

There seems to be a synergy (Synergy effect refers to the overall effects of distinctive aspects of production, marketing, and management, using the same resources together at respective stages), and innovative technology is the basis of the synergistic influences. All developments of Disney, including the renovation of Disney Parks and the production of Disney animations, require support of innovative technologies. Supported by science and technology, Disney will continue to carry out a virtuous cycle, which is also facilitated by synergies: the more channels they have to develop technology, the more attractions toward consumers to watch Disney movies or buy Disney dolls etc. In addition, it is going to make substantial profits to construct a strong capital system. These funds can be invested in other enterprises to develop cooperative relationships. In that way, Disney can use technology from other companies, this creates the effect that one plus one is greater than two. In other words, the two companies can work together to share technology and customer bases or in human resources. Therefore, they can expand overseas markers by synergy.

By and large, we harbor the idea that the current overseas market revenues take around 10% of total revenues from Disney. We would like to see at least a 5% increase in revenue by 2030.

However, our strategy and the corresponding solution did not deeply specify how Disney should take the most active and effective measures to deal with the unexpected epidemic. The outbreak caused Disney to close its parks and their films could not be shown on the screen, which caused financial damage to Disney. The measures mentioned in this paper will depend on the situation of the epidemic. For example, the idea of establishing a Disneyland in northern China may be delayed by the epidemic, and the opening date cannot be determined clearly. Although all of those will be affected by covid-19, our strategy enables Disney to recover as much as possible from the damage caused by the pandemic, because, with or without the impact of the epidemic, Disney should invest money and manpower in technology research and

development and international expansion.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

These authors contributed equally. The first two part — "Introduction" and "Data and Method" was finished by Ruihe Tian as well as the main typesetting work; Jiyu Jiang analyzed and concluded the SWOT; Haoyang Dong contributed to the major audition and modification of the article and wrote the "Result and Discussion" section; Qingzhen Du made the overall conclusion of the article as the composer of the conclusion segment.

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