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Theme park experience: Factors explaining amount of pleasure from a theme park visit, time allocation for theme park activities, perceived value, queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty

Maksim Godovykh

University of Central Florida, maksim.godovykh@ucf.edu

Ady Milman

University of Central Florida

Alsi D.A. Tasci

University of Central Florida

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Factors explaining amount of pleasure from a theme park visit, time allocation for theme park activities, perceived value, queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty

Abstract

A considerable amount of literature describes concepts that predict theme park visitor behavior. Although previous studies made an effort to measure the impact of several variables on theme park visitors' loyalty, there is a lack of empirical attention on the impact of some consumption variables such as previous experience, perceived queuing quality, waiting time, using of virtual queuing, and the role of anticipating and remembering the visit. The current study introduces several new experience concepts that were not previously discussed in the literature: the amount of pleasure from anticipation, visiting, and remembering the experience, and time allocation for waiting in lines, amusement activities, and food consumption. Factors that explain these variables, as well as factors that explain perceived value, queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty were investigated through survey data from a cross-sectional study. The results demonstrate that previous theme park experience has significant influence on customer loyalty, and explains the amount of pleasure visitors receive from anticipation, remembering, and the actual visiting experience. Another important finding is related to the role of virtual queuing, which has relationships with perceived value, perceived waiting time, perceived queuing quality, satisfaction, loyalty, as well as the amount of pleasure from anticipation, visiting, and remembering the theme park visit. Theoretical and managerial implications and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: Theme Parks, Satisfaction, Loyalty, Virtual Queuing

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Introduction

Theme parks are multi-dimensional landscapes of popular culture that provide a space of objects, images, and ideas, both real and imaginary (Browne & Browne, 2000; King, 2002). These contemporary entertainment attractions attempt to create a fantasy-atmosphere of another place and time, concentrate on a dominant theme with likely sub-themes, and have closed geographical boundaries with admission price at the gate. Theming is typically reflected in architecture, landscaping, costumed personnel, rides, shows, food services, merchandising, and any other guest experiences (Milman, 2009). The theme is mainly communicated through visual and vocal statements, but also through other senses and other experiential consumption variables (Milman, 2009). These symbolic landscapes of cultural narratives typically feature follow-ups on stories, books, plays, films, and other intellectual property in which the guests immerse themselves (King, 2002).

In the past several decades, the global theme park industry has grown considerably. In 2018, attendance at top themed attraction operators like Walt Disney Attractions, Merlin Entertainment Group and Universal Parks and Resorts have exceeded half a billion visitors for the first time, equivalent to almost 7% of the world population (Rubin, 2019). While these major operators experienced 5.4% overall growth in 2018, the increase in attendance was mainly led by theme park operators in China like OCT Park China, Chimelong Group and Fantawild, where attendance increased by 15.1%, 9.6%, and 9.3%, respectively (Rubin, 2019). Attendance at the top 20 North American theme parks increased in 2018 by 4%, a substantial increase for this market, representing growth of 6.1 million visits (Rubin, 2019). According to Technavio (2018), the industry is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of over 8% during the 2017-2022 period, from \$53.12 billion in 2017 to \$79 billion by 2022. Projections also suggest that sustained growth would be due to the rise in urban population, growth in GDP-per-capita, the rise in the middle-class population, and the increase in international tourism expenditure (Rubin, 2016).

With the current continued development, well-known theme park brands have become destinations that feature hotels, campgrounds, entertainment zones, convention centers, restaurants, and retail establishments (Rubin, 2018, 2019). This trend is accelerating worldwide as many theme parks are now facing competition with other entertainment businesses, and therefore integrate their experience offerings with harmonizing leisure and hospitality sectors to increase their market share and generate auxiliary economic impacts (Clavé, 2007, Milman et al., 2012). The new integrated business encourages visitors to

remain in the operator's territory and experience other facilities that are linked to the theme park's brand (Rubin, 2016).

The global theme park industry has become a staple of consumers' leisure activities reflected by its continuous growth, even in mature markets. Theme park experiences occupy a "sweet spot" among consumers as they incorporate elements of the various realms of consumer experience (Pine and Gilmore, 2011). These entertainment complexes have become a playground for consumers' leisure activities and visitation numbers are expected to grow as the global industry continues to offer a high-quality core product that generates positive emotions, coupled with the esthetic physical environment (Torres et al., 2018). The theme park playground not only offers experiences for passive patrons who are expected to be entertained, but also provides opportunities for human interactions to complete the overall experience. For example, Ali et al.'s (2018) structural model to quantify customer satisfaction at theme parks concluded that the physical environment, interaction with customers, and interaction with staff significantly influenced customer satisfaction.

Nonetheless, increasing consumer expectations is a major challenge in the theme park industry. Therefore, it is imperative to better understand the diverse drivers of consumers' satisfaction and loyalty in the context of theme park visits to stay competitive in the marketplace. While several studies made an effort to measure the impact of a variety of variables on theme park visitors' satisfaction and loyalty (Fotiadis, 2016; Manthiou et al., 2016; Milman & Tasci, 2017; Fu, Kang, & Tasci, 2017), there is a gap in the literature on the impact of guest experience prior, during, and after the visit on theme park's satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, as the industry evolves, new consumption variables such as prior visit experiences, perceived queuing quality, and the role of anticipation and remembering the visit may also impact visitors' overall outcomes. Hence, the goal of this study is to analyze the influence of prior visit experience, queuing quality, visit anticipation, as well as perceived value and sociodemographic characteristics on theme park visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Hence, the aim of this study is to analyze new experience concepts including the amount of pleasure from anticipation, visiting, and remembering the experience, and time allocation for waiting in lines, amusement activities, and food consumption and investigate the factors

influencing these new experience variables as well as perceived value, queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Literature Review

Predictors of Theme Park Visitor Behaviors

The literature points out to several concepts that predict theme park visitor behavior, especially the levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Examples of these predictors include theme park visitors' sociodemographics; past visit experience; theme park visit quality related to the physical environment, parking, thrill rides, rest areas, crowding, cleanliness; human interactions with staff and other visitors; and intangible aspects related to visitor attitude and perception (Ali et al., 2018; Fotiadis 2016; Geissler & Rucks, 2011; Hsing et al., 2014; Jin et al., 2015; Milman et al., 2012).

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Sociodemographic variables have traditionally been the basic predictors of human behavior (Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Sheth, 1977; Swanson & Horridge, 2004; Trinh et al. 2014; Wilkins, 2011; Wolin & Korgaonkar, 2003). However, many empirical studies did not find sociodemographic variables as reliable predictors on theme park visitors' level of satisfaction (Ryan et al., 2010; Geissler & Rucks, 2011; Milman et al., 2012; Jin et al., 2015). Recently, Milman and Tasci (2017) investigated the influence of age, gender, education, marital status, ethnicity, and income on theme parks' levels of satisfaction and loyalty, and the results did not reveal any influence from these sociodemographic variables. On the other hand, Spinks et al. (2005) concluded that the level of theme park visitor satisfaction might vary according to demographic characteristics such as visitors' origins, gender, and age groups. Considering the ongoing interest in sociodemographics as instrumental segmentation variables, their influence on theme park consumption behavior is tested in the current study. Sociodemographic variables included age, gender, education, income, and race, and consumption behavior variables included the amount of pleasure from anticipation prior to the visit, from the actual visit, and from recollection of the theme park visit, perceived amount of time spent on waiting in lines, on amusement activities (rides and shows), and on food and beverage consumption, perceived value for money, perceived queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Past Visit Experience

Past experience is described as the history of the previous relationship of a customer with a business (Oh & Parks, 1997). Past experience has also been a traditional predictor of consumer behavior due to its influence on awareness and familiarity (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Zaichkowsky, 1985), which then help reducing uncertainty and risk, and thus induce positive feelings (Burch, 1969; Tasci & Knutson, 2003; Tasci & Boylu, 2010). Previous studies suggest that prior experience influenced customer intentions and behavior (Bagozzi, 1981; Lehto, Kim, & Morrison, 2006). Previous knowledge was described as one of the most important antecedents of trust in tourism (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004), while previous experience was also described as an important component of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Oh & Parks, 1997).

Theme park research also revealed the influence of the past visit experience. For example, Ryan et al. (2010) found that repeat visits were antecedents for visitor satisfaction and recommending the park to others. Milman and Tasci (2017) also investigated if satisfaction and loyalty were influenced by past visits, the number of past visits, and staying overnight at the theme park's destination. The results pointed out the influence of overnight stays on the level of satisfaction, and the influence of the number of past visits on the likelihood to revisit theme parks. Thus, the relationship of past theme park visit experience with theme park consumption was tested in this study. Theme park visitors' past visit experience included the number of past visits and the time after the last visit, and consumption behavior variables included the amount of pleasure from anticipation prior to the visit, from the actual visit, and from recollection of the theme park visit, perceived amount of time spent on waiting in lines, on amusement activities (rides and shows), and on food and beverage consumption, perceived value for money, perceived queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Theme Park Visit Quality

The majority of theme park research focused on different aspects of the theme park visiting experience as predictors of visitor behavior, particularly levels of satisfaction and loyalty. A variety of components of a theme park visit, both tangible and intangible, have been proposed to be predictors of satisfaction and loyalty. For example, Jensen (2007) suggested that theme park visitors base their overall satisfaction on motivators like entertainment, educational

events, socializing or more peripheral elements like parking, seating areas, and restrooms. Ryan et al. (2010) identified six dimensions to measure visitor satisfaction: The park's atmosphere, thrill rides, degree of crowding, rest areas, and reasonable admission prices. Geissler and Rucks (2011) concluded that visitors evaluate their theme park visits primarily on their overall park experiences like food quality and variety, the park's cleanliness, and atmosphere, as well as visitors' perception of admission price value. Milman et al. (2012) pointed out to the staff's knowledge of the theme park, roller coasters' safety, the park's security, and ticket prices as the most important attributes impacting visitors' satisfaction, and Cheng et al. (2016) suggested that recreation experience, park services, park environment, guidance information, or amusement consumption are the key drivers of customer satisfaction.

Among the tangible variables, crowding has increasingly gained attention since theme park operators are often faced with the challenge of overcrowding and long waiting in lines. Budruk et al. (2002) concluded that perceived, expected, and preferences for crowding and density, actual density, in addition to visitors' previous experience at the attraction may impact patrons' level of satisfaction. Yet, recent empirical studies indicated that crowds were not the most significant variable influencing the selection of a particular theme park visit (Pan et al., 2018).

Even though the crowds may not directly influence satisfaction or loyalty, they may exert significant influences through the perceived cost of time. Fotiadis (2016) found that satisfaction and loyalty were significantly affected by the visitors' participation intensity measured by the time visitors spent on each activity in the park. Crowds may both increase the waiting time and reduce the time of involvement in the amusement activities. Waiting is described as a common attribute of leisure experience (Dawes & Rowley, 1996). Effective service management involves converting waiting time into a pleasant experience. Li (2010) found that perceived waiting time, waiting time information, and the waiting environment were the three elements of influencing theme park visitors' waiting time satisfaction.

Physical characteristics of the environment could also influence visitor behavior (Bateson, 1992); Maister (1985) found that the width of the queue could influence visitors' perceptions of waiting time.

One of the crowd management methods gradually used by the industry is virtual lines, which allows visitors to navigate through amusement activities without physically waiting in line or waiting too long. However, its role in visitor behavior has not been tested thus far. While

several contributions addressed the impact of the quality of waiting experience on perceived service quality and customer satisfaction (Katz, Larson, & Larson, 1991; Bitran & Lojo, 1993, Lee & Lambert, 2005; Li, 2010), the influence of virtual lines on perceived waiting time, the impact of perceived queuing time, and queuing quality on visitors' satisfaction and loyalty received very little attention in theme parks context. Considering the potential influence of waiting in lines and virtual lines, their relationship with theme park consumption variables including satisfaction and loyalty was tested in this study.

In addition, the theme park visit quality is dependent on the individual theme parks' products and services. Each theme park is unique in its infrastructure, amenities, services, as well as the core amusement products. Therefore, theme park consumption can be expected to be influenced by the theme park visited as well. Thus, the brand name's influence on theme park consumption variables was tested in this study.

Intangible Aspects Related to Visitor Attitude and Perception

Several intangible variables related to theme park visitors' attitudes and perceptions have also been tested for their influences on levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Bigné et al. (2005) demonstrated how visitor pleasure and emotion arousal influenced satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Hsing et al. (2014) showed that a theme park's service quality, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy had a significant influence on customer satisfaction. Manthiou et al. (2016) recognized the role of experience in generating long-term memories in the minds of consumers and suggested that experience is a key predictor of visitors' satisfaction and recollection, which leads to loyalty (Manthiou et al., 2016).

The contribution of experiential quality to visitors' overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions were also studied by Kao et al. (2008) who identified four experiential constructs that influenced satisfaction, which in turn related positively to loyalty intentions. The four constructs were visitor immersion during consumption, surprise, participation or interaction, and fun. Fu, Kang, and Tasci (2017) found that visitors' attitude and flow experience influence their loyalty towards the theme park brand. Milman and Tasci (2017) investigated if satisfaction and loyalty were influenced by perceived value for money and Schmitt's (1999) five experiential dimensions (sense, feel, think, act, and relate). The results confirmed the influence of perceived value on both satisfaction and loyalty, yet only the feel dimension influence on satisfaction, suspected to exert an indirect influence on loyalty. Their study also

revealed the influence of satisfaction on loyalty, however, perceived value's influence on loyalty was greater than that of satisfaction. Based on this discussion, the influence of perceived value for money on satisfaction and loyalty, and the influence of satisfaction on loyalty were tested in this study.

Despite the increasing attention in the literature to theme park experience, some key experiential consumption variables have been neglected so far. Experience is described by Kahneman, Wakker, and Sarin (1997) as an amount of pleasure or displeasure evoked from an event from anticipating, experiencing, or remembering it. Every moment of an experience which influence pleasure and displeasure can be described as an instant utility, or the basic unit of experience, which is "the hedonic value of a moment of experience as immediately reported or recorded" (Kahneman et al., 1997, p. 388). The remembered or recollected utility refers to retrospective evaluations of the previous experience, while the anticipated utility is related to the amount of pleasure evoked from savoring the future experience (Morewedge, 2016). Carmon and Kahneman (1996) investigated the experience of queuing and found that a long line that ended with a positive emotional state led to a higher level of remembered experience than a shorter queue. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) advanced the idea that anticipation and recollection phases are important components of the tourism experience. Barnes, Mattsson, and Sorensen (2016) investigated the remembered experience of safari park visitors and concluded that longer-term remembered experiences have stronger effects on customers' revisit intentions than satisfaction after the visit. Hence, splitting visitor experience into its components (i.e., anticipated experience, remembered experience, etc.) makes it possible to analyze the relationship between these variables and their individual effects on outcomes.

The effects of anticipated and remembered experience were described in previous studies. Anticipation theory has shown that levels of anticipation would initially be high after the purchase, then decrease, rising again before the event takes place (Sharples, 2018). A few papers addressed the impact of anticipation on consumer choice and satisfaction (Shiv & Huber, 2000; Harrison & Beatty, 2011; Godovykh, 2019; Koenig-Lewis & Palmer, 2014). One more interesting correlate is related to the influence of the level of anticipation on remembered experience (Kahneman, Fredrickson, Schreiber, & Redelmeier, 1993). Witz, Kruger, Scollon, and Diener (2003) described the influence of predicted and remembered experience on people's desire to repeat the experience. There is a lack of empirical attention on the impact of anticipation and remembering the theme park visits which are characterized

by the highest level of visitors' experiential consumption on levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Hence, the influence of the amount of pleasure from anticipation and remembering both satisfaction and loyalty were tested in this study.

Research Methods

Study Context

Orlando's most popular theme parks (Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando, Sea World) were chosen as the context of this study. More than 50 million patrons visited the Walt Disney World's four theme parks in 2017 (Magic Kingdom: 20.4 million guests; Disney's Animal Kingdom: 12.5 million; Epcot: 12.2 million; Disney's Hollywood Studios: 10.7 million), Universal Orlando's two theme parks welcomed about 20 million visitors, while Sea World Orlando hosted about 4 million visitors in 2017 (Bilbao, 2018).

Research Instrument

The purpose of the study was to analyze the amount of pleasure from anticipation, visiting, and remembering the experience, and time allocation for waiting in lines, amusement activities, and food consumption as well as investigate factors that explain these variables besides perceived value, queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. Multiple-item scales of the different constructs were included in the questionnaire. Based on the literature, satisfaction was measured using Oliver's (1997) 5-item 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree), including the following items: "This is one of the best parks I visited," "I am satisfied with my decision to visit the park," "my choice to visit the park was a wise one," "I have really enjoyed myself in the park," and "I am sure it was the right thing to visit the park."

Visitor loyalty was measured by a 7-item 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree) established in previous research (Bigne et al., 2005; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Tasci, 2017), by asking respondents to rate their agreement on the following statements: "I would like to say positive things about the park to other people," "I would like to recommend the park to someone who seeks my advice," "I would like to encourage friends and relatives to visit the park," "I would consider the park as my first choice to visit," "I would like to

revisit the park in the next few years,” “I would choose the park for my vacation even if it costs more than other attractions,” and “I would promote the park in social media.”

Perceived value was measured by using a 3-item 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree) that was developed by Petrick (2002) and applied in the theme park context by Jin, Lee, and Lee (2015). The latter version was adopted in the current study and included the following statements: “Fees were fairly priced at the park,” “The quality of service at this park has a good reputation,” and “Overall quality of the service at the park was valuable.”

Perceived queuing quality was measured by using three items based on a previous study by Li (2010) on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree) by asking respondents to rate their agreement on the following statements: “I spend less time for staying in lines than I expected,” “Theme park provided comprehensive waiting information,” and “Waiting environment was organized on a good level.” The question about the relative contribution (out of 100%) of anticipation, consumption, and memory to the total pleasure was adopted from Morewedge (2015). Questions about the previous experience, time of the last visit, using virtual lines, and typical demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, income, and race/ethnicity) were also included in the questionnaire. Furthermore, a screening question about the name of their favorite attraction in the visited theme park was included to ascertain an actual visit to the theme park.

Data Collection & Analysis

The survey was designed in Qualtrics software (Qualtrics Labs, 2011) and applied to a sample of visitors who visited Orlando’s major theme parks during the past six months. Amazon’s Mechanical Turk was used to collect the data. Previous studies reported no significant difference between MTurk data compared to other modes (Bartneck, Duenser, Moltchanova, & Zawieska, 2015). A total of 148 surveys were collected from respondents who visited at least one of Orlando’s major theme parks (Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando, Sea World).

Several analysis tools of IBM's SPSS version 24.0 were applied to the data. Descriptive statistics and frequency distribution were generated to check the respondents' profile, missing data, and normality of the data. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to reduce multi-item measures into meaningful factors. Pearson correlation, t-test, and one-way ANOVA tests were used to test the relationships between sociodemographics and theme park consumption variables and the relationships between past theme park visit experience and theme park consumption variables. To understand the impact of pleasure from anticipation and remembering, time spent waiting in lines and waiting for amusement activities on satisfaction and loyalty, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Data were checked for multicollinearity through inspection of Tolerance values and VIFs (variance inflation factors). All tolerance values were higher than .25 threshold (Huber and Stephens, 1993). VIF is defined as $1/\text{tolerance}$, and is always greater than 1; a VIF value greater than 10 strongly indicates high multicollinearity (Ott & Longnecker, 2010). VIF values for all independent variables in the current study were smaller than three (3).

Results

Sample Characteristics

Respondents' sociodemographic profile and experience characteristics are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Respondents were 32.45 years old ($SD=9.79$) on average, with a slight dominance of female respondents (57.4%). The majority of the participants have College or University education (58.1%), majority having an annual income of less than USD 50,000, and more than 70% being White/Caucasians. As for the time of their visit to the theme park, 19.6% of respondents visited less than one month ago, 39.2% had their visit one to three months ago, and 41.2% visited six months ago. 31.8% of the respondents reported that it was their first theme park visit, 31.1% visited theme park once before, and 37.2% visited theme parks multiple times before. Almost one half (48.6%) of respondents used virtual lines, (e.g., fast pass, express pass) during their visit. The majority of respondents visited the Walt Disney World theme parks (53.4%).

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample

Sociodemographic characteristics	N	% or Mean
Age (mean)		32.4
Gender (n = 148)		
Male	63	42.6
Female	85	57.4
Household income (n = 148)		
Under \$30,000	37	25
\$30,000–\$49,999	38	25.7
\$50,000–\$79,999	47	31.8
More than \$80,000	26	17.5
Education (n = 148)		
High school	24	16.2
Vocational School/Associate	18	12.2
College/University	86	58.1
Master’s or PhD	19	12.8
Other	1	0.7
Ethnicity (n = 148)		
White/Caucasian	106	71.6
African American	7	4.7
Hispanic	10	6.8
Asian	19	12.8
Native American	5	3.4
Other	1	0.7

Table 2: Past Theme Park Experience of the Sample

Characteristics	N	%
Time of the visit (n=148)		
Less than one month ago	29	19.6
From one to three months ago	58	39.2
From three to six months ago	61	41.2
Previous experience (n=148)		
First visit	47	31.8
Visited once before	46	31.1
Visited more than one time before	55	37.2
Virtual queuing (e.g., fast pass, express pass) (n=148)		
Yes	72	48.6
No	76	51.4
Park visited (n=148)		
Walt Disney World	79	53.4
Universal Orlando	52	35.1
Sea World	15	10.1
Other theme parks	2	1.4

Table 3 displays the theme park consumption variables, measurement items, and factors assessed using Principal Component Analysis. The amount of pleasure the respondents received from the whole experience was measured as the relative contribution of three components, namely anticipation, visiting, and remembering. The combined amount of pleasure from anticipation (30.9%) and from remembering the visit (24.6%) surpassed their pleasure from the visit itself. Some respondents reported no pleasure (0%) from anticipating

(2 respondents), visiting (5 respondents), or remembering (7 respondents). Only anticipation component received the maximum value of 100%, while the maximum amounts of pleasure from visiting the theme park and remembering the experience were 97% and 55%, respectively. The average amount of time they spent waiting in lines (out of 100%) was 38.2%, for amusement activities (i.e., rides, shows) was 38.80%, and for consuming food and beverage was 22.6%.

Table 3: Theme Park Consumption Variables, Measurement Items, and PCA Results

Variables & Measurement Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Factor Loadings	% of Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha	Factor Grand Mean
Amount of pleasure from anticipation (savoring) of the theme park visit	148	.00	100	30.89	17.784				
Amount of pleasure from visiting the theme park	148	.00	97	44.519	19.722				
Amount of pleasure from remembering of your theme park visit	148	.00	55	24.609	12.951				
Time Allocation									
Time spent waiting in lines	148	.00	100	38.23	19.423				
Time spent with amusement activities	148	.00	80	38.80	17.354				
Time spent taking food	148	.00	56	22.63	12.383				
Perceived value^a									
Fees were fairly priced at the park	148	1	7	4.02	1.576	.906	65.181	.70	4.92
Quality of service at this park has a good reputation	148	1	7	5.36	1.278	.897			
Overall quality of the service at the park was valuable	148	1	7	5.37	1.316	.574			
Queuing quality^a									
I spend less time for staying in lines than I expected	148	1	7	4.26	1.734	.860	69.113	.76	4.81
Theme park provided comprehensive waiting information	148	1	7	5.00	1.409	.848			
Waiting environment was organized on a good level	148	1	7	5.16	1.299	.784			
Satisfaction^a									
This is one of the best parks I visited	148	1	7	5.41	1.480	.919	81.100	.94	5.61
I am satisfied with my decision to visit	148	1	7	5.59	1.339	.916			
My choice to visit was a wise one	148	1	7	5.61	1.291	.916			
I have really enjoyed myself in	148	1	7	5.68	1.320	.909			
I am sure it was the right thing to visit	148	1	7	5.72	1.239	.841			
Loyalty^a									
I would like to say positive things about to other people	148	1	7	5.74	1.213	.885	68.037	.91	5.38
I would like to recommend to someone who seeks my advice	148	1	7	5.68	1.225	.865			
I would like to encourage friends and relatives to visit	148	1	7	5.72	1.266	.862			
I would consider as my first choice to visit	148	1	7	5.31	1.470	.840			
I would like to revisit in the next few years	148	1	7	5.57	1.530	.839			
I would choose for my vacation even if it costs more than other destinations	148	1	7	4.59	1.733	.756			
I would promote in my social media	148	1	7	5.03	1.538	.711			

a: 1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree

PCA revealed that perceived value explained about 65% of the total variation with an acceptable level of reliability (Cronbach’s alpha= 0.70) and a factor grand mean of 4.92 on the 7-point Likert scale. The retained measurement items explained 69% of the variation in queuing quality with a high level of reliability (Cronbach alpha= 0.76) and a factor grand mean of 4.81 on the 7-point Likert scale. The retained measurement items explained about 81% of variation in satisfaction with a high level of reliability (Cronbach’s alpha= 0.94) and a factor grand mean of 5.61 on the 7-point Likert scale, while those for loyalty explained 68% of the total variance with a high level of reliability (Cronbach’s alpha= 0.91) and a factor grand mean of 5.38 on the 7-point Likert scale.

A variety of statistical tests was applied to analyze the influence of socio-demographic and experience variables on theme park visitor experience, perceived value, quality, satisfaction, and loyalty (Table 4 and 5). First, the variables influencing the relative contribution of anticipating, visiting, and remembering the theme park experience and perceived time spent for waiting in lines, amusement activities (i.e., rides, shows), and food and beverage consumption were analyzed. First-time visitors had significantly higher perceived levels of pleasure from anticipation (40% vs. 22%) and significantly lower levels of pleasure from visiting (34% vs. 55%) than those who visited before. One-way ANOVA did not reveal any significant differences in the level of pleasure from remembering the experience for first-time visitors (25%) and repeat visitors (26% for visiting once before and 23% for multiple prior visits).

Table 4: Test of Influence of Socio-Demographic and Experience Variables on the Amount of Pleasure from Phases of Theme Park Visit and Time Allocation for Different Activities

Sociodemographic and experience antecedents	Amount of pleasure from the theme park visit			Time allocation		
	anticipating (mean percent.)	visiting (mean percent.)	remembering (mean percent.)	waiting in lines (mean)	amusement activities (mean)	taking food (mean)
Age (Years, mean) Correlation	-.034	.062	-.048	.047	.085	-.168
Correlation significance	.677	.451	.565	.568	.305	.042*
Gender (%)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Female	29.48	47.15	23.36	27.78	40.41	22.16
Male	32.78	40.95	26.27	28.84	36.63	23.25
t-test significance	.262	.054	.184	.737	.182	.598
Level of Education (%)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Less than College	33.33	44.52	22.14	41.55	37.98	20.71
College/University	29.94	44.43	25.63	37.13	38.87	23.30
Graduate level	28.74	45.63	25.63	35.79	41.32	22.89
One-way ANOVA test significance	.523	.971	.342	.411	.786	.535

Family's annual income (%)						
Under \$30,000	30.27	49.62	20.10	42.42	36.57	20.27
\$30,000–\$49,999	32.71	39.95	27.34	40.34	37.53	22.13
\$50,000–\$79,999	31.81	42.64	25.55	33.72	39.47	25.53
More than \$80,000	27.42	25.27	25.27	35.88	42.65	21.46
One-way ANOVA test significance	.673	.140	.089	.110	.542	.240
Race/Ethnicity (%)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
White/Caucasian	31.06	43.96	24.98	38.38	38.97	21.90
Others	30.45	45.90	23.64	37.85	38.38	24.48
t-test significance	.855	.595	.592	.885	.851	.312
Visit Experience	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
First visit	40.46	34.04	25.49	40.28	33.64	24.38
Visited once before	31.80	42.19	26.00	38.15	37.22	25.28
Visited more than one time before	21.92	55.40	22.67	36.55	44.55	18.91
One-way ANOVA test significance	.000**	.000*	.375	.629	.004**	.017*
Using skip the line access (e.g., fast pass, express pass)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
No	31.76	45.55	22.68	42.14	37.88	20.37
Yes	29.96	43.42	26.63	34.10	39.78	25.01
t-test significance	.537	.511	.063	.011**	.508	.022*
Park visited	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Walt Disney	29.68	46.02	24.29	40.08	38.67	21.38
Universal	32.52	44.73	22.75	37.31	38.65	22.88
SeaWorld	31.47	36.82	31.71	32.47	39.88	27.65
One-way ANOVA test significance	.667	.218	.043*	.315	.964	.164

Of all the sociodemographic variables, only age was found to be significant in explaining the perceived time spent on food and beverage consumption. As age increases, the amount of time spent on dining during the visit decreases. On the other hand, family income and ethnicity were significant in explaining theme park consumption variables (Table 5). Respondents with income USD 50,000-\$79,999 rated their perceived theme park value significantly higher (5.38 on the 7-point Likert scale) than other income groups. They also reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction from their visit (6.04) than all other respondents. White/Caucasian respondents who visited theme parks reported significantly higher levels of perceived queuing quality (4.94), level of satisfaction (5.75), and loyalty (5.52) than all other categories of ethnicity. Age influences the time spent on food and beverage consumption, while income influences the perceived value and satisfaction, and race influences perceived queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Prior theme park visit experience explained the amount of pleasure from anticipation and the actual visiting experience. First-time visitors reported a significantly higher amount of pleasure from anticipation (40.46%), compared to the pleasure from the actual visit (34.04%). Prior visitors, on the other hand, reported a significantly higher amount of pleasure from their visiting experience than first-time visitors. Prior experience also explained the time spent on

amusement activities (i.e., rides, shows) and food and beverage consumption. First-time visitors reported significantly lower perceived time spent on amusement activities (33.6%) and a higher amount of time spent on food and beverage consumption (24.3%) than respondents who visited theme parks more than once before (44.6% and 18.9%, respectively). The results also demonstrated that previous visiting experience was correlated with satisfaction and loyalty. Respondents who visited a theme park more than once before rated their level of satisfaction (6.11) and loyalty (5.79) significantly higher than respondents with low prior visiting experience did. Previous theme park experience has a relationship with the relative contribution of pleasure derived from anticipating the visit, the perceived time spent on amusement activities and for food and beverage consumption, level of satisfaction, and loyalty.

Visitors who used virtual lines (e.g., fast pass, express pass) spent significantly less time on waiting in lines (34%) and significantly more time for food and beverage consumption (25%) than respondents who did not use virtual lines. In addition, visitors using virtual lines rated the perceived value of the park visit (5.20), queuing quality (5.40), level of satisfaction (5.84), and loyalty (5.70) significantly higher than respondents who did not use virtual lines (4.64, 4.25, 5.38, and 5.08, respectively). Using virtual lines has a relationship with all hypothesized variables (the amount of pleasure from anticipation, visiting, and remembering the theme park visit, perceived amount of time spent on waiting in lines, amusement activities, and food and beverage consumption, perceived value, perceived queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty) except for the amount of pleasure derived from anticipation/visiting/remembering or the amount of time spent on amusement activities. In addition, the type of park visited demonstrated an impact only on the contribution of pleasure from remembering the experience. Sea World visitors had a significantly higher level of pleasure from remembering the theme park experience (32%) than the Walt Disney World (24%) and Universal Orlando (23%) visitors. Thus, theme park brand name influences the remembered experience from the theme park visit.

Table 5: Test of Influence of Socio-demographic and Past Experience Variables on Theme Park Value, Queuing Quality, Satisfaction, and Loyalty

Sociodemographic and Experience antecedents	Perceived value (grand mean)	Queuing quality (grand mean)	Satisfaction (grand mean)	Loyalty (grand mean)
Age (Years, mean)	-.131	-.058	.017	.002
Correlation significance	.112	.484	.841	.985
Gender (%)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Male	5.04	4.93	5.71	5.53
Female	4.75	4.64	5.45	5.17

t-test significance	.113	.146	.192	.070
Level of Education (%)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Less than College	4.76	4.49	5.33	5.18
College/University	5.05	4.95	5.75	5.51
Graduate level	4.74	4.84	5.61	5.30
One-way ANOVA test significance	.284	.146	.189	.315
Family's annual income (%)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Under \$30,000	4.64	4.47	5.31	5.06
\$30,000–\$49,999	4.63	4.66	5.31	5.23
\$50,000–\$79,999	5.38	5.15	6.04	5.69
More than \$80,000	4.90	4.88	5.66	5.48
One-way ANOVA test significance	.004**	.067	.012*	0.075
Race/Ethnicity (%)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
White/Caucasian	5.00	4.94	5.75	5.52
Others	4.71	4.46	5.23	5.02
t-test significance	.182	.046*	.029*	.026*
Visit Experience	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
First visit	5.0213	4.7872	5.30	5.14
Visited once before	4.7391	4.6594	5.31	5.13
Visited more than one time before	4.9758	4.9455	6.11	5.79
One-way ANOVA test significance	.413	.506	.000**	.004**
Using skip the line access (e.g., fast pass, express pass)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
No	4.64	4.25	5.38	5.08
Yes	5.20	5.40	5.84	5.70
t-test significance	.002**	.000**	.017**	.001**
Park visited	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Walt Disney	4.82	4.82	5.61	5.41
Universal	5.00	4.79	5.75	5.42
SeaWorld	5.12	4.80	5.14	5.12
One-way ANOVA test significance	.477	.991	.196	.620

In addition, OLS multiple regression was employed to measure the relative influences of the amount of pleasure from anticipation and remembering, time spent waiting in lines and on amusement activities, perceived value, and perceived queuing quality on the level of visiting satisfaction on loyalty. The results indicated in Table 6 show that different variables exert different levels of influence on the level of visiting satisfaction and loyalty. Satisfaction is explained by the amount of pleasure from anticipation ($\beta = -.273$), remembering ($\beta = -.211$), perceived value ($\beta = .554$), and perceived queuing quality ($\beta = .257$).

While the influences of perceived value and queuing quality are positive, the influences of the amount of pleasure from anticipation and remembering are negative. With an R^2 value (.592), these four variables explain about 59% of the variance in the level of visiting satisfaction. The amount of pleasure from anticipation and remembering as well as perceived queuing quality and perceived value of the theme park experience influence theme park visitor satisfaction. On the other hand, loyalty was explained by only the perceived queuing quality ($\beta = .178$) and the level of visiting satisfaction ($\beta = .713$), explaining 80% of the variance in loyalty ($R^2 = .800$). Hence, perceived queuing quality and satisfaction have effects

on theme park loyalty. Finally, some expected relationships or influences were not supported by the data. Waiting in lines and for the amusement activities were not associated with the level of satisfaction or loyalty. In addition, the relative amount of pleasure from anticipation or remembering the visit experience did not influence visitor loyalty either.

Table 6: Regression Results on the Factors Explaining Satisfaction and Loyalty

Dependent Variables	Satisfaction R ² =.592 Adj.R ² =.575 F=34.141 Sig.=.000					Loyalty R ² =.800 Adj.R ² =.790 F=79.790 Sig.=.000				
	b	Std. Error	β	t	α	b	Std. Error	β	t	α
(Constant)	2.407	.629		3.828	.000	-.134	.452		-.296	.768
Amount of pleasure from anticipation	-.018	.004	-.273	-	.000	.002	.003	.038	.820	.414
Amount of pleasure from remembering	-.020	.005	-.211	-	.000	-.001	.004	-.010	-.236	.814
Time spent waiting in lines	.005	.005	.078	.931	.353	.003	.004	.043	.721	.472
Time spent waiting for amusement activities	-.003	.006	-.041	-.486	.628	.003	.004	.046	.791	.430
Perceived value	.604	.078	.554	7.731	.000	.110	.064	.104	1.723	.087
Queuing quality	.250	.072	.257	3.495	.001	.169	.051	.178	3.298	.001
Satisfaction	-	-	-	-	-	.693	.058	.713	12.029	.000

R²: Overall model statistics indicating how close the data are to the fitted regression line.

Adj.R²: R-squared adjusted for the number of predictors in the model.

F: The ratio of the Model Mean Square to the Error Mean Square.

Sig: Significance of the overall regression model.

β : Standardized beta, indicating an independent variable's level of influence on the dependent variable, keeping all other independent variables constant.

α : Alpha or p-value, reflecting the significance level of β for each independent variable.

*: Significant influence at p < .05 or p < .01 level.

All tolerance values are higher than .25

All VIF values are smaller than 10.

Discussion and Implications

The goal of the study was to analyze factors influencing the amount of pleasure from anticipation and remembering a theme park experience, time allocation for waiting in lines, amusement activities, and food consumption, perceived value, queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. The majority of respondents visited the Walt Disney World theme parks, the most visited theme parks in the U.S. The theme park brand name demonstrated an influence on the amount of pleasure from remembering the experience. Sea World visitors had a significantly higher level of pleasure from remembering the theme park experience. This result may be explained by the fact that each theme park is unique in its infrastructure,

amenities, services, and experiences and possibly interaction with animals in Sea World led to the higher level of remembered experience. The findings are surprising as Sea World and other marine mammal theme parks featuring entertaining marine mammals in captivity have gone through social responsibility scrutiny in the past decade or so (Rose & Parsons, 2019). Nevertheless, the results could be explained by the level of involvement intensity experienced by patrons at the different Orlando's mega-theme parks. Unlike the Walt Disney World or Universal Orlando theme parks, Sea World is a smaller, compact park that does not require overstimulation of senses, compared to its rivals. Visitors are likely to be less stressed in Sea World than its competing theme parks to consume all rides, shows, and other entertainment experiences, and therefore are able to take a slower pace, a more focused visit, and consequently, remember their experiences better than in its competitors where the experience is intensive and exhaustive. This may imply future theme park development to focus on smaller regional theme parks that will tell the local stories in a less intensive and less stressful pace, thus yield better memorable experiences.

All the significant consumer behavior variables (namely satisfaction, queuing quality, perceived value, and loyalty) received above the mid-point ratings. The high ratings for the theme parks may suggest that visiting theme parks constitute hedonistic experiential consumption activity (Crompton & Van Doren, 1976), where visitors respond more vividly to emotional content rather than traditional elements of service delivery (Johns & Gyimothy, 2002). Theme parks are also creators of the emerging experience economy and remain leaders in innovative design, marketing, and delivery of memorable experiences (Geissler & Rucks, 2011). The new integrated theme park business model reinforces theme parks to become destinations by encouraging visitors to remain in the operator's territory and experience hotels, restaurants, retail outlets, and other facilities linked to the theme park's brand (Rubin, 2016). The industry continues to invest in its infrastructure and experience design to meet consumer demand. For example, in late 2018, Six Flags signed more agreements for parks in China, Disney announced plans to invest \$2.5 billion to expand its Paris property; and Universal reportedly doubled the budget for its upcoming Beijing Park (Sampson, 2018).

The study findings demonstrate that past experience could influence visitor perception of the amount of time spent for waiting in lines, amusement activities, and food and beverage consumption, and that previous visit experience could have significant effects on both satisfaction and loyalty. These results complement previous findings underlining the

influence of past experience on consumer behavior due to familiarity (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Tasci & Boylu, 2010; Tasci & Knutson, 2004; Zaichkowsky, 1985). Interestingly, the time after the last visit does not have significant effects on visitor satisfaction or loyalty, while several previous studies suggested that the influence of prior attitudes on customer evaluations changed by time (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Mittal, Katrichis, & Kumar, 2001). Large theme park repeat visitors have become experts in the park's landscapes and attractions and are not stressed to consume all the park's attractions. Therefore, they can be selective of the experiences they choose, including waiting in lines, the amusement activities they select, and the time they spend on food consumption.

Almost one-half of the respondents used virtual lines. A possible explanation for these results is related to the increasing popularity of the theme park industry resulting in increasing crowds and long waiting lines. Attendance at the top 25 global theme parks increased by 4.7% in 2017 in comparison with the previous year. Theme park crowding is unique, as the parks provide multi-focus resources like attractions and rides, shows, restaurants, retail stores, and more. Guests make decisions regarding their visit path and the time they allocate for each resource, according to their personal preferences. The study's respondents reported that they are spending almost the same time for waiting in lines and for amusement activities, and therefore, they are seeking strategies to reduce their waiting time by utilizing virtual lines. Virtual lines are the latest evolution in theme parks' efforts to cut or eliminate waits for rides and attractions by using sophisticated technology.

In addition, the study's results showed that using visual lines significantly influenced visitors' outcomes. Expectedly, visitors who used virtual lines spent significantly less time waiting in lines and significantly more time for consuming food and beverage than those who did not use virtual lines. Furthermore, visitors using the virtual lines rated the perceived value of the park visit, the queuing quality, level of satisfaction, and loyalty significantly higher than people who did not use virtual lines. These findings support previous research on the influence of the crowds on visitor outcomes through the time cost. Long lines increase the waiting time and reduce the time of involvement in amusement activities (Li, 2010; Fotiadis, 2016), which is inherently connected with positive consumer outcomes. The findings call for theme park informational technology teams to continue developing innovative virtual line strategies.

Some research suggests that sociodemographic variables influence consumers' perceptions and decision-making (Spinks et al., 2005; Wilkins, 2011; Trinh et al., 2014). However, some

studies did not reveal a significant influence of sociodemographic characteristics on theme park satisfaction and loyalty (Geissler & Rucks, 2011; Jin et al., 2015). The results of the current study demonstrate that sociodemographic characteristics could influence theme park consumption variables; family income and ethnicity were significant in explaining theme park consumption outcomes. These results support sociodemographic-based segmentation for targeted marketing of theme parks.

One unanticipated finding of the study is that the amount of participants' consequential pleasure from anticipation and remembering the visit surpassed their pleasure from the visit itself. This means that for some theme park visitors, anticipation and remembering the experience can be more important than the visit itself. Moreover, respondents who reported more pleasure from anticipating their theme park experience reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction and loyalty. These results support the findings of previous psychological research on the negative correlation between anticipation and satisfaction (Kahneman et al., 1993). These relationships deserve further investigation in the context of theme parks and attractions. Theme park decision-makers should carefully consider their product portfolios and develop pre-visit experiences that may unrealistically enhance guests' anticipation associated with their forthcoming visit. Furthermore, in the experience economy, businesses intentionally stage memorable encounters, thus the experience becomes the product where memories become transformations (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Therefore, theme parks should develop customized experiences that will be inherently personal, embedded in the mind of their individual guests who have been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). These memorable experiences may lead to transformations and consumer loyalty. The Walt Disney Company already develops anticipated experiences through online and mobile tools that make it easy to plan, manage and share vacation details at home prior to departure (Walt Disney World, 2019a). However, they complement this with onsite customized experiences while visiting their theme parks. For example, the *Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique* at Disney's Magic Kingdom, an enchanted beauty salon, offers magical makeovers for young princesses and knights (Walt Disney World, 2019b).

Another interesting finding is that the amount of pleasure from anticipation and remembering the experience, as well as perceived value and perceived queuing quality influenced visitor satisfaction. Satisfaction was explained by the amount of pleasure from anticipation, remembering, perceived queuing quality, and perceived value for money, perceived value's

effect being double as much as the others. It is somewhat surprising that anticipated and remembered experience negatively influenced satisfaction, which can be explained by the fact that a higher level of anticipation leads to a lower level of positive disconfirmation, which is intimately related to satisfaction.

Limitations

First, the study was conducted in Orlando, Florida, the largest theme park destination in the world. Since every theme park offers different spatial environments, services, atmospheres, and experiences, the results may vary in different geographical locations around the U.S. or globally. Second, collecting data from an online sample rather than an onsite sample of theme park visitors may have revealed results not applicable to the typical U.S. theme park visitors. Third, the data were collected from consumers who had visited their favorite theme park within a specific time frame, which may have influences on their memory recollection related to their visiting experience (Manthiou et al., 2016). Fourth, other explanatory variables could better explain some of the dependent variables addressed in this study. Future research may check the ramifications of these four limitations by applying and comparing the findings in different types of theme parks, both in the U.S. and around the world.

Future Research

Theme parks becoming more luxury products coupled with consumers' experiential consumption expectations; it would be interesting to investigate other drivers for consumers' motivation to continue visiting these hedonistic entertainment complexes. The study introduced several new concepts in the context of theme park experiential consumption that were not previously discussed in the literature and should be studied further. First, the three sequential stages of anticipation, the consumption, and the post-visit remembered experiences should be examined more carefully, including the relative contribution of each of the consumption stages. Second, the visitors' time allocation for the different aspects of their visit, including planning, traveling to, queuing, food and beverage consumption, shopping, and other experiential activities should be evaluated in relation to their impact on satisfaction and loyalty. Third, the role of virtual lines and crowding and their impact on the overall visiting experience should be addressed from different theoretical perspectives such as psychology, sociology, and geography. Fourth, the concept of pleasure from anticipation and

remembering the experience was introduced in this study. Future research is needed to delve into the other sources of pleasure.

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