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PERCEPTIONS OF WALT DISNEY WORLD: ANTECEDENTS TO RETURN
VISITS
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BY

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Abstract

Walt Disney World is an extremely popular tourist destination that attracts millions of visitors each year. Scholars have researched Walt Disney World and there are many different written articles on the subject, however there are very few that delve deep enough into the subject to generate quantitative data about visitors rather than only opinions about the parks. Due to its popularity and prominence in America, it is important to determine which demographic segment prefers to visit Walt Disney World. This can be used for both the parks themselves as a marketing tool, and consumers as well by knowing when the “best age” to visit the parks will be. This thesis will determine which age group, if any, prefers Walt Disney World over others. To generate an affirmative conclusion, an extensive literature review was conducted and a survey was distributed. The results of the survey show that there is not a positive correlation between age and preference of the Walt Disney World parks, however there is a correlation between gender and preference. This study is one of the first quantitative studies to be available to the public in respect to the parks, which significantly assists future researchers in determining demographic information and satisfaction concerning Walt Disney World.

Walt Disney World: Preference by Age

Orlando, Florida is home to the biggest and most popular theme park in the world: Walt Disney World. Walt Disney World is made up of four different theme parks. These are called the Magical Kingdom, Animal Kingdom, Hollywood Studios, and Epcot. Over sixteen million people visited the Walt Disney World parks in 2010 (Jeffers, 2010), and this past spring my family and I added six more people to the number of visitors in 2011. On my vacation to Walt Disney World both my boyfriend and I turned 21, my older sister was 23, my parents 40 and 43, and my younger sister was 3 years old. The weeklong vacation turned out to be not only fun and entertaining, but very enlightening due to the various age gaps within our party.

My younger sister, Ellana, was delighted at the fact that she would be attending Walt Disney World where, as she had been told, the princesses from her favorite movies lived. I was extremely excited to go to Walt Disney World and ride all the rides the park had to offer, see all the shows, and eat and drink “around the world” in Epcot. My parents, boyfriend, and older sister were also excited for the same things I was. After the first day of visiting the parks, I realized that my idealized vision of my vacation was very different compared to what it was actually turning out to be. Although we all enjoyed ourselves thoroughly, my parents were focusing more on keeping my younger sister happy and interested with the parks than they were on their own enjoyment. It turns out that Ellana gets more enjoyment from watching movies with her princesses in them than going to visit them and the other “magical” attributes that Walt Disney World has to offer.

Once I realized that Ellana didn't seem to be having as much fun as the children in Walt Disney World commercials are depicted as having, I started to look around at the other children

in the parks. Parents everywhere were trying to make their kids happy and ecstatic about what they were experiencing, but the children themselves didn't seem to be having as much fun as the other adults I would see roaming around without children in tow. Because of this I started to wonder if there is a "best age" to visit Walt Disney World. Does one particular age group actually prefer to visit Walt Disney World more so than other age groups?

Based on my personal experience, I hypothesize that middle aged adults, 35-50, prefer to visit Walt Disney World more than other age groups. To determine if my hypothesis is correct I will review current literature and research on the topic as well as conduct a survey of past visitors.

Literature Review

There are numerous scholars who have discussed Walt Disney World according to a variety of different topics and themes. The themes that are currently presented are the history of Walt Disney World and other theme parks, defining how Walt Disney World is different from these other theme parks, "the Disney Experience" that is expected, the personal experiences people received from the park, and data collected concerning theme park satisfaction. The history of Walt Disney World has been discussed to enlighten why the parks are so dominant and popular in American culture. With the history surrounding the parks scholars also discuss how Disney has set itself apart from other theme parks and attractions since its creation. Walt Disney World has always set high standards, and these I have termed "the Disney experience" because the experience scholars have described has come to be what is expected of the parks. The way that a person perceives and experiences the parks, based on personal stories and narratives, is one of the most common forms of literature on Walt Disney World. The last group of literature

discussed will be the surveys and data collected concerning satisfaction of Walt Disney World and other theme parks.

History of Theme Parks and Walt Disney World

A few scholars focus primarily on defining theme parks and the creation of Walt Disney World. For example, Beardsworth and Bryman describe themed restaurants and why they are so popular. The definition they use of a themed restaurant is “an eating establishment which clothes itself in a complex of distinctive signs that are largely extraneous to the activity of eating itself” (Beardsworth & Bryman, 1999). Examples of themed restaurants are the Hard Rock Café, House of Blues, and Rainforest Cafe. The authors present the history of themed restaurants, and how theme parks are simply a grander form of themed restaurants. This is because theme parks have all the classifications of a themed restaurant such as the following:

- An organized narrative or concept that is drawn from widely known culture resources
- The narrative is made visible and tangible in the physical structure of the establishment
- Eating (or playing in the case of a theme park) is not the defining feature to the establishment (Beardsworth & Bryman, 1999).

According to their definitions, Walt Disney World falls into this category of themed attractions. Like Beardsworth and Bryman, Steven Mills is concerned with what can be classified as a theme park. Mills suggests characteristics that make up this definition including technological wonders, spectacular buildings, educational presentations, sideshows to amuse, historical presentations, a party atmosphere, and food and drink (Mills, 1990). Mills describes other exhibitions that came about prior to Walt Disney World, such as Coney Island and town fairs, and he also shows that Walt Disney World has all of these characteristics to be a theme

park (Mills, 1990). While Beardsworth and Bryman are simply defining the theme aspect of recreation Mills attempts to show how Disney is innovative in the way they format the parks compared to other exhibitions. Mills uses history, along with many descriptions about attractions within Disney World, to show how Disney “does it best” compared to other theme parks. For example Mills states that Disney was innovative by “taking existing features and using them within a sight that though permanent is nevertheless placeless (in that it studiously ignores its own locality in favour of a three-dimensional re-creation of an imaginary world)” (Mills, 1990).

Raymond Weinstein shows that Walt Disney himself wanted to create the parks in order to have a “cleaner, friendlier, better” version of Coney Island. Weinstein writes in depth of how and why the parks were created. He explains that Disney himself wanted “a park... which would be as entertaining for adults as for their children” (Weinstein, 1992). He attempts in his article to demonstrate how theme parks are associated with popular American culture. For example, the economy of America changed from being labor and production dominated to being an economy dominated by consumption and leisure, and Coney Island and Disneyland (or Disney World) parks fulfill a need of Americans for this type of economy (Weinstein, 1992). Weinstein’s article is primarily a history of theme parks and how Disneyland eventually came to outperform Coney Island (Weinstein, 1992).

Defining Disney and How Disney is Different

Defining Walt Disney World in a way that sets it apart from other theme parks is also a common theme amongst scholars. Raymond Weinstein not only describes the history, but he helps define how guests view the park compared to other parks, setting it apart from the common parks of the era such as Coney Island (Weinstein, 1992). Ken Apel agrees with Weinstein that the park outperforms others; Apel proves this in his article by demonstrating the practice Walt

Disney World follows to retain guests. This practice is called Evidence-based practice which is described as an approach that involves research, client culture and preferences, and expertise (Apel 2007). Apel persuades readers that evidence-based practice is common at Walt Disney World, and that other people and places should follow this idea in all fields of work. Apel describes this approach in more detail and mentions that it is “the Disney way,” going above and beyond expectations by using the evidence-based practice, which allows Disney to provide a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Apel considers that by using this practice they are “doing it right” (Apel, 2007).

Ken Apel and Margaret King agree that Disney is doing something within the company that is making it more popular than other theme parks and attractions. King argues that theme parks, Walt Disney World specifically, are capturing audiences' attention and educating consumers in a way that museums are not. King uses many examples of how Walt Disney World educates, but still retains attention and attendance, unlike many museums. King describes the way Walt Disney World accomplishes this as the “Disney Effect” which consists of an “inventive application of technology and the use of themed motifs and décor... along with flights of fancy in symbolic architecture” (King, 1991). An example King uses is the Wonders of Life Pavilion in Epcot that allows guests to work out on “exercycles” while learning about space (King, 1991). Retaining the guests is a key strength of Walt Disney World, according to both Apel and King. Going along with the “Disney does it best” theme, Steven Mills provides information of other innovative ways Walt Disney World sets itself apart from others.

In Mill's article he stated: Disney recognized a novel opportunity to create not just a profitable enterprise but an heroic agency to promote US values far beyond the limitations inherent in the movies. He saw a window of opportunity to create not a sterile

monument to American values but a dynamic agency by which he could promote them, helping to resolve what he saw as a crisis in US society. Whereas the Depression had been resolved by the collectivist activities of mass mobilization, Disney sought to write both the cure and the disease out of the public memory by re-establishing popular faith in both the individualistic myths of the past and the technological possibilities of the future. (Mills, 1990)

This quote indicates that Walt Disney intended to create a healthy environment that promotes good American values and was different from current attractions in the sense that it would encourage and re-establish faith in a positive future (Mills, 1990).

The “Disney Experience”

Walt Disney World is commonly known to create an experience unlike any other. Many authors researched this theme and came up with strikingly similar results. Most scholars agree that Disney is attempting to create similar experiences for all guests, this being referred to as “the Disney experience.” This experience entails a demonstration of the past, present, and future, and actually viewing everything as “real,” not critiquing the fakeness in some exhibits, and enjoying the visit to the parks with many fond memories of the visit.

Salamone and Salamone examine Disney World’s depiction of “Main Street” and compare it to how England depicts America at the theme park American Adventure. Disney’s “Main Street” is polished and clean with everything being the same size and color scheme. England’s American Adventure park depicts America in a similar fashion; however, Salamone and Salamone describe it as “nostalgic and it harks back to an America that never was... An England that could have been.” There is a feeling that Americans took British culture with them

and developed it in a recognizable but new direction” (Salamone & Salamone, 1999). Their argument is that Disney does a wonderful job at “creating a world” on American soil, yet it leaves out some truth of what America actually is because “the buildings are cleaner, more innocent, and... carefully planned” (Salamone & Salamone, 1999). The authors use their own experiences in the parks as well as quotes from a scholar named Polan to describe the settings. Polan describes a walk through the Disney town of Celebration and describes it as “a very old utopian idea with deep roots in the American landscape” (Salamone & Salamone, 1990) Based on the settings and experiences, Salamone and Salamone conclude that the Main Street’s purpose is for everyone to view the same thing when they arrive in the park, thus getting the same experience of a mythically wholesome American town (Salamone & Salamone, 1999). This common experience the guests perceive is the definition of “the Disney experience.”

Christopher Wright describes “the Disney experience” as something slightly different than just experiencing a wholesome America. Wright explains how terms such as “vacation” and “leisure” don’t necessarily live up to their expectations when traveling on vacation to Walt Disney World because guests are waking up early, fighting crowds, and rushing around to attempt to see and do everything (Wright, 2006). Wright uses his own experiences of three trips to Disney, along with some views of others, to argue that Walt Disney World is intentionally “organizing and controlling” guests while making it seem as if they are making their own decisions without much influence (Wright, 2006). He makes this argument by describing how the park is laid out to guide you in a certain direction, enter lines a certain way, and pass by shops to buy memorabilia at the entrances and exits of every park (Wright, 2006). Wright demonstrates this controlled environment by using an example of the daily parade that happens at the Magical Kingdom.

Wright states: The only barrier between spectators and the parade floats is a yellow tape that is rewound as the parade passes. At the back of the parade marshals hold a soft rope behind which a large number of spectators walk. Even though the tape and the rope are purely symbolic barriers, no spectator attempts to intrude on the parade space. That is, despite the informality of appearances and explicit endorsement of self-expression, behavior at the parks is marked by civil order. (Wright, 2006).

H. Peter Steeves describes a similar atmosphere that influences guests subconsciously and describes how visitors can become enveloped in the experience and possibly take the experience more realistically than it is meant to be. He looks at how guests visit Disneyland and experience the park by “becoming” what they consume, which in this case is the Disney rides, shows, and attractions (Steeves, 2003). “Becoming Disney” simply implies that the guests are closing the gap between the experience they receive and reality, thus becoming part of the Disney attraction. Steeves’ argument is that when a guest perceives the items in Walt Disney World, they are actually viewing everything as “real” (Steeves, 2003). Steeves accomplishes this by giving more examples that were in the news and other articles. One example is once when Chip the Chipmunk was posing for pictures and put his arm around a girl, who then started to giggle. The girl’s boyfriend began to beat Chip to the ground because he thought Chip was “coming on to her” until he heard a girl’s voice cry out from in the costume. Because Chip is known as a male character, the boyfriend had assumed that a male was coming onto his girlfriend rather than a person doing their job (Steeves, 2003).

Lynn Weiner similarly argues that Walt Disney World attempts to influence guests, and the influence is demonstrated with the portrayal throughout the parks of the “past, present, and future.” These themes can be seen in the American frontier, which is a depiction of the “wild

west” past that America used to be; the around-the-world section of Epcot, which demonstrates the present cultures of different nations; and the space sections of Epcot, which show what sort of technological advancements may be made in the future. Weiner is more critical of “the Disney experience” when referring to the past. Weiner demonstrates how one of Walt Disney World’s popular attractions, the Carousel of Progress, attempts to portray the history of technological revolutions, from electricity and central air to televisions and video games, and also the “typical American family” (Weiner, 1997). Weiner uses scripts from the play, along with some history of the attraction, to demonstrate her point that the typical family depicted in the attraction is dominated by the male characters and the women are often characterized as dependant and domestic women.

A conversation between the mother and father in the Carousel of Progress shows this:

Mother: With my new washday marvel it takes only five hours to do the wash- imagine!

Father: That’s right, folks... Now Mother has time for recreations like...

Mother (sarcastically): Like canning and polishing the stove!

Father: Okay Mother, you just iron the wrinkles out of my shirts. (Weiner, 1997)

The information from Weiner does indeed contribute to the demonstration of “the Disney experience” because Disney is attempting with this attraction to demonstrate the past; however, it also provides insight into how traditional Disney World can be at times, overlooking some forms of progress America has made in an attempt to savor the past, which can lead to a variation of the experience Disney is expecting from guests.

Personal Experiences

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of the research thus far is the use of personal experiences and perceptions of Walt Disney World. It is with these testimonies that it will be determined if age groups do indeed experience the park differently, and if one age group prefers Walt Disney World over the others. Christopher Wright, Charles Carson, Ostman, Baker-Sperry, Nicholas Sammond, Richard Todd and Bob Garfield all include quotes and descriptions of real experiences that have been formed at Walt Disney World or from the Disney brand.

Perceptions of the Disney brand are what will shape impressions of Walt Disney World before a person even enters the park. L. Baker-Sperry did a research project to determine the gender roles that Cinderella, a Disney Princess, can influence in children. Her main argument is that the Cinderella story causes girls to want to be pretty and grow up to marry a prince (often giving girls a negative image of normal women), while boys seem uninterested because it is a “girl story” (Baker-Sperry, 2007). Baker-Sperry does conclude that traditional gender roles are part of the Disney brand and that children will likely grow up believing in these roles (Baker-Sperry, 2007). Like Baker-Sperry, Nicholas Sammond believes that children are heavily influenced by Disney. Sammond’s article is about the rise of Walt Disney and how the movies produced by the Disney Corporation influence children, raising them to be “proper Americans” that stay out of trouble, work hard for a living, and have strong family values (Sammond, 1999). The author uses multiple examples from movies, along with quotes from researchers, sociologists, and psychologists to demonstrate possible cause and effects from the Disney Company. For example, Sammond mentions that parents from the depression-era used Pinocchio as a model for their children. Using Pinocchio allowed them to show their children that even children in bad situations can overcome them and prosper (Sammond 1999).

Sammond also includes information about the history of movies and culture from the early 1900s to around the 1950s and 60s (which is the era of Disney's creation).

Ronald Ostman reviews ways the recent Disney movies have been criticized and shown as a negative influence over children. The author uses examples that have stirred up publicity and controversy, and shows how Walt Disney World reacted and defended their reputation. One example is when a child mentioned to his mother that the lions in "The Lion King" spelled out the word "sex" in the sand. The mother promptly threw out all Disney films and called Christian organizations to persuade them that children need to be kept away from Disney films (Ostman, 1996). Disney refuted this claim and said that the pictures in no way were meant to show this. They said "a lot of imagination (and the power of suggestion) is required for anyone to see specific letters and words in the shapes formed by the swirling dust clouds, even when the video is played in slow motion" (Ostman, 1996). This article has quotes and sections within that describe why Disney has a "wholesome," "American" image and why they wouldn't want to ruin that image. This information could help articulate why parents either want or do not want their children to watch Disney movies or consume Disney products.

Aside from the perceptions of Disney before one enters the park, descriptions of the actual experience within Walt Disney World is reviewed. Charles Carson argues that music throughout Disney shapes and creates different views of the theme park based on which song is playing and where. Carson used his own experiences and the types of music he heard at the park to describe why and how the music is used. He mentioned the authentic mariachi band that performs in Epcot in the Mexico area, providing a realistic feel to the exhibit (Carson, 2004). Carson's view of Walt Disney World is educational and enlightening when it comes to the music and sights he experienced (Carson, 2004) Like Carson, Peter Steves and Christopher Wright also

recount personal experiences of Walt Disney World, and how the memories were formed.

Wright, similar to Carson, provides many quotes from his personal trips to Walt Disney World to describe the experiences he had. As mentioned before, Wright finds his experiences in Walt Disney World to be controlled. One example is of his trip to Animal Kingdom (Disney World's theme park designed around animals and the nature of the world); when viewing the animals they seem to be more "in the wild" than they do in captivity. This is because Walt Disney World carefully puts them in a large enough setting to seem realistic, but in an attempt to control the events of the day, there are hidden fences and gullies to separate predators and prey, hence there will hopefully never be a situation in which a guest sees the violence the animals naturally act upon (Wright, 2006).

Richard Todd's article describes a visit he made to Walt Disney World around the age of 45, after his children had graduated from high school and he and his wife could enjoy the park alone together. He describes an interaction between himself and Chip, the character from "Chip n' Dale" at Walt Disney World. He mentions that Chip made motions as if he was going to "steal his wife" and flirted with her in front of him. He specifically says in the article "at any other age this encounter would have been trouble. As a little boy I would have been scared, as a teenager mortified. As a young man I would have been... verbally abusive and possibly violent... but now, in mellowness, I was just... fine. I had come to Walt Disney World at exactly the right age" (Todd, 2002). Todd believes that coming to Walt Disney World at an appropriate age makes all the difference in how the parks will be experienced. He didn't feel pressured, and was content and relaxed with Walt Disney World when he visited, and mentions that other ages would feel differently (Todd, 2002).

Todd and Bob Garfield agree on the right age to come to Walt Disney World. Garfield rather crudely states that “the little brats (children) aren't particularly awestruck, because they don't appreciate the engineering and design miracle that is Disney World; they're children, and therefore stupid, so they take the illusion at face value” (Garfield, 2001). Garfield believes the parks are magical for grown-ups, particularly baby boomers, because they can appreciate the engineering and design at the parks (Garfield, 2001).

Theme Park Surveys and Data

Among the articles and research by scholars concerning Walt Disney World, there are numerous surveys and studies that help to determine critical data with theme parks. The Theme Index edited by Jeffers for the Themed Entertainment Association stated that 16,972,000 visitors attended Walt Disney World in 2010 (Jeffers, 2010). This is down from 2009, but it is still an enormous amount of visitors. A few scholars attempted to determine what influences this many people's decisions to visit theme parks as well as what influences their satisfaction with the parks.

Park and Reseinger explored visitors' motivation for visiting the theme parks and identified visitors' segments based on their motivation. Park researched the motivations through surveys distributed at the entrance to different theme parks. Her research ultimately finds that “fantasy and myth”, which focuses on entertainment through unrealistic and story-like aspects, and “learning” were the two biggest motivational factors for visitors. (Park, 2009) Children were not surveyed; 56.9% of the visitors who took the survey were between 20-39. (Park, 2009) Like Park, Gary Geissler's investigation focused on key factors and variables influencing customer evaluation and satisfaction of their overall experience at a theme park, but unlike Park, his goal

was mainly to determine satisfaction after visitation rather than motivation before (Geissler 2011). One key finding of Geissler's research is that return visitors seem to be, in general, more satisfied with their experience than first time visitors. A. Millman also conducted research involving the factors in which influence visitors satisfaction. Millman found that the most prominent factor associated with the quality of the experience was found in entertainment and shows (Millman, 2009)

One scholar actually did research on whether children prefer Disney World over other theme parks, as they claim they do. Simone Pettigrew chose to evaluate children's experience because he deemed them to be more susceptible to hype from the Disney brand than adults would be (Pettigrew, 2011). Pettigrew conducted experiments on two children and found that based on their heart rate, mood, rides, and shows they do not have a better experience at Walt Disney World compared to another theme park called Sea World in Orlando. His results concluded that although the children did appear happy, they were not "as deliriously happy as they had anticipated or as academic literature relating to the Disney parks would suggest" (Pettigrew, 2011). The children both claimed they preferred Walt Disney World over Sea World although based on the data from their heart rate, mood, and rides they would seem to have preferred Sea World. (Pettigrew 2011)

Methods

To come to a conclusion as to whether one age group prefers Walt Disney World over another, a survey was administered to 457 people. Out of the 457 people 213 surveys were completed, however only 211 were usable because one person did not sign the informed consent page, and one person was under eighteen.

The survey tool used is called SurveyBuilder and it is free for users. I was able to ensure that anyone under the age of eighteen did not participate in the survey by sending anyone who answered “under the age of eighteen” to a dismissal page. Unfortunately there is no way to prevent participants from lying about their age on this survey because it is not required to be taken in public with someone administering the process. This survey was completely anonymous and free to anyone who chose to participate, barring the requirement that they must check off the informed consent page and be of appropriate age.

The beginning of the survey consists of basic demographic questions. Besides age, it also included gender, state of residence, and information about any children or grandchildren the participant may have. Following the demographic questions, there were twenty five questions about the satisfaction of Walt Disney World that were rated on a seven point scale, with “Strongly Agree” being the highest rating and “Strongly Disagree” being the lowest rating. These scaled questions included questions about landscaping, cleanliness, food, employees, variety of attractions and merchandise, the price/value of the parks, and how fun Walt Disney World is. Finally, there was a question about willingness to return, their satisfaction compared to different theme parks, and the other theme parks in which they have visited before.

The survey was posted onto Facebook, Twitter, and distributed by email to students and faculty at Coastal Carolina University as well as emailed to friends and family in many states, including South Carolina, New York, Florida, Georgia, and California. My hypothesis is that once all the data is analyzed, there will be a larger number of people aged 35-50 that rate Walt Disney World higher than any other age group.

Once the survey data was collected, a number of statistical techniques were used to analyze the data. First, principle component analysis was conducted to identify the dimensions that determine a customer's satisfaction level with their Walt Disney experience. This tool was utilized to understand how respondents conceptualize an experience since individuals reduce a wide-range of stimuli into a manageable number of dimensions. Correlation analysis was then used to explore the relationships between the dimensions analyzed. Correlation analysis identifies the strength of the relationship between variables. A correlation of greater than 0.70 indicates a strong relationship exists between the variables. The sign of the correlation, positive or negative, indicates the direction of the relationship (e.g. direct or inverse). Next, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to identify if differences exist based upon age, gender, or parental status on the ratings of each of the dimensions. Finally, regression analysis was utilized to determine which of the factors are the strongest predictors of a guest's intent to return to a Disney park. Regression analysis examines the relationships between independent variables, in this case the dimensions identified by the principle component analysis, and a dependent variable, which in this case is the respondents' likelihood to return to a Disney theme park.

Findings

As mentioned before, the data collected came from the 211 respondents who successfully completed the survey. Of the respondents 58% were female and 42% were male. There were 33% of respondents who answered "yes" to having children and 6% who answered "yes" to having grandchildren. Of the 211 surveys completed, 81% of the respondents have visited Walt Disney World before.

To analyze the survey, the questions and their answers were put into the SPSS program. The first step to analyzing the survey was to identify how consumers may conceptualize the theme park experience. A principle component analysis was conducted using varimax rotation. This broke down the twenty one survey items related to guests' perceptions of Walt Disney World into four different factors. Table 1 below outlines the factor-loadings.

Table 1: Principle Component Analysis

Table 1
Principle Component
Analysis

	Facilities	Atmosphere	Food	Price/Value
Indscpwd1	.729	.420	-.237	.016
cleanwd1	.747	.353	.087	.279
empathwd1	.745	.225	.154	.052
cleanwd2	.662	.241	.331	.276
userfwd1	.680	.382	-.018	.011
maintwd1	.754	.361	-.268	.214
empathwd2	.713	.176	.052	.048
varietywd1	.644	.055	-.214	-.258
funwd1	.761	.072	-.348	-.223
foodwd1	.727	-.241	.420	-.262
foodwd2	.756	-.173	.198	-.321
edwd1	.755	-.136	.059	-.068
pricevalwd1	.545	-.485	.335	.162
merchwd1	.692	-.025	-.130	-.036
efficwd1	.421	-.359	-.042	.645
funwd2	.742	-.042	-.371	-.117
pricevalwd2	.608	-.565	-.174	.136
cleanwd3	.730	.012	.303	.011
foodwd3	.721	-.295	.400	-.163
pricevalwd3	-.065	.600	.408	-.100
pricecvalwd4	.673	-.275	-.295	-.076

Note. a. 4 components extracted

The strongest variables in each component are what determine the factors involved in guests' perceptions. From this table it is concluded that component one relates to facilities in the parks. This involves cleanliness, maintenance, employees, and signs and directions within the parks. The second component relates to the atmosphere of the park, which includes how fun activities are, the variety of attractions and merchandise, and the price paid for admission. The third component relates to the food of Walt Disney World. The only variable that had a strong number in this component that did not quite fit was the educational aspects of the parks. This variable also had a somewhat strong value for the second component, atmosphere. Because educational aspects are more closely related to atmosphere than food, this variable was moved into component two. The final component relates to the price/value guests' perceive from the parks. This component includes the wait times for rides, the price/value of admission, and the expensiveness of the parks. Correlations between the four factors and willingness to return can be shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Table 2
Correlation
Analysis

1. Facilities	1.00					
2. Food	.628	1.00				
3. Atmosphere	.713	.704	1.00			
4. Price Value	.292	.497	.523	1.00		
5. Return	.327	.281	.501	.240	1.00	
6. OP Compare	.359	.264	.378	.173	.249	1.00

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The next step in analyzing the survey is to determine if the four factors labeled “facilities”, “atmosphere”, “food”, and “price value” correlate enough with ages of the respondents to say definitively whether one age group prefers Walt Disney World more than another. The completion of an Analysis of Variance indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between respondents age for any of the dimensions or for the intent to return; however, there is a difference based upon gender. Table 3 shows the ANOVA results from comparing age of respondents to the four factors and the differences based upon gender are found in Table 4.

Table 3: Age

<i>Relationship</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F-statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Facilities	Between Groups	297.213	10	29.721	1.293	0.239
	Within Groups	3563.558	155	22.991		
	Total	3860.771	165			
Food	Between Groups	275.408	10	27.541	1.007	0.44
	Within Groups	4238.526	155	27.345		
	Total	4513.934	165			
Atmosphere	Between Groups	323.175	10	32.317	1.43	0.172
	Within Groups	3502.801	155	22.599		
	Total	3825.976	165			
Price Value	Between Groups	103.046	10	10.305	1.013	0.435
	Within Groups	1576.351	155	10.17		
	Total	1679.398	165			
Return	Between Groups	62.808	10	6.281	1.525	0.135
	Within Groups	638.542	155	4.12		
	Total	701.349	165			
OP Compare	Between Groups	557.42	10	55.742	0.512	0.88

Within Groups	16863.333	155	108.796
Total	17420.753	165	

Table 4: Gender

<i>Relationship</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F-statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Facilities	Between Groups	105.726	1	105.726	4.618	0.033
	Within Groups	3755.045	164	22.897		
	Total	3860.771	165			
Food	Between Groups	0.359	1	0.359	0.013	0.909
	Within Groups	4513.575	164	27.522		
	Total	4513.934	165			
Atmosphere	Between Groups	53.934	1	53.934	2.345	0.128
	Within Groups	3772.042	164	23		
	Total	3825.976	165			
Price Value	Between Groups	9.052	1	9.052	0.889	0.347
	Within Groups	1670.345	164	10.185		
	Total	1679.398	165			
Return	Between Groups	36.539	1	36.539	9.014	0.003
	Within Groups	664.81	164	4.054		
	Total	701.349	165			
OP Compare	Between Groups	2.551	1	2.551	0.024	0.877
	Within Groups	17418.202	164	106.209		
	Total	17420.753	165			

As you can see in Table 4 the significance of “return” is at .003, which shows that willingness to return and gender have a strong enough correlation to say that “one gender prefers

Walt Disney World over the other". In this case it is found that women prefer Walt Disney World over men.

Another question that arose from analyzing the results was if respondents were more likely to prefer Walt Disney World and return to the parks if they have children. An ANOVA was ran, as shown in Table 5, but again there were no statistically significant results.

Table 5: Children

<i>Relationship</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F-statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Facilities	Between Groups	43.937	1	43.927	1.887	0.171
	Within Groups	2816.844	164	23.273		
	Total	3860.771	165			
Food	Between Groups	4.744	1	4.744	0.173	0.678
	Within Groups	4509.19	164	27.495		
	Total	4513.934	165			
Atmosphere	Between Groups	30.666	1	30.666	1.325	0.251
	Within Groups	3795.31	164	23.142		
	Total	3825.976	165			
Price Value	Between Groups	2.413	1	2.413	0.236	0.628
	Within Groups	1676.985	164	10.226		
	Total	1679.398	165			
Return	Between Groups	1.752	1	1.752	0.411	0.523
	Within Groups	699.597	164	4.266		
	Total	701.349	165			
OP Compare	Between Groups	19.557	1	19.557	0.184	0.668
	Within Groups	17401.196	164	106.105		
	Total	17420.753	165			

A regression analysis was performed to determine which factor is the strongest predictor of willingness to return to a Disney Park. As seen in Table 6, atmosphere is a significant predictor in determining the respondents’ willingness to return, and about 30% of the variance is explained by this factor.

Table 6: Regression Analysis

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
1	.564a	0.319	0.302	2.639

Notes: a. Predictors: (Constant), Price Value, Facilities, Food, Atmosphere

<i>Model</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F-statistic</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Regression	523.948	4	130.987	18.813	.000a
Residual	1120.999	161	6.963		
Total	1644.947	165			

Notes: a. Predictors: (Constant), Price Value, Facilities, Food, Atmosphere

b. Dependent Variable: revisitwd1

c. Weighted Least Squares Regression- Weighted by Return

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Significance</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
(Constant)	0.597	0.804		0.742	0.459
Facilities	-0.009	0.024	-0.034	-0.37	0.712
Food	-0.035	0.021	-0.153	-1.615	0.108
Atmosphere	0.193	0.029	0.701	6.714	0
Price Value	-0.021	0.028	-0.058	-0.746	0.457

Notes: a. Dependent Variable: revisitwd1

b. Weighted Least Squares Regression- Weighted by Return

Discussion

The literature reviewed is very limited on the perceptions and experiences of different age groups. The majority of the articles read describe people's experiences, views, and opinions of Walt Disney World without actually grasping the demographic information of the visitors.

Margaret King, for example, does a good job in demonstrating that Walt Disney World retains guests based on the educational aspects the park incorporates into its attractions, but she doesn't specify who prefers these aspects. One thing King notices is that families will leave museums, exhausted and unfulfilled from the experience, in an average of less than an hour after arriving, while it is not uncommon to find families leave Walt Disney World after a week claiming that they did not get a chance to experience everything they wanted to (King, 1991). King argues that Walt Disney World does an excellent job attracting and retaining guests, but she does not delve into the topic much deeper than this. She left out any points that would say which type of guests prefers the educational attractions, which is important to museums and theme parks alike in order to know who they are marketing to. Do the children enjoy the attractions at Walt Disney World as much as adults? With all of the information and technological wonders that are involved with most attractions at Disney World, it is possible that children are indeed impressed, but are they not as interested in the attractions as adults?

Adults, according to Garfield, can actually appreciate the parks, the engineering and design. Garfield proves this point because children aren't generally interested in the technological advancements that Walt Disney World has shown throughout time; they most likely just want to have fun. Garfield's article is primarily to persuade readers not to bring their children to Walt Disney World, rather to enjoy it on their own. Garfield's argument would have been much more thorough had he provided any types of solutions to get children interested rather than leaving them behind completely.

Simone Pettigrew's experiment proved that children, at least the ones surveyed, do in general like and enjoy Walt Disney World. Although his findings do prove children enjoy the parks, the results also prove that children will claim they prefer Walt Disney World over other parks although they actually do not prefer them by any quantitative standards (Pettigrew, 2011). The conversations Pettigrew includes in his research show that the children were excited about the rides and shows because they would be "fun and exciting, maybe even scary" (Pettigrew 2011).

Based on Todd's, Wright's, and Carson's personal experiences, it seems as if children and teenagers would not be nearly as interested as adults in the parks. This is because Carson was describing all of the themes in Epcot, differentiating between what is authentic and what Walt Disney World was distorting to catch people's eyes. He was actually amused and interested in the types of music coming from the speakers in the parks (Carson, 2004). It is quite unlikely that children would notice these things at all based on Pettigrew's study of how children reacted to rides or entertainment. Wright also notices things out of the ordinary, such as the "controlled" way Walt Disney World structures the Animal Kingdom park (Wright, 2006). Observations such as these are excellent in describing some of the ways adults can appreciate Walt Disney World, but they do leave out any time of observation from someone other than themselves. It would be interesting to know whether others feel the same way about the attractions as they do. As mentioned before, Richard Todd actually says that he "... came to Walt Disney World at exactly the right age" (Todd, 2002). This statement he made is all about perception because he could imagine how he would have reacted at a younger age than 45. Do other adults his age feel the same way?

One of the main reasons the hypothesis is that middle aged adults prefer Walt Disney World is because children were not around for the beginning of a majority of the themes presented at the parks. One example is the ride that Lynn Weiner mentions in her article, the Carousel of Progress. The Carousel revolves around different eras in America showing the technological revolutions (Weiner, 1997). If children watch this attraction then they can only relate to the most current era on the attraction, which has technology from the 90s and today. Middle aged and older adults would be able to recollect the previous eras, and answer questions for the children when they ask about them. Although Weiner's article is about the way the men in the attraction treat the women, there is still plenty of history in the attraction to draw attention from older adults.

Not only can adults find the history in the rides, but they can also appreciate the history behind Walt Disney World itself. Weinstein describes why Disneyland was created in 1955, and why Walt Disney World parks are so popular (Weinstein, 1992). After the success of Disneyland, Walt Disney World was opened in 1971. As mentioned before the hypothesis that the age group that prefers Walt Disney World is adults between 35 and 50. These would be the children born between 1961 and 1976, who were children when the theme parks first opened. Park's data collected from her survey shows that the biggest motivations for visiting theme parks are "fantasy and myth, and learning" (Park, 2009). If these are indeed the primary motivations, then finding out if the age group mentioned prefers Walt Disney World over another age group is going to be based on how thoroughly Walt Disney World satisfies their motivation. It is also possible to use Geissler's method of determining overall satisfaction with the parks to determine if the hypothesis is correct, however the responses will need to be separated by the ages of the participants in order to find results.

Implications

Due to the shortcomings of present literature, the data collected from the survey is so far the most informative resource when it comes to the preference of different age groups and Walt Disney World because the data is quantitative and can be separated by different factors. The hypothesis of middle aged adults preferring Walt Disney World over other age groups was not accepted based on the results of the ANOVA, however it was found that women may prefer Walt Disney World over men.

The survey that was administered will significantly assist future researchers in determining demographic information and satisfaction when it comes to Walt Disney World because the survey does not only measure people's overall satisfaction but it narrows it down into categories and topics. The survey results showing that women prefer Walt Disney World over men can influence the marketing and advertising professionals in the tourism field for future projects. This thesis is original in its topic, so it is hoped that there will be further research conducted to help define the results and add to the scholarship concerning Walt Disney World.

For future research it is suggested that surveys also include the number of times a person has visited Walt Disney World, for this may help determine which age group visits the parks more often than another. It would also be resourceful for data to actually be collected on site in Orlando, Florida from current Walt Disney World visitors. Because the survey used only collected data from 213 people, it is also suggested that a much larger sample size be used to determine if the results are accurate.

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