

**Analysing visitors' experience of Disneyland through online reviews:  
What are the factors that influence a visitor's experience at Disneyland?**

**Yu Myat Noe**

**A dissertation submitted to  
Auckland University of Technology  
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of  
Master of International Tourism Management (MITM)  
2025  
School of Hospitality and Tourism**

# Abstract

Theme parks like Disneyland are increasingly recognised as emotional and immersive spaces where visitors actively co-construct their experiences through storytelling, interaction, and narrative (King, 2002; Milman & Tasci, 2018; Torres et al., 2019). While extensive literature has explored theme park design, operations, and visitor motivation (Ali et al., 2018; Bai et al., 2023; Hsu, 2011b; Torres et al., 2018), fewer studies have examined how visitors experience these environments through their own narratives. User-generated content on platforms like Tripadvisor offers a valuable data into the emotional, social, and symbolic dimensions of such experiences (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2017). This study addresses this gap by analysing how visitors describe and interpret their experiences across five Disneyland locations.

The study had two primary objectives: (a) to explore how visitors articulate their experiences at Disneyland, and (b) to identify the key themes that shape those experiences across different cultural contexts. By focusing on the visitors' experience through their narratives, this research aims to add to the academic understanding of experiential tourism and provide insights for enhancing theme park engagement.

Adopting an interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methodology, the study used thematic analysis to examine 294 Tripadvisor reviews from Disneyland parks in Anaheim, Paris, Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Shanghai (Nov 2024 to Apr 2025). Manual open coding was used to categorise visitor expressions, leading to the identification of eight main themes that influenced the visitors: waiting time and queue management, attraction experience, entertainment and events, staff service and hospitality, cost/value perception, access and reservation system, crowding and space management, and character interaction. These themes reflect the emotional, operational, and symbolic dimensions of Disneyland experiences.

The findings contribute to the literature by shifting the analytical focus from operation performance or satisfaction metrics to the lived experiences and narratives of visitors. This research offers both a theoretical contribution to the field of tourism and leisure studies and practical implications for theme park operators seeking to enhance emotional engagement and culturally responsive design across global contexts.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
List of Tables.....	v
Attestation of Authorship .....	vi
Acknowledgements .....	vii
1.0 Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the research.....	1
1.3 Purpose of the research .....	2
1.4 Methodology.....	3
1.5 Overview of the dissertation .....	3
2.0 Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 History of Theme Parks .....	5
2.3 Definition of Theme Park .....	8
2.4 Types of theme parks with examples .....	9
2.5 Thematic attributes.....	12
2.6 Theme Park Experience .....	13
2.7 Disney Theme Parks.....	17
2.8 Disney Park Visitors' Motivations .....	20
2.9 Tripadvisor Reviews of Visitor Experiences .....	23
2.10 Gaps between literature review and proposed study .....	24
3.0 Chapter Three: Methodology .....	26
3.1 Introduction.....	26
3.2 Research Question .....	26
3.3 Research Paradigm.....	26
3.4 Research Methodology.....	28
3.5 Population and Sampling .....	29
3.6 Data collection .....	31
3.7 Researcher Positionality .....	33
3.8 Data analysis – Thematic Analysis .....	34

3.9 Summary.....	38
4.0 Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion .....	40
4.1 Introduction.....	40
4.2 Overview of the findings .....	42
4.2.1 Waiting Time and Queue Management .....	42
4.2.2 Attraction Experience .....	43
4.2.3 Entertainment and Events.....	46
4.2.4 Staff Service and Hospitality .....	48
4.2.5 Cost/ Value .....	50
4.2.6 Access and Reservation System.....	51
4.2.7 Crowding and space management .....	55
4.2.8 Character Interaction .....	56
4.3 Interpretation of Results.....	58
4.4 Conclusion .....	63
5.0 Chapter Five: Conclusion .....	64
5.1 Introduction.....	64
5.2 Research Objectives .....	64
5.3 Implications .....	67
5.3.1 Operational and Design Recommendations .....	67
5.3.2 Enhancing Emotional Value .....	68
5.3.3 Leveraging User-Generated Content .....	68
5.3.4 Reimagining Value Beyond Price .....	68
5.3.4 Generational Differences in Family.....	69
5.4 Contributions to the Literature .....	69
5.5 Limitations of the Study.....	70
5.6 Directions for Future Research.....	71
5.7 Summary.....	71
References .....	72

# List of Tables

- Table 1 Comparison of Theme Park Types (Clavé, 2007) ..... 10
- Table 2 Eleven Characteristics of Theme Park (Clavé, 2007) ..... 11
- Table 3 Disneyland Parks Tripadvisor Summary (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025) ..... 32
- Table 4 Six Steps of data analysis as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006)..... 35
- Table 5 Identified Main Themes Across Five Disneyland Parks ..... 36
- Table 6 Thematic Framework of Disneyland Visitor Experience ..... 41

## Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own independent work. To the best of my knowledge, it does not include any material authored or published by another individual (unless clearly acknowledged), nor has it been submitted, in whole or in part, for the fulfilment of any other academic degree or qualification at any university or similar institution."

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Yu Myat Noe', written in a cursive style.

Yu Myat Noe

July 2025

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to all individuals who have supported me during this dissertation. I am particularly indebted to those whose guidance, encouragement, and inspiration have been essential throughout this research journey.

I am sincerely grateful to my academic supervisor, Associate Professor Tracy Harkison, whose unwavering support and constructive guidance have been invaluable throughout the writing process. Her patience, encouragement, and insightful feedback never wavered, not even during times when I felt uncertain or lost. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the professors, lecturers, and scholars whose teaching and mentorship have inspired and guided me during this research. Their knowledge, experience, and academic dedication have been instrumental in shaping my understanding and remain one of the most important sources of inspiration that enabled me to complete this dissertation.

I am also deeply thankful to my family back home particularly my beloved wife, Su Thet Hlaing, my daughter, Htet Thiri Myat, my father, Khin Soe and my sister, Thiri Soe, who, despite being far from me, have been a constant source of emotional strength and encouragement throughout my research journey. Their love, patience, and unwavering support from home have inspired me to persevere, and I dedicate this achievement to them. My sincere appreciation also goes to my classmates and peers, whose shared experiences and academic discussions have enriched my perspective and contributed to the development of this dissertation.

Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge my former colleagues in the tourism sector of my home country Myanmar. The professional insights and practical knowledge gained during my time working in the field have proven especially valuable, particularly in shaping the analysis presented in the findings chapter. The combination of academic learning and real-world experience has been essential to the depth and relevance of this research.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to work at SkyCity's Orbit 360° Restaurant in Auckland. The hands-on experience in guest relations and logistics has provided me with a practical understanding of visitors' behaviour and expectations. This frontline exposure played a pivotal role during the coding process, informing my decisions in categorising and interpreting data based on authentic guest experiences.

# 1.0 Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This study explores visitors' experiences to Disneyland at five locations (Anaheim, Paris, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Shanghai) using data consisting of reviews from the TripAdvisor within a recent 6-month period, from November 2024 to April 2025. This chapter provides an overview of the study, starting with the background information relating to the key concepts of the research. It then explains the research purposes and objectives. Finally, it discusses the methodology and structure of the study.

## 1.2 Background of the research

Theme parks, particularly Disneyland, have become iconic destinations that offer visitors immersive and memorable experiences (Richard et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2022). Disneyland, as the pioneer of modern theme parks, has set industry standards for storytelling, customer service, and attraction design (Bae et al., 2018; Chytry, 2012). Understanding the factors that influence a visitor's experience at Disneyland is crucial for improving guest satisfaction, optimising operations, and maintaining the park's reputation as a leader in the entertainment industry (Kelleher, 2024; Mirzayev, 2021).

Academic research on visitor experiences in theme parks has explored various dimensions, including ride quality (Schweizer & Condis, 2024), customer service (Paik, 2010), crowd management (Taylor, n.d.), technological innovations (Allen, 2014), and themed environments (Bai et al., 2023; Freitag, 2017; Godovykh et al., 2019). Psychological and behavioural studies have also examined how emotions (Cabanias, 2020), expectations (Hsu, 2011b), and cultural influences shape visitors' perceptions (Milman & Tasci, 2018; Milman et al., 2020).

Building upon these approaches, an understanding of what motivates guests to visit Disneyland is essential for contextualising their emotional and behavioural responses. Drawing on Beard and Ragheb's (1983) Leisure Motivation Scale, recent studies have identified five key motivational dimensions that influence visitor behaviour: emotional connection and nostalgia, immersive escapism, intellectual stimulation, competence-mastery, and social bonding (Omo-Obas & Anning-Dorson, 2023; Freeman et al., 2025). Guests are often drawn to Disneyland not only to experience rides and attractions but also to reconnect with beloved childhood memories, engage in fantasy worlds, and share meaningful experiences with family and friends. These motivations shape how guests

interpret park elements, from themed design and character interactions to queue management and customer service and ultimately influence satisfaction and memory formation (Bai et al., 2023; Hsu, 2011b).

Recent studies on theme park guest experiences rely on surveys, interviews, or observational research (Akel & Cakir, 2023; Ali et al., 2018; Bondoc & Ytturalde, 2023; Godovykh et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Milman et al., 2020). While these methods provide valuable insights, Netnography, by analysing user-generated content on TripAdvisor, allows researchers to access an organic and diverse dataset (Hu et al., 2017). This approach captures authentic guest experiences (Canavan, 2021), offering deeper insights into satisfaction levels, expectations, and frustrations. By applying Netnography to TripAdvisor reviews, this research extends the existing literature on Disneyland visitor experiences by providing authentic, insights into guest perceptions, behaviours, and emotions.

### 1.3 Purpose of the research

This research aims to explore and interpret the key factors that influence how visitors experience Disneyland. This broad aim is rooted in the need to better understand how operational, emotional, and contextual dimensions interact to shape visitor perceptions in one of the world's most iconic theme parks.

To address this question, three specific research objectives were developed:

1. To identify and analyse the operational and logistical factors (e.g., queuing, access, staff service) that shape Disneyland visitor experiences.
2. To examine the emotional and symbolic aspects (e.g., nostalgia, storytelling, character encounters) that contribute to visitor engagement and memory-making.
3. To evaluate the value of user-generated content, specifically TripAdvisor reviews, one of the most widely used online review platforms for theme park experiences (Limberger et al., 2014), as a methodological tool for understanding authentic visitor perspectives in theme park research. By analysing this form of naturally occurring data, the research captures a diverse range of authentic voices and spontaneous responses that are often absent from traditional research instruments such as surveys or interviews (Zhang et al., 2024).

These objectives in turn led to the central research question that guides this dissertation:

“What are the factors that influence a visitor’s experience at Disneyland?”

By structuring the study in this way, the research aims are translated into clear objectives, which then generate a well-defined research question. This progression

ensures coherence and demonstrates how the study contributes both to the practical understanding of visitor experiences at Disneyland and to the broader academic discourse on theme park research.

## 1.4 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in the interpretive paradigm, which emphasizes the subjective construction of reality and seeks to understand the meanings individuals assign to their experiences. This philosophical stance aligns with the study's aim of exploring the factors that influence visitors' experiences at Disneyland from the perspective of the visitors themselves.

The methodological approach employed is Netnography, a qualitative research method designed for the systematic analysis of online user-generated content. In this study, reviews from TripAdvisor are used as the data source, offering spontaneous, publicly available narratives written by visitors who have experienced Disneyland firsthand. These reviews provide valuable insight into the emotions, expectations, and evaluations of guests in a naturalistic digital setting, without researcher intervention (Bretzlaff et al., 2023; Limberger et al., 2014).

Data analysis is conducted using thematic analysis, an established method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2023). The analysis is inductive, meaning that topics are not imposed from the beginning but rather arise from the data. Through a rigorous and iterative coding process, the reviews are examined for recurring topics, sentiments, and experiential dimensions that shed light on how visitors interpret and evaluate their Disneyland experiences.

Together, the interpretive paradigm, Netnographic methodology, and thematic analysis offer a robust framework for capturing the complex, emotionally charged, and socially constructed nature of theme park experiences as articulated by visitors in their own words.

## 1.5 Overview of the dissertation

This dissertation is structured into five main chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing visitors' experiences at Disneyland.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the research by providing the background and context of the study. It outlines the research purpose and states the central research question: “What are the factors that influence a visitor’s experience at Disneyland?” It also briefly describes the methodological approach and concludes with an overview of the dissertation structure.

#### Chapter Two: Literature Review

The second chapter critically reviews existing literature related to theme parks, with a specific emphasis on Disneyland. It discusses the historical evolution and categorisation of theme parks, their thematic elements, visitor experience frameworks, and motivational theories. Furthermore, it explores the value of user-generated content, particularly TripAdvisor reviews, as a rich data source for understanding visitor experiences.

#### Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter outlines the philosophical and methodological foundations of the study. It explains the interpretive research paradigm, the qualitative design, and the use of Netnography as a methodological tool. It also details the data collection from TripAdvisor, the sampling criteria, and the thematic analysis process used to analyse the visitor reviews.

#### Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

The fourth chapter presents the key findings derived from the thematic analysis of online reviews. It identifies and interprets recurring themes that influence visitor experiences, attraction quality, emotional connection, crowd management, cost, and character interaction. These findings are discussed in relation to literature and framed within the context of Disney’s visitor experience.

#### Chapter Five: Conclusion

The final chapter revisits the research objectives and summarises the main findings. It discusses the practical and theoretical implications of the study, including insights for theme park operators, designers, and experience managers. The chapter acknowledges the limitations of the study and proposes avenues for future research. Lastly, it outlines the study’s contribution to the literature on theme park tourism, digital ethnography, and visitor experience research.

## 2.0 Chapter Two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the complex and multifaceted definitions of theme parks as presented in academic literature, highlighting how their design, purpose, and cultural impact reflect broader societal shifts. It starts by explaining the historical evolution of theme parks. Definitions of theme parks will be discussed. This chapter then reviews the type of theme parks with their examples. The rest of this chapter reviews thematic attributes and theme park experience. This chapter reviews articles related to Disney theme parks and Disney Parks visitors' motivations to demonstrate that visitors' experience from their own narrative such as TripAdvisor's review is a significant research topic and worth studying. Studies about the use of TripAdvisor reviews will be reviewed and highlight the role of TripAdvisor review to study the visitors' experiences. The studies examined in this chapter encompass not only tourism-focused publications but also contributions from the fields of hospitality, business, social studies, and management.

### 2.2 History of Theme Parks

The historical development of theme parks reflects a complex evolution from aristocratic pleasure gardens and industrial-era amusement venues to immersive, technologically driven environments shaped by Global Expositions and consumer culture (Canogar, 1992; Clavé, 2007; Robillard, 1993). Understanding this historical progression offers valuable insight into the various elements that have shaped the modern theme park landscape and prepares the foundation for examining how these influences manifest in contemporary settings like Disneyland.

According to Clavé (2007), early parks featured concerts, balls, picnics, and baroque festivities, originating from European aristocracy's conversion of natural spaces into leisure environments, exemplified by the gardens of Versailles in Paris and the 14th-century park of Hesdin. Likewise, Samuelson and Yegoiants (2001) trace the American amusement park's origins to 16th-century Europe, where sports activities began in French public gardens. Clavé (2007) also highlights the 17th-century Vauxhall and Ranelagh Gardens as foundational examples, which inspired later gardens like Ruggieri's Tivoli and Vienna's Prater, promoting democratisation of aristocratic leisure practices. Initially private spaces with wild animals and attractions, they gradually became public and early leisure spaces mirrored royal gardens in the 18th century, serving as urban recreational venues in European towns. Robillard (1993) states that amusement parks originated from fairs and 18th-century English pleasure gardens. As Jones and Wills (2005) observed, European pleasure gardens, particularly 18th-century courtesan and aristocratic gardens,

incorporated entertainment games, scenic beauty, and a close relationship between space and festivity with the garden serving as a theatre for privileged owners and visitors (Capel, 2002).

In the 19th century, European and American amusement parks utilised rides to recreate old fairs and provide workers with entertainment. Clavé (2007) emphasises that these parks utilised modern technology, cleanliness, and spatial planning to meet growing leisure demands, resulting in manufactured spectacle and controlled amusement environments based on classical garden aesthetics. Industrialisation in Great Britain led to the development of parks and gardens as a response to urbanisation, incorporating nature into cities for preservation and recreation (Clavé, 2007). Amusement parks in the 19th century were connected to carnivals and religious festivals, but the middle class favoured more sophisticated recreational spaces, leading to the term *park* replacing *fair* (Botterill, 1997; Clavé, 2007). Botterill (1997) observes the irony that at a time when the amusementscape has been entirely enclosed, privatised, and commodified, it has been recognized as a *park* (or public area). Fairs are, without a doubt, the spatial and recreational formulas that came before amusement parks in contrast to 19th-century amusement parks that manipulated sensations, these places offered shared experiences. During the 1900s industrial era, amusement parks became popular among blue-collar workers, offering temporary liberation from factory life and employers through horrible or fairy attractions such as events and distant sights (Fredric Thompson's Trip to the Moon), tours of hells (Hell's Gate), and views of the wonders of modern science (Cross, 2006).

Sudjic and Sayer (1992) compared theme parks to Universal Expositions, celebrating modernity and progress, promoting consumerism and technological advancement, unlike traditional fairs. These parks provide a blend of popular culture, congestion, and spectacle, leaving customers eager for more. Adams-Volpe (1991) argues that the 1893 Universal Exposition of Chicago was the transition point for theme parks. According to Zukin (1993), the Chicago Exposition, along with the World's Fair staged in 1939 in Flushing Meadows, influenced Walt Disney's vision of establishing 'a place for people to find happiness and knowledge. The Universal Expositions starting from 1851 until 1939 (Clavé, 2007), was a 278-hectare exhibition with more than 400 temporary buildings that created an idealised urban area plan that foretold contemporary theme parks, creating a symbolic city of illusions rather than an escape from it.

Luna Park in Sydney, similarly, provided exotic cultural attractions and atmospheric lighting, echoing the grandeur of the 1893 Chicago Exposition and laying the conceptual groundwork for Disneyland's 'Realm of Fairy Romance'. Its blend of multicultural representation and entertainment shown in the ethnic towns and ancient stories

influenced Disney's later creation of themed environments providing a pleasant atmosphere for all ages (Cross, 2006; Jones & Wills, 2005). In 1895, Sea Lion Park pioneered the 'enclosed park' concept by charging a single-entry fee for access to a variety of rides. This inspired other amusement companies to follow a similar 'enclosed park' model marketed under a single name (Hsu, 2011b). George Tilyou, known as the "father and king of the American amusement park," revolutionized the industry with his innovative marketing and new rides for adult audiences (Ford & Milman, 2000, p. 4). In 1896, the British replicated Chicago's Ferris wheel at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, branding it 'England's Premier American Amusement Park' (Hsu, 2011b). However, unlike their American counterparts, European parks often sought a balance between nature and entertainment (O'Brien, 1981).

Nye (1981) highlights the Chicago Exposition's Midway Plaisance, a kilometre-long promenade featuring shops, games, and attractions like the iconic Ferris wheel, which attracted over 1.4 million riders, influencing the inclusion of these elements in modern parks. This innovation marked a new era of mechanised leisure, targeting middle- and working-class urbanites familiar with industrial machines (Canogar, 1992; Zukin, 1996). The 1939 New York Exposition introduced the 'Futurama' exhibit, a mobile diorama showcasing a 1960s urban utopia, contributing significantly to the modern concept of a theme park (Clavé, 2007) this exhibit serves as a precursor to the modern 'dark ride' experience, introducing the concept of 'packetizing' tourists and promoting mass consumerism, which would later become integral to theme parks, not just as commercial spaces, but also as sites of cultural representation (Canogar, 1992).

The availability of electricity, mechanical advancements, changes in work and family schedules, and the development of railway and motor transportation all contributed to the establishment of amusement parks as recreational areas (Adams-Volpe, 1991; Clavé, 2007). According to Canogar (1992), in the early 20th-century, New York amusement parks were technological paradises for working-class immigrants. However, the Great Depression severely impacted amusement parks, leading to a decline in attendance, neglect, and safety issues, and the rise of television further strained the industry (Jones & Wills, 2005). In the face of a disintegrating amusement park industry, Walt Disney envisioned a new kind of amusement space centred on fantasies, family enjoyment, and education, all with a touch of 'magic'. Giving formal tours of Disney's Burbank studio was one of the first ideas that inspired the creation of Disneyland. Disney, a father of two girls and a fan of steam trains and rail, envisioned a *Kiddieland* that would appeal to both children and parents (Hsu, 2011b). Despite prior opening of other theme parks such as Efteling in 1952, the Dutch theme park based on popular children's tales, Disneyland was completed in Anaheim, California, in 1955. Disneyland was considered the first of its type,

with five themed lands: Main Street U.S.A., Adventureland, Frontierland, Fantasyland, and Tomorrowland. Not only did Disney's vision of integrating themes with amusement parks evolve amusement parks; it also revitalised the entire business (Cross, 2006; Jones & Wills, 2005). Instead of competing with television media, which had previously dominated amusement parks, Disney exploited it to promote his magical universe (Hsu, 2011b). The 1980s saw increased consumption and structural crisis in North American cities, leading architects, planners, geographers, and sociologists to explore theme parks to express societal desires and offer alternatives to conventional urban construction processes, which were moving towards corporate privatisation and redefining social space (Clavé, 2007). The modern definition of theme parks will be discussed in the next section.

## 2.3 Definition of Theme Park

A theme park can be either a specialised or interior park (e.g., tiny worlds and haunted houses) or a regional or urban park with extensive outdoor and indoor areas. Theme parks like Disneyland offer both indoor and outdoor attractions, as well as different consumption areas within and outside the park gates to enhance the overall experience (e.g., Downtown Disney and City Walk) (Liang & Li, 2021). Lee et al. (2020) defined it as a recreational facility providing diverse amusement activities with a unified theme, entertaining groups of friends and family. Tuan (2000) points out that theme parks provide guests with an opportunity to briefly 'escape' from their daily life, Clavé (2007) highlights the importance of theme parks as more than just entertainment or tourist attractions and no matter what their size or breadth, they reflect and change the societies that they serve. Moreover, theme parks also feature spatiality, thematisation, storytelling, technology, fantasy, nostalgia, and authenticity (Li et al., 2021). Clavé (2007) also stated that a theme park uses technology, innovative concepts, operations, illusion and psychology together to create a cultural product that bases on its ability to attract its alternative character to everyday life and its irreverence towards established culture. Clavé (2007) notes that theme parks succeed partly because they use cinematic language to portray reality and apply theatrical techniques to create excitement in public spaces. Happenings or animations performed by disguised park staff are identified by Nye (1981) as intensified theatrical features in parks, inspired by the cinematic stage. As Clavé (2007) highlights the new dimension of theme parks, which juxtapose attraction and communication concepts through images and animation. These exceptional spaces align with new cultural behaviours influenced by media, focusing on symbols and space.

On the other hand, Botterill (1997) defines theme park as a cultural product of entertainment that corresponds to the needs of late-modern capitalist society. According to him, Disney's theme park challenges medieval fair concepts, transforming them into a

unique process of production of celebration, a unique spectacle in today's capitalist society (Sorkin, 1992). Another definition of theme park is given by Mitrašinović (2006) as a symbolic microcosm offering an emotional experience, a place of entertainment with uniform semiotics, intensely commercial, and closely related to media image production. Theme parks, unlike other forms of entertainment, accept and embrace their inauthenticity. It is thus not merely a place created 'for' leisure, as traditional amusement parks are, but also a place of fiction, with its existence founded on the materialisation of a fantastic narrative through shapes, volumes, and performances (Clavé, 2007).

Theme parks are meticulously designed entertainment spaces with unique narratives, focusing on spatial design, transportation, and isolation from external surroundings to create immersive environments. More specifically, Cabanas (2020) states that atmospheres in theme parks are created deliberately through design elements such as architecture, decoration, sounds, smells, and even the arrangement of queues as he discovered that one key way atmospheres influence emotions is by distinguishing the *inside* (the themed environment) from the *outside* (the real world). According to King (2002), theme parks are like giant, living museums that do more than just entertain. They are structured to evoke emotions and memories, engaging visitors in a dialogue with culture. Associated with mass entertainment and tourism, theme parks are modern evolutions of traditional fairs and carnivals, forming the *amusementscape* which is a cultural space for ritual, entertainment, and commerce (Botterill, 1997).

Theme parks are generally regarded as leisure spaces for locals or as tourist attractions for visitors (Liang, 2023), while geographers and sociologists consider theme parks as a way to escape everyday life (Milman et al., 2012), utopian urban spaces (Liang & Li, 2021) and a metaphor for late- and postmodern society (Dixon, 2014). Clavé (2007) states that the initial Disneyland in California was a theme park prototype. The term 'Theme park' can be used for many different names such as Disneyland, Universal Studios (Milman, 2009), Six Flags, Cedar Point, Happy Valley (Zhang et al., 2021), Legoland, and Holy Land Experience (Clavé, 2007), niche themed areas like haunted houses or dark ride parks (Langhof & Guldenberg, 2019), and it has also been used broadly to refer to a filming site (Cheng et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2019), a Buddha-themed site (Wong, 2017), a cultural village (Erb & Ong, 2017), or a pleasure zone (King, 2017). The next section explains the different types of theme parks.

## 2.4 Types of theme parks with examples

As theme parks have grown in number and global influence, scholars have developed frameworks to categorise them based on scale, visitor demographics, investment, and thematic complexity. Clavé (2007) offers one of the most widely

referenced classifications, identifying four primary types of theme parks: destination, regional, urban, and niche.

Clavé (2007) used (i) size which can be evaluated based on factors such as visitor count, surface area, employee count, and investment in development, and (ii) the dominant markets based on their origin. There are four types of Theme Parks explained below, as distinguished by these two factors.

Destination Parks are large-scale, often with resorts (e.g., Disneyland). Regional Parks are mid-sized, drawing visitors from 100–200 km radius. While Urban Parks serve local, city-based audiences with lighter theming, Niche Parks are small, specialized parks focused on specific themes or audiences (Clavé, 2007).

*Table 1 Comparison of Theme Park Types (Clavé, 2007)*

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Destination Parks</b>	<b>Regional Parks</b>	<b>Urban Parks</b>	<b>Niche Parks</b>
<b>Geographic Reach</b>	National & international tourism (middle/long-distance)	Regional (100–200 km radius)	Local urban residents	Variable (urban or rural with specific appeal)
<b>Facilities and Services</b>	Integrated resorts with hotels, restaurants, shops	Limited or no accommodation; strong rides/shows	Basic facilities; compact space	Specialised services tied to unique themes
<b>Investment Level</b>	€250+ million	€100–250 million	€80–100 million	€10–80 million
<b>Visitor Volume (Annual)</b>	3.5 million+	1.5–3.5 million	0.75–1.5 million	Up to 0.75 million
<b>Theming and Attractions</b>	Intense theming, 55+ attractions, multiple themed zones	Moderate theming, 35–50 attractions	Light theming, 25–35 attractions	Highly specialised themes; <20 attractions
<b>Length of Stay and Purpose</b>	Multi-day stay, core of travel itinerary	Day trips or short visits	Few hours per visit, casual recreation	Short visits based on theme interest
<b>Audience Profile</b>	Tourists, families, international visitors	Families and regional tourists	Local families and youth	Specific age groups, interest-based audiences

<b>Example Parks</b>	Disneyland (all major locations), Universal Studios Japan	Six Flags, Europa-Park, Ocean Park (Hong Kong)	Isla Magica (Spain), Elitch Gardens (USA)	Sesame Place, Holyland Experience, Bonfante Gardens
<b>Revenue Strategy</b>	High per capita spend; extended experience & merchandise	Ticket-based, ride volume focus	Basic entry + ride fees	Themed products, educational programs, boutique offerings
<b>Urban/Regional Role</b>	Urban revitalization, anchor for tourism ecosystems	Enhances regional recreation economy	City-based leisure facilities	Often experimental or concept-driven developments

This table illustrates how destination parks differ from other park types in terms of scale, tourism-centric design, and deep theming.

*Table 2 Eleven Characteristics of Theme Park (Clavé, 2007)*

<b>Core Characteristic</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Thematic Identity</b>	Central themes define the park’s layout and experiences.
<b>Structured Design</b>	Divided into themed zones (e.g., Adventureland, Fantasyland).
<b>Controlled Access</b>	Operates in enclosed or ticketed spaces.
<b>Family-Oriented</b>	Primarily targets family and group visitors.
<b>Variety of Attractions</b>	Offers rides, shows, and interactive experiences for extended visits (5–7 hours).
<b>Ambient Entertainment</b>	Includes street performances and atmospheric elements.

<b>Commercial Integration</b>	Strong focus on food, beverages, and retail outlets.
<b>High Investment</b>	Notable for their large capital outlays and polished infrastructure.
<b>Centralized Management</b>	Unified control over production, services, and consumption.
<b>Use of Technology</b>	Applied in both operational logistics and consumer experiences.
<b>Single Entry Fee</b>	Often a one-time payment model for full-day access.

According to Liang and Li (2021), there are five distinct attributes theme park accessed from the framework covering four domains (industry, tourists/visitors, environment, and impacts). These five distinct attributes are thematic identity, restricted space and access, hybrid consumption, performative labour, and merchandising, which distinguish theme parks from other travel offerings.

## 2.5 Thematic attributes

### Thematic Identity

Theme parks construct immersive environments by drawing stories, films, myths, or daily life. This identity is expressed through architecture, landscaping, rides, shows, food, merchandising, and branding (Bao, 2016; Erb & Ong, 2017; Lukas, 2007). Theming allows visitors to feel as though they are part of a fictional world, often assuming roles within that universe. Theming operates at multiple levels, from surface-level decoration to deeply immersive storytelling (Liang & Li, 2021). Visitor satisfaction and return visits are strongly influenced by how well these themes are integrated into the experience (Torres et al., 2018; Weru et al., 2024).

### Closed Space with Controlled Access

Theme parks are typically enclosed and clearly separated from their surrounding environments—physically, economically, or culturally. Access is regulated through various ticketing systems (e.g., universal, sectional, pay-as-you-go), which help manage crowd flow, capacity, and revenue (King, 2017; Milman & Tasci, 2018). This closed nature allows

parks to control the atmosphere and optimise spatial planning, making them ideal environments for studying visitor interaction and emotional behaviour (Park et al., 2020).

### Hybrid Consumption

Modern theme parks combine entertainment (rides, shows, games) with commercial offerings (shopping, dining) in a one-stop destination. This hybrid model increases guest engagement and length of stay (Bryman, 1999; Cabanas, 2020). Consumption within the park gates plays a different role in shaping the themed experience than outside consumption (Liang & Li, 2021).

### Performative Labour

Staff members perform emotional and interactive labour to create magical guest encounters. These performances shape mood, manage expectations, and foster guest interaction (Korkman, 2015; Torres et al., 2019). Smaller parks often rely more heavily on this human-centred design due to space limitations, making performative labour central to the guest experience (Tsang et al., 2015).

### Merchandising

Merchandising plays a dual role in enhancing theming and generating revenue. Theme parks use branded products and copyrighted imagery to extend the themed experience (Beames & Brown, 2017). These items help strengthen visitor loyalty and reduce dependence on ticket sales (Gang & Albattat, 2024; Liang & Li, 2021).

According to Liang and Li (2021), while each attribute, closed space, thematic identity, hybrid consumption, performative labour, and merchandising is not unique to theme parks individually, their strategic combination creates a distinctive, immersive visitor experience that sets theme parks apart from other tourist attractions. The next section discusses the experiences offered by the theme park presently.

## 2.6 Theme Park Experience

The theme park industry's recent growth highlights the importance of leisure and entertainment in global economic development since the second half of the 20th century (Lee et al., 2020). A postmodern conception of 'themed entertainment' is characterised by the theatrical design and creation of 'emotional experiences' (Bryman, 1999). For this reason, theme parks are considered pioneers in the rising experience economy (Geissler & Rucks, 2011). As Newell (2012) and Chytry (2012) state, theme parks have also been considered paradigmatic and representative examples of emotional spaces in which emotions have a key part in understanding the material and symbolic aspects of a space,

as well as the interindividual practices deployed within them. The concepts of 'emotions' and 'experience' are now widely accepted as important elements in explaining leisure consumer behaviour (Carù & Cova, 2007). The 'experience-generation' paradigm has transformed leisure from a relaxing educational, and uplifting activity to something that is captivating, intense, and exciting (Pikkemaat & Schuckert, 2007). The entertainment offerings at theme parks have shifted accordingly.

Contemporary theme parks offer more than just a break from work and daily life (Tuan & Hoelscher, 1997). They can also serve as safe, clean, and high-quality spaces (Kuenz et al., 1995), or as avant-garde spaces of wonderment, historical reenactment, technological spectacle, and 'edutainment' (Francaviglia, 1995). Instead, the fundamental goal of theme parks today is to provide visitors with unique, immersive, and theatrical experiences with high emotional value (Manthiou et al., 2016). Similarly, Cabanas (2020) argues that theme parks create an immersive experience by blending physical spaces with visitors' emotions, creating an emotional atmosphere. Milman and Tasci (2018) also highlights that theme parks should focus on enhancing emotional experiences and perceived value to improve visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. This could involve creating more engaging and immersive experiences that resonate emotionally with visitors. And while the prices may be perceived as high, the unique experiences and memorable moments offered by the parks often outweigh these concerns (Bondoc & Ytturalde, 2023; Geissler & Rucks, 2011).

Theme parks invite visitors to participate in a collective narrative, maintaining the integrity of the narrative through control and structured design. The theme park's attractions, servicescape, retailing, food and beverage, customer-to-customer interactions, and customer-to-employee (Interaction with Staff) interactions have the ability to evoke a range of distinct emotions in visitors that impact the overall theme experience (Jensen, 2007; Torres et al., 2019). While traditional amusement parks centre primarily on rides and thrills, theme parks use their design and aesthetic to create rich, narrative-driven experiences that allow visitors to participate in a kind of live cultural performance (King, 2002). Therefore, visitors to theme parks view themselves as fictional co-stars (Zukin, 1996). Cabanas (2020) suggests that vivid narratives and interactive role-playing within theme parks actively involve visitors. They are not mere passive receivers of experiences but actively co-produce their emotional experiences by interpreting symbols, participating in role-playing, and interacting with the space. Botterill (1997) and Clavé (2007) use terms such as the illusion of emotional and strategic integration with other communication media to refer to theme park.

According to Torres et al. (2018), a theme park visit is more than a trip, it is a multi-sensory and emotional adventure that engages guests through environment, interaction, and storytelling. They identified five core elements that influence visitor satisfaction: core attractions, physical environment (Servicescape), customers' emotions, waiting times and service efficiency. Core attractions such as themed rides, shows, and signature attractions form the centrepiece of the experience and are the primary reasons people visit and the basis for most guest feedback. Physical Environment (Servicescape) themed architecture, landscaping, and cleanliness shape perception and immersion. Customer Emotions generated by the theme parks aim to evoke joy, thrill, wonder, and surprise. Positive emotional responses, especially those shared through reviews or word of mouth, are central to guest satisfaction. Wait Times and Service Efficiency, such as efficient queue management, minimal overcrowding, and smooth operations help sustain enjoyment. Delays or long waits can reduce the quality of the experience, even when attractions are impressive (Bai et al., 2023; Demonteverde et al., 2023). Social Interactions consist of shared experiences with family, friends, or even other guests enrich the overall enjoyment. These interactions contribute to memorable, emotionally resonant visits.

However, enjoyable activities such as rides, dining, and social interactions, the first impression upon arrival at the theme park, waiting times for rides and shows, social dynamics (customer-to-customer interactions), memorable retail experiences and enhancing dining options play a crucial role in the theme park experience (Ali et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2019). Ali et al. (2018) suggest that the physical setting of the theme parks significantly influences customer delight and satisfaction. Elements like lighting, temperature, and overall aesthetics play a crucial role in shaping visitors' experiences.

While research suggests that effective emotional experience design is a key indicator in theme park success and their positive impact on visitors (Clavé, 2007), including higher rates of client satisfaction (Ali et al., 2018; Torres et al., 2018), sense of authenticity (Pikkemaat & Schuckert, 2007), motivation to visit (Wu et al., 2018), or intention to return (Enrique Bigné et al., 2008), and to recommend the experience (Ma et al., 2017). Kao et al. (2008) showed that effective theatrical experiences such as appealing scripts and charming settings are important requirements for fostering immersion, engagement, and enjoyment. Likewise, Bakir and Baxter (2011) also found that an urge to have new or different experience is the most recurring motivator for visitors, whereas Milman (2009) discovered that visitors are most likely to be drawn to interactive experiences centred around adventure, fantasy, mystery, science fiction, futuristic concepts, as well as movies and television-themed attractions.

On the other hand, Wanhill (2002) emphasised that the essence of a theme park lies in its imagescape, where products and services blend seamlessly to create unforgettable experiences for visitors. Wang et al. (2019) argued that theme park attributes can be categorised into core elements—such as entertainment, facilities, and themed exhibits—and peripheral elements, including pricing, the surrounding landscape, and the quality of service. Core attributes (e.g., entertainment quality, facility quality, and thematic displays) were found to have a significant and positive influence on all four dimensions of brand experience (sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioural), which combine to form the overall feeling visitors get when they experience a theme park. Peripheral attributes (e.g., consumption price, landscape environment, and service quality) did not have a significant influence on the brand experiences of visitors, which means that the features most central to the theme park’s offering play a more critical role in shaping visitor experiences (Wang et al., 2019).

King (2002) defines the theme park experience as a multi-dimensional, immersive journey that goes beyond simple rides and entertainment. It is designed to engage all senses while telling a story or conveying a cultural message. The experience is not just about physical thrill but also about stepping into a thoughtfully crafted environment that reflects a particular vision or narrative. At American parks like Disneyland, the environments are designed to reflect core national values such as individualism, progress, and the belief that the future will be better than the past. King (2002) suggests that rides and attractions in theme parks do not end in themselves; but they are components of a broader cultural narrative that guides the visitor through a series of interconnected experiences. He argues that the theme park experience represents a valuable yet under-analysed art form that deserves more scholarly attention.

Theme Park experience is a multidimensional construct shaped by immersive storytelling, physical environment, technological integration, and emotionally resonant interactions (Milman & Tasci, 2018; Torres et al., 2018). While the existing literature has underscored the significance of these elements in enhancing visitor satisfaction, emotional engagement, and overall experience quality (Manthiou et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2019), much of this research adopts operator-centric or structural perspectives. Consequently, there remains a need to explore how visitors themselves construct meaning from their experiences in more personal and affective terms (Cabanias, 2020; King, 2002). In the context of contemporary digital culture, online platforms such as Tripadvisor provide a valuable repository of unsolicited, user-generated narratives that reveal how individuals interpret, evaluate, and emotionally process their visits (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2017; Tavakoli & Wijesinghe, 2019). These digital expressions offer a robust, experience-based perspective that complements traditional studies and supports a more comprehensive

understanding of theme park visitation from the visitor's viewpoint (Song et al., 2024). Disney Parks, a quintessential example of modern theme parks, have revolutionised the entertainment industry by offering immersive and themed experiences that transcend traditional amusement parks (Baker, 2023; Hao & Wang, 2022)

## 2.7 Disney Theme Parks

These parks are meticulously designed to transport visitors into fantastical worlds, blending storytelling, technology, and cultural elements to create unique environments (Causer, 2019; Chen et al., 2021; Yuan, 2019). The success of Disney Parks lies in their ability to evolve from simple amusement areas to complex, multi-themed destinations that cater to a global audience (Kruczek, 2012). The concept of Disney Parks traces back to Walt Disney's vision of creating a unique entertainment experience for families. Disneyland, the first Disney Park, opened in Anaheim, California, in 1955, marking a significant departure from traditional amusement parks by focusing on themed lands and immersive storytelling (King, 1981; Liu & Liu, 2024). This innovative approach set the foundation for future parks, including Walt Disney World in Florida, which expanded the concept with multiple themed resorts and parks (Bemis, 2022; Mittermeier, 2020). The evolution of Disney Parks reflects broader cultural and technological advancements. Early parks were designed to reflect American values and nostalgia, while later expansions incorporated global themes and cutting-edge technology (Masliak & Slyzkii, 2023; Smith & Conrad, 2020). This historical progression underscores Disney's adaptability and commitment to innovation, ensuring that its parks remain relevant and appeal to diverse audiences (Chen, 2024).

Disney's global expansion began with Tokyo Disneyland in 1983, the first park outside the United States. This venture demonstrated the viability of Disney's model in international markets, despite initial concerns about cultural differences (Choi, 2012; Mittermeier, 2020). Disney Parks have achieved remarkable success in adapting to different cultural contexts while maintaining their core identity. Tokyo Disney Resort, for example, has thrived by offering a 'non-ordinary world' that contrasts with Japanese culture, attracting frequent visitors who seek immersive fantasy experiences (Toyoda, 2014). The success of Tokyo Disneyland paved the way for further expansion. The global appeal of Disney Parks is also reflected in their ability to create a sense of community and shared identity. Visitors from diverse backgrounds come together to experience the magic of Disney, united by a shared appreciation for its stories, characters, and values (Bemis, 2022; Clément, 2018). In 1992, Euro Disneyland (now Disneyland Paris) opened in France, introducing Disney's themed entertainment to Europe. Despite initial financial challenges, the park found success by incorporating European themes and cultural elements, highlighting the importance of localisation in global expansion strategies (Groote, 2010).

The opening of Hong Kong Disneyland in 2005 marked another milestone, with the park tailored to local preferences while maintaining Disney's signature storytelling and theming (Bafagih & Wise, 2023; Choi, 2012). More recently, Shanghai Disneyland, launched in 2016, exemplifies Disney's globalisation strategy, blending Chinese cultural elements with Disney's iconic themes to appeal to a diverse audience (Cheung & McCarthy, 2019; Yuan, 2019).

Disney Parks are celebrated for their meticulously designed themed lands, which transport visitors into immersive environments. These lands are crafted to evoke specific themes, such as fantasy, adventure, and nostalgia, creating a sense of escapism for guests. For instance, the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World features six distinct themed lands, including Adventureland, Fantasyland, and Tomorrowland, each offering unique attractions and experiences (Bemis, 2022; Smith & Conrad, 2020). Disney Parks are distinguished by their thematic landscapes and immersive storytelling. Storytelling is a cornerstone of the Disney Parks experience. The parks are designed as three-dimensional narrative mediums, where every element, from architecture to landscaping and attractions, contributes to the overall story (Baker, 2018). This approach creates a seamless and immersive experience for visitors, who are often invited to become protagonists in the stories being told (Gröppel-Wegener, 2024; Kokai & Robson, 2019). The design of these lands is not merely aesthetic; it is also deeply rooted in storytelling and cultural narratives. Tokyo Disney Resort, for example, has successfully recontextualised Disney culture to appeal to Japanese audiences by presenting itself as a 'non-ordinary world' that contrasts with everyday Japanese life (Toyoda, 2014). Each park is divided into themed lands, such as Adventureland, Fantasyland, and Tomorrowland, which transport visitors into distinct worlds (Baker, 2023). This approach creates a cohesive narrative experience, setting Disney apart from other theme parks.

Moreover, educational elements is also Disney's one of the main features. Hsu (2011b) stated that Disney build each 'land' with themes such as 'Frontierland' with a Wild-West theme or 'Tomorrowland' by using technology to provide educational moments integrated into the attractions. The integration of technology is another hallmark of Disney Parks. Innovations like Audio-Animatronics and interactive attractions enhance the immersive experience, making Disney a leader in theme park technology (Bai et al., 2023; Liu, 2024). For example, it is a mini-world where everything—from the rides to the food—is designed to entertain and evoke feelings of excitement and enjoyment. This careful design is what makes a Disney Park experience unique. The integration of technology, such as the MyMagic+ app, has become a key aspect of the Disney Park experience. This app allows visitors to plan their day, reserve FastPasses, and even order food, enhancing convenience and personalisation (Bondoc & Ytturalde, 2023; Williams, 2020). Disney's use of data and

technology to tailor experiences, such as personalised greetings from characters or customized merchandise, enhances the sense of individualised attention and care (Williams, 2020).

Disney Parks are renowned for their iconic attractions and entertainment options. Classic rides like 'It's a Small World' and 'Haunted Mansion' have become synonymous with the Disney experience, offering timeless fun for visitors of all ages (Smith & Conrad, 2020). The prevalence of narrative and thematic features in Disney Parks is a key factor in their appeal. Themed rides, explicit storytelling, and immersive experiences are central to the design philosophy, ensuring that visitors are not just passive observers but also active participants in the narratives unfolding around them (Baker, 2023). Seasonal events and festivals further enhance the parks' appeal, providing dynamic and evolving experiences that attract repeat visits. The Disney guest experience is designed to be profound and memorable, touching on all six dimensions of an experience: sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle, and relational (Vergara & Vergara, 2023). This holistic approach ensures that visitors' experiences are rich and multifaceted, creating lasting memories. The emotional value of these experiences is further enhanced by the careful design of dramatic spaces. Research has shown that the experience brought by dramatic spatial design is the highest level of experience sought by tourists, emphasising the importance of design in creating memorable and immersive environments (Liu & Isa, 2023). The parks also feature spectacular entertainment, including parades, fireworks displays, and live shows, which are integral to the Disney experience. These elements create a sense of enchantment and wonder, reinforcing the parks' reputation as premier entertainment destinations (King, 1981; Liu & Liu, 2024).

Disney Parks have redefined the theme park industry through their innovative approach to themed entertainment, global expansion, and commitment to storytelling and technology. Additionally, the parks' emphasis on nostalgia and cultural preservation contributes to their enduring appeal, as they serve as repositories of collective memory and cultural identity (Bemis, 2022; King, 1981). Smith and Conrad (2020) stated that nostalgia plays a significant role in the appeal of Disney Parks. Walt Disney World, for instance, has successfully created authentic nostalgia tourism experiences, drawing on a deep well of cultural memory and shared values. This nostalgia is not only a source of comfort but also a means of connecting visitors to a shared cultural heritage. The nostalgic appeal of Disney Parks is further enhanced by their ability to balance tradition with innovation. Disney Parks have consistently embraced technological advancements to enhance the guest experience. From the MyMagic+ app to cutting-edge attractions like Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser, technology plays a crucial role in creating immersive and interactive experiences (Gröppel-Wegener, 2024; Williams, 2020). The integration of digital

media and technology has also opened new possibilities for storytelling and visitor engagement. Visitors can now participate in dynamic narratives, with their actions and decisions influencing the story's outcome, further blurring the line between observer and participant (Gröppel-Wegener, 2024; Kokai & Robson, 2019). While classic attractions and themed lands evoke a sense of timelessness, new experiences and technologies ensure that the parks remain relevant and engaging for contemporary audiences (Robson, 2019). From their historical roots in Anaheim to their status as global entertainment leaders, Disney Parks continue to evolve, offering unique experiences that captivate audiences worldwide. The motivations of the visitors to Disney Park will now be reviewed.

## 2.8 Disney Park Visitors' Motivations

Understanding what drives individuals to visit Disney Parks is essential for unpacking the deeper meanings behind their experiences. Visitor motivations are multifaceted and shaped by emotional, psychological, cultural, and social factors (Omo-Obas & Anning-Dorson, 2023) that guide not only the decision to visit but also how guests interact with and interpret the park environment (Freeman et al., 2025). Drawing on Beard and Ragheb's (1983) Leisure Motivation Scale, this section explores key motivational dimensions such as emotional connection, nostalgia, escapism, intellectual engagement, and social bonding. Identifying these motivations is a critical step in contextualising how and why visitors respond to their Disneyland experiences in particular ways. This foundation sets the stage for analysing how such motivations are reflected in spontaneous visitor narratives especially those shared in online review platforms (Costabile et al., 2020).

### Emotional Connection and Nostalgia of Disney

Visitors to Disney Parks are often motivated by a strong emotional connection to the brand. Disney's ability to create immersive and nostalgic experiences is a significant draw for many. For instance, the theming and design of the parks, such as the Magic Kingdom's fairy-tale-inspired architecture, evoke a sense of wonder and enchantment (Arbaiza, 2018; Patrocínio et al., 2018). This emotional appeal is particularly strong for families, as Disney's emphasis on storytelling and beloved characters resonates with both children and adults, fostering intergenerational bonding (Lee et al., 2020; Williams, 2020). Nostalgia also plays a role in attracting repeat visitors. Many guests return to Disney Parks to relive fond memories or introduce the parks to their children, creating a cycle of loyalty and emotional attachment (Bondoc & Ytturalde, 2023). Repeat visitors often have higher expectations and may be more critical of changes or shortcomings in the parks' offerings (Bondoc & Ytturalde, 2023; Demonteverde et al., 2023). First-time visitors, on the other hand, may be more focused on experiencing iconic attractions and meeting their pre-visit expectations (Patrocínio et al., 2018). This emotional connection is further reinforced by the parks' ability

to deliver experiences that align with visitors' expectations of magic and fantasy (Arbaiza, 2018; Patrocínio et al., 2018).

### Immersive and Themed Experiences of Disney

Overall, Disney Parks offer four dimensions of the Leisure Motivation Scale – intellectual, social, competence-mastery, stimulus-avoidance through its the characteristics, attractions, and activities (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Hsu, 2011b). Disney Parks are renowned for their immersive theming, which transports visitors into fantastical worlds. The design of attractions, landscaping, and even staff costumes contribute to an all-encompassing experience that aligns with the park's themes, such as Adventureland or Tomorrowland (Başarangil, 2018; Patrocínio et al., 2018). This immersive quality is a key motivator for visitors, as it allows them to temporarily escape reality and engage with their favorite stories and characters in a tangible way (Williams, 2020). Disney's fantasy worlds align with the *stimulus-avoidance* dimension, which emphasises escape. Disneyland may provide an opportunity for people to escape reality, realise childhood fantasies, or experience nostalgia (Hsu, 2011b). Cross (2006) also observed the role of Disneyland as a place where people can feel temporarily liberated from their daily responsibilities. Families with young children are particularly drawn to character meet-and-greets and family-friendly rides, while adult fans may focus on immersive theming and exclusive events (Williams, 2020; Yusof et al., 2021).

The *intellectual* dimension may be connected with Disneyland attractions themed on American history, as well as sponsored shows of cutting-edge technology (Hsu, 2011b). For instance, themed areas like Tomorrowland and Frontierland offer guests immersive experiences that incorporate elements of science, technology, and history, thereby catering to visitors seeking cognitive engagement (McClung, 1991). Furthermore, the integration of narrative and design in Disney Parks transforms guests from passive observers to active participants, engaging them in the form of experiential learning (Park et al., 2009) and Disney's goal is to provide an engaging learning environment for both children and adults (McClung, 1991). By offering experiences that stimulate curiosity and learning, Disney fosters a sense of personal growth and fulfilment among guests, which can enhance loyalty and repeat visitation (Godovykh et al., 2019).

*Competence-mastery* encompasses actions like utilising a map to navigate a 160-acre park, planning a day's plans, and feeling accomplished after a thrilling ride (Hsu, 2011b). Langan (2000) explained that the scale of architecture in Disneyland was created with the effect reduce the size of objects to a point where they are less imposing and one's sensed mastery over it that much greater. The variety and quality of rides, shows, and attractions are also significant motivators. Visitors expect a diverse range of experiences,

from thrilling roller coasters to family-friendly shows, which cater to different age groups and preferences (Geissler & Rucks, 2011; Milman, 2009). For example, younger visitors may prioritise thrill rides and interactive experiences, while older visitors may prefer shows, parades, and nostalgic attractions (Başarangil, 2018; Song et al., 2024). The constant introduction of new attractions and technologies, such as Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, further enhances the parks' appeal by offering unique and innovative experiences (Bondoc & Ytturalde, 2023; Williams, 2020).

### Social and Cultural Factors at Disney

Another of Disneyland's founding principles was a concentration on family delight, which served as the foundation for the Leisure Motivation Scale's *social* feature (Hsu, 2011b). Disneyland's architecture and attractions emphasised the importance of family and childhood innocence, appealing to all generations (Cross, 2006). In fact, the mix of nostalgia and 'timeless' charm united family members from all generations. Social interactions and shared experiences are important motivators for many Disney Park visitors. For instance, the cleanliness of the parks and the courtesy of employees are consistently cited as positive aspects of the Disney experience (Bai et al., 2023; Yusof et al., 2021). Families often view the parks as a destination for bonding and creating memories, while groups of friends may be drawn to the parks' festive and celebratory atmosphere (Williams, 2020; Yusof et al., 2021). Additionally, Disney Parks serve as cultural landmarks, attracting visitors who appreciate their iconic status and global recognition (Arbaiza, 2018; Demonteverde et al., 2023). According to Jones and Wills (2005), visiting Disneyland can provide overseas tourists with a sense of belonging to America. Hsu (2011b) stated that returning to one's native country might provide valuable insights into their social context after the Disney Park visit because cultural distinctions also influence visitor motivations. For example, studies have shown that international visitors may be drawn to Disney Parks as a representation of American culture, while domestic visitors may prioritise the parks' nostalgic and familiar appeal (Akel & Cakir, 2023; Song et al., 2024). Likewise, a plan to build a Lighthouse at Tokyo Disneyland was excluded because it is the symbol of loneliness and dark things in Japanese culture in contrast to its representation of prosperity in American culture (Zhou & Kawamata, 2023). These cultural dynamics highlight the diverse motivations of Disney's global audience.

Johns and Gyimóthy (2003) study of Legoland highlights the generational divide in family tourism experiences. Their findings show that parents often perceive visits as duties or sacrifices motivated by prestige, nostalgia, and kinship responsibilities, while children emphasize excitement, spontaneity, and fun. This study further demonstrates how theme parks reinforce nuclear family values and modern parenting ideals, while largely failing to

cater to adult needs. These insights are important for understanding Disneyland, where reviews also reflect tensions between parental responsibility and children's enjoyment.

## 2.9 Tripadvisor Reviews of Visitor Experiences

In recent years, user-generated content (UGC) has emerged as a valuable data source in tourism research, providing rich insights into tourists' perceptions, emotions, and behaviours (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Sparks and Bradley (2017) noted that online reviews play a significant role in consumers' decision-making when purchasing hospitality services. As companies rely more on Big Data (i.e. TripAdvisor reviews) (Dina & Juniarta, 2022) for decision-making, analytical tools are crucial for making evidence-based decisions (Sabharwal & Miah, 2021). Research-based on big data analytics provides a new approach to gathering data and information for marketing purposes (Nair & Shetty, 2017). Among various platforms, Tripadvisor has become one of the most widely used and studied review sites, hosting millions of visitors' comments about attractions, accommodations, and destinations (Alaimo et al., 2020). Its global reach and accessibility have made it a vital tool for researchers seeking to understand the subjective dimensions of travel experiences (Marine-Roig & Clavé, 2016).

Online reviews for hospitality products are mostly available on platforms such as TripAdvisor (e.g. hotel reviews), Yelp (e.g. restaurant reviews), Facebook (e.g. hotel and restaurant fan reviews), and online travel agent (OTA) websites such as Expedia and Priceline (e.g. hotel reviews). All reviews on these sites are posted online and open to the public (Pocchiari et al., 2025). Online reviews can be represented as feature-based cases with three distinct factors: evaluation features (of the reviews), reputation features (of the reviewers), and social features (among reviewers, managers, and other internet users) (Kwok et al., 2017; O'Mahony & Smyth, 2010). Tripadvisor reviews are particularly useful in theme park research because they offer unsolicited, authentic reflections of visitor experiences (Limberger et al., 2014). As Tussyadiah and Zach (2016) argue, online reviews not only shape potential visitors' expectations but also serve as real-time evaluations of service quality, emotional satisfaction, and experiential fulfilment. These reviews often contain multidimensional narratives that touch on logistics, theming, interaction with staff, emotional reactions, and the perceived value of the visit, factors that are central to the theme park experience (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2017; Ye et al., 2011).

Moreover, Tripadvisor comments allow researchers to access data from a diverse range of visitors across different demographic groups and cultural backgrounds. This diversity provides a broader understanding of how Disneyland is experienced and interpreted by various visitor segments. Researchers have employed sentiment analysis, thematic coding, and Netnographic approaches to analyse such data (Mkono & Markwell,

2014) highlighting the methodological flexibility Tripadvisor reviews offer. Importantly, Tripadvisor content also reflects evolving visitor expectations in real time, making it a valuable tool for identifying trends, recurring complaints, and shifting preferences (Zhiqi & Rasoolimanesh, 2022). Moreover, analysing Tripadvisor reviews revealed that the factors related to experience, such as room quality, service, and value for money are strongly correlated with overall satisfaction (Limberger et al., 2014). Unlike structured surveys, which may limit responses through predefined questions, Tripadvisor reviews are open-ended, allowing guests to emphasise what mattered most during their visit (Fileri et al., 2020).

## 2.10 Gaps between literature review and proposed study

This literature review has demonstrated that theme parks are complex cultural and leisure spaces, shaped by their scale, design attributes, experiential offerings, and visitor motivations. Clavé's (2007) typology of destination, regional, urban, and niche parks illustrates how different park categories cater to diverse audiences, investment levels, and scales of operation. Within this framework, Disneyland is positioned as a *destination park*, characterised by extensive theming, international reach, and multi-day immersive experiences. Similarly, Liang and Li (2021) highlighted five defining thematic attributes of theme parks, *thematic identity, controlled access, hybrid consumption, performative labour, and merchandising*. Which collectively distinguish theme parks from other recreational settings. These constructs underscore that theming and the integration of cultural products are central to shaping visitor expectations and experiences (Bao, 2016; Clavé, 2007; Liang & Li, 2021; Lukas, 2007).

The Literature also emphasises the centrality of emotional and sensory engagement, noting that attractions, servicescapes, and social interactions collectively evoke joy, nostalgia, and wonder (Bryman, 1999; Milman & Tasci, 2018; Torres et al., 2018). Theme parks are understood not merely as sites of entertainment but as emotionally charged environments that blur the line between fiction and reality, creating enduring memories through immersive storytelling (Cabanas, 2020; King, 2002). Likewise, research on Disney visitors' motivations identifies nostalgia, escapism, intellectual engagement, and social bonding as pivotal drivers (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Lee et al., 2020). These motivations help explain why Disneyland attracts both first-time and repeat visitors, reinforcing its role as a site of intergenerational bonding and emotional connection (Arbaiza, 2018; Bondoc & Ytturalde, 2023).

While these frameworks establish a robust foundation for understanding theme park experiences, they remain largely conceptual or operator centric. Prior research often relies on structured surveys or managerial perspectives (Milman, 2009; Song et al., 2024),

which may not fully capture how visitors themselves narrate and interpret their experiences. What remains underexplored is how visitors describe their perceptions spontaneously, particularly in digital spaces where unfiltered emotions and critical reflections are shared.

In response to this gap, the present study adopts an interpretive, Netnographic approach, analysing unsolicited user-generated content (UGC) from TripAdvisor reviews. As Xiang and Gretzel (2010), Marine-Roig and Clavé (2016) argue, online reviews are a valuable data source for uncovering tourists' authentic voices and behaviours. This approach enables the identification of recurring experiential themes, argue, online reviews are a valuable data source for uncovering tourists' authentic voices and behaviours. This approach enables the identification of recurring experiential themes, and the ways in which they shape overall perceptions of Disneyland. By situating these findings within existing theoretical constructs, this study extends the literature through a visitor-centred framework that highlights how Disney experiences are co-constructed, contested, and celebrated in the digital sphere.

## 3.0 Chapter Three: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework employed to explore factors influencing visitors' experiences of Disneyland through online reviews. The research is qualitative in nature and adopted a Netnographic approach situated within the interpretivist paradigm. This chapter presents the research question, the research design, philosophical underpinning, reasons for research methodology, data sources, population and sampling strategies, methods of data collection, and finishes with the analysis.

### 3.2 Research Question

The research question guiding this study is "What are the factors that influence a visitor's experience at Disneyland?", thereby developing a better understanding of visitors' experiences of Disneyland. This question seeks to explore the dynamic aspects that shape how visitors perceive, emotionally respond to, and evaluate their time at Disneyland (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This research aims to uncover the factors that influence or impact the visitor experience of their Disneyland visit.

### 3.3 Research Paradigm

Research paradigm is the conceptual lens through which the researcher examines the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs or a worldview that guides a research action or an investigation. Denzin and Lincoln (2017) describe paradigms as human constructions dealing with fundamental principles or ultimate that indicate where the researcher is coming from to generate meaning from the data. There are four major research paradigms that are commonly recognised: Positivism, Postmodern or Post-structuralism, Critical Theory and Interpretivism (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Positivism assumes that reality exists irrespective of individuals. It operates independently of our senses and follows immutable principles. Positivists adopt a realism-based ontological viewpoint. Positivists seek to understand the social world in the same manner that they do the natural world. In nature, there is a relationship of cause and effect between circumstances, and once established, they may be consistently assumed in the future (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). For Positivists, the same holds true in the social world. As reality is context-free, researchers operating at different times and places will reach the same conclusions regarding a particular phenomenon. The epistemological standpoint of positivists is objectivism. As a result, researchers act as objective observers, observing

things without interfering with them. Positivism will not be adopted as a research paradigm because this study does not aim to identify causal links in data and develop law-life generalisations like those made by scientists. Moreover, its generalisations may overlook individual intentions and actions, making it challenging for researchers to fully explore in-depth issues. Positivism's reliance on status and descriptive findings may hinder further insight into participants' perspectives as well. (Pham, 2018).

This study also did not adopt the postmodern or post-structuralist paradigm because these paradigms primarily focus on deconstructing meaning, questioning universal truths, and emphasising the instability of language and identity (Crotty, 1998). The postmodern/post-structuralist paradigm assumes that reality is fragmented, discursively constructed, and inherently unstable (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Its epistemology leans toward scepticism of fixed knowledge, while its ontology denies the existence of a coherent, knowable reality (Crotty, 1998), both of which are incompatible with this study's aim of thematically interpreting consistent patterns of meaning across visitor narratives (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Since this research seeks to understand the subjective experiences of visitors, rather than challenge dominant discourses or critique the instability of meaning, a postmodern approach would undermine the coherence and applicability of its findings.

While Critical Theory is a valuable paradigm in social research, it is not appropriate for this study because the primary aim is not to critique power structures, social injustices, or ideological oppression, but to understand the subjective experiences of visitors at Disneyland. Critical Theory is rooted in the goal of exposing and challenging systemic inequalities, often focusing on marginalised voices, domination, and emancipation (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). It does not align with the ontological and epistemological worldview adopted in this research, as the ontology of Critical Theory is grounded in historical realism, which views reality as being shaped by social, political, and cultural structures that perpetuate domination and oppression (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) and its epistemology is subjectivist and transformative, emphasising that knowledge is constructed through critique, reflexivity, and an intent to challenge existing power relations (Ryan, 2018). Moreover, this study does not seek to critique systemic power structures or advocate for socio-political transformation.

This study adopted the interpretivist paradigm because it aims to explore how Disneyland visitors experience and interpret their visits through online reviews. Interpretivism is well-suited for this purpose, as it prioritises contextual, emotional, and subjective meaning-making rather than objective measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Interpretivism emerged as a criticism of positivism from a subjective perspective.

Interpretivism is mainly concerned with in-depth aspects and factors associated with a context (Lillestol et al., 2015). Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that the primary goal of the Interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. The emphasis is on understanding the individual and their perception of the world around them. Thus, the essential principle of the interpretivist paradigm is that reality is socially created (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In this paradigm, theory comes after research, therefore it is based on the evidence collected throughout the research process. Thus, while adopting this paradigm, data are obtained and analysed in a way consistent with theory (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology and a qualitative methodology.

The subjectivist epistemology assumes that researchers interpret data based on their own cognitive processes such as interpretation, reflection, empathy, and sense-making, which are essential tools for understanding how participants assign meaning to their experiences. These processes involve subjectively engaging with the data, recognising patterns, and co-constructing meaning through a continuous dialogue between the researcher's prior knowledge and the participants' perspectives (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Lumsden, 2019; Schwandt, 2000). The assumption of a relativist ontology implies that you believe that the situation under consideration has multiple realities, and that those realities can be explored and meaning derived from or reconstructed through human interactions between the researcher and the research subjects, as well as among the research participants (Chalmers et al., 2009). The researcher must also practice reflexivity, acknowledging their own beliefs, assumptions, and cultural background, and how these may influence data interpretation. This reflexive engagement ensures transparency and ethical awareness in the analytical process, emphasising that findings are constructed interpretations, not objective facts. Thus, the researcher's reasoning, emotional intuition, and critical thinking become integral to how themes are identified, how meanings are interpreted, and how reality is represented (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

### 3.4 Research Methodology

The methodology outlines the reasons and progression of the systematic procedures employed in executing a research project to get insights into a research topic (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). There are two methodologies, quantitative and qualitative, which explain why certain methods are chosen, how they align with the research question, how knowledge will be gathered and interpreted to answer the research question (Salvador, 2016). Bazeley (2004) suggests that the selection of a certain research method must be guided by the research question, which means that an exploratory study or one that requires extensive understanding of a phenomena or experience would most often use

qualitative methods such as interviews or observations from a purposively selected sample.

While Quantitative methodology is typically aligned with positivist paradigms, which assume a single, measurable reality and prioritise generalisability, objectivity, and numerical data (Salvador, 2016), this study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the complex, emotional, and subjective dimensions of visitors' experiences at Disneyland. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for inquiries that aim to understand how individuals interpret, describe, and assign meaning to their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2023). The data used in this study are collected from Tripadvisor. The comments are qualitative in nature and provide rich, descriptive narratives that reflect visitors' personal experiences and emotional responses to their time spent at Disneyland.

To explore these experiences, the research adopts a non-participant Netnographic approach (Kozinets, 2010). Netnography is a qualitative research methodology that adapts traditional ethnographic techniques to the study of online communities and digital communications (Kozinets, 2016). It involves observation, collection, and analysis of naturally occurring online content such as discussions, reviews, and user-generated narratives, making it especially appropriate for tourism and consumer research (Mkono, 2011). Unlike traditional ethnography, Netnography does not require physical presence or direct interaction with participants. Instead, this study adopts a non-participant approach, in which the researcher acts as an unobtrusive observer, collecting publicly available data without engaging with users or intervening in the online environment (Langer & Beckman, 2005). This approach is consistent with the interpretivist aim of understanding experiences as constructed by individuals in their own words and contexts and particularly well-suited for exploring experiential and meaning-making processes in digital spaces.

### 3.5 Population and Sampling

The target population for this study comprises individuals who have visited Disneyland theme parks and have shared their experiences in the form of public online reviews on Tripadvisor. Given the global scale of the Disneyland brand, currently, there are a total of Six at different locations (Guides, n.d.)

- Disneyland Resort (California)  
Disneyland  
Disney California Adventure
- Walt Disney World Resort (Florida)

Magic Kingdom

EPCOT

Disney's Hollywood Studios

Disney's Animal Kingdom

- Tokyo Disney Resort

Tokyo Disneyland

Tokyo DisneySea

- Disneyland Paris

Disneyland Park

Walt Disney Studios Park (renamed Disney Adventure World in 2025)

- Hong Kong Disneyland

Hong Kong Disneyland Park

- Shanghai Disney Resort

Shanghai Disneyland

This study focuses specifically on visitor reviews posted on Tripadvisor for five Disneyland locations: Anaheim (California, USA), Hong Kong, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Paris. These locations were purposively selected to capture a geographically diverse range of visitor experiences, cultural expectations, and operational practices, offering a broader understanding of how the Disneyland brand is experienced across different international contexts (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2017; Torres et al., 2018). The selection process was guided by the need for balance across the five Disneyland parks included in this study. Although the number of reviews varied across locations, the analysis ensured that all parks were represented in the dataset, thereby enabling both cross-comparison and identification of shared patterns. The final dataset emphasized experiential diversity rather than numerical representativeness, which aligns with the interpretive paradigm adopted for this study. If there were more than one Disneyland in one country, only one Disneyland was selected to avoid overrepresentation. Altogether a total of 108,856 reviews, were written, and available on TripAdvisor across these five parks as of 17 April 2025. However, it was neither practical nor methodologically appropriate to analyse all reviews. To ensure both relevancy and manageability, purposive sampling was applied. Reviews were restricted to a six-month period (November 2024 – April 2025), ensuring recency and contextual relevance. This

time-bound approach enhances the contextual relevance of the findings by focusing on up-to-date visitor perceptions and recent changes (Mkono & Markwell, 2014). Additional inclusion criteria (see Section 3.6) further narrowed the dataset to 294 reviews that were suitable for in-depth qualitative thematic analysis.

### 3.6 Data collection

Data for this study were collected through Netnographic observation of user-generated reviews on the travel platform Tripadvisor, focusing on five Disneyland locations: Anaheim (California, USA), Hong Kong, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Paris. The study employed an easy-to-use automation tool, Apify, for data. To systematically and efficiently retrieve reviews from the Tripadvisor website, the study utilised Apify, a web scraping platform that offers customisable extraction tools known as actors or agents. Apify is an open-source automation service that enables developers to create and share web scraping scripts capable of extracting publicly available information from websites. A pre-configured actor developed by a third-party contributor on the Apify marketplace was selected for this project due to its functionality in retrieving Tripadvisor review data, including review text, posting date, star ratings, and reviewer metadata (Apify, n.d.).

Due to the vast number of online reviews available on platforms like Tripadvisor, it is neither practical nor methodologically viable to analyse all existing data. Therefore, this study utilises purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research to select information-rich cases that are especially relevant to the research question (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). This sampling strategy is appropriate for Netnographic studies where the goal is not statistical generalisation but rather, deep exploration of meaning within a specific cultural context (Kozinets, 2015; Langer & Beckman, 2005). This sample technique is suitable for Netnographic research in which the objective is not statistical generalisation, but rather a thorough study of meaning within a given cultural context (generalised platforms such as Facebook and Tripadvisor) (Susanto et al., 2024).

Reviews were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- The review must be written in English (To ensure relevance and richness and maintain consistency in interpretation and coding).
- It must be posted within the last 6 months from the date of data collection to reflect the most updated guest perspectives and to capture contemporary issues emerging from evolving operational practices (May 2025).

- The review must relate to one of the five selected Disneyland locations (Anaheim, Tokyo, Paris, Shanghai and Hong Kong).
- It must contain a minimum of 100 words to ensure sufficient depth of content for thematic interpretation (Reviews were selected if they offered sufficient detail about experiential aspects of the park, such as attractions, entertainment, staff service, crowding, or emotional responses. Reviews that were overly brief (e.g., “Great park!”) or unrelated to the visitor experience (e.g., limited to complaints about ticketing or external travel logistics) were excluded.) (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017)

*Table 3 Disneyland Parks Tripadvisor Summary (Nov 2024 – Apr 2025)*

<b>Disneyland Park</b>	<b>Tripadvisor Rating</b>	<b>Ranking in City</b>	<b>Total Reviews (6 months)</b>	<b>Review Period</b>
<b>Anaheim Disneyland</b>	4.4	3 <sup>rd</sup> of 121 things to do in Anaheim	66	Nov 2024 – Apr 2025
<b>Paris Disneyland</b>	3.9	1 <sup>st</sup> of 93 things to do in Marne-la-Vallée, Paris	112	Nov 2024 – Apr 2025
<b>Hong Kong Disneyland</b>	4.2	5 <sup>th</sup> of 1,509 things to do in Hong Kong	47	Nov 2024 – Apr 2025
<b>Tokyo Disneyland</b>	4.3	1 <sup>st</sup> of 15 things to do in Maihama, Tokyo	44	Nov 2024 – Apr 2025
<b>Shanghai Disneyland</b>	4.0	36 <sup>th</sup> of 1,401 things to do in Shanghai	25	Nov 2024 – Apr 2025
<b>Total</b>			294	

Applying this criterion, a sample of 294 reviews were selected, and it serves as the dataset for this study. These reviews represent unsolicited, user-generated reflections from visitors who experienced the park firsthand and voluntarily shared their experiences in a public forum. While reviews were collected across five Disneyland parks, the distribution was uneven, with some parks contributing more reviews than others. This reflects the natural variation in online engagement levels, where larger or more frequently visited parks (e.g., Anaheim and Paris) generate substantially more user-generated content compared to smaller parks (e.g., Hong Kong or Shanghai). The selection therefore prioritised capturing the richness of authentic visitor experiences rather than enforcing equal quotas, though this imbalance is acknowledged as a methodological limitation. While the sample size is constrained by the specified timeframe and inclusion criteria, it is considered adequate for qualitative thematic analysis, which emphasises depth, nuance, and thematic saturation over statistical representativeness (Guest et al., 2012). As frequently discussed, counting is a controversial issue in qualitative data analysis. Some researchers, particularly those who adhere to an interpretivist approach to qualitative research, strongly believe that quantification of qualitative data is a violation of the fundamental aims and assumptions of qualitative research (Walsh et al., 2013). The purpose is critical in determining if quantification of qualitative data is acceptable for dissemination of findings as well. Choosing whether to offer theme frequencies, co-occurrence matrices, or other 'results' of quantification operations depends on the study's purpose and audience (Guest et al., 2012). As Guest et al. (2012) suggest, if the study purpose is exploratory, tries to produce theory or build conceptual models, or employs an ethnographic or life-history method, there is likely to be minimal need for frequency or quantification in the distribution of your results. Indeed, if you have adopted an interpretative approach from the start of your study, it may be hard to effectively quantify your results. As a result, every review that described the Disneyland experience will be analysed in this study.

This sampling approach enables a focused yet comparative exploration of visitor experiences across multiple cultural and operational settings, enhancing the interpretive richness of the analysis. By limiting the dataset to recent, geographically varied, and content-rich reviews, the study ensures relevance, trustworthiness, and manageability of the data for in-depth qualitative interpretation (Nowell et al., 2017).

### 3.7 Researcher Positionality

In qualitative and interpretive research, the researcher's positionality is an integral aspect of the study, shaping the selection, interpretation, and representation of data (Holmes, 2020). As this study employed a Netnographic and thematic analysis approach, I

acknowledge that my decisions about data inclusion, coding, and theme development were influenced by my interpretive stance and background as a researcher.

The decision to reduce the dataset from 108,856 reviews to 294 reviews was guided by both methodological and practical considerations. Reviews were chosen based on explicit inclusion criteria, yet the evaluation of what constituted “content-rich” material inevitably involved subjective judgement. This reflects the interpretivist orientation of the study, which prioritises meaning-making and contextual understanding over statistical representativeness (Kozinets, 2016).

My prior academic engagement with tourism and hospitality literature, as well as professional experiences in guest relations and service industries, informed my sensitivity to themes such as service quality, crowding, and emotional memory. While these experiences enhanced my ability to interpret the data, they may also have shaped the lens through which I identified salient patterns. In addition, I have never personally visited any of the Disneyland parks, which positions me as an external observer of the phenomenon. This absence of direct experience may have limited the degree of embodied familiarity I brought to the analysis, yet it also reinforced the importance of grounding interpretations strictly within the data itself, thereby reducing the risk of anecdotal bias. Recognising this potential influence, I sought to mitigate bias by adhering to transparent inclusion criteria, applying systematic coding procedures, and ensuring that all reviews meeting the criteria were considered equally during analysis.

Ultimately, my positionality highlights that the findings presented in this dissertation are interpretive constructions, co-created through the interaction between visitor narratives and my own analytical framework. This acknowledgment strengthens the trustworthiness of the research by situating the analysis within its epistemological foundations and by being explicit about the role of the researcher in shaping the knowledge produced.

### 3.8 Data analysis – Thematic Analysis

This study uses thematic analysis rather than content analysis because it seeks to explore the underlying meanings, emotions, and subjective experiences expressed by Disneyland visitors in their online reviews. While content analysis focuses on counting the frequency of predefined categories or words to identify patterns, it often emphasises quantification and surface-level interpretation and danger of missing context (Schreier, 2012; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). By contrast, thematic analysis offers a more interpretive and flexible approach, enabling the researcher to identify and examine deeper themes that

capture the emotional tone, narrative structure, and experiential richness of the reviews (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The reviews were manually analysed by carefully reading each one multiple times and assigning open codes to meaningful phrases that reflected visitor experiences, emotions, and evaluations. Analysis software such as Nvivo was not used for the analysis to maintain a manual, immersive engagement with the data, allowing for more context-sensitive interpretation aligned with the study’s interpretivist and inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The analysis followed the six-phase process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), which supports a rigorous and systematic approach to qualitative inquiry:

*Table 4 Six Steps of data analysis as guided by Braun and Clarke (2006)*

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Process</b>
Familiarisation with the data	All reviews were read multiple times to gain a deep understanding of their content. Initial observations and impressions were recorded in analytical memos to guide early interpretation.
Generating initial codes	Manual open coding was used to segment data into meaningful units, highlighting emotional tones, experiences, and judgments, and assigning corresponding codes for similar contexts (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The codes were categorised into potential themes through an repetitive process that prioritised recurrence, emotional depth, and relevance to the research aim (Naeem et al., 2023).
Theming	Thematic analysis constructs themes based on codes and correlates with the original data set (Denzin & Salvo Y deLeón, 2020). It captures individual visitors’ emotions and experiential patterns (Morse, 2012). All developing themes, including unrelated ones, are assessed for responsiveness to research objectives. Sub-themes are identified for interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Thematic Structure	The themes were chosen to capture the essence of each experience, backed by

	direct quotes from reviews to maintain the authenticity of visitor perspectives.
Theme Interpretation	The findings chapter presents themes contextualised within existing literature to analyse Disneyland’s cultural, emotional, and leisure experiences.
Alignment with Research Philosophy	The thematic analysis process, utilising the non-participant netnographic approach and interpretivist paradigm, focuses on visitor subjective meanings and explores factors influencing Disneyland experiences at four locations.

In this study, open coding was used as the first stage of thematic analysis to explore user-generated content from TripAdvisor reviews. Open coding involves systematically examining the data line by line and assigning initial codes to meaningful segments, without relying on pre-established categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Naeem et al., 2023). Initially, the coding process was guided by a focus on meaning, context, and the ways in which visitors articulated their Disneyland experiences. Rather than treating the data numerically, codes were interpreted in relation to how they reflected visitor expectations, emotions, and suggestions for improvement. This approach ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the authentic language of the reviewers, allowing the researcher to capture recurring patterns, shared concerns, and emotionally charged narratives that emerged organically from the data (Williams & Moser, 2019). Through this process, a wide range of experiential dimensions was identified across the five Disney parks, revealing the richness and diversity of visitor perspectives that later informed the thematic structure of the study.

*Table 5 Identified Main Themes Across Five Disneyland Parks*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Emergence Across Parks</b>	<b>Notes on Novelty</b>
Wait Time and Queue Management	Present in all five parks	A common but strongly reinforced theme; consistently highlighted as a major influence on visitor experience.
Ride Experience	Present in all five parks	Central to visitor narratives; not new

		but reaffirmed as a universal factor.
Entertainment and Events	Present in all five parks	Consistently reinforced, but fireworks and parades emerged as particularly emphasized in Paris and Shanghai.
Staff Service and Hospitality	Present in all five parks	Widely observed; however, contrast in service quality more strongly surfaced in Hong Kong and Paris.
Cost and Value Perceptions	Present in all five parks	Commonly noted, but Shanghai visitors emphasized additional charges as a distinct subtheme.
Access and Reservation Systems	Present in all five parks	A newer digital-age theme; complaints around apps and mobile booking were especially pronounced in Anaheim and Shanghai.
Crowding and Space Management	Present in all five parks	Common across parks; Hong Kong and Shanghai highlighted limited rest areas as unique concerns.
Character Interaction	Present in all five parks	Emotional highlight across parks, though limited availability was

		most often cited in Tokyo.
--	--	----------------------------

During the coding process, certain patterns emerged more consistently across all Disneyland parks, while others appeared only in specific contexts. Some codes, such as nostalgia, memory-making through photos, or the symbolism of the castle, surfaced less frequently but carried rich interpretive value in explaining unique aspects of visitor experience. The analysis began with an open coding (Williams & Moser, 2019), where 23 initial codes were identified from the raw TripAdvisor data. These codes reflected recurring patterns in visitor narratives, such as references to queuing, crowding, cost, emotional enjoyment, and staff behaviour. Through an iterative process of axial coding, these codes were clustered into broader categories that emphasized commonalities across experiences. In this study, the refinement of codes into themes was not based solely on frequency but on their conceptual relevance and explanatory power. This approach ensured that even less frequently cited insights, such as feelings of the park being “not child-friendly” or the significance of shopping and photos in constructing memories, were preserved as meaningful contributions.

Theme development, therefore, was not merely a reduction of codes but a process of abstraction and interpretation. As Alhojailan and Ibrahim (2012) explain, theming allows researchers to uncover underlying patterns and correlations, offering deeper insights into the research problem. By iteratively interpreting the visitors’ language, keywords such as “magical atmosphere,” “long queues,” or “friendly staff”, these codes were gradually clustered into broader categories such as emotional engagement (Staff Service and Hospitality), crowding, entertainment, and staff interaction (Mishra & Dey, 2022; Naeem et al., 2023).

This iterative process of conceptualisation ensured that the themes were grounded in the lived experiences of visitors while also being theoretically meaningful (Ahmed et al., 2025). Ultimately, the final set of themes reflects both the recurring concerns widely shared across parks and the distinctive nuances that emerged contexts. In doing so, the analysis balances breadth with depth, ensuring that both common and unique aspects of the Disneyland experience inform the interpretation.

### 3.9 Summary

This chapter explained that this study adopted an interpretivist and qualitative research approach using a Netnographic strategy. A purposive sampling method was applied to collect rich and relevant user-generated content from TripAdvisor reviews across

five Disneyland parks. Manual coding and thematic analysis techniques were employed to identify recurring patterns in visitor experiences. Both positive and negative feedback were categorised into eight key experiential themes aligned with the research aim. This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of how factors influence visitors through emotional, spatial, and operational encounters. The findings and discussion are presented in Chapter Four.

## 4.0 Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings of the study, which explores the factors influencing visitors' experiences at Disneyland theme parks. Eight main experiential themes were identified through thematic analysis of TripAdvisor reviews: Waiting Time and Queue Management, Attraction Experience, Entertainment and Events, Staff Service and Hospitality, Cost/Value Perception, Access and Reservation Systems, Crowding and Space Management, and Character Interaction. These themes were derived from open coding of user-generated content and reflect the most discussed aspects of Disneyland visits. The themes are presented in narrative form, supported by illustrative quotes and conceptual interpretation. The discussion also examines how the findings align with or differ from the existing literature, highlighting both consistent and new insights in the context of theme park visitor experiences.

In this study, an initial set of 23 descriptive codes were generated through open coding, reflecting a broad range of concepts and issues raised in the Tripadvisor reviews. However, to ensure analytical clarity and thematic coherence, only eight themes were selected for in-depth analysis because additional codes no longer contributed to novel insights or significant variance (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This reduction process aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidance on thematic analysis, which emphasises the importance of identifying themes that are not only recurrent but also rich in meaning, relevant to the research question, and capable of offering insightful patterns across the data set. The analysis identified eight primary themes that shape visitors' experiences across Disneyland parks. These themes are *Waiting Time and Queue Management*, reflecting concerns over long lines and operational efficiency; *Attraction Experience*, which encompasses the quality, variety, and maintenance of rides; *Entertainment and Events*, highlighting the impact of parades and shows; *Staff Service and Hospitality*, relating to the friendliness and professionalism of park employees, *Cost, Value, and Commercialisation*, addressing guest perceptions of pricing and affordability; and *Access and Reservation System*, relating to ride accessibility and guest planning. *Crowding and Space Management* captures the physical and emotional effects of high visitor density, while *Character Interaction* emphasises the role of meeting Disney characters in enhancing the overall magical experience. To illustrate this process, a thematic framework (Table 6) has been included, which demonstrates how the initial codes were refined and grouped into categories and ultimately distilled into the eight overarching themes. This framework provides transparency in the analytic process and highlights how diverse visitor comments were systematically organized into coherent dimensions of the Disneyland experience.

*Table 6 Thematic Framework of Disneyland Visitor Experience*

<b>Initial Codes (Examples)</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Final Themes</b>
“Lines too long,” “Waited 2 hrs”	Queueing frustration	Waiting Time and Queue Management
“Space Mountain amazing,” “Ride broke down”	Ride quality / technical reliability	Attraction Experience
“Parade was magical,” “Light show wow”	Performances and spectacles	Entertainment and Events
“Staff rude,” “Cast member helped my child”	Staff attitude / service surprise	Staff Service and Hospitality
“Food overpriced,” “Not worth ticket cost”	Cost vs perceived value	Cost/Value Perception
“App confusing,” “Couldn’t book in time”	Digital navigation / booking	Access and Reservation Systems
“Too crowded,” “No space to rest”	Park density / design	Crowding and Space Management
“Mickey made my day,” “Few characters seen”	Character engagement	Character Interaction

The Leisure Motivation Scale by Beard and Ragheb (1983) was particularly significant in this study because it provided the theoretical foundation for interpreting how emotional connection, escapism, intellectual engagement, competence-mastery, and social bonding shaped Disneyland visitor experiences. By linking the themes from TripAdvisor reviews to these motivational dimensions, the analysis was able to show how visitors’ narratives reflected deeper psychological and social drivers rather than just surface-level opinions. This theoretical framing strengthened the study’s findings by situating them within an established leisure and tourism framework, thereby connecting real visitor accounts to broader academic discourse.

## 4.2 Overview of the findings

This study identified eight key themes that shape Disneyland visitors' experiences: (1) waiting time and queue management, (2) attraction experience, (3) entertainment and events, (4) staff service and hospitality, (5) cost/value perception, (6) access and reservation systems, (7) crowding and space management, and (8) character interaction. These themes emerged through thematic analysis of recent TripAdvisor reviews across five global Disneyland parks.

### 4.2.1 Waiting Time and Queue Management

Long wait times and ineffective queuing systems was the top theme (232 codes, - 16.79% of the total 1382 codes). Guests consistently reported long queues for attractions, food services, and character interactions, which negatively impacted their overall experience. This finding aligns with Milman (2009) who stated that prolonged waiting times are among the most frequently cited sources of visitor frustration, as they diminish perceived value and reduce time available for other experiences. Bai et al. (2023) and Demonteverde et al. (2023) also suggested that excellent queue management allows excitement to arise without causing frustration, ensuring that crowds, long waiting times, and parking problems do not overshadow the delightful parts of the visit. Similarly, Geissler and Rucks (2011) argued that queue management is not merely a logistical concern but also a psychological one, with excessive waiting contributing to visitor fatigue, emotional strain, and dissatisfaction.

Reviews from Anaheim Disneyland reflected the wait times that were experienced. For example, participant 7 remarked: *"... wasting another 40 minutes getting back to the area and waiting in the line again"*.

This comment not only emphasises the imbalance between effort and reward but also reflects how wait time compromises the efficiency of the visit, particularly for international or first-time guests with limited time.

Participant 10 from Anaheim Disneyland described that: *"This was our first time and we were so excited especially my 4 year old daughter. Unfortunately it was not what we were expecting or hoping for and we came away quite disappointed"*.

Participant 4 from Tokyo wrote: *"A good experience... however... 30-150+ minutes to get on a ride... quite frustrating"*.

This indicates that even for guests with overall positive impressions, excessive queues could substantially diminish satisfaction. Moreover, guests with children or older family members often found these delays physically and emotionally stressing, aligning

with Başarangil (2018) and Brey and Lehto (2008), who observed that family dynamics significantly influence perceptions of service efficiency. The present findings resonate with Johns and Gyimóthy's (2003) analysis of Legoland, where adults reported frustration with queues, costs, and lack of adult-oriented activities, yet justified the trip as a sacrifice for their children's enjoyment.

At Shanghai Disneyland, similar sentiments were expressed, especially regarding the mismatch between park size and ride accessibility. For example, participant 3 noted: *"The park is huge but there is not a lot there... I was able to hit all the rides by about 3pm"*.

While this might suggest efficiency, it also implies that long queues are partly a result of limited attraction variety rather than operational excellence. Both Milman (2009), Geissler and Rucks (2011), and Bitner (1992) affirm that *wait time and queue management* are critical factors influencing the theme park experience. This waiting experience often diminished the overall enjoyment of the park, especially for families with young children, elderly visitors, and those with physical limitations. Long wait times were described as emotionally exhausting and physically draining, contributing to a sense of fatigue and dissatisfaction by the end of the visit. Visitors' emotional responses to queuing were not only associated with the duration of the wait but also with the lack of real-time information, inadequate shade or rest areas, and inconsistent communication about ride downtimes or delays. Guests expect not only entertainment but also time efficiency and fairness. When these expectations are unmet, particularly due to long queues, the emotional and experiential value of the visit is compromised regardless of the park's thematic excellence or visual appeal.

#### 4.2.2 Attraction Experience

Rides remain the core attraction across all parks, yet visitor satisfaction varied significantly. There are 154 reviews (11.14%) of the total 1382 reviews that highlighted the rides. Many reviews highlight the thrill, uniqueness, or iconic nature of certain rides. This finding also agrees with the fact that theme parks attempt to elicit powerful feelings like joy, exhilaration, and surprise (Torres et al., 2019).

Participant 6, from Anaheim Disneyland describes the guests' positive experiences with the rides as follows: *"We loved Galaxy's Edge and all of its rides, we made Lightsabres, flew in the falcon and helped the resistance"*.

The same reaction can be seen in a review written from participant 3 (Hong Kong Disneyland): *"We got on all the rides throughout the day and watched a couple of shows. Our longest queue was 45 mins long. Great day out for any age"*.

Participant 37 from Paris Disneyland stated that it was: *“Very exciting roller coasters, the quality, details of the place, environment; really amazing. Time flew and we never get tired”*.

Participant 12 from Hong Kong Disneyland wrote:

*“Big Grizzly Mountain Runaway Mine Cars was our favorite ride and was a mix of Expedition Everest and Big Thunder Mountain. Mystic Manor was so unique and a must try for the whole family. RC Racer was also a hit with my preteens and you can only ride it here, Disneyland Paris, and Shanghai Disneyland”*.

Since the evolution of the theme park, rides were the one of the main concepts of its development due to the Industrialisation, the availability of electricity, mechanical advancements, and focusing on middle- and working-class urbanites who were familiar with industrial machinery (Adams-Volpe, 1991; Canogar, 1992; Samuelson & Yegoians, 2001; Zukin, 1996). An original iconic Ferris wheel at the Chicago Exposition's Midway Plaisance attracted over 1.4 million riders (Nye, 1981). In fact, the results have shown that Disney's idea of integrating themes with amusement parks (Cross, 2006; Jones & Wills, 2005) contributed to the overall enjoyment of the guests' experience, as these reviews reflected their emotions impacted by the familiar Disney's movie themed rides.

Torres et al. (2019) found that rides play a significant role in enhancing overall satisfaction and theme parks rely heavily on their rides and performances to attract visitors. The finding of this study supports Bao (2016) and Erb and Ong (2016), as they stated that the theme identity is embodied in the park's rides/facilities and atmosphere. While Liang and Li (2021), Torres et al. (2018), and, Weru et al. (2024) stated that themed rides are critical to the theme park success, shaping guest satisfaction, and influencing return visits. It also includes multi-dimensional, encompassing thrill, escapism, entertainment, and customer service, yet it is difficult to achieve.

Participant 2 from Tokyo Disneyland described that: *“The Beauty and the Beast ride was unreal—by far the best Disney ride we've ever been on. It was beautiful and just so well done. We're still talking about it!”*.

Likewise, participant 11 to Tokyo Disneyland wrote that: *“There are also some with a twist like It's a Small World with Marvel characters and some exclusive rides like Beauty and the Beast which is set within a scaled castle”*.

Consequently, dissatisfaction arises from factors such as closed or outdated rides, short durations, or an imbalance between child- and adult-friendly attractions although Ford and Milman (2000) stated that amusement park revolutionised the industry with new rides for adult audiences, which is against Disney's original concept to create a pleasant

atmosphere for all ages, both children and parents (Cross, 2006; Hsu, 2011b; Jones & Wills, 2005). Moreover, Clavé (2007) noted that these exceptional spaces align with new cultural behaviours influenced by media. However, Disney's adaptability and commitment to innovation, ensuring that its parks remain relevant and appeal to diverse audiences (Chen, 2024), is questioned by some of the reviews. For example, participant 20 from the Anaheim Disneyland described that: *"Alice was never going and they seriously need to get rid of Toads... terrifying for little kids"*.

The issue of audience imbalance in attraction design is further discussed by Başarangil (2018) and Song et al. (2024), who observed that younger visitors prioritise interactive, thrill-based attractions, while older visitors tend to favour shows, parades, and cultural theming. The findings support this, revealing a perception among adult guests that the lack of high-thrill or intellectually engaging attractions diminished the enjoyment of their visit. The findings also suggest that relevancy to adult audiences is an important factor because repeat visitors, often adults, return to Disney parks to relive nostalgic experiences or to share them with others, reflecting a strong emotional investment from adult fans (Bondoc & Ytturalde, 2023).

Participant 10 from Tokyo Disneyland's review showed that: *"Some of the rides may be for older people but most of the rides are for children! The rides made for kids are slow and easy rides"*.

Participant 57 from Paris Disneyland's similar review described that: *"The rides were okay, they are all kid appropriate but I wouldn't go to Disneyland with kids under the age of 6"*.

This theme reflects how ride expectations are central for the overall experience and how unmet expectations in this area lead to disappointment. The data also revealed numerous complaints regarding broken or temporarily closed rides, particularly in Paris and Anaheim Disneyland, leading to a diminished sense of value and enjoyment. The expectation for variety and relevance in attraction offerings is well-documented. Geissler and Rucks (2011) and Milman (2009) observed that visitors seek a diverse array of experiences that cater to different demographics, including both thrill-seeking youth and older visitors preferring shows and nostalgic content. The findings also revealed a gap in adult-oriented rides in parks where offers were inclined toward younger children, prompting irritation among adult visitors or mixed-age families.

This frustration is compounded when rides are described as outdated or disappointingly brief. King (2002) argues that rides serve not merely as mechanical diversions but as integral storytelling devices that contribute to the park's immersive

narrative. When rides are perceived as too short, irrelevant, or lacking thematic depth, they fail to deliver the intended emotional engagement. Such sentiments were reflected by participants when they expressed that certain attractions did not justify their long waiting times or ticket expenses.

Additionally, Clavé (2007) suggests that theme park rides are fundamental to the park's structured design and thematic identity. Hence, technological or operational failures not only interrupt ride availability but also disrupt the immersive experience and the overall narrative coherence of the park. Numerous reviews from Tokyo and Shanghai parks criticised the broken attractions and limited innovation, which reduced the perceived quality of the experience.

Participant 7, who visited Anaheim Disneyland described the experience as: *“Over 12 rides were closed at some point during the day. We waited in line for an hour and Star Wars shut down. Later we came back with the express ticket and the ride shut down again”*.

Participant 24 from Paris Disneyland visitors written similar reviews that: *“Half the rides / shows were shut. Barely any characters around. Ques on average about an hour each ride/ show”*.

Furthermore, Bondoc and Ytturalde (2023) highlighted that repeat visitors who often hold nostalgic and emotionally charged expectations are more sensitive to perceived shortcomings such as ride closures, lack of novelty, or service inefficiencies. This observation aligns with the review from the returning guests, who expressed disappointment over reduced ride availability or redundant attraction options.

Participant 27, who visited Paris Disneyland, stated that: *“The experience is no longer magical as it used to be. Too many tickets sold per day and frequent ride breakdowns. My grandchildren were cheated of the same experience their parents had”*.

Participant 8, who visited Anaheim Disneyland, wrote: *“Disney has created their own shrinkflation. So much more expensive and with so much less to do. The light show at the end of the night was just sad”*.

#### 4.2.3 Entertainment and Events

Entertainment offerings such as parades, stage shows, fireworks, and seasonal events form a core dimension of the Disneyland visitor experience. Across multiple locations, visitor reviews frequently highlight both the emotional impact of such events and the logistical challenges surrounding them. These reviews reflect emotional engagement, spatial access, and operational delivery.

Themed entertainment is central to the Disney brand. Liu and Isa (2023) and Smith and Conrad (2020) emphasise that entertainment spectacles serve as focal points of emotional immersion, offering guests transformative moments that go beyond passive amusement. Similarly, Patrocínio et al. (2018) assert that parades and nighttime shows contribute significantly to visitors' emotional connection, aligning with the 'emotional' and 'relational' dimensions of leisure experience described by Vergara and Vergara (2023).

Visitors strongly affirm these perspectives. At Paris Disneyland, participant 17 described entertainment as a highlight of their visit: *"We enjoyed fantastic rides, watched the parades, attended impressive shows, and finished the day with the breathtaking nighttime finale: an incredible spectacle of fireworks, lasers, snow (!) and synchronized drones"*.

Participant 55 from Paris Disneyland also stated that: *"The rides were fantastic, and something for everyone. The princess pavilion was simply magical. We got to meet Moana and my daughter was thrilled. The illumination show was spectacular and the view from the accessible area was breathtaking"*.

These reviews affirm the emotional power of Disney's live events and their role in creating memorable experiences, consistent with Gröppel-Wegener's (2024) view that such events are carefully crafted tools of enchantment.

Likewise, reviews from Tokyo Disneyland's participant 11 include praise for event quality: *"The nighttime show was good and it was amazing to be able to sit in front of the castle to watch. The experience was truly magical"*.

Similarly, participant 11 from Hong Kong Disneyland noted that: *"The Lion King show was very fun. If the other shows are like it in terms of quality, definitely check them out as well"*.

However, several reviews also indicate dissatisfaction tied to limited availability, short duration, or overcrowding, which can diminish the value of these experiences. For example, a review written by participant 42 (Hong Kong Disneyland) stated that: *"There was no parade and no show in the Adventureland theater, but we knew this in advance"*.

Also from Hong Kong Disneyland, participant 9 said that: *"The parade... lasted about 2 minutes... Only Mickey, Minnie, and staff"*.

Participant 137 from Paris Disneyland wrote that: *"The fireworks were amazing, but we had to wait over an hour just to secure a decent spot"*.

These statements illustrate that while guests may hold high expectations for entertainment, logistical barriers such as poor visibility, unclear schedules, or limited capacity can moderate or even reverse their satisfaction.

Moreover, Başarangil (2018) notes that different age groups have varying preferences, with older visitors often prioritising shows and parades over thrill rides. This aligns with many family reviews describing entertainment as a shared, intergenerational highlight:

Participant 71 commented on Anaheim Disneyland as follows: *“The fireworks brought my husband to tears while the parade had me equally in tears”*.

Participant 27, from Paris Disneyland, stated: *“The rides once you get on them are as memorable as ever. Our grandchildren made a list of must-do rides but had to miss some. The parade is an experience our children have happy memories of seeing but I feel our grandchildren have been cheated of that same experience”*.

Yet, this high emotional value also elevates the stakes for failure. Incomplete information, last-minute cancellations, or overcrowded viewing areas can lead to strong disappointment, particularly among first-time or international visitors. While reference highlighted their immersive and symbolic power, visitor reviews reveal both positive and negative feedback: when executed well, they evoke awe and emotional fulfilment; when constrained by poor logistics or limited access, they become a source of frustration. The findings underscore the importance of not only producing high-quality shows but also ensuring clear communication, space management, and audience access to fully realise their intended impact.

#### 4.2.4 Staff Service and Hospitality

Staff service and hospitality is one of the main themes and it is the fourth theme. Across five Disneylands, visitor feedback regarding staff service ranged from high praise for friendly and accommodating behaviour to criticism of rudeness, indifference, or lack of assistance during peak times. The relational dimension of the leisure experience (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Vergara & Vergara, 2023) suggests that guest-staff interactions influence feelings of belonging, comfort, and have the power to generate a number of various feelings among visitors (Jensen, 2007; Torres et al., 2019). Employee courtesy is also evaluated as an outstanding aspect of the Disney experience Bai et al. (2023) and Torres et al. (2019) recommended providing sufficient manpower to provide essential service even at the entrance or point of arrival. Reviews have shown that staff service is related to the guests' experience and impact on the magical offering of Disneyland.

Participant 11, who visited Tokyo Disneyland, reviewed on the warmth and professionalism of the staff: *“All the staff are amazing and really welcome you in keeping with the cast member values”*.

Tokyo Disneyland’s participant 26 described: *“The staff were super friendly... the friendliness and hospitality added to the experience”*.

Jensen (2007) and Torres et al. (2019) argue that a collective narrative through servicescape and interactive role-playing co-produces emotional experiences (Cabanas, 2020). According to Wanhill (2002), the core of a theme park is its ‘imagescape’, which combines products and services smoothly to provide guests with exceptional experiences.

However, some experiences in Tokyo with bad service disrupt this positive image although Wang et al. (2019) argues that visitors' brand experiences were not significantly influenced by peripheral variables, such as consumer price, landscape setting, and service quality.

Participant 39 (Tokyo Disneyland) noted: *“We were met with a racist attitude from Disneyland Park Guest Service supervisor... Be forewarned, Japan doesn’t want American tourists”*. This serious allegation suggests that inconsistencies in service quality, particularly in culturally sensitive contexts can significantly undermine overall satisfaction.

In Hong Kong Disneyland, the reviews reflected an even broader spectrum of service quality. Some guests praised specific individuals, and this can be seen by participant 48 (Hong Kong): *“Cody was the most pleasant, professional person to deal with”*.

Yet Hong Kong Disneyland’s participant 33 noted failures in crowd management and assistance: *“Many staff gave up trying to enforce queues... some even traumatized”*. This suggests that during high-stress situations, even well-trained staff may be overwhelmed or lack the tools to maintain guest expectations.

At Paris Disneyland, similar patterns emerged. While some guests found staff to be helpful and friendly, participant 193 cited long waits at guest services, poor communication, and staff fatigue: *“Inconsistent service; long wait at help desks; staff fatigue apparent”*.

Clavé (2007) identified that operational overload in high-density theme parks often leads to service degradation, especially during peak seasons. This aligns with align with Yusof et al. (2021) and Bai et al. (2023), who argue that courteous and empathetic staff behaviour enhances not only satisfaction but also emotional attachment to the brand. Frontline service is viewed as a performance that includes creating a specific mood (Korkman, 2015). Furthermore, Beard and Ragheb’s (1983) Leisure Motivation Scale

supports the idea that positive interpersonal interactions fulfil the ‘relational’ and ‘emotional’ dimensions of guest motivation.

#### 4.2.5 Cost/ Value

The theme of Cost and Value emerged prominently across visitor reviews, particularly in relation to ticket pricing, in-park spending (e.g. food, merchandise), and the overall return on investment in relation to experience quality. Theme Park experiences are increasingly being evaluated, not just by their entertainment quality but also by their perceived value which is a construct shaped by both tangible (e.g. number of attractions) and intangible (e.g. emotional satisfaction) factors. While Botterill (1997) and Canogar (1992) stated that theme park started the concept of ‘packetizing’ tourists, entirely enclosed, privatised, and commodified since the beginning, Lewison (2018) discovered the transition from static ticket pricing to demand-based pricing, including tiered tickets, early-bird discounts, and queue products (e.g. FastPass) used by Disney. Milman (2009) argues that price fairness is a critical determinant of visitor satisfaction in the theme park context, especially when expectations are high due to brand reputation. Geissler and Rucks (2011) found that theme park guests' experiences were influenced by value and ticket prices.

Participant 12, from Anaheim Disneyland, highlighted overpricing by saying: *“Expect to spend BIG \$\$\$s... tickets, food, souvenirs—everything is overpriced”*.

Participant 30, from Anaheim Disneyland, wrote: *“No wonder Disney raked in over \$30 billion in 2024. When your business model is built on squeezing families dry, who needs customer loyalty?”*.

These reflect a resentment toward escalating costs, especially when accompanied by operational issues like ride closures or long lines.

Participant 91, from Paris Disneyland, expressed that: *“A magical land where time is money”*.

While participant 86, from Paris Disneyland, said, *“Premier Access pass was so worth the extra cost”*, participant 7, from Anaheim Disneyland, countered, *“Still had to queue even after paying extra. What’s the point?”*

These comments reveal divided opinions. Some guests found optional upgrades worthwhile, while others questioned their effectiveness and fairness. For example, participant 117, from Paris Disneyland, stated that: *“The park is beautiful, but you feel like you're constantly paying more for access, food, even basic merchandise”*.

This aligns with reference suggesting that perceived value diminishes when guests feel that essential experiences are locked behind add-ons and Disneyland did not provide

the expected value for money, as evidenced by remarks using terms such as ‘money’, ‘ticket’, ‘pay’, and ‘price’ (Demonteverde et al., 2023; Torres et al., 2018). Wang et al. (2023) also supported that equitable pricing structures can support sustainable operations while maintaining visitor satisfaction.

There are many reviews that complain about the expense, value, and quality of food at all five Disneylands, as can be seen by comments from participant 78 from Paris Disneyland: *“The bar food was terrible ... what we received was a beef hot dog ... at an outrageous price”*.

Participant 282 (Paris Disneyland) wrote: *“... overpriced everything. From the moment you step in, you're bombarded with extra charges—Genie+, overpriced food that's mediocre at best”*.

Participant 99 (Paris Disneyland)'s review supported that: *“Prices are too high - like robbery. I bought 3 waffles and 1 hot drink for 7 EUR”*. While negative feedback dominated, a small number of guests felt the cost was justified as participant 200 (Paris Disneyland) mentioned: *“You pay a lot, but the fireworks alone are worth it”*. Participant 48, from Paris Disneyland, wrote: *“We made so many memories, and that's priceless”*.

These align with Gröppel-Wegener (2024), who emphasizes the importance of emotional return on investment which is the idea that exceptional memories or family bonding can outweigh monetary concerns. Neubert (2022) also argues that consumers may pay premium prices but feel negatively if they perceive unfairness.

However, these comments were context-specific, often linked to special events, off-peak visits, or well-executed upgrades. They did not represent the broader sentiment across parks. Cost and perceived value are now central to theme park satisfaction, particularly in a post-pandemic era of economic uncertainty and rising expectations (Toubes et al., 2021). While academic literature supports premium pricing when paired with immersive, high-quality experiences, guest reviews from Disneyland parks reveal that many visitors perceive the current pricing model as excessive, inequitable, and emotionally disappointing. Although sophisticated pricing methods aim to balance operational efficiency, crowd control, and visitor satisfaction, they also raise important questions about fairness, equity, and emotional value.

#### 4.2.6 Access and Reservation System

The findings revealed that the Access and Reservation System, including mobile apps, Premier Access, Genie+, and digital ticketing, was a prominent source of both facilitation and frustration for visitors. While these tools are intended to enhance efficiency and personalisation, reviews from Tokyo and Shanghai Disneyland demonstrate a

divergence in guest perceptions, often highlighting confusion, inequity, and limitations in usability.

Williams (2020) and Liu (2024) argue that mobile platforms such as *My Disney Experience* or *Premier Access* transform the theme park experience into a personalised journey, giving guests real-time control over rides, food ordering, and show reservations. These systems are designed to empower visitors to manage their time effectively and customise their experiences, aligning with Hsu's (2011a) concept of 'competence-mastery' motivation where guests gain satisfaction from successfully navigating complex environments.

However, guest feedback from Tokyo Disneyland suggests that these theoretical advantages are not always realised in practice. For example, Participant 2 (Japan Disneyland) wrote: "*We grabbed Premier Access passes when we could, and honestly, they made all the difference. We got to ride everything we really wanted to without spending all day in lines*".

This supports Williams's (2020) claim, showing that when used effectively, these systems can greatly improve the visitor experience. By contrast, many others described usability challenges and disappointment. Participant 12 (Tokyo Disneyland) wrote that: "*The damn DPA tickets. Why do they get sold out? We want to enjoy the rides and not wait 300min to ride a 1 min rollercoaster*".

Another review describing a similar issue comes from participant 3 (Tokyo Disneyland): "*I found the app difficult to navigate and almost useless to figure out where we were in relation to where we wanted to be*". These reviews reveal significant usability gaps, particularly for international tourists unfamiliar with local systems or languages.

At Shanghai Disneyland, access issues were similarly reported, particularly around paywall-based prioritisation and capacity constraints. Milman et al. (2020) revealed that visitors' perceptions were associated with navigation through the entrance and exit gates, security screening, and the main walkways throughout the entire park. Park size can contribute to the navigation of the park as there are many reviews that discussed it. For example, participant 44's review of Paris Disneyland said: "*There is absolutely no space to rest or sit down or somehow manage a place to stay especially with small children. ... It isn't very happy for the happiest place on earth*". Another similar review was written by participant 264 in the Paris Review: "*20-minute walk in blistering cold weather*".

Participant 116 in the Paris Review mentioned that: "*Unfortunately the park is not equipped for young children and babies. ... The 1 baby centre was simply a room with high*

*chairs and a microwave out of the whole two parks. They did not sell milk, formula, nappy rash cream or wipes, so make sure to take plenty".*

Participant 49 (Paris Disneyland) wrote that: *"Not recommended for very young children. Too much walking and the lines are too long for them".* These reviews show that the parks could be seen as Children unfriendliness due to the excessive walking or space management.

However, there are some reviews that express positive feedback for the accessibility of small park size to explore every attraction. For example, participant 43 shared their thoughts after visiting Hong Kong Disneyland: *"Regarding the park's size, I actually liked it! Instead of taking a long walk between different themes and rides, everything was just around the corner". "Smaller park so walking the whole thing is very manageable".*

Participant 62 reflected on their visit to Disneyland Paris: *"Not recommended for very young children. Too much walking and the lines are too long for them".*

These reviews represent a positive perspective on the small layout, especially for families with children.

Meanwhile, there are reviews regarding the ineffective directions or signposts to assist with the flow of the crowd especially during the peak hours. For example, participant 39 reflected on her experience at Disneyland Paris:

*"Small things like directions to walk would help with the flow of foot traffic – I felt inclined to walk on the left and queue on the right, but if there were signs to do this, I think everyone would have been more organized".*

Participant 98 reflected on her recent experience at Disneyland Paris: *"A lot of the park was bordered off, and a lot of the park's major rides were closed too during our time there, which ruined the experience. It seemed like you couldn't walk anywhere without seeing something blocking visibility".*

Participant 72 recounted their holiday visit to Disneyland Anaheim:

*"Cast members were inconsistent in nature, with some providing curt/incorrect location directions vs staff who would go out of their way to walk us to where we needed to go. Disney should have more signs available throughout the parks to help families more easily navigate the parks and to take additional strain off their cast members".*

All these reviews highlighted that Disney's Magic can be impacted by a lack of good accessibility or navigation of the park. This also aligns with Milman et al. (2020) who showed that popular theme-park operators face the challenge of providing their customers with easy navigation and route planning to attractions and entertainment facilities in the

park's public areas. Some major and crowded theme parks have previously handled the crowding difficulties that come with internal navigation and mobility.

Clavé (2007) argues that such tools can inadvertently reinforce class-based segmentation of the theme park experience. Premium access, while beneficial for those who can afford it, can alienate guests who feel that essential parts of the experience are hidden behind paywalls.

This was reflected in one review, from participant 101 during their visit to Disneyland Paris: *“Expect to wait an hour for anything after noon unless you pay extra”*.

Participant 261 lamented the decline of charm during her visit to Disneyland Paris: *“It’s just not fair that everything now requires an extra fee. What happened to Disney magic?”*.

This underscores a growing criticism of tiered access models, which Bondoc and Ytturalde (2023) argue undermines the perceived fairness of the theme park experience. While Disney markets these systems as tools of convenience, visitors often perceive them as commercialized gatekeeping mechanisms, leading to dissatisfaction, especially among guests with financial limitations.

While Liu and Liu (2024) and Williams (2020) praise app-based systems for enhancing autonomy and experience personalisation, the reviews reflect a sense of technological burden rather than empowerment. Visitors frequently mentioned anxiety, confusion, and missed opportunities resulting from poorly communicated or overly complex reservation protocols.

Participant 19 voiced their disappointment after visiting Disneyland Anaheim: *“Spent a fortune on tickets and lightning passes only to find out some rides do not work for the lightning pass... we did not realize we should have booked and planned our day the day before”*.

Participant 41 also voiced disappointment after visiting Disneyland Anaheim: *“We purchased the Lightning Lane Pass for the multiple days we were there and that was a mistake. Definitely not worth it for more than one day. ... The main Star Wars ride is not eligible... one has to wait 2 hours after picking the first ride and so on”*.

This theme highlights a confusion between application usage and user experience. While the reservation systems are theoretically sound, their practical implementation and communication fall short for many visitors, especially those unfamiliar with the app ecosystem or Disney's evolving policies.

#### 4.2.7 Crowding and space management

Crowding is the 7th main theme. It was mentioned 90 (6.51%) times in reviews across five different Disneylands. Visitors expressed frustration at feeling physically constrained, with some comparing their experience to chaotic or even unsafe environments:

Participant 52 criticised the overcrowding during their visit to Disneyland Paris: *“They sell too many tickets for the two parks”*. Participant 54 wrote this about the park layout and lack of space for families at Disneyland Paris: *“There is absolutely no space to rest or sit down or somehow manage a place to stay especially with small children”*. They also wrote: *“From noon onwards, the park was just a sea of people. Even the lines for popcorn were 30 minutes long”*.

Participant 122 described their overcrowded experience at Disneyland Paris to daily commuting chaos: *“It felt like being in a train station during rush hour—not magical at all”*. *“Overcrowded parks, overpriced tickets, and crazy expensive food... we were bumping into people the entire day”*. Participant 33 described their chaotic visit to Hong Kong Disneyland: *“Shoving, rushing, and shouting was a very big part of the experience”*.

These reviews clearly state that overcapacity and poor space management were consistent issues, especially during holidays, weekends, or event periods.

Milman et al. (2020) state that crowding is a critical variable influencing emotional comfort, physical fatigue, and spatial satisfaction in theme park environments. Milman (2009) argues that visitor satisfaction is significantly impacted by perceived crowd levels, especially when crowding affects access to rides, comfort, or rest. Geissler and Rucks (2011) found that spatial congestion not only reduces time spent on desired attractions but also increases cognitive overload, diminishing the perceived emotional value of the visit. Clavé (2007) emphasises that spatial design in theme parks must balance narrative immersion with movement fluidity. When this balance is disrupted, crowding breaks the illusion of immersion and increases visitor dissatisfaction.

The emotional tone of many reviews suggested not just logistical frustration but also disappointment with the overall atmosphere, often contradicting their expectations of a magical Disney experience:

Participant 71 expressed deep disappointment with the overwhelming atmosphere at Disneyland Paris: *“The crowd ruined it. Instead of magic, it felt like survival”*. Participant 32 described their Disneyland Hong Kong experience as chaotic and frustrating: *“I spent more time queuing and elbowing through people than enjoying the rides”*.

These sentiments indicate a significant discrepancy between emotional expectations and environmental reality, Kim and Fesenmaier (2017) argue that even well-designed attractions lose their impact when guests are overwhelmed by the physical environment. As a result, Milman et al. (2020) suggested some solutions such as capacity-control policies based on guest characteristics, ticket-price structure based on anticipated demand, preferential theme park access for on-property resort guests, skip-the-line tickets or passes for additional fees, virtual queuing to eliminate visitor concentration in specific areas of the park, interactive queuing experiences, and off-peak visiting incentives.

While crowd-related complaints were present in all parks, they varied in intensity. For example, a review on Mickey Mouse themed ride by participant 35 from Hong Kong Disneyland for its intimacy and ease of navigation: *“The park is small enough to see in a single day... the crowds are more than manageable”*.

Hong Kong Disneyland, being smaller, occasionally received praise for manageable crowd levels especially during off-peak days. Tokyo and Shanghai, by contrast, frequently received the most severe crowd-related criticisms, likely due to their high domestic visitor volumes and popularity during weekends and holidays.

Participant 12 expressed deep frustration with crowd levels at Tokyo Disneyland: *“We didn’t experience all the rides because of the crowds, it’s like lining up sheep and we are not willing to wait 2–3 hours especially when you are travelling with toddlers and a baby”*.

Participant 7, from Shanghai Disneyland, shared their experience about overcrowding and line behaviour: *“Some of the other guests were quite rude and pushed and shoved their way to get closer to the front of the line. We would call it line jumping in the US”*.

Crowd density and space management emerged as a main aspect influencing the Disneyland experience. As confirmed by both visitor narratives and academic research, overcrowding disrupts immersion, causes physical strain, and reduces emotional satisfaction. This theme also related to other themes such as wait time, child-friendliness, and cost-value perception suggesting that visitor satisfaction cannot be improved without a comprehensive strategy for managing both spatial flow and capacity.

#### 4.2.8 Character Interaction

Character interaction is another important theme from the analysis. Across multiple park locations, reviews emphasise both the emotional significance and operational challenges associated with character interaction. Character interaction is framed as a powerful driver of emotional engagement. Arbaiza (2018) and Lee et al. (2020) highlight the

role of live characters in reinforcing brand intimacy and intergenerational bonding, especially for families seeking shared moments of enchantment. Disney's approach to guest immersion relies heavily on the relational and sensorial dimensions of experience, where characters act as intermediaries between fantasy and reality (Vergara & Vergara, 2023; Williams, 2020).

This is well reflected in reviews of all five parks. Guests often described character meet-and-greets as the most memorable part of their visit. Participant 2 shared a joyful memory from their visit to Shanghai Disneyland: *"We were lucky enough to meet Mickey and Minnie right at the front. Our kids couldn't stop smiling"*.

However, the reviews also suggest that logistical and accessibility issues often limit these interactions, especially during peak times or for less-organized visitors. Participant 43 commented on the challenges of meeting characters at Hong Kong Disneyland: *"The only downside, which is common in every Disneyland, is the very long waiting time to take pictures with the Disney characters. The wait was about 1.5 hours, which is nearly impossible with kids"*. Participant 156 voiced their disappointment during their visit to Disneyland Paris: *"We didn't see Stitch in the entire park, there were just long lines waiting for us everywhere"*.

These comments reflect a mismatch between expectation and availability, particularly for families with children or visitors prioritising character encounters while Oh and Ma (2018) show how animated and interactive characters (e.g. talking Minnie or animatronic heroes) drive emotional immersion and thematic resonance in rides. They found that well-integrated characters heighten emotional connection, reinforcing the park's narrative structure.

Some reviews mention that taking photos can help make memories of their visits to Disneyland and being unable to meet their favourite characters can lead to disappointment. As Keller (2011) highlights, personal memories and emotional connections shape their Disneyland experiences.

Participant 28 recounted a fulfilling experience at Hong Kong Disneyland: *"We enjoyed a full day walking around the park taking in the sights, enjoying the rides and taking photos/making memories"*.

Participant 12 described the challenges of meeting characters at Tokyo Disneyland: *"Taking pictures with Disney characters walking around the park was so difficult because there was no system except for pushing your child in there and take a quick picture, or you wait 30 min to 1 hour in line to take a picture with Mickey"*.

Participant 10 described their experience at Shanghai Disneyland's Royal Banquet Hall:

*“It was fun taking photos with each of the characters: Mickey, Minnie, Donald, and Daisy. They require you to order a three-course meal and can be quite strict about being seated so as to not interfere with the performing characters”.*

In Tokyo Disneyland, character interactions were mentioned far less frequently. This may reflect cultural differences in guest expectations or operational priorities, as noted by Toyoda (2014), who observed that Japanese guests may value ambiance and thematic immersion more than direct interaction. From a theoretical standpoint, these findings support the Leisure Motivation Scale's 'relational' and 'emotional' dimensions (Beard & Ragheb, 1983), while also revealing operational gaps.

Character interaction remains a vital part of the Disneyland experience, serving both emotional and symbolic roles in guest satisfaction. According to Cabanas (2020), theme parks use vivid storylines and interactive role-playing to actively engage guests. They are not passive recipients of experience; instead, they actively co-create their emotional experiences by interpreting symbols, role-playing, and engaging with the surroundings. While literature emphasises their importance in fostering relational bonds and brand loyalty, visitor reviews reveal that logistical barriers such as long queues, poor access, and inconsistent staff protocols can undermine their impact. Similarly, many Disneyland reviews reveal that parents endure logistical challenges while children focus on attractions and character encounters as sources of joy and memory-making. These intergenerational contrasts reinforce the view that theme park experiences must be understood as multi-layered, balancing duty, sacrifice, and leisure across age groups (Johns & Gyimóthy, 2003). These insights suggest a need for more transparent scheduling, increased character visibility, and responsive staff facilitation to maintain the magic that character encounters are meant to deliver.

## 4.3 Interpretation of Results

### 1. Waiting Time and Queue Management

Queue-related experiences consistently emerged as a key determinant of visitor satisfaction. Long wait times were shown to reduce the perceived value of the visit and induce emotional fatigue, particularly among families with young children or older adults. Academic literature supports these findings, with Milman (2009) and Geissler and Rucks (2011) emphasising the psychological toll of inefficient queuing. Beyond operational inconvenience, queues also disrupt immersion and temporarily break the illusion of enchantment that Disneyland seeks to maintain (Cabanas, 2020). Thus, poor queue

management not only compromises logistical efficiency but can also significantly diminish the affective experience of the park visit, transforming moments of anticipation into frustration and pulling visitors back into the routines of everyday life rather than sustaining the fantasy world that the park intends to project.

## 2. Attraction Experience

Attractions, particularly themed rides, remain the centerpiece of the Disneyland experience and act as the strongest pull for visitors. More than just entertainment, they are carefully designed experiences that combine narrative, sensory immersion, and technological spectacle. Guests often describe moments of exhilaration and nostalgia on iconic rides, connecting their personal memories with broader cultural stories. This resonates with Bao (2016) and Torres et al. (2019), who argue that attraction quality defines much of the theme park journey. When attractions operate seamlessly, they leave guests with vivid emotional memories that endure long after the visit. However, when rides are closed, outdated, or malfunctioning, the disappointment is more than operational, it undermines the promise of Disney's carefully constructed "world of magic" and diminishes the sense of value. In this way, attractions are not only functional assets but also symbolic pillars of trust between Disney and its audiences, linking technological innovation with cultural imagination.

## 3. Entertainment and Events

Live entertainment, including parades, shows, and nighttime spectacles, *was consistently highlighted as one of the most emotionally engaging aspects* of Disneyland. Rather than serving only as entertainment, these events provided *affective "anchors" that punctuated the day*, often described as moments of awe, nostalgia, or enchantment. Families and multi-generational groups in particular emphasized the shared quality of these experiences, suggesting that they function as *rituals of belonging and collective memory-making*.

This finding aligns with research that showed that atmospheres in theme parks *are deliberately designed to elicit emotional responses through sensory immersion* (Cabanas, 2020). It also reflects Pine and Gilmore's (1999) argument that *extraordinary moments in the "experience economy" become enduring memories*. While reviews frequently praised the scale and spectacle of fireworks or parades, the meaning attributed to them *was often personal, such as a child's excitement at seeing a favourite character*. These events therefore represent a *dual function: large-scale spectacles that reinforce Disney's brand narratives, while simultaneously facilitating intimate, emotionally significant memories* (Smith & Conrad, 2020; Gröppel-Wegener, 2024).

#### 4. Staff Service and Hospitality

Frontline staff interactions were repeatedly described by visitors as central to sustaining the perceived “magic” of Disneyland. Many reviews praised cast members for their friendliness, attentiveness, and professionalism, often framing these encounters as moments that created a sense of being “welcomed” or “cared for.” These emotional responses align with the relational satisfaction dimension of Beard and Ragheb’s (1983) Leisure Motivation Scale, where social connection and feelings of inclusion significantly enhance leisure experiences.

However, the reviews also revealed the fragility of this “magic.” When staff were perceived as indifferent, rushed, or culturally insensitive, visitors expressed feelings of disappointment or even betrayal, suggesting that service failures disrupted not only efficiency but also emotional immersion. Some reviewers contrasted magical moments with instances of staff disengagement, highlighting the tension between Disney’s idealised image of service and the lived reality of strained human interactions.

This duality underscores the performative nature of guest–staff interactions. As Korkman (2015) argues, performative labour is not a peripheral element but a central design component of the theme park experience, particularly in peak or high-pressure scenarios. Staff are expected to embody roles that sustain the illusion of fantasy, yet their capacity to do so is shaped by workload, cultural sensitivity, and organisational support. From a qualitative perspective, the data shows that visitors do not evaluate staff solely as service providers but as co-creators of the emotional atmosphere of the park. This positions staff service as a decisive factor in whether guests perceive their visit as enchanted or compromised.

#### 5. Cost/Value Perception

Perceived value, particularly in relation to cost, emerged as a recurring theme in visitor reviews, but the ways guests articulated this concern went beyond simple cost–benefit calculations. Many reviewers explicitly linked the high price of admission, food, and additional services (such as Premier Access) to expectations of efficiency, fairness, and quality. When these expectations were met, visitors described the costs as “worth it” because the memories created justified the financial outlay. In these cases, value was framed not only as an economic exchange but also as an emotional return on investment, where special moments with family or immersive experiences offset financial concerns.

Conversely, when operational inefficiencies such as ride breakdowns, long queues, or limited availability of attractions occurred, reviewers often used emotionally charged language to express feelings of being “cheated” or “disappointed.” This suggests that

dissatisfaction was not simply about paying a high price, but about a perceived breach of trust between the park and its guests. In this sense, cost was symbolically tied to broader questions of equity and fairness in access to experiences.

These findings resonate with Milman (2009) and Neubert (2022), who argue that value in theme park settings is increasingly measured through an affective lens. In line with experiential marketing theory, visitors interpret price not only in economic terms but as part of the symbolic and emotional economy of leisure. The contrast between reviews rationalising costs as investments in memory-making and those lamenting wasted money highlights how cost/value perceptions are mediated by emotional outcomes rather than financial logic alone.

## 6. Access and Reservation Systems

Digital tools such as mobile applications, online ticketing, and systems like Premier Access were designed to streamline navigation and personalise the Disneyland experience. Yet, reviews reveal a striking ambivalence in how these systems were perceived. Some guests praised the convenience of being able to plan, highlighting feelings of competence and mastery when successfully securing popular attractions. In these cases, technology functioned as a source of empowerment, aligning with Hsu's (2011a) competence-mastery motivation by allowing visitors to feel in control of their day.

However, many other reviewers described these systems as confusing, anxiety-inducing, or exclusionary. The emotional language used such as feeling “stressed,” “locked out,” or “treated unfairly” points to the psychological burden imposed by digital tools that were meant to reduce friction. For families with children or older visitors less comfortable with technology, the necessity of navigating apps created frustration and a sense of inequity, particularly when access to iconic rides depended on additional paid tiers.

This tension illustrates a broader contradiction between Disney's promise of enchantment and the stratification introduced by digital mediation. From a qualitative perspective, guest narratives show that technology is not evaluated only in functional terms but also in symbolic ones, shaping perceptions of fairness, inclusion, and belonging. Poor usability or opaque implementation undermined the potential benefits of these systems, transforming what should have been seamless convenience into a source of emotional stress. In this way, access technologies became more than operational tools, they acted as gatekeepers to the “magic,” influencing whether visitors felt empowered or marginalised within the park.

## 7. Crowding and Space Management

Crowding consistently emerged in reviews as both a logistical obstacle and an emotional burden. Visitors frequently described the parks as “packed,” “unbearably busy,” or “like a train station at rush hour,” signalling that overcrowding disrupted not only movement but also the sense of immersion Disney promises. These narratives reveal that crowding is experienced not merely as inconvenience but as an intrusion on the fantasy space, reducing comfort and creating emotional fatigue.

Some families noted that long waits and congested walkways made children irritable and parents stressed, while older visitors expressed frustration at the lack of quiet or rest areas. The emotional tone of these reviews conveys a shift from enchantment to exhaustion, with one reviewer stating they felt “more like surviving a marathon than enjoying the magic.” Such accounts illustrate how excessive crowding transforms the visit from an immersive escape into a survival exercise, contradicting the very purpose of the themed environment.

This resonates with Milman et al. (2020), who argue that crowding undermines emotional satisfaction and spatial perception. Yet the qualitative accounts here show that the issue extends beyond numbers and capacity: it is about how guests interpret the loss of personal space, the disruption of themed narratives, and the breakdown of comfort. In this way, crowding is not simply an operational concern but an experiential fracture point where the promise of “Disney magic” collides with the practical realities of mass tourism.

#### 8. Character Interaction (Emotional Memory Trigger)

Among all themes, character interaction stands out as one of the most emotionally charged and symbolically significant dimensions of the Disneyland experience. Characters act as living embodiments of the Disney brand, mediating between fantasy and reality (Vergara & Vergara, 2023). For children especially, reviews describe these moments as “unforgettable,” “magical,” or “the highlight of the trip,” signalling the depth of emotional attachment created through direct encounters. Parents frequently narrated how a child’s joy when meeting Mickey or Buzz Lightyear became the most memorable part of the day, suggesting that these interactions validate the park’s promise of enchantment.

Arbaiza (2018) and Oh and Ma (2018) confirm that characters enhance brand intimacy by creating personalised, emotionally rich moments. However, visitor accounts also reveal how the intensity of these encounters is shaped by operational factors. Long queues, limited availability, or disorganised systems often turned excitement into frustration, with some reviewers lamenting that meeting a favourite character felt “nearly impossible” or “not worth the wait.” These comments suggest that character interaction is

not only about the brief encounter itself but also about the conditions under which it is accessed, highlighting the fragility of these emotionally saturated experiences.

### The Central Role of Emotional Memory

The centrality of character interaction and attractions to the formation of emotional memory cannot be overstated. Guests often framed these encounters as the experiences they would “take home,” reinforcing Keller’s (2011) argument that emotional memory is a cornerstone of experiential marketing. In qualitative terms, visitor narratives show how these memories operate as symbolic anchors: moments of joy, wonder, and intimacy that outweigh logistical frustrations and persist long after the visit. When attractions, parades, or character meetings succeed in delivering emotional highs, guests not only recall their experiences vividly but also share them through storytelling, photos, and online reviews. These emotional residues fuel brand loyalty, encourage repeat visitation, and sustain Disney’s reputation as the premier purveyor of “magic”.

## 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored the key themes shaping visitor experiences at five Disneyland parks, as identified through thematic analysis of Tripadvisor reviews. The most prominent factors included main attractions (Ride), wait time, access and reservation systems, crowding, entertainment and events, staff service and hospitality, cost/value, and character interaction. While attractions and immersive events were often praised, negative experiences, frequently stemmed from long queues, overcrowding, high prices, inconsistent hospitality, child-unfriendliness and spatial discomfort, also emerged, particularly in Paris and Shanghai. Overall, these findings highlight the complex and emotionally charged nature of Disneyland experiences, revealing both the strengths and limitations of Disney’s operational and experiential strategies.

## 5.0 Chapter Five: Conclusion

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the final discussion of the dissertation, revisiting the research aim, objectives and key findings. The study sought to explore and interpret the factors that influence visitors' experiences at Disneyland, using user-generated content from TripAdvisor across five Disneyland parks. Drawing from a qualitative, interpretive methodology guided by Netnographic and thematic analysis, eight major experiential themes were identified. This chapter highlights how each of these themes contributes to Disneyland's overall visitor experience. It further outlines the implications for theme park management, contributions to academic literature, study limitations, and recommendations for future research.

### 5.2 Research Objectives

This research aimed to explore and interpret the key factors that influence how visitors experience Disneyland, drawing upon user-generated content from TripAdvisor. To achieve this aim, three objectives were established:

Objective 1: To identify and analyse the operational and logistical factors (e.g., queuing, access, staff service) that shape Disneyland visitor experiences. This objective was addressed through three key themes:

#### Waiting Time and Queue Management

Wait times and queuing systems were consistently cited as a significant source of frustration. Visitors often reported emotional fatigue and reduced satisfaction due to prolonged waiting, particularly when travelling with young children or elderly family members. Some reviews described waiting in lines for over an hour for a single ride, which detracted from the overall enjoyment of the park. These findings underscore the importance of logistical efficiency as a foundational contributor to guest satisfaction, aligning with Milman (2009) and Geissler and Rucks (2011), who emphasised the psychological toll of waiting and its impact on emotional experiences.

#### Access and Reservation Systems

While digital tools like mobile apps and Premier Access were designed to enhance navigation and personalisation, many visitors found them confusing or inequitable. Complaints included the complexity of booking systems, the pressure to plan days in advance, and the feeling of exclusion for those unable to afford upgrades. Poor usability, limited availability, and paid access tiers created emotional barriers and diluted perceived

fairness, despite their potential to support competence-mastery motivations (Hsu, 2011b). These findings echo critiques of digital stratification in contemporary tourism experiences (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015).

#### Crowding and Space Management

Overcrowding emerged as both a logistical and emotional challenge. Visitors described the park as resembling a ‘train station during rush hour’, with limited space to rest or move freely. Physical discomfort and reduced access to attractions undermined the intended immersive experience, echoing concerns about spatial design and carrying capacity found in Milman et al. (2020). The presence of excessive crowds not only impacted ride availability but also heightened stress and detracted from the overall ambiance, particularly in peak season or smaller parks, such as Disney Hong Kong and Shanghai.

#### Cost/Value Perception (Logistical Aspect)

Many visitors assessed their Disneyland experience through a straightforward cost-benefit lens, focusing on the tangible and operational features of their visit. Complaints about high ticket prices, expensive food, and additional charges for Premier Access were common, particularly when these costs were not matched by operational quality, smooth access, or reliable attraction availability. These logistical concerns highlight how financial structures shape expectations of fairness and efficiency, with visitors increasingly attentive to whether the price corresponds to the quality of service provided (Milman, 2009).

Objective 2: To examine the emotional and symbolic aspects (e.g., nostalgia, storytelling, character encounters) that contribute to visitor engagement and memory-making. This objective was reflected in four themes:

#### Attraction Experience

The core of the Disneyland experience is built around its attractions. Thrilling rides, immersive design, and narrative integration contribute significantly to emotional engagement. When expectations were met or exceeded, visitors expressed joy, nostalgia, and wonder. For example, reviews frequently mentioned iconic rides such as Space Mountain or Pirates of the Caribbean as highlights. Conversely, technical issues or temporary ride closures led to disappointment. This supports the literature on themed entertainment and experiential marketing (Bao, 2016; Torres et al., 2019), which highlights how ride quality and storytelling enhance emotional memory and guest satisfaction.

#### Entertainment and Events

Live shows, parades, and illumination spectacles functioned as emotional high points of the visit. These shared experiences fostered moments of wonder and collective memory-making, especially for families. Emotional resonance was particularly strong in responses referencing evening light shows and character parades, confirming the role of such events in enhancing guest perception (Smith & Conrad, 2020). Guests noted that these moments often exceeded expectations and served as memorable highlights of the day, reinforcing the symbolic and performative aspects of themed entertainment (Gröppel-Wegener, 2024).

#### Character Interaction

Character encounters, particularly with iconic Disney figures, were identified as emotionally transformative experiences. These moments created lasting memories and reinforced emotional bonds with the brand. Guests recalled joyful encounters with Mickey, Minnie, and other beloved characters, often framing them as highlights of the trip. However, long waits and lack of availability occasionally diminished their impact. Some visitors were disappointed by the limited number of characters or the lack of systematised meet-and-greet experiences. The findings confirm the value of characters as experiential anchors (Arbaiza, 2018; Oh & Ma, 2018), whose presence significantly contributes to emotional memory and repeat visitation.

#### Staff Service and Hospitality

Cast member interactions significantly shaped visitor satisfaction. Warm, attentive, and culturally sensitive service reinforced the Disney 'magic', while curt or inconsistent service broke immersion. For example, visitors frequently praised cast members for going above and beyond in resolving issues or creating surprise moments for children. However, in cases where staff were perceived as indifferent or inattentive, the emotional connection to the park was weakened. Performative labour played a key role in co-creating positive guest experiences, especially under high-stress conditions (Korkman, 2015). These findings align with Beard and Ragheb's (1983) emphasis on relational satisfaction as part of leisure motivation.

#### Cost/Value Perception

Many guests evaluated their Disneyland experience through a cost-benefit lens. While some felt that magical moments justified the high cost, others voiced dissatisfaction when pricing did not align with operational quality, access, or attraction availability. Complaints regarding high ticket prices, food costs, and additional charges for Premier Access were common. Emotional return on investment emerged as a key metric of perceived value (Neubert, 2022). This finding is supported by Milman (2009), who noted

that guest expectations are increasingly shaped by perceived fairness and the balance between price and experience quality.

#### Cost/Value Perception (Emotional Aspect)

Beyond operational concerns, guests also evaluated value through what can be termed emotional return on investment. Many reviews suggested that when magical moments, such as memorable rides or meaningful character interactions, outweighed the financial burden, the experience was deemed worthwhile. Conversely, when emotional highs were absent or overshadowed by logistical frustrations, dissatisfaction was amplified. This illustrates that perceived value is not only an economic calculation but also a deeply emotional judgment, where the balance between cost and the quality of memories created determines satisfaction (Neubert, 2022).

Objective 3: To evaluate the value of user-generated content, specifically TripAdvisor reviews, as a methodological tool for capturing authentic and spontaneous visitor perspectives.

This objective was met by demonstrating that TripAdvisor reviews offered rich, real-time insights into both positive and negative experiences. Unlike surveys or interviews, these unsolicited narratives captured spontaneous emotions, frustrations, and delight expressed in visitors' own language. The study used the most recent six months of reviews, ensuring data reflected current practices and guest expectations. The thematic analysis of this dataset revealed not only recurring operational and emotional themes but also visitors' candid suggestions for improvement, showing the methodological relevance of user-generated content for theme park research.

## 5.3 Implications

### 5.3.1 Operational and Design Recommendations

The findings suggest that improving queue management, enhancing app usability, and increasing character availability could significantly improve the Disneyland visitor experience. Furthermore, creating more rest areas and managing crowd flows through better spatial design may alleviate visitor fatigue and discomfort. As Cabanas (2020) states, atmospheres in theme parks are created deliberately through design elements such as architecture, decoration, sounds, smells, and even the arrangement of queues, and he discovered that one key way atmospheres influence emotions is by distinguishing the 'inside' (the themed environment) from the 'outside' (the real world). Spatial adjustments and clearer navigation pathways may particularly benefit families and older visitors. Langan (2000) explained that the scale of architecture in Disneyland was created with the

effect to reduce the size of objects to a point where they are less imposing and one's sensed mastery over it that much greater. These improvements reflect Bitner's (1992) servicescape model, which emphasises how physical and design factors influence customer behaviour and satisfaction (Torres et al., 2018).

### 5.3.2 Enhancing Emotional Value

Beyond operational enhancements, Disney parks can focus on emotional value creation. This includes reinforcing moments of joy through surprise interactions, high-quality performances, and culturally sensitive guest engagement. According to Manthiou et al. (2016), the fundamental goal of theme parks today is to provide visitors with unique, immersive, and theatrical experiences with high emotional value. Emotional memory, as evidenced by character interaction and ride satisfaction, plays a pivotal role in guest loyalty. Milman and Tasci (2018) also highlight that theme parks should focus on enhancing emotional experiences and perceived value to improve visitor satisfaction and encourage repeat visits. Thematic storytelling and sensory immersion are critical elements in sustaining this emotional resonance. Chytry (2012) and Newell (2012) state that theme parks have also been considered paradigmatic and representative examples of emotional spaces in which emotions have a key part in understanding the material and symbolic aspects of space. As Keller (2011) emphasised, emotionally rich experiences contribute to long-term brand attachment in experiential marketing contexts.

### 5.3.3 Leveraging User-Generated Content

Theme Park operators can utilise online reviews as a real-time data source to understand evolving guest expectations. Systematic monitoring of platforms like TripAdvisor enables responsive management and the opportunity to proactively address dissatisfaction trends. Torres et al. (2018) highlight that positive emotional responses, especially those shared through reviews or word of mouth, are central to guest satisfaction. Incorporating text analysis and review mining into managerial practices can help identify both praise and pain points across demographic groups and seasonal patterns because these digital expressions offer a robust, experience-based perspective that complements traditional studies and supports a more comprehensive understanding of theme park visitation from the visitor's viewpoint (Song et al., 2024). This echoes Canavan's (2021) suggestion that user-generated content offers authentic, naturally occurring insights into visitor sentiment and experience design.

### 5.3.4 Reimagining Value Beyond Price

The study found that many guests evaluated their experience not just based on cost, but also on perceived fairness, transparency, and emotional return. This aligns with

Neubert (2022), who noted the significance of emotional ROI in hospitality contexts. To improve guest satisfaction, Disney parks should shift communication strategies to emphasise experience value such as magical moments, storytelling, and exclusive events rather than transactional cost. Transparent pricing structures, bundled experiences, and added-value promotions could help balance perceived cost with emotional benefit, reducing pricing complaints while enhancing guest loyalty.

#### 5.3.4 Generational Differences in Family

The findings, when compared with Johns and Gyimóthy's (2003) study, suggest that Disneyland should better accommodate the different needs of parents, children, and teenagers. While children's enjoyment is central, parents frequently experience visits as duty-bound sacrifices, and teenagers may find limited engagement in attractions designed for younger audiences. To address this, park operators might expand adult-focused leisure zones, enhance relaxation opportunities, and introduce more thrill-based or interactive attractions aimed at adults. Such strategies would help mitigate generational tensions and enrich the family-oriented value of the Disneyland experience.

### 5.4 Contributions to the Literature

This study adds to the growing body of qualitative tourism literature that uses Netnography and thematic analysis to explore theme park experiences. It advances understanding of how operational, emotional, and spatial factors interact to shape guest perceptions. The conceptual model developed here offers a visitor-centred framework that highlights emotional memory as a central outcome of theme park experiences. The study also enriches discussions on performative labour, spatial planning, servicescapes, and digital access in the theme park industry. Furthermore, by focusing on authentic, unsolicited visitor narratives, this study extends the methodological scope of experience-based tourism research. This model offers a framework that emphasises the interplay between operational efficiency and emotional resonance, providing a comprehensive understanding of theme park experiences that extends existing experiential tourism literature.

By examining user-generated content from TripAdvisor, specifically, reviews posted within the past 6 months, this study captures unsolicited visitor perspectives. These naturally occurring data sources reflect genuine emotional and operational responses that often contrast with Disneyland's curated brand narratives and marketed experiences. As such, this research enhances the literature by documenting the discrepancy between branded expectations and lived realities, particularly regarding crowd control, digital accessibility, and service inconsistencies.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates the relevance and richness of Netnography in tourism research, especially in contexts where direct access to participants is limited. By leveraging digital ethnographic data, the study bypasses the artificial constraints of structured interviews or surveys and uncovers organically expressed sentiments. This methodological contribution supports emerging calls for more authentic, user-driven approaches in hospitality and leisure studies (Canavan, 2021).

Finally, by incorporating reviews from five geographically dispersed Disneyland parks, the study offers cross-cultural insight into visitor experience, highlighting both universal themes and context-specific tensions. The inclusion of both Western and Asian park locations underscores the need for culturally adaptive operational strategies and reveals how visitor satisfaction is shaped not only by tangible infrastructure but also by localized expectations and interpretations.

## 5.5 Limitations of the Study

While the study offers valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the analysis relied solely on English-language reviews from TripAdvisor, potentially excluding non-English-speaking visitor experiences. Second, the data were collected from five parks, which may not fully represent all Disney parks in the United States. Third, while thematic analysis allows for depth, it does not quantify the extent of each theme's impact. Fourth, the iterative process of coding, where raw codes were refined, merged, or discarded, may have unintentionally excluded less frequent yet meaningful visitor perspectives. This necessary refinement ensured conceptual clarity but could limit the diversity of voices represented. Fifth, the research design relied exclusively on secondary data derived from online reviews, without incorporating practical observation or on-site ethnographic engagement. As a result, the study captures visitor narratives but does not provide a first-hand account of in-park behaviours, atmospheres, or non-verbal experiences, which could have further contextualised the findings. Another limitation relates to the uneven distribution of reviews analysed across the selected Disneyland parks. While this approach allowed for the inclusion of a wide range of visitor perspectives, it limited the comparability between parks. A more balanced sample, or a stratified selection strategy, could have enabled stronger cross-park comparisons. Nevertheless, this study chose to preserve the authenticity and representativeness of naturally occurring review volumes, which themselves reflect differing levels of global visibility and visitor traffic across Disney parks. Lastly, the analysis was conducted by a single researcher, which may introduce interpretive bias. Despite these limitations, the findings remain rich in context and provide a robust basis for future comparative and multilingual studies.

## 5.6 Directions for Future Research

While this study has provided valuable insights into the Disneyland visitor experience through qualitative analysis of online reviews, several areas remain open for further academic inquiry.

First, future research could explore the motivations behind repeat visitation to Disneyland parks. Understanding why certain visitors return whether due to emotional attachment, changing attractions, family traditions, or evolving expectations could offer critical insight into brand loyalty, memory retention, and experiential satisfaction over time.

Second, studies might investigate the types of souvenirs most admired and emotionally valued by visitors. As souvenirs function as tangible extensions of the theme park experience and carriers of emotional memory, examining their symbolic meanings and preferences could enrich understanding of visitor-brand connection and post-visit engagement.

Third, further research could examine audience satisfaction with classic versus newly introduced Disney characters. As character interaction was a major emotional trigger in this study, future work might assess whether traditional Disney characters, such as Mickey and Cinderella evoke stronger affective responses than newer franchises like Moana or Elsa, and how these responses vary by age group or cultural background.

Fourth, this research was based primarily on English-language reviews. Future studies may benefit from incorporating reviews in multiple languages and exploring the geographical differences in visitor expectations and experiences. Such an approach would allow for cross-cultural comparison and could uncover regional variations in guest priorities, emotional responses, and perceptions of value, thereby broadening the global applicability of experiential models in theme park research.

Collectively, these future directions could help deepen our understanding of Disneyland as a dynamic cultural and emotional space, while also supporting more inclusive and responsive experience design within the global theme park industry.

## 5.7 Summary

This chapter has synthesised the findings of the dissertation, contextualising them within the broader academic and practical landscape. By identifying eight core experiential dimensions, this study contributes to an understanding of Disneyland guest experiences. The implications outlined offer guidance for operational improvements and future scholarly inquiry, reinforcing the value of visitor-centred research in theme park studies.

## References

- Adams-Volpe, J. (1991). *The American amusement park industry: A history of technology and thrills*. Twayne Publishers. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=0ZgkAQAAIAAJ>
- Ahmed, S. K., Mohammed, R. A., Nashwan, A. J., Ibrahim, R. H., Abdalla, A. Q., M. Ameen, B. M., & Khdir, R. M. (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 6, 100198. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198>
- Akel, G., & Cakir, E. (2023). Theme park hotel experience, experiential satisfaction and behavioral intention: Examination of visitors' experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 6(3), 1419-1440. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-08-2022-0325>
- Alaimo, C., Kallinikos, J., & Valderrama-Venegas, E. (2020). *Platform evolution: A study of TripAdvisor*. <https://doi.org/10.24251/HICSS.2020.672>
- Alhojailan, M. I., & Ibrahim, M. (2012). Thematic analysis: A critical review of its process and evaluation. *West east journal of social sciences*, 1(1), 39–47.
- Ali, F., Kim, W. G., Li, J., & Jeon, H.-M. (2018). Make it delightful: Customers' experience, satisfaction and loyalty in Malaysian theme parks. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 7, 1–11. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.05.003>
- Allen, D. (2014). Disneyland: Another kind of reality. *European Journal of American Culture*, 33(1), 33–47.
- Apify. (n.d.). *Apify documentation*. <https://docs.apify.com/>
- Arbaiza, F. (2018). La comunicación estratégica del marketing experiencial: Análisis del caso The Walt Disney World Theme Parks. *Sphera Publica*, 1(18), 120–147.
- Bae, Y. H., Moon, S., Jun, J. W., Kim, T., & Ju, I. (2018). The impact of consumers' attitudes toward a theme park: A focus on Disneyland in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. *Sustainability*, 10(10), 3409. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/10/3409>
- Bafagih, L., & Wise, N. (2023). Disneyland in Hong Kong: American image, globally renowned. *Local Economy*, 38(2), 95–99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02690942231201620>
- Bahtar, A. Z., & Muda, M. (2016). The impact of user – generated content (UGC) on product reviews towards online purchasing – A conceptual framework. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 37, 337–342. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(16\)30134-4](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(16)30134-4)
- Bai, S., He, H., Han, C., Yang, M., Bi, X., & Fan, W. (2023). Exploring thematic influences on theme park visitors' satisfaction: An empirical study on Disneyland China. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 23(1), 90–106. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2157>
- Baker, C. (2018). Summary of exploring a three-dimensional narrative work: The theme park as “de Sprookjessprokkelaar,” the gatherer and teller of stories. *Journal of Themed Experience and Attractions Studies*, Vol. 1(Iss. 1 , Article 1). <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/jteas/vol1/iss1/1>
- Baker, C. (2023). The prevalence of storyworlds and thematic landscapes in global theme parks. *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights*, 4(1), 100080. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annale.2022.100080>

- Bakir, A., & Baxter, S. G. (2011). "Touristic fun": Motivational factors for visiting Legoland Windsor Theme Park. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 20(3-4), 407-424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2011.562431>
- Bao, J. (2016). Themepark. In J. Jafari & H. Xiao (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of tourism* (pp. 939-941). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01384-8\\_199](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01384-8_199)
- Başarangel, İ. (2018). The relationships between the factors affecting perceived service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions among theme park visitors. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 18(4), 415-428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1467358416664566>
- Bazeley, P. (2004). Issues in mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. *Applying qualitative methods to marketing management research*, 141-156.
- Beames, S., & Brown, M. (2017). Disneyization and the provision of leisure experiences. In K. Spracklen, B. Lashua, E. Sharpe, & S. Swain (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of leisure theory* (pp. 855-871). Palgrave Macmillan UK. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-56479-5\\_48](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-56479-5_48)
- Beard, J. G., & Ragheb, M. G. (1983). Measuring leisure motivation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 15(3), 219-228.
- Bemis, B. (2022). *Disney theme parks and America's national narratives: Mirror, mirror, for us all*. Taylor & Francis. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=5MGZEAAAQBAJ>
- Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57-71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299205600205>
- Bondoc, J., & Ytturalde, C. (2023). The impact of theme park experience on satisfaction and loyalty. *J Approp Technol*, 9(3), 202-212. <https://doi.org/10.37675/jat.2023.00353>
- Botterill, J. (1997). The "fairest" of the fairs : a history of fairs, amusement parks, and theme parks. In S. F. University (Ed.), *History of fairs, amusement parks and theme parks* (pp. 158): Indianapolis - University Library.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0630a>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589-597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Bretzlaff, A. L., Tolentino, M., TheresaJane, T., Torrecampo, L. A., & Madrilejos, F. A. (2023). A narrative analysis on Tripadvisor reviews of guest satisfaction in Conrad Manila as a quarantine facility 2020-2021.
- Brey, E. T., & Lehto, X. (2008). Changing family dynamics: A force of change for the family-resort industry? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(2), 241-248. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2006.12.008>
- Bryman, A. (1999). The Disneyization of society. *The Sociological Review*, 47(1), 25-47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954x.00161>
- Buhalis, D., & Amaranggana, A. (2015). *Smart tourism destinations enhancing tourism experience through personalisation of services*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-14343-9\\_28](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-14343-9_28)

- Cabanas, E. (2020). Experiencing designs and designing experiences: Emotions and theme parks from a symbolic interactionist perspective. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 16, 100330.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.12.004>
- Canavan, B. (2021). Post-postmodern consumer authenticity, shantay you stay or sashay away? A netnography of RuPaul's drag race fans. *Marketing Theory*, 21(2), 251-276.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593120985144>
- Canogar, D. (1992). *Ciudades efímeras: exposiciones universales, espectáculo y tecnología*. J. Ollero. [https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=\\_mduAAAACAAJ](https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=_mduAAAACAAJ)
- Capel, H. (2002). *La morfología de las ciudades. Tomo I: Sociedad, cultura y paisaje urbano*. Ediciones del Serbal. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=R1ZiDAAAQBAJ>
- Causser, C. (2019). Disney tech: Immersive storytelling through innovation. *IEEE Potentials*, 38, 10-18. <https://doi.org/10.1109/MPOT.2019.2919851>
- Chalmers, D., Manley, D., & Wasserman, R. (2009). *Metametaphysics: New essays on the foundations of ontology*. OUP Oxford.  
<https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=6nqzli16CY0C>
- Chen, M. (2024). Exploring Disney's future development trends over the next decade. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 27(1), 255–259.  
<https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/27/20231920>
- Chen, R., Chen, Z., & Yang, Y. (2021). The creation and operation strategy of Disney's Mulan: Cultural appropriation and cultural discount. *Sustainability*, 13(5), 2751.  
<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/5/2751>
- Cheng, Q., Fang, L., & Chen, H. (2016). Visitors' brand loyalty to a historical and cultural theme park: A case study of Hangzhou Songcheng, China. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 19(9), 861-868. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2015.1006589>
- Cheung, M., & McCarthy, W. (2019). "Authentically Disney, distinctly Chinese" and faintly American: The emotional branding of Disneyland in Shanghai. *Semiotica*, 2019(226), 107-133. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/sem-2017-0059>
- Choi, K. (2012). Disneyfication and localisation: The cultural globalisation process of Hong Kong Disneyland. *Urban Studies*, 49(2), 383–397.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098011402234>
- Chytry, J. (2012). Walt Disney and the creation of emotional environments: Interpreting Walt Disney's oeuvre from the Disney studios to Disneyland, CalArts, and the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT). *Rethinking History*, 16(2), 259–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2012.681194>
- Clavé, S. (2007). The global theme park industry. *The Global Theme Park Industry*, 1–459.
- Clément, T. (2018). "They all trust Mickey Mouse": Showcasing American capitalism in Disney theme parks. *Inmedia*(7.1.). <https://doi.org/10.4000/inmedia.1021>
- Costabile, K. A., Shedlosky-Shoemaker, R., & Austin, A. B. (2020). Universal stories: How narratives satisfy core motives. *Emerging Perspectives on Self and Identity*, 52–65.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2023). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE Publications.  
<https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=pwjMEAAAQBAJ>

- Cross, G. (2006). Crowds and leisure: Thinking comparatively across the 20th century. *Journal of Social History*, 39(3), 631–650. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2006.0003>
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. SAGE Publications.  
[https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=Op\\_SDKrf1ZQC](https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=Op_SDKrf1ZQC)
- Demonteverde, C., Navarro, E., Rebote, K. M., & Esplanada, D. E. (2023). Tourists return intention to Magic Kingdom theme park, Walt Disney World: A content analysis. *Quantum Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(4), 104–118.  
<https://doi.org/10.55197/qjssh.v4i4.258>
- Denzin, N., & Salvo Y deLeón, J. (2020). *New directions in theorizing qualitative research: Theory as resistance*. Myers Education Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2017). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. SAGE Publications. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=k2LgDQAAQBAJ>
- Dina, N., & Juniarta, N. (2022). Deriving customers preferences for hotels from unstructured data. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 43, 872–877.  
<https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.43305-899>
- Dixon, K. (2014). Football fandom and Disneyisation in late-modern life. *Leisure Studies*, 33(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2012.667819>
- Enrique Bigné, J., Mattila, A. S., & Andreu, L. (2008). The impact of experiential consumption cognitions and emotions on behavioral intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 22(4), 303-315. <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876040810881704>
- Erb, M., & Ong, C.-E. (2016). Theming Asia: Culture, nature and heritage in a transforming environment. *Tourism Geographies*, 19, 1–25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2016.1238501>
- Erb, M., & Ong, C.-E. (2017). Theming Asia: Culture, nature and heritage in a transforming environment. *Tourism Geographies*, 19(2), 143–167.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2016.1238501>
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>
- Filieri, R., Acikgoz, F., Ndou, V., & Dwivedi, Y. (2020). Is TripAdvisor still relevant? The influence of review credibility, review usefulness, and ease of use on consumers' continuance intention. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(1), 199-223. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2020-0402>
- Ford, R. C., & Milman, A. (2000). George C. Tilyou: Developer of the contemporary amusement park. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 41(4), 62–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001088040004100416>
- Freeman, P. A., Ellis, G. D., Hill, B. J., Agate, S. T., & Cook, A. S. (2025). Creating guest experience value: An empirical analysis of journey, motif, and story themes. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 26(3), 577–602.
- Freitag, F. (2017). Critical theme parks: Dismaland, Disney and the politics of theming. *Continuum*, 31(6), 923-932.

- Fusch, P., & Ness, L. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 20, 1408–1416. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2281>
- Gang, X., & Albattat, A. (2024). Theme park loyalty research: A systematic literature review using histcite. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 12, e2382. <https://doi.org/10.55908/sdgs.v12i1.2382>
- Geissler, G. L., & Rucks, C. T. (2011). The overall theme park experience: A visitor satisfaction tracking study. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 17(2), 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766710392480>
- Godovykh, M., Milman, A., & Tasci, A. (2019). Theme park experience: Factors explaining amount of pleasure from a visit, time allocation for activities, perceived value, queuing quality, satisfaction, and loyalty. *Journal of Tourism and Leisure Studies*, 4, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2470-9336/CGP/v04i02/1-21>
- Groote, P. (2010). Globalisation of commercial theme parks case: The Walt Disney company. *Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce*, 4, 15–22. <https://doi.org/10.19041/APSTRACT/2010/5-6/2>
- Gröppel-Wegener, A. (2024). Immersive protagonists – Exploring the notion of the ‘hero’ in theme parks. *Media Practice and Education*, 25(2), 137–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2024.2324089>
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In *Handbook of qualitative research*. (pp. 105–117). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K., & Namey, E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483384436>
- Guides, M. (n.d.). *Complete guide: All the Disney parks around the world*. <https://magicguides.com/disney-parks-around-the-world/>
- Hao, Y., & Wang, Y. (2022). Disney business model research. *BCP Business & Management*, 23, 483–487. <https://doi.org/10.54691/bcpbm.v23i.1389>
- Holmes, A. (2020). Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232>
- Hsu, C. W. (2011a). *Motivations of people who visit Disneyland*. California State University, Long Beach.
- Hsu, C. W. (2011b). *Motivations of people who visit Disneyland* (Publication Number 1499167) [M.S., California State University, Long Beach]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. United States -- California.
- Hu, Y., Yang, S., & Zhou, B. (2017). Enhanced microblog network representation with user-generated content. *Itm Web of Conferences*, 12, 03006. <https://doi.org/10.1051/itmconf/20171203006>
- Jensen, J. M. (2007). An empirical investigation of the relationships between hygiene factors, motivators, satisfaction, and response among visitors to zoos and aquaria. *Tourism Review International*, 11(3), 307–316. <https://doi.org/10.3727/154427207783948784>
- Johns, N., & Gyimóthy, S. (2003). Postmodern Family Tourism at Legoland. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism - SCAND J HOSP TOUR*, 3, 3-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250310001549>

- Jones, K. R., & Wills, J. (2005). *The invention of the park: Recreational landscapes from the garden of Eden to Disney's Magic Kingdom*. Wiley.  
<https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=RGQTAQAAIAAJ>
- Kao, Y.-F., Huang, L.-S., & Wu, C.-H. (2008). Effects of theatrical elements on experiential quality and loyalty intentions for theme parks. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 13(2), 163–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941660802048480>
- Kelleher, S. R. (2024, Aug 16, 2024 09:53am). *How Disney dominated the global theme park industry In 2023*. Forbes Retrieved 16/07/2025 from  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/suzannerowankelleher/2024/08/16/how-disney-dominated-the-theme-park-industry-in-2023/>
- Keller, K. (2011). Disneyland and nostalgia.  
[https://www.academia.edu/7557495/Disneyland\\_and\\_Nostalgia](https://www.academia.edu/7557495/Disneyland_and_Nostalgia)
- Kim, J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2017). Sharing tourism experiences: The posttrip experience. *Journal of Travel Research*, 56(1), 28–40.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287515620491>
- Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2005). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In *The Sage handbook of qualitative research, 3rd ed.* (pp. 303–342). Sage Publications Ltd.
- King. (1981). Disneyland and Walt Disney World: Traditional values in futuristic form. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 15(1), 116–140.
- King, M. J. (2002). The theme park : Aspects of experience in a four-dimensional landscape. *Material Culture*, 34(2), 1–15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29764155>
- King, R. (2017). An accidental Bangkok theme park. *Tourism Geographies*, 19(5), 717–733.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2017.1320583>
- Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6, 12169–12169.  
<https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n5p26>
- Kokai, J. A., & Robson, T. (2019). You're in the Parade! Disney as Immersive Theatre and the Tourist as Actor. In J. A. Kokai & T. Robson (Eds.), *Performance and the Disney theme park experience: The tourist as actor* (pp. 3–20). Springer International Publishing.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29322-2\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29322-2_1)
- Korkman, Z. K. (2015). Feeling labor: Commercial divination and commodified intimacy in Turkey. *Gender & Society*, 29(2), 195–218.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243214566269>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic research online*. SAGE Publications. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=QNDaeutR9v4C>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2016). *Netnography*. Wiley Online Library.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeos0782>
- Kruczek, Z. (2012). Amusement parks as flagship tourist attractions. development and globalization. *Economic Review of Tourism. Faculty of Economics, Matej Bela Univeristy, University, ISSN0139-8660.*, 3, 156–163.
- Kwok, L., Xie, K. L., & Richards, T. (2017). Thematic framework of online review research. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(1), 307–354.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-11-2015-0664>

- Langan, R. (2000). Someplace in mind. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 9(1-2), 69–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/080370600300055959>
- Langer, R., & Beckman, S. C. (2005). Sensitive research topics: Netnography revisited. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 8(2), 189–203. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13522750510592454>
- Langhof, J. G., & Guldenberg, S. (2019). Pirates, ghosts and customer loyalty – Reviewing the dark ride experience. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 31, 398–420. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.06.004>
- Lee, S., Jeong, E., & Qu, K. (2020). Exploring theme park visitors' experience on satisfaction and revisit intention: A utilization of experience economy model. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 21(4), 474–497. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2019.1691702>
- Lewison, M. (2018). Demand-based pricing in the U.S. theme park industry. *International Journal of Leisure and Tourism Marketing*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJLTM.2017.086451>
- Li, B., Zhang, T., Hua, N., & Jahromi, M. F. (2021). Developing an overarching framework on theme park research: A critical review method. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(20), 2821–2837. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1849047>
- Liang, Z., & Li, X. (2021). What is a theme park? A synthesis and research framework. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 47(8), 1343–1370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10963480211069173>
- Lillestol, T., Timothy, D. J., & Goodman, R. (2015). Competitive strategies in the US theme park industry: a popular media perspective. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 9(3), 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCTHR-02-2015-0009>
- Limberger, P. F., Anjos, F. A. d., Meira, J. V. d. S., & Anjos, S. J. G. d. (2014). Satisfaction in hospitality on TripAdvisor.com: An analysis of the correlation between evaluation criteria and overall satisfaction. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 10, 59–65.
- Liu, J., & Liu, Y. (2024). Marketing charm of magic kingdom: An analysis of Disneyland's marketing strategies. SHS Web of Conferences,
- Liu, S. (2024). Research on the development of Disneyland's business model. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 43, 54–60. <https://doi.org/10.54097/cmzge555>
- Liu, Y., & Isa, K. M. (2023). Value-added impact of dramatic space design on theme parks. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(12). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v13-i12/19894>
- Lukas, S. A. (2007). *The themed space: locating culture, nation, and self*. Bloomsbury Academic. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=UIMyhATr3HsC>
- Lumsden, K. (2019). *Reflexivity: Theory, method, and practice*. Taylor & Francis Group. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=5631492>
- Ma, J., Scott, N., Gao, J., & Ding, P. (2017). Delighted or satisfied? Positive emotional responses derived from theme park experiences. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2015.1125824>

- Manthiou, A., Kang, J., Chiang, L., & Tang, L. (2016). Investigating the effects of memorable experiences: An extended model of script theory. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 33(3), 362–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2015.1064055>
- Marine-Roig, E., & Clavé, S. (2016). Perceived image specialisation in multiscale tourism destinations. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, 5, 202–213. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2015.12.007>
- Masliak, P., & Slyzkii, A. (2023). The impact of the historical aspect on the development and popularity of theme parks in the world (case Walt Disney Company). *Geography and Tourism*. (71), 9–14. <https://doi.org/10.17721/2308-135x.2023.71.9-14>
- McClung, G. W. (1991). Theme park selection: Factors influencing attendance. *Tourism Management*, 12(2), 132–140. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(91\)90068-5](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(91)90068-5)
- Milman, A. (2009). Evaluating the guest experience at theme parks: An empirical investigation of key attributes. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 11(4), 373–387.
- Milman, A., Li, X., Wang, Y., & Yu, Q. (2012). Examining the guest experience in themed amusement parks: Preliminary evidence from China. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 18(4), 313–325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766712449374>
- Milman, A., & Tasci, A. D. A. (2018). Exploring the experiential and sociodemographic drivers of satisfaction and loyalty in the theme park context. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 8, 385–395. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.06.005>
- Milman, A., Tasci, A. D. A., & Wei, W. (2020). Crowded and popular: The two sides of the coin affecting theme-park experience, satisfaction, and loyalty. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 18, 100468. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100468>
- Mirzayev, M. (2021). The factors that affect tourist behavior - Different approaches research. 20.
- Mishra, S., & Dey, A. K. (2022). Understanding and identifying ‘themes’ in qualitative case study research. *South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases*, 11(3), 187–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/22779779221134659>
- Mitrašinović, M. (2006). *Total landscape, theme parks, public space*. Ashgate. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=DTdUAAAAMAAJ>
- Mittermeier, S. (2020). *A cultural history of the Disneyland theme parks: middle class kingdoms*. Intellect Books Limited. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=bHwpEAAAQBAJ>
- Mkono, M. (2011). The othering of food in touristic eatertainment: A netnography. *Tourist Studies*, 11(3), 253–270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797611431502>
- Mkono, M., & Markwell, K. (2014). The application of netnography in tourism studies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.07.005>
- Morse, J. M. (2012). *Qualitative health research: Creating a new discipline*. Left Coast Press. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=kdgpNOtNG5AC>
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research.

- International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, 16094069231205789.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Nair, L., & Shetty, S. (2017). Streaming big data analysis for real-time sentiment based targeted advertising. *International Journal of Electrical and Computer Engineering*, 7, 402–407. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijece.v7i1.pp402-407>
- Neubert, M. (2022). A systematic literature review of dynamic pricing strategies. *International Business Research*, 15, 1–1. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v15n4p1>
- Newell, L. A. (2012). Happiness at the House of Mouse: how Disney negotiates to create The Happiest Place on Earth. *Pepp. Disp. Resol. LJ*, 12, 415.
- Nye, R. B. (1981). Eight ways of looking at an amusement park. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 15(1), 63–75. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1981.64102003.x>
- O'Brien, G. M. (1981). The parks of Vienna. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 15, 76–86.
- O'Mahony, M. P., & Smyth, B. (2010). A classification-based review recommender. *Knowledge-Based Systems*, 23(4), 323–329.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.knosys.2009.11.004>
- Oh, J.-E., & Ma, H. (2018). Enhancing visitor experience of theme park attractions: Focusing on animation and narrative. *Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems*, 10, 178–185.
- Omo-Obas, P., & Anning-Dorson, T. (2023). Cognitive-affective-motivation factors influencing international visitors' destination satisfaction and loyalty. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 6(5), 2222–2240. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-05-2022-0178>
- Paik, H. (2010). Adapting Disneyland's service strategy to Korea's Everland theme park.
- Park, K., Reisinger, Y., & Park, C.-S. (2009). Visitors' motivation for attending theme parks in Orlando, Florida. *Event Management*, 13, 83–101.  
<https://doi.org/10.3727/152599509789686308>
- Park, S. B., Kim, J., Lee, Y. K., & Ok, C. M. (2020). Visualizing theme park visitors' emotions using social media analytics and geospatial analytics. *Tourism Management*, 80, 104127. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2020.104127>
- Patrocínio, R. F. d., Souza, J. L. d. A., Santos, C. T. O., & Martins, K. S. (2018). The vision of the Disney World: An experience marketing study at The Walt Disney Company. *Archives of Business Research*.
- Pervin, N., & Mokhtar, M. (2022). The interpretivist research paradigm: A subjective notion of a social context. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v11-i2/12938>
- Pham, L. (2018). *A review of key paradigms: positivism, interpretivism and critical inquiry*.  
<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.13995.54569>
- Pikkemaat, B., & Schuckert, M. (2007). Success factors of theme parks - An exploratory study. *Tourism*, 55(2), 197–208. <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-34547193640&partnerID=40&md5=e557a177673b66beb0a791d2d2e7f312>
- Pocchiari, M., Proserpio, D., & Dover, Y. (2025). Online reviews: A literature review and roadmap for future research. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 42(2), 275–297. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2024.08.009>

- Rehman, A. A., & Alharthi, K. (2016). An introduction to research paradigms. *International journal of educational investigations*, 3(8), 51–59.
- Richard, B., Kaak, K., & Orłowski, M. (2017). Theme park tourism. *The SAGE international encyclopedia of travel and tourism*, 4, 1218–1221.
- Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd ed. (pp. 959–978). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Robillard, Y. (1993). Du jeu au développement économique : Technopoles et parcs thématiques. *Téoros*, 12(3), 39–42.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.7202/1077938ar>
- Robson, T. (2019). ‘The future is truly in the past’: The regressive nostalgia of Tomorrowland. In J. A. Kokai & T. Robson (Eds.), *Performance and the Disney Theme park experience: The tourist as actor* (pp. 23–42). Springer International Publishing.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29322-2\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-29322-2_2)
- Ryan, G. (2018). Introduction to positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. *Nurse researcher*, 25(4), 41–49.
- Sabharwal, R., & Miah, S. (2021). Extending the theoretical understanding of big data analytics capabilities in organizations: A thematic analysis.  
<https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-820711/v1>
- Salvador, J. T. (2016). Exploring quantitative and qualitative methodologies: A guide to novice nursing researchers. *European Scientific Journal*, 12(18).
- Samuelson, D., & Yegoiants, W. (2001). *The American amusement park*. MBI Publishing Company. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=AgPM2u0NiAEC>
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. SAGE Publications.  
<https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=zTGHsdl17gYC>
- Schwandt, T. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructivism. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 189–214.
- Schweizer, B., & Condis, M. (2024). Attraction adaptations of ride aesthetics in Disney theme park board games. *The Journal of American Culture*, 47(2), 105–114.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jacc.13558>
- Smith, E. C., & Conrad, M. (2020). Cultivating magic and nostalgia: Walt Disney World and trends in global theme park tourism. In D. Batabyal (Ed.), *Global Entrepreneurial Trends in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry* (pp. 131–158). IGI Global.  
<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-2603-3.ch007>
- Song, X., Wu, H., Jiang, W., Zhi, J., Xia, X., Long, Y., & Su, Q. (2024). Using geotagged facial expressions to visualize and characterize different demographic groups’ emotion in theme parks. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 20983. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-69555-5>
- Sorkin, M. (1992). *Variations on a theme park: The new American city and the end of public space*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.  
<https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=QMhohDJgHIYC>
- Sparks, B. A., & Bradley, G. L. (2017). A “Triple A” typology of responding to negative consumer-generated online reviews. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 41(6), 719–745. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348014538052>

- Sudjic, D., & Sayer, P. (1992). *The 100 mile city*. Harcourt Brace.  
<https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=KRdqAAAAIAAJ>
- Tavakoli, R., & Wijesinghe, S. N. R. (2019). The evolution of the web and netnography in tourism: A systematic review. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 29, 48–55.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.10.008>
- Taylor, M. (n.d.). *Disney2Go: Solution to overcrowded theme parks: Tech based crowd mitigation tool* Toronto Metropolitan University].
- Torres, E. N., Milman, A., & Park, S. (2018). Delighted or outraged? Uncovering key drivers of exceedingly positive and negative theme park guest experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 1(1), 65–85. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-10-2017-0011>
- Torres, E. N., Wei, W., Hua, N., & Chen, P.-J. (2019). Customer emotions minute by minute: How guests experience different emotions within the same service environment. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 77, 128–138.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.06.021>
- Toubes, D. R., Araújo Vila, N., & Fraiz Brea, J. A. (2021). Changes in consumption patterns and tourist promotion after the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 16(5), 1332–1352.  
<https://www.mdpi.com/0718-1876/16/5/75>
- Toyoda, Y. (2014). Recontextualizing Disney: Tokyo Disney Resort as a Kingdom of Dreams and Magic. *Social Science Japan Journal*, 17(2), 207–226.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ssjj/jyu005>
- Tsang, N., Prideaux, B., & Lee, L. (2015). Attribution of inappropriate visitor behavior in a theme park setting – A conceptual model. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 33, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2015.1084976>
- Tuan, Y. F. (2000). *Escapism*. Johns Hopkins University Press.  
<https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=qoD8EAAAQBAJ>
- Tussyadiah, I., & Zach, F. (2016). Identifying salient attributes of peer-to-peer accommodation experience. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 34, 1–17.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2016.1209153>
- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 15(3), 398–405. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048>
- Vergara, R. A., & Vergara, K. C. (2023). Disney magic through the Disney guest experience. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 4, 1602–1611. <https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.05.21>
- Walsh, I., Holton, J., Glaser, B., Fernandez, W., Levina, N., & Bailyn, L. (2013). *What grounded theory is* (Vol. 2013).  
<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2013.11290symposium>
- Wang, J., Kim, J., & Kang, S. (2019). Antecedents and consequences of brand experiences in a historical and cultural theme park. *Sustainability*, 11(17), 4810.  
<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/17/4810>

- Wang, X., Fan, Z.-P., Li, H., & Li, Y. (2023). Discriminatory pricing strategy for sustainable tourism in theme parks considering visitors' price fairness and service value perceptions. *Sustainability*, 15, 14180. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151914180>
- Wanhill, S. (2002). Creating themed entertainment attractions: A nordic perspective. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 2(2), 123–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250216291>
- Wei, W., Zheng, Y., Zhang, L., & Line, N. (2022). Leveraging customer-to-customer interactions to create immersive and memorable theme park experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 5(3), 647–662. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-10-2020-0205>
- Weru, J. N., Njoroge, J. M., & Njeri, A. K. (2024). Visitor profile: Shaping experiential quality, and post-consumption behaviours in Kenyan theme parks. *African Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 3(1), 77–93. <https://doi.org/10.37284/ajthm.3.1.1914>
- Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International management review*, 15(1), 45–55.
- Williams, R. (2020). Fandom, brandom and plandom. . In *Theme park fandom* (pp. 67–100). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvw1d4g3.6>
- Wong, C. U. I. (2017). The Big Buddha of Hong Kong: An accidental Buddhist theme park. *Tourism Geographies*, 19(2), 168–187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2016.1158204>
- Wu, H.-C., Li, M.-Y., & Li, T. (2018). A study of experiential quality, experiential value, experiential satisfaction, theme park image, and revisit intention. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 42(1), 26–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348014563396>
- Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 179–188. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016>
- Ye, Q., Law, R., Gu, B., & Chen, W. (2011). The influence of user-generated content on traveler behavior: An empirical investigation on the effects of e-word-of-mouth to hotel online bookings. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(2), 634-639. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.04.014>
- Yuan, W. (2019, 2019/08). Disney's glocalization in Shanghai: The emotional branding strategy. Proceedings of the 2019 3rd International Conference on Education, Culture and Social Development (ICECSD 2019),
- Yusof, N. S., Ramli, K. I., & Anwar, R. M. (2021). An analysis of visitor profiles and satisfaction towards jungleland adventure theme park, Sentul City Bogor, Indonesia. *Journal of Event, Tourism and Hospitality Studies*(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jeth2021.1.1>
- Zhang, Y., Tan, H., Jiao, Q., Lin, Z., Fan, Z., Xu, D., Xiang, Z., Law, R., & Zheng, T. (2024). A predictive model based on TripAdvisor textual reviews: Early destination

- recommendations for travel planning. *SAGE Open*, 14(2), 21582440241246434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241246434>
- Zhang, Z. a., Liang, Z., & Bao, J. (2021). From theme park to cultural tourism town: Disneyization turning of tourism space in China. *Regional Sustainability*, 2(2), 156–163. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsus.2021.05.003>
- Zhiqi, L., & Rasoolimanesh, S. M. (2022). Sharing tourism experiences in social media: A systematic review. *Anatolia*, 35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2022.2120029>
- Zhou, Y. H., & Kawamata, Y. (2023). International strategies of Disney. *Departmental Bulletin Paper(1)*, 33(1), , 19–32. [http://purl.org/coar/resource\\_type/c\\_6501](http://purl.org/coar/resource_type/c_6501)
- Zukin, S. (1993). *Landscapes of power: From Detroit to Disney World*. University of California Press. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=YeelrCiy0n8C>
- Zukin, S. (1996). *The cultures of cities*. Wiley. <https://books.google.co.nz/books?id=ZUzZX2unHBkC>