

# Disney, A Dangerous Role in Globalization

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As a giant in the cartoon and toy industries, Disney Company has an unshakable position in the course of economic globalization, as well as being a remarkable symbol of globalization. Nowadays the majority of worldwide kids have been exposed to Disney commercial products in their childhood, and those famous characters like Mickey Mouse and Snow White play an important role of their happy memories. At the beginning, Disney was just a classic studio creating some short films, but today it has become one of the largest and best-known independent media conglomerates all over the world. Behaviors of Disney may even have an impact on worldwide culture and economy. Many people appreciate Disney as a remarkably positive leader of globalization because through media it contributes an imaginative wonderland to people all around the world. However, one should consider that the globalization of Disney also has a dark side: the hidden messages in Disney cartoons and the business practices of Disney have various negative effects on the world.

It is true that Disney holds great sway over different cultural groups because it promotes intercultural communication and reduces cultural conflicts. As a renowned transnational media enterprise, Disney

tends to create products with multicultural identities that are accepted by audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, a famous animated cartoon Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp was based on an Arabic science fiction tale, but Disney added global elements by changing characters' way of speaking and behaving, in order to increase global audiences' understanding of Arab native culture, and to reduce conflicts caused by cultural misunderstandings. In recent years, 70% of Disney media productions witnessed the trend of cultural integration that contributed to cultural diversity and reduced the cultural barriers. In addition, children are the main target audiences; exposure to diverse cultural characters may easily create an open attitude to foreign culture and the larger world, which is beneficial for children to have an international perspective in the future.

Disney provides chances for intercultural communication for their global customers; however, we cannot ignore the fact that the hidden messages of Disney products have a negative effect on children's worldview. For instance, Disney films present stereotype—s such as the sanitized version of American history and the outworn values. Specifically, Disney female characters are portrayed as relatively passive figures that

encourage girls to accept traditional gender roles. Classical female characters like the princess Snow White and Cinderella are often crying and worrying rather than working or fighting to solve problems and it is usually princes who rescue them at the end of stories, which is likely to cause girls' behavior of relying on men. Also, Donald Duck is always portrayed as a scrooge that expresses the traditional values in the cartoon series. Further, Disney films often positively remove the negative sides initiated by the United States in order to recreate the popular image of America as a freedom country without war and conflict (Giroux, 1998). Children are an immature group, who are unable to distinguish right from wrong quickly and are vulnerable to accept new information without consideration. Exposure to Disney films too much may lead children to accept gender stereotype, racism, capitalism, and so on. Yet many parents view the label of Disney as a guarantee of being appropriate for children and often play Disney videos for companying babies, but they may fail to recognize that the harmful hidden messages in the videos can easily impact children. Many children are exposed to Disney films with minimal parental guidance, which is detrimental for them to foster a correct outlook in the real life. Surprisingly,

even though they contain negative messages, the prevalence of Disney products is difficult to limit because it takes up a huge percentage on national revenues, which puts pressure on the government. When Disney activities are out of regulation, it is likely to continue promoting prejudiced information, and thus have a strictly unfavorable impact on children's worldview.

Although Disney provides better future work prospects in a globalized world, one should consider that the globalization of Disney promotes the growing inequalities between rich and poor countries through its large-scale exploitation and illegal behaviors in underdeveloped countries. Disney has promised that they would help build thriving economies in developing nations and obey local regulations, but actually, what they did is inadequate or even the opposite. In most cases, Disney is one of the biggest symbols of 'the global sweatshop' and has been a leader in corporate exploitation of Third World low-wage labor. According to a survey by the National Labor Committee, the treatment of workers in Disney plants in Haiti is inhumane, including the following points: pay is not enough for workers to live on; Disney forces laborers to work like crazy to meet quotas; workers are harassed by bosses; workers lack insurance in healthcare



and other benefits (Sweeney, 1999). The most horrible behavior of Disney treatment is using child labor. Sydney Schanberg, a famous American journalist who won the Pulitzer Prize, published his assignment "Six Cents an Hour" in Life magazine to introduce the cruel fact of the children employed by multinational companies. Finding cheap children labors in order to drive up profits is an inhumane treatment of children and is legally unwarrantable. In addition, global trade creates waste and pollution, which has an unfavorable influence on natural resources and healthcare of civilians in underdeveloped countries, who are forced to

live in the harsh environments created by international companies. The inequities in the global division of labor increase the gap between rich and poor countries, and people in underdeveloped societies began to appear as generic global victims.

Even though some critics support that the globalization of Disney has a positive effect on global culture diversity and promotion in some degree, we cannot run out that it misleads children and leads to an inhumane disaster in poor countries. It is necessary for global organizations to supervised large multinational companies in the progress of globalization. Commercial activities which

are prone to negatively changing the outlook of people's life and damaging the environment in underdeveloped areas should be forbidden and punished. For Disney, it should fulfill the social responsibility of the guidance for children, and set up an appropriate view of profit.

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