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WALT DISNEY WORLD AS A MODEL FOR BRAND MARKETING: AN IMC APPROACH
TO BUILD BRAND LOYALTY

by
Sarah Camille Blankenship

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2021

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ABSTRACT

The Walt Disney Company has an estimated brand value of \$61.3 billion and a brand revenue of \$38.7 billion according to Forbes' 2020 World's Most Valuable Brands (Swant, n.d.).

As number seven in the world's most valuable brands and the only leisure brand in the top fifty, the Disney brand is often used as a business model and inspiration for many companies (Swant, n.d.). Its success can be attributable to the high degree of brand loyalty they create among their customers. Among its approximately 157 million visitors who visited Disney Parks globally, there was a 70% return rate of first-time visitors (Team Attendify, 2020). What is responsible for this high degree of brand loyalty that people feel for the Disney brand?

To investigate why the Disney model has been successful in engaging generations of customers and establishing a loyal customer base, the core values of the Walt Disney Company were explored. In addition, how those core values are instilled in the Walt Disney employees was also examined. Research was collected through a review of published literature, a survey of 123 Disney customers, 10 interviews with Walt Disney World Resort employees, and 4 site visits to determine the influence points that distinguish the Disney experience and love for the brand that has established the reputation of Disney as a premier marketer of branded experiences.

The purpose of this study is to explore how Walt Disney World Resort creates, maintains, and builds unparalleled consumer engagement through integrated experiences. Through research, one main research question was explored: How does Walt Disney World Resort implement an IMC approach to integrate, build and reinforce consumer behavior, loyalty, and brand love?

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CHAPTER 1: THE INTRODUCTION

Walt Disney World Resort is the model of building and cultivating emotionally engaging experiences with customers of all ages. Walt Disney World Resort offers its consumers magical experiences at every touchpoint along the customer journey. It incorporates elements of escapism, fantasy, and fun in every interaction consumers have with the brand. It is the building and delivery of an exceptional customer experience (CX) that may be the foundation to Disney Park's success and high return rate of first-time visitors. In 2019, 70% of Disney Parks' 157 million visitors were estimated to be returning or repeat customers. That is markedly above the industry average and indicative of the level of loyalty Disney has created among its customers or brand "fans". As number seven in the world's most valuable brands, and the only leisure brand in the top 50 besides Lego at number 92, the Walt Disney Company falls between brands such as Coca-Cola and Samsung in terms of its value. Additionally, it had a 1-year value change (18%) higher than companies such as Apple, McDonalds, Coca-Cola, and Facebook in the 2019 fiscal year (Swant, n.d.). While being the world's strongest media brand in 2020 according to Brand Finance, the Disney brand is one of the most effective integrated marketing companies.

According to Love Gupta of Business Quant, the Walt Disney Company's revenue can be broken down into the following:

Advertising (11%), affiliate fees (25.99%), home entertainment (2.99%), parks and resorts – domestic (28.71%), parks and resorts – international (3.33%), media network (12.54%), studio entertainment (10.47%) and theatrical distribution (4.17%).

This means that the domestic and international Parks and Resorts sectors make up nearly a third of the company's total revenue. Along with its multiple global endeavors, the Disney brand understands that its growth is almost solely due to its innovative marketing strategies.

With consumers interacting with brands like never before, brands “have to move much faster, with greater agility and responsiveness to consumer actions and reactions, which can be at warp-speed in this rapidly changing environment” (Schoultz, 2017). He further explains Disney’s brand identity:

“The heart of Disney’s marketing strategy is their brand. The brand is built into and reflected by its tagline... the happiest place on earth. They clearly understand that their brand is not about them. Rather it is about how the potential client community sees them, feels about them, and talks about them. They realize that their brand represents their current and future relationships. Their goal is to deliver an emotional connection to their services. And they are doing it very well.”

Schoultz breaks down Disney’s diverse, yet effective marketing strategy through its content marketing, stories, experience, adaptation to change, social media presence, and short and sweet messages.

With the Disney brand, every touchpoint of communication begins and ends with a focus on the audience. Walt Disney, founder of the brand, was focused on the audience from the inception of the theme park he created. As stated by Bruce Jones, Senior Programming Director at the Disney Institute, “At Disney, in our theme parks and resorts, we’ve been striving to perfect our customer experience over the many decades since Walt Disney founded the company—attempting to do things so well that our guests want to come back and see us do it again and again. And CX continues to be something our leaders think about each and every day.”

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING A BRANDED EXPERIENCE TO REMEMBER WITH IMC

Although the concept is relatively new, integrated marketing in businesses is one of the most effective ways to create a consistent strategy across the many channels of a company. The mission statement of the Walt Disney Company is as follows:

The mission of The Walt Disney Company is to entertain, inform and inspire people around the globe through the power of unparalleled storytelling, reflecting the iconic brands, creative minds and innovative technologies that make ours the world's premier entertainment company (About the Walt Disney Company, n.d.).

The Walt Disney Company is an example of a company with an integrated approach to marketing communications. With the mindset of being the world's premier entertainment company, the brand continuously understands that "their brand is not about them. Rather it is about how the potential client community sees them, feels about them, and talks about them" (Schultz, 2017).

Everything the Walt Disney Company creates in marketing, promotion, and consumer experience is centered around the target audience. This is the pinnacle of an integrated marketing communications approach. The Disney organization's approach to marketing is indicative of the Marketing Communications (MARCOM) Model shown below.



Figure 1: The Marketing Communications (MARCOM) Model

Walt Disney once said, “People can feel perfection.” This principle has permeated the company’s values and branding. At the center of the MARCOM Model is the target audience, which is also at the brand’s forefront of thinking when creating experiences. Through the focus on the target audience, Walt Disney World consumers can both feel and experience perfection, which corresponds to Walt Disney’s ideals of consumers feeling perfection and its effect on their brand affinity. In order to achieve this goal, Walt Disney World Resort delivers these experiences through a highly committed and engaged workforce.

With the relentless focus on the target audience, the brand was able to expand from a small cartoon studio into media networks, theme parks/resorts, movie production, merchandising, licensing, and, most recently, interactive media. The entirety of the Disney brand was built with the simple idea of creating memorable experiences for the audience. The Disney

brand was created for the entire family, not for only young children. Walt Disney wanted a park where parents and children could have fun as a family. It inspired his vision for the Disney empire; “a place where parents and children could have fun. Together.”

As a core principle of integrated marketing communications, uniformity is a key to creating brand love and loyalty in consumers. The Disney brand has an unprecedented ability to create a uniform message that is integrated through stories and characters in the marketing mix and media channels, forming an emotional bond with its wide range of consumers. The magic, ambiance, and novelty surrounding the simple idea of fun is what creates the immersive experience and loyalty of consumers. The experience is reinforced through storytelling that surrounds the guest in a 360-degree method. Walt Disney explained this principle by saying, “When they come here, they’re coming because of an integrity that we’ve established over the years. And they drive hundreds of miles.” The integrity Walt Disney alludes to is the trust that has been established that the Disney experience will be focused upon the audience and transport them to a fantasy world where they are in the center of the experience.

Building amazing experiences to remember and share is a result of developing loyal customers who act as fans more than customers. That fandom is achieved by integrating experiences that delight these fans. In many ways, Walt Disney World Resort deployed the practice of integrated marketing communications to deliver those memorable experiences. Integrated marketing in its simplest form is “an approach to creating a unified and seamless experience for consumers to interact with the brand/enterprise,” (Belch, 2004) while also combining the many facets of marketing communication. The Disney brand starts with the customer experience to design their operations and theme park attractions around those memorable experiences. As the world’s second-largest media company, the Walt Disney

Company communicates the brand message of wholesome family entertainment in all of its brand channels. “Their movies, cartoons, theme parks, and television channels all project fantasy, magic, love and adventure” (Weber, 2015). Through its divisions, the Disney brand utilizes storytelling as the mechanism to create brand fans. It is at the forefront of everything it does. It requires a component of emotion that can appeal to all ages of consumers. Brand storytelling is “using a narrative to connect your brand to customers, with a focus on linking what you stand for to the values you share with your customers” (Loyal, 2018).

Breaking down the key elements of the definition, Loyal writes:

“By *narrative*, we mean storytelling elements. A story includes characters, setting, conflict, rising action, climax, and dénouement.”

“By *what you stand for*, we mean the essence of your brand. It’s not the product you sell, and it’s not to make money. It’s the driving force behind your business, and it differentiates you from the competition.”

“*Values* are the character traits of your company that define it ... A company’s values are the best behaviors of your best employees on their best days.”

The Disney brand has honed in on this ability and mastered creating those emotions in its target audience. Everything that the brand involves itself in— commercials, advertisements, and billboards, reminds consumers of the Disney-created emotions and stories. A former long-time executive of the Disney Company, Geoffrey de la Bourdonnaye, explained this concept saying, “We’ve all known the power of attracting emotions through strong storytelling, and that’s what makes Disney so unique. At Disney, it’s about the power of narrative and being able to create a world with a theme and characters, to draw emotions that are common to all people around the world.”

In terms of separating itself from its numerous competitors, Disney utilizes a one-two approach by creating the story first and, then, creating an entire line of products around the specific story. By adopting this unique, yet simple content marketing strategy, the company has managed to differentiate itself from its peers in the rather saturated entertainment market. The brand has masterfully wielded the stories as part of the company's brandings and has furthered this by appealing to the wishes and wants of its extremely varying target audience. The main driving force behind Disney's annual revenue is nostalgia and the brand plays on this factor at a high level. Consumers who encountered the influence and power of Disney in their childhood days often yearn for the reminder of those impactful feelings. The majority of Disney consumers want the original Disney that they grew up with— no changes, nothing fancy or new. The Walt Disney Company has grown to understand this concept through trial and error with its European theme parks and has customized the trajectory of marketing, park experience, and dining offerings in its parks. The Disney brand understands that it is vital to fully know and understand its audience in order to create brand resonance in consumers. Disney consumers react differently to varying movies, shows, theme parks, and other forms of entertainment. What Disney does differently than its peers is constantly analyzing and customizing its experiences to meet the needs and wishes of its growing consumer base.

CHAPTER 3: DELIVERING MAGICAL MOMENTS

The Disney experience is communicated and reinforced through its employees, which are called “Cast Members.” It is an important distinction as “cast” means a member of a production and “member” is defined as a part of a whole making it clear each member of the Walt Disney Company has a role to play in delivering a magical Disney experience to every guest. The Walt Disney Company includes its workforce as an integral part of the delivery of the Disney brand as an integrated one. The Disney brand utilizes personal selling with its creation of employee storytellers who surprise and delight guests daily. The Walt Disney Company has built and maintained a branded marketing experience that is sought after and admired by the top companies of the world through its world-renowned employee instruction. Disney University and the Traditions course are the ways that they indoctrinate employees and implement Cast Member behaviors and ideals to create the best consumer experience possible.

They initially laid the foundation for a totally immersive and nearly perfect experience for the brand’s theme parks and all entertainment outlets by Walt Disney once saying, “Anything that has a Disney name to it is something that we feel responsible for.” Disney Cast Members feel a commitment to delivering the Disney experience to guests with an unwavering dedication to Disney values.

Another distinction is the Disney term “guest” in place of “customer”. Guest is defined by Webster Dictionary as “a person who is invited to visit the home of or take part in a function organized by another.” This description is in sharp contrast to the industry standard of an employee who provides service to a customer who is defined as “a person or organization that buys goods or services from a store or business.” The invitation and notion of hosting are very

different from a mindset of selling. This nomenclature is a part of the culture and leads to the world-renowned Disney experience recognized as the best in class around the globe.

Tami Garcia is the Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Diversity and Inclusion at Disney Parks and Resorts and she explains her role as her “dream job” and that she “absolutely loves[s] it.” Having “the ability to just be part of the magic, and deliver those magical experiences was something that I was very interested in,” says Garcia (Indeed Editorial Team, 2018). This foundation is a sort of common ground among Cast Members throughout the resort. From the very beginning, Walt Disney understood the importance that was empowering his Cast Members to constantly strive to deliver extraordinary guest service to all guests. Walt Disney himself once said, “You can dream, create, design, and build the most wonderful place in the world ... but it requires people to make the dream a reality.”

To learn how to create these lasting memories and relationships with guests, all Cast Members, “regardless of their role or level in the organization,” (Jones, 2018) take the initial class called Traditions. In this class, individuals from all over the world and from all roles came together to learn the “big picture—their purpose, which is to create happiness.” Bruce Jones, the Senior Programming Director at the Disney Institute, explains that “the more empowered employees feel, the more engaged they tend to be in the technical aspects of their jobs as well as in the quality of service they provide to customers.” The Cast Members who teach the Traditions class are trained and taught to empower all Cast Members in the room to deliver top-notch service to park visitors. The Traditions course educates Cast Members about the company’s history and its legacy of superlative Guest service. This course makes the new Disney employees like they are a part of a production and the company is sure to provide excitement for their first day on the job. Their “boss,” Mickey Mouse visits every Traditions class, and every new Cast

Member is given a pair of Mickey Mouse ears to build on the excitement. By providing this experience to the new employees, the company is setting the stage and ensuring the guest experience through the Cast Members and their training. They feel inspired to uphold the Disney legacy and “Disney’s Four Key Basics”: Safety, Courtesy, Show, and Efficiency, which are listed in priority order. Figure 2 below shows an example of how the Four Key Basics were presented to Cast Members during training and throughout their employment.



Figure 2: The Four Key Basics

On April 13, 2021, however, the Walt Disney Company added a fifth key to the Four Key Basics, Inclusion. The key was introduced with a quote of Walt Disney said on the dedication of Disneyland Resort in 1955 of, “To all who come to this happy place, welcome.” Josh D’Amaro, chairman of Disney Parks, Experience and Products, explains the enactment of the Inclusion key

by saying, “We want our guests to see their own backgrounds and traditions reflected in the stories, experiences and products they encounter in their interactions with Disney” (2021). The creation of this key over 65 years after the opening of the first Disney theme park demonstrates the company’s dedication to the focus on the consumer experience before all else. D’Amaro further explains the reasoning behind the 5 Keys replacing the Four Keys by saying, “Like The Four Keys before them, The 5 Keys – with Inclusion at the heart – will continue to guide us as we interact with guests, collaborate together, create the next generation of Disney products and experiences, and make critical decisions about the future of our business” (2021). In Figure 3 below, this is the new company-wide graphic included to present the new key of Inclusion.



Figure 3: The 5 Keys

The implementation of these keys keeps the “show” alive and upkeep the storytelling and immersiveness throughout the theme parks so that the guests continuously feel like they are transported to another world. Even small things, like learning the “Disney Dip,” which is how

Cast Members are taught to pick up any trash or debris on the theme park floor, are imperative to creating the “Happiest Place on Earth” and keeping the guests immersed in the world around them.

From the Traditions course, Cast Members are given their first schedule to have on-the-job training in their designated work location. This is the first time for new Cast Members to put on their costumes and work with a designated “trainer” to learn the specifics of their role and its job location. In this portion of the training, Cast Members learn the specific lingo and other useful information for the themed area. For example, in Adventureland in Magic Kingdom, the Pirates of the Caribbean merchandise location’s Cast Members are “pirates” who know Jack Sparrow and his crew well. The register locations are named after the ships from the movie series, Pirates of the Caribbean, which encourages Cast Members to stay “in character.” In this gift shop, guests are welcomed “to shore” after disembarking from the water attraction, engaged in sword fights with pirates, can embark on a treasure hunt, or search in the treasure chests for new pins to trade.

Along with setting the stage for guests to ensure they feel like they are part of the magic around them, Cast Members are taught the difference between “on stage” (the sales floor) and “backstage” (the breakroom). During Traditions, Cast Members are taught that they are a part of the “show” and “are expected to BE happy ‘on stage’ during the ‘show,’ and “backstage” is “where Cast Members can be themselves, decompress, and relax.” Backstage is a place that the “guest (or customer) never sees” to ensure that the show is always ready on stage (Donnelly, n.d.).

In addition to being part of the show and the story, Cast Members are encouraged to be “show-ready” in accordance with the “Disney Look” which includes wearing the correct

“costume” with the correct accessories, shoe color, and other specifications for the role, the proper haircut, length, or style, the overall cleanliness of the entire look of the Cast Member, no colorful or long fingernails, no overly-grown facial hair, no excessive jewelry, and no facial piercings besides one hole in the ear for female Cast Members.

Viewing exceptional customer service as a day-to-day standard as opposed to an unordinary, special-case-scenario basis is one of the main pillars of the foundation for Disney’s guest service. To maintain the magic within the theme parks, Cast Members are encouraged to create “magical moments,” which can be anything from replacing spilled ice cream to receiving complimentary merchandise to being given a FastPass for the park’s busiest attraction.

All of these small, yet impactful, elements reinforce the importance of being in character and maintaining the show for the guests. Throughout the training, Cast Members learn that guests always come first and that one of the most important parts of their job is to ensure that the guests feel like they are in a different world and a part of the show themselves. Through their trainings, Cast Members are instilled with the notion that the entire park experience revolves around Walt Disney World Resort’s target audience, the theme park visitors. This behavior and idealism reinforce brand loyalty and love in customers. The Walt Disney Company is rewarded for its Cast Members’ delivery of the experience by unprecedented loyalty by consumers of all ages and ethnicities. Where else can individuals be known as a guest for the duration of their stay, be transported to an entirely different world, meet their favorite movie characters, or engage in sword fighting? It is the culmination of these factors that sets the brand apart from its competitors in the minds of the consumer.

CHAPTER 4: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRAND LOYALTY: AN ANALYSIS OF DISNEY IN KELLER'S BRAND EQUITY MODEL

Disney creates loyal fans who are Disney zealots. Keller's Brand Equity Model, also known as the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model, is a brand relationship-building model that can be used to explain the value Disney has created for its organization and through the value chain of Disney's multimedia entertainment empire. Applying the Keller Brand Equity Model to the Disney brand provides a framework to understand how Disney is so successful at creating brand loyalty.

Step one of the CBBE is to identify the brand and "create 'brand salience,' or awareness – in other words, you need to make sure that your brand stands out, and that customers recognize it and are aware of it" (Mind Tools Content Team, n.d.).

The second tier of the CBBE is to convey to consumers what the brand represents and stands for. The two key pieces of this step are "performance" and "imagery." The term performance defines how well a brand's products meet consumers' needs. Performance consists of five categories: "primary characteristics and features; product reliability, durability, and serviceability; service effectiveness, efficiency, and empathy; style and design; and price" (Mind Tools Content Team, n.d.). The second term, imagery, alludes to a brand's meeting of consumers' psychological and social needs. A brand "can meet these needs directly, from a customer's own experiences with a product; or indirectly, with targeted marketing, or with word of mouth" (Mind Tools Content Team, n.d.).

Walt Disney World Resort is a great example of brand meaning. Walt Disney World Resort creates high-quality guest interactions and really utilizes guests' nostalgia to create the

most immersive experience in its parks. Walt Disney World Resort's brand performance exhibits its effectiveness, efficiency, and empathy; consumers visit the Disney theme parks understanding that the brand's product or service will be immensely efficient and will create experiences that will last for a lifetime. Disney's brand imagery is further established by its consistent commitment to a number of environmental and wildlife causes, which makes guests feel inherently good that they're spending money with a company that has an environmental conscience.

The entirety of the CBBE is to have the brand's product "must meet, and, ideally, exceed [guests'] expectations if you want to build loyalty." The experiences that consumers have with the brand are essentially a direct result of your brand's product performance. The Walt Disney Company is an exemplary example of this philosophy and is such a successful company due to this process. The company regularly reevaluates its diverse consumers' needs and explores methods to evolve these needs into high-quality products and experiences.

The consumers' responses to the brand and how they think or feel about the brand is the third step of the CBBE. Consumers are always making judgments about the Walt Disney World brand and the judgments fall into four key categories (Mind Tools Content Team, n.d.):

- Quality: Customers judge a product or brand based on its actual and perceived quality.
- Credibility: Customers judge credibility using three dimensions – expertise (which includes innovation), trustworthiness, and likability.
- Consideration: Customers judge how relevant your product is to their unique needs.
- Superiority: Customers assess how superior your brand is, compared with your competitors' brands.

In addition, consumers can answer to a brand based on how it makes them feel. A brand can raise feelings directly or consumers can “also respond emotionally to how a brand makes them feel about themselves.” The model suggests that there are six positive brand feelings: warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval, and self-respect.

The Walt Disney World Resort brand fits and oftentimes exceeds, a lot of these brand judgments of consumers. In addition, Disney evokes the six positive brand feelings daily within its theme parks. The final, top tier of the CBBE is the brand’s resonance. This refers to the level of a deep, psychological bond with the brand and the consumer.

Resonance is broken down into four categories (Mind Tools Content Team, n.d.):

- Behavioral loyalty: This includes regular, repeat purchases.
- Attitudinal attachment: Your customers love your brand or your product, and they see it as a special purchase.
- Sense of community: Your customers feel a sense of community with people associated with the brand, including other consumers and company representatives.
- Active engagement: This is the strongest example of brand loyalty. Customers are actively engaged with your brand, even when they are not purchasing it or consuming it. This could include joining a club related to the brand; participating in online chats, marketing rallies, or events; following your brand on social media; or taking part in other, outside activities.

There is no company that better achieves brand resonance than the Disney brand. Consumers regularly purchase merchandise, resort hotel stays, theme park tickets, and dining experiences. In addition, there is a very large sense of community with those associated with the brand and many thrive on this, especially during the time in between vacations.

All in all, the CBBE model breaks down each step of the process of the creation of a truly successful brand, and when comparing the Walt Disney brand to it, it is clear why the brand is so successful. Disney overachieves at each of the tiers of the CBBE and is always working towards changing its actions as its consumers' needs change. In addition, implementing each of these steps in its brand's daily workings is what makes its brand loyalty and preference so much higher than that of the average entertainment/theme park company.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION OF STORYTELLING IN THE WALT DISNEY WORLD

THEME PARKS

There is a large deal of importance in both the storytelling and immersive experiences throughout the Walt Disney World Resort theme parks. It is these unique features that set the Disney company far apart from other entertainment companies. Bob Chapek, the current Chief Executive Officer of The Walt Disney Company, explained that “it was Walt’s vision for our theme parks to be places where Disney stories come to life in amazing ways, and with the world’s most creative and talented team of artists and dreamers, there’s no shortage of inspiration” (“Disney Parks, Experiences and Products Reveals Next Generation of Immersive Storytelling in Disney Parks,” 2019).

There is a clear-cut approach throughout the Walt Disney World Resort theme parks instilled by the Walt Disney Imagineering (WDI) team “that everything starts with a story, and technology is utilized to serve those tales” (Causer, 2020). Throughout the multiple departments and disciplines of WDI, there are constant advancements and innovations of technology to create this ability to open up entirely new environments and transformative worlds to align with the imagination of its customers. With this progressive attitude, stories, along with their characters and setting, are told to generations of guests in the parks. Storytelling coupled with an innovative mindset creates one-of-a-kind experiences for guests. Years ago, it could not have been fathomed that guests could fly the Millennium Falcon, take a trip to space, or ride on the back of a Banshee through Pandora.

Personality and emotion are implemented in all creations of all guest experiences. A prime example of this passion for immersiveness is Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge in Walt Disney World Resort. Casey Ging, senior concept designer explains that:

Every piece of content in this land, every droid and every mark on a wall, has a story behind it. Why is that droid broken? Where did those blast marks on the wall come from? Who are the characters that own these shops? What are their relationships to one another? All that stuff is discoverable organically through this experience, and it's something that hasn't been traditionally available through themed entertainment.

It is this close eye and attention to detail that sets the Walt Disney Company apart from its competitors. Throughout its four theme parks, Walt Disney World Resort creates separate worlds or environments through its theming and dedication to storytelling.

A great example of this is the costuming and characterization of Cast Members. In Galaxy's Edge especially, Cast Members go through in-depth training that delves into the story behind Galaxy's Edge and how each Cast Member plays a huge role in guest experiences and interactions. When telling guests a price, Galaxy's Edge Cast Members call dollars "points". In addition, these Cast Members' name tags include their name in both English and the Star Wars language and have an entirely different theming from those found around the park. They also implement changes in their language and greetings and would say, "Bright suns, traveler," as opposed to a regular greeting. These seemingly small, but immensely impactful pieces that create the all-encompassing world for all generations of Walt Disney World Resort guests.

A way that Disney takes guests to another world outside of their own is through the introduction of the Play Disney Parks app. Continuing with the example of Galaxy's Edge, guests go "beyond the queue to allow[s them] to build a reputation and let their story unfold

throughout the land, if they choose to opt in” (Causer, 2020). Another example of immersiveness is the guest’s participation and interaction within the attraction, Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run, where his or her participation not only affects the story as a guest plays but also the other stories that a guest experiences throughout the land of Batuu. WDI has even created a “series of missions available for guests who want to completely dig into their own personalized narrative and get involved with deeper storytelling” (Causer, 2020). The creation of these living lands allows guests to dive deeper than ever before into these uniquely designed worlds. Implementing new technologies is one of the best ways that Disney allows guests to escape into its theme parks and experience the story of each attraction in a personal way.

CHAPTER 6: SURVEY RESULTS: THE WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT CONSUMER

The representation of Walt Disney World Resort consumers varies in a number of ways including gender, race, age, income level, and geographical location. The brand's audience has unique perceptions of the brand and its relationship with the Disney brand and all that it encompasses. Describing one cohesive Disney fandom or the average Disney fan is nearly impossible. There is a multigenerational, globally-spread community that spans a variety of people. Avid Disney fans see the visit to the theme parks as more than a vacation with food and attractions. The pilgrimage has grown into an identity or symbolic representation of their habits as a consumer, and a realm for their fantasies to become realities. Mark Duffett (2013) explains that "a focus on fandom uncovers social attitudes to class, gender, and other shared dimensions of identity" (p. 3). However, one overarching identifying factor of fans of the Disney brand is their participatory nature. Re-watching Disney movies or television shows, dressing up as Disney characters, or visiting the Disney theme parks, the fans are immensely dedicated to interacting with and immersing themselves in the brand in a tangible way. Nostalgia and the overall longing to return to an easier time are factors that the Disney brand holds as the driving forces behind the fans' brand loyalty, love, and dedication.

To gauge how well the Disney Company executed immersiveness, storytelling, and consumer connection within Walt Disney World Resort, a 31-question survey, titled "Walt Disney World Perceptions" was constructed and distributed to consumers 18 years and older through the researcher's network via social media. Of the 123 respondents that completed the

survey, 109 of the 123 fit the age range, 18-24 and 10 of 123 fit the age range, 33-54, and 4 of 123 fit the age range, 55-84. The majority (83%) of respondents were females residing in the southeast.

The survey asked general questions regarding Walt Disney World Resort and its theme parks. A more detailed account of the methodology, 31 questions, and respondent demographics are available in Appendix A.

Many guests think of many different ways or emotions to describe their experiences of Walt Disney World Resort.

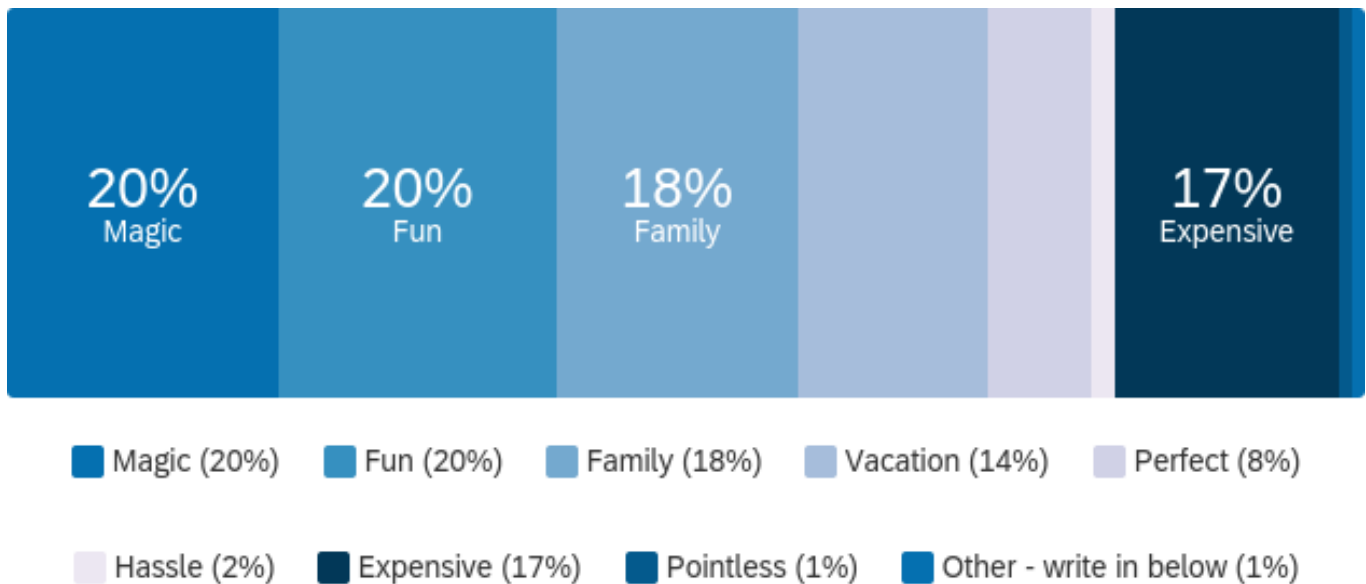


Figure 4: What are some of the words or emotions that come to mind when thinking of Walt Disney World Resort? (Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey, 2021)

Figure 4 is representative of the different words or emotions thought of by Walt Disney World Resort consumers. 40% of consumers chose the emotive words “Magic” and “Fun” to describe how they feel when thinking of the resort, while only 2% reported the word “Hassle” as a feeling when thinking of Walt Disney World Resort. Therefore, it can be concluded that

“Magic”, “Fun”, “Family”, and “Expensive” are some of the words or emotions that most consumers associate with.

The researcher asked a series of questions to determine the makeup of the Walt Disney World Resort consumer population in 2021. Their response to the Walt Disney World Perceptions survey question “If you've been to Walt Disney World Resort more than once, what are some reasons you continue to return?” is shown below in Figure 5.

As pictured below in Figure 5, 70 of the 394 (20%) responses showed that “The theme parks” are the top reason why consumers continue to return to Walt Disney World Resort, with “The atmosphere/surroundings” being the second-most important factor, receiving 70 of 394 (18%) responses.

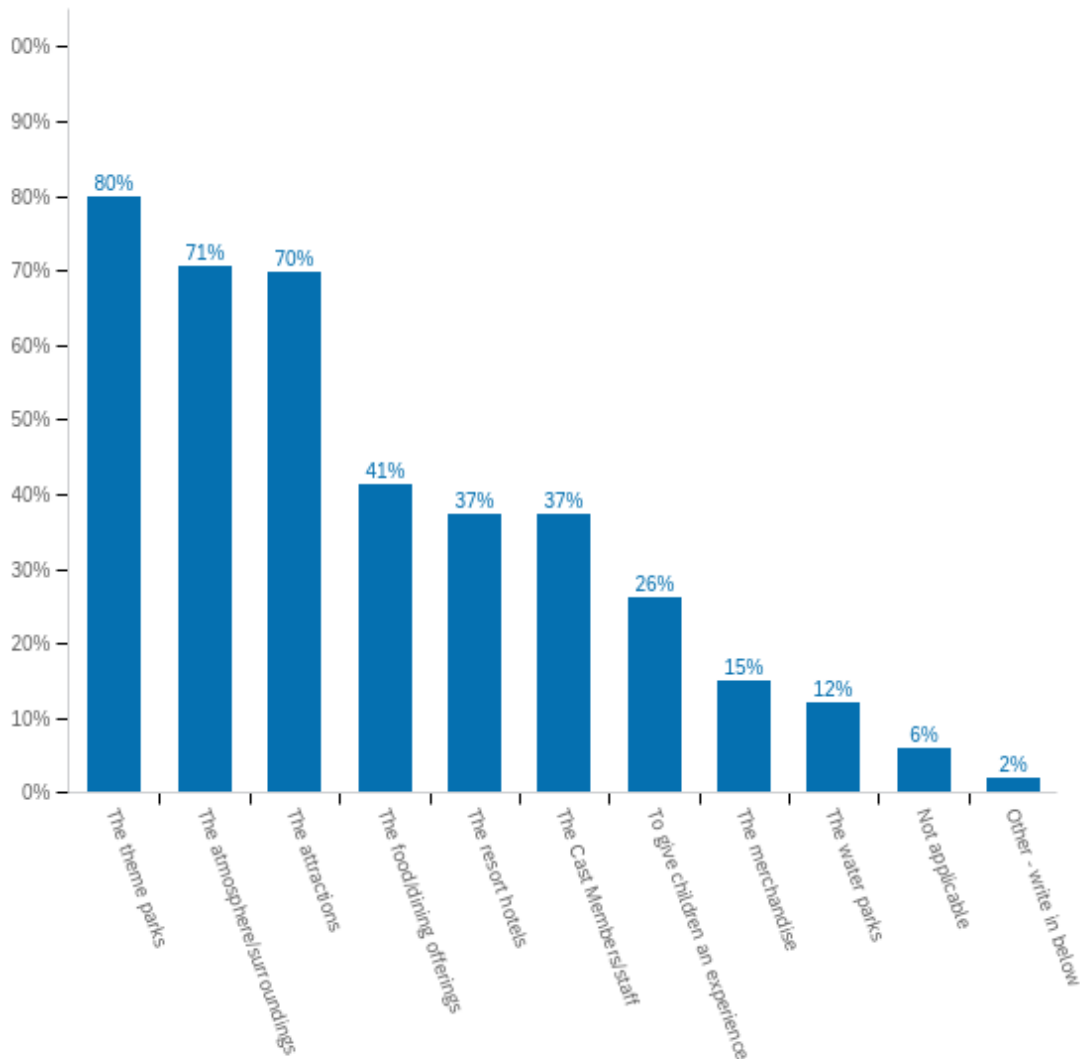


Figure 5: If you've been to Walt Disney World Resort more than once, what are some reasons you continue to return? (Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey, 2021).

The finding illustrated the frequency of which consumers feel the need to vacation, which is anywhere from one to three times per year. These findings correlated with the Walt Disney World Perceptions survey question “Which of the following theme parks have you ever visited?” presented in Figure 6 below.

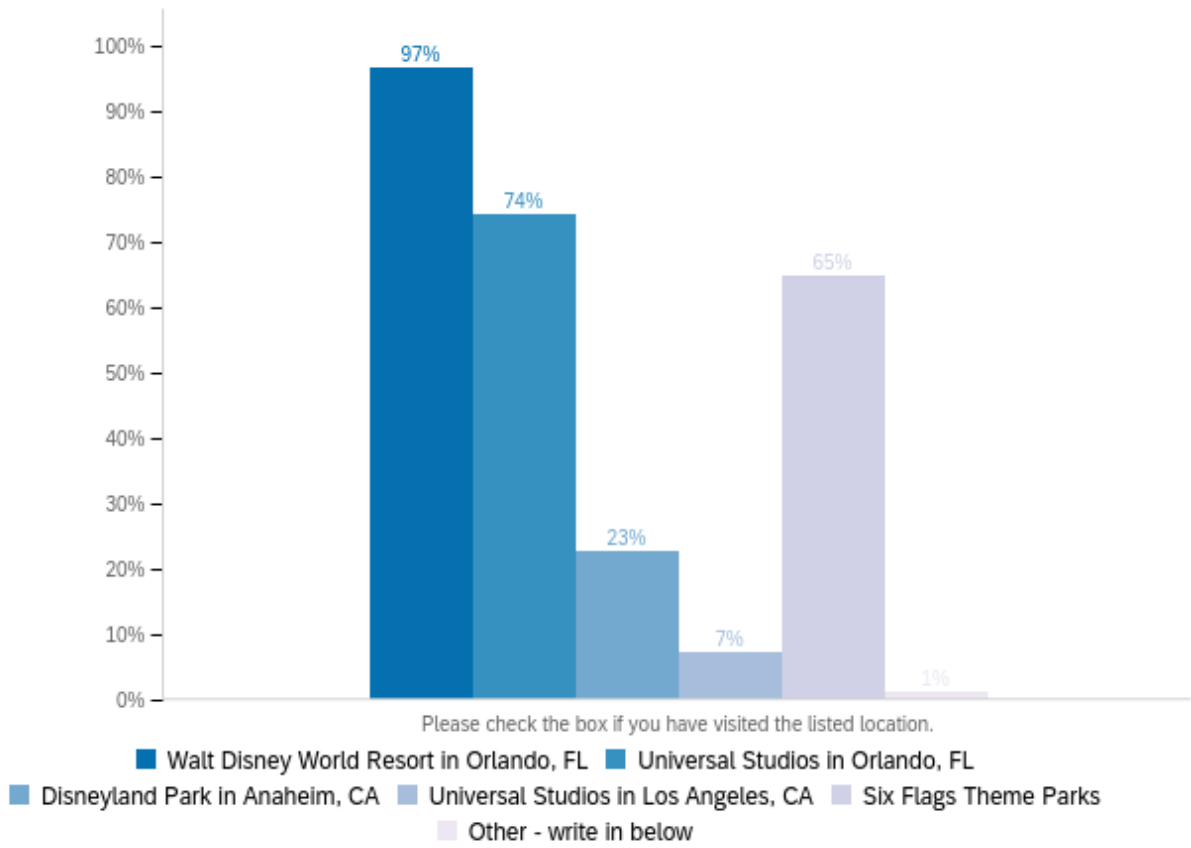


Figure 6: Which of the following theme parks have you ever visited? (Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey, 2021).

97% of consumers have visited Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, at least once in their lives, which reinforces the idea that the Disney brand embodies the notion that many who visit theme parks are looking for authentic experiences that transport them from their everyday lives to a place of entertainment and relaxation (Wang, 1999). The authenticity that the Disney Company achieves originates from the multisensory, multi-experiential space that its theme parks provide.

In conclusion, the Walt Disney World Perceptions survey revealed that the theme park consumer population is more frequent or well-versed with Walt Disney World Resort. This finding is consistent throughout the research and survey data.

Thus, using secondary and primary research, including the survey, the psychographics and motivations of this demographic and coveted target market were further deliberated.

Walt Disney World Resort Consumer/Fan Psychographics

The Walt Disney World Resort consumer varies in dedication and love for the brand. Most Disney consumers value the symbolic nature of the location of Walt Disney World Resort, which provides a setting for fans and consumers to exist through the narrative landscapes and interactive character meet-and-greets. Sandvoss (2005) states that “the themes of the theme park, for instance, are not the themes of the actual landscape but, as in the case of Disneyland, the themes of the virtual, symbolic spaces of entertainment media” (p. 59). Even those that are not specifically Disney fans are encompassed by thematic elements that create the feeling as if they have been transported if they allow themselves to give in to the environment surrounding them. This is the appeal of theme parks and one of their overall purposes; transportation (Lukas, 2008). “Fandom can be a place where the grownup rules are suspended, where we can stop pretending to be adults, and revel in the delightfulness of enchantment and mystery and fantasy” (Fraade-Blazer & Glazer, 2017, p. 154-155). These findings and research are reflected below in Figure 7, which explores the question “Why do you believe that adults visit Walt Disney World?”

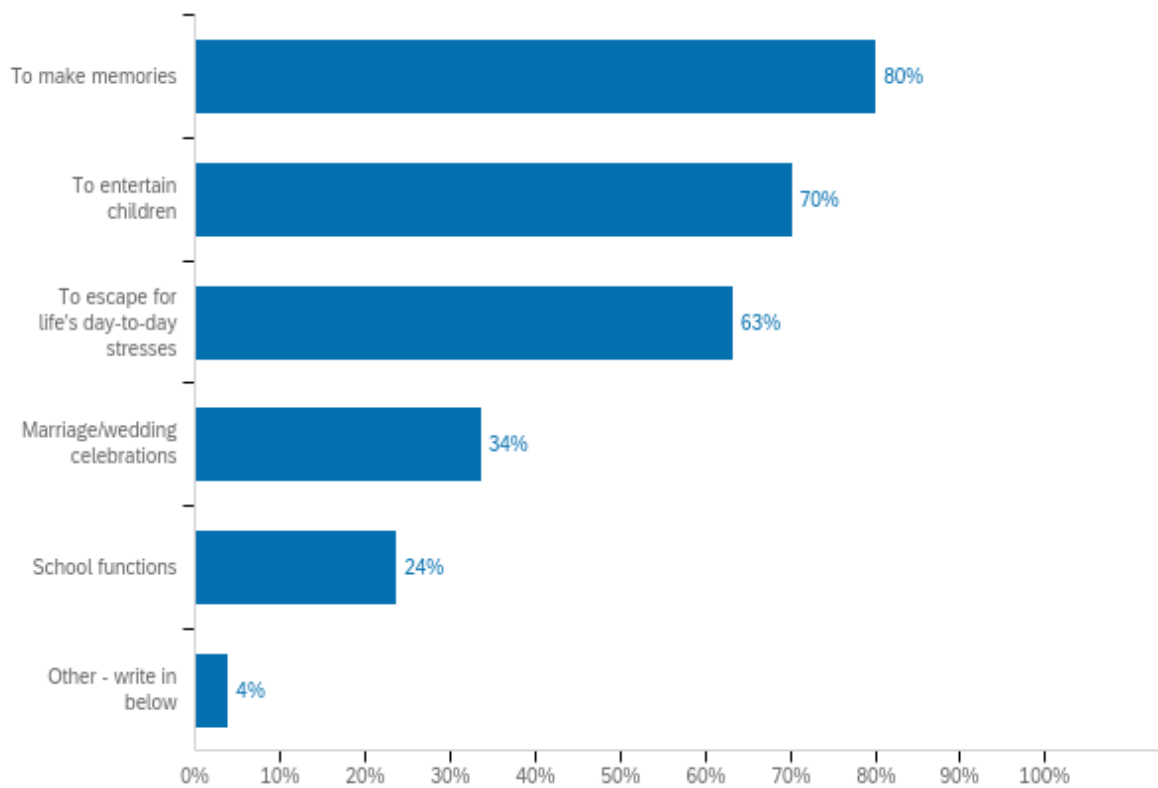


Figure 7: Why do you believe that adults visit Walt Disney World Resort? (Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey, 2021).

The most commonly believed reason that adults visit Walt Disney World Resort is “to make memories” (80%). As shown in Figure 7, the next highest reasons reported were “to entertain children” (70%) and “to escape for life’s day-to-day stresses” (63%). These findings correlate with the concept of the Disney fandom explained by Fraade-Blazer & Glazer.

Public spaces bring stories and narratives to life, such as Walt Disney World Resort, creating two scenarios for fans. They provide a place for imagination to become reality and a place for fans to come face-to-face with others that are looking for the same experience (Sandvoss, 2005). The theme parks are a type of platform for fans to not only physically interact with the narratives, but a location to show their fandom without judgment.

Walt Disney World Resort utilizes immersive storytelling with the sole intention to invite guests to enact their imaginations and become a piece of the culture they come to visit. With the wide variety of theme spaces, smells, sounds, and interactions with beloved characters, visitors are fully immersed in the space that surrounds them. For example, the lands that Walt Disney World Resort is divided into are distinguished from one another by color schemes, scents, architectural styles, shops, merchandise, background music, landscaping, landmarks, lingo, and Cast Member costuming. This, combined with the entertainment and overall ambiance of the theme parks creates a world where time does not exist as it does outside of them. Instead, guests are filled with nostalgia, dreams, and fantasy mindsets, which come together to provide a narrative escape for visitors. Walt Disney World Resort consumers visit the parks with the intention to see the characters from movies and television shows that they know and love. In Figure 8 below, the question “On a scale of 1 to 5, how knowledgeable are you of the Disney brand (movies, shows, merchandise, parks)?” was asked to further define the Walt Disney World Resort consumer psychographic.

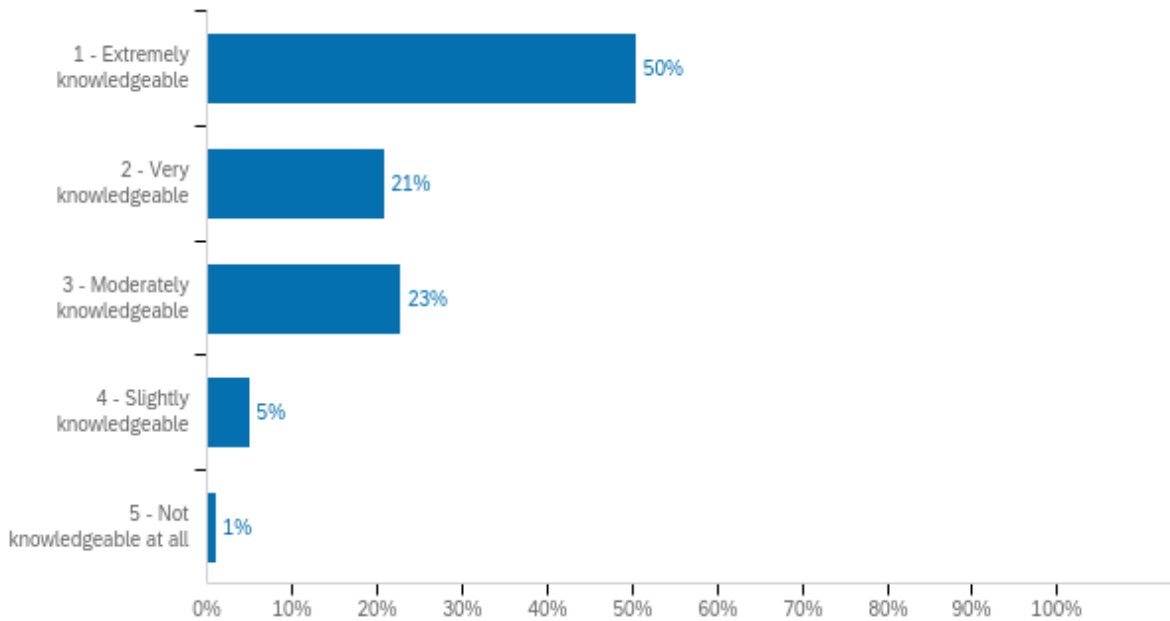


Figure 8: On a scale of 1 to 5, how knowledgeable are you of the Disney brand (movies, shows, merchandise, parks)? (Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey, 2021).

Half (50%) of respondents surveyed reported that they are “extremely knowledgeable” of the Disney brand, while only 1% of respondents reported that they were “not knowledgeable at all” of the Disney brand.

“The theme park can be defined as: A social artwork designed as a four-dimensional symbolic landscape, evoking impressions of places and times, real and imaginary” (King, p. 387-389). This is integrated marketing in the fullest sense due to its combination of brand loyalty and love created within all guests. The implementation of storytelling is vital to the Walt Disney World Resort experience. This includes making movie and television characters come to life through meet and greets or sightings in the parks, creating attractions that are identical to the movie which they are modeled after or using specific lingo or phrases within specific lands. The Walt Disney World Perceptions survey discovered how well consumers feel that the Walt Disney Company executes storytelling within its theme parks. This thought is supported by the Walt

Disney World Perceptions survey, as 81% of respondents reported that the Walt Disney Company executes storytelling in Walt Disney World Resort “extremely well” and only 1% of respondents reported that it executes storytelling “extremely poorly,” as seen below in Figure 9.

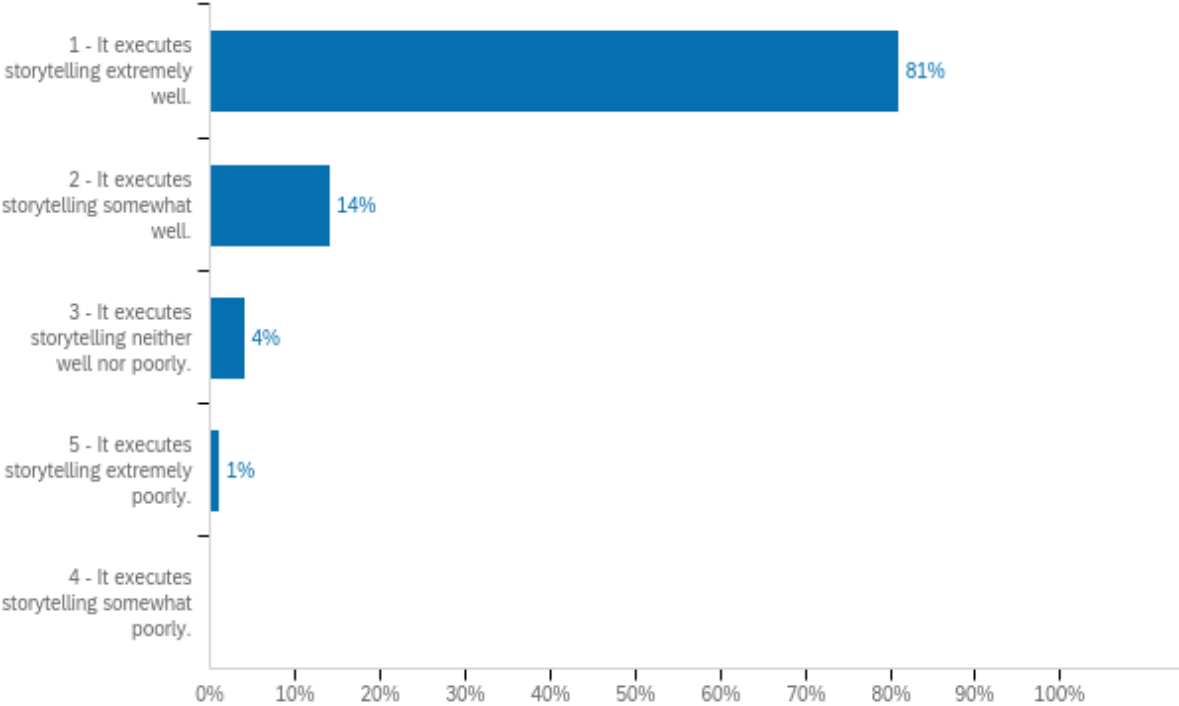


Figure 9: On a scale from 1 to 5, how well does the Disney Company execute storytelling in Walt Disney World Resort? (Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey, 2021).

The Walt Disney World Perceptions survey indicated a direct relationship between brand loyalty through effective storytelling in the theme parks and the likelihood of recommending Walt Disney World Resort as a place to vacation to peers. As seen in Figure 10 below, a combined total of 83 respondents reported that it is “extremely likely” (64%) or “somewhat likely” (18%) that they would recommend Walt Disney World Resort as a place to vacation to their peers, while only a combined total of 6 respondents are “somewhat unlikely” (2%) or “extremely unlikely” (4%) would do so.

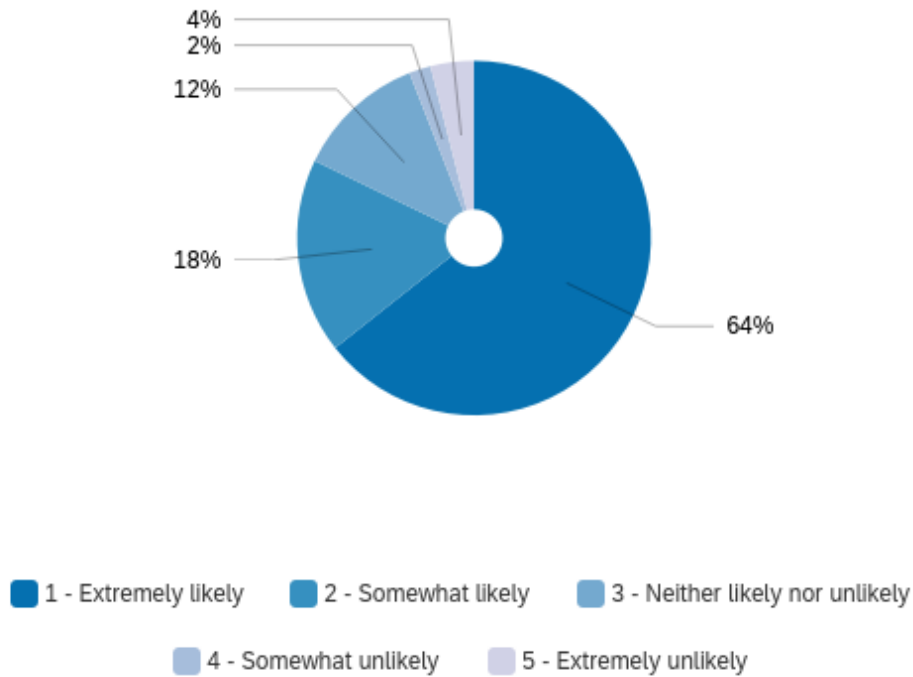


Figure 10: On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to recommend Walt Disney World Resort as a place to vacation to your peers? (Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey, 2021).

Presented in Figure 11 below, 46% of consumers reported that they are “extremely connected” to the Disney brand and 28% are “somewhat connected”. Together, $\frac{3}{4}$ of consumers interviewed reported some emotional connection to the Disney brand. This is a high percentage compared to other brands. In fact, only 6% said they are “not connected at all to the Disney brand” suggesting consumers surveyed have strong ties to the Disney brand.

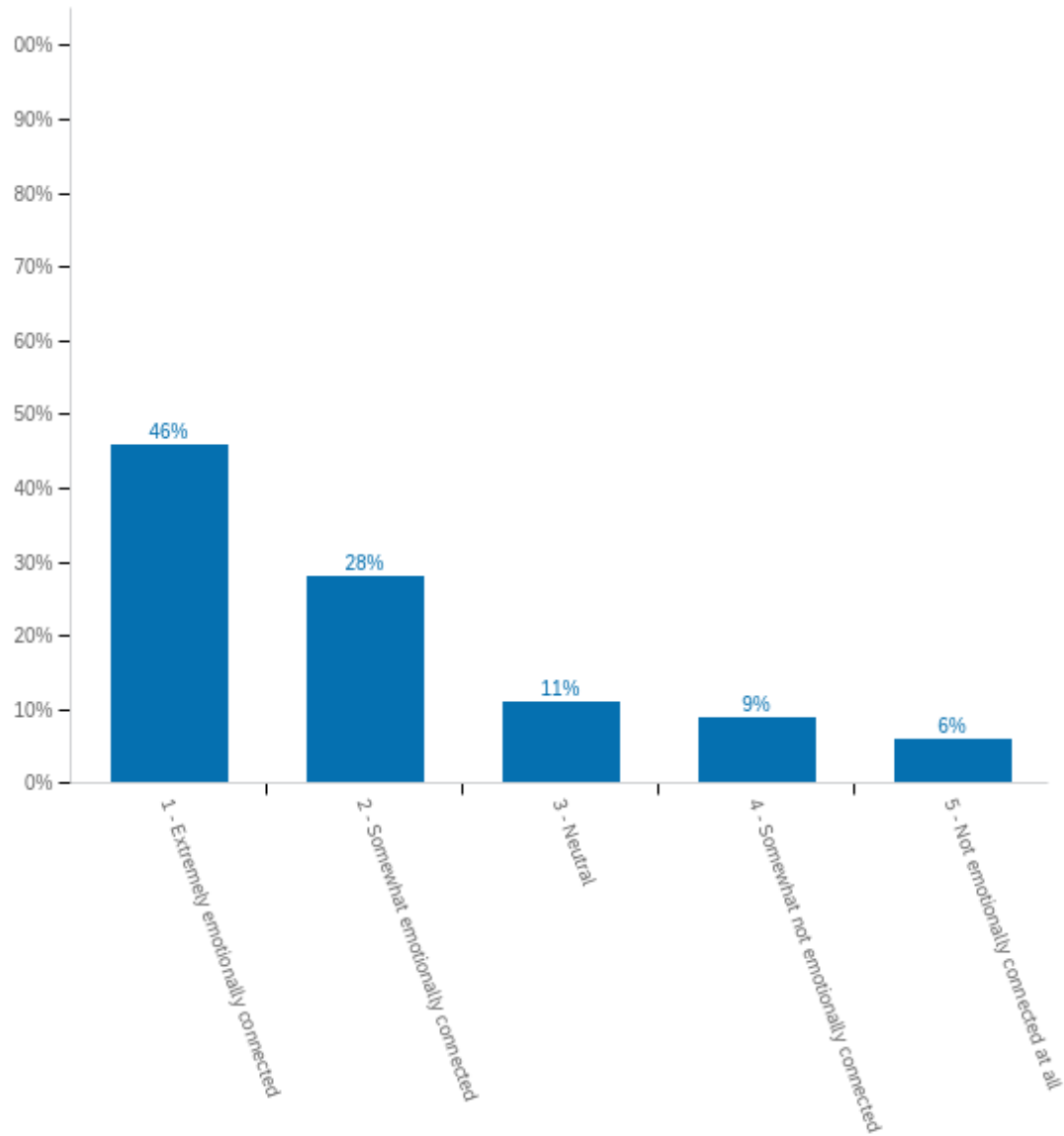


Figure 11: On a scale of 1 to 5, how emotionally connected are you to the Disney brand? (Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey, 2021).

CHAPTER 7: INTERVIEWS WITH CAST MEMBERS: DELIVERING THE DISNEY EXPERIENCE

Interviews were conducted with past and present Disney Cast Members to gather insights on what Cast Members believe sets working for Walt Disney World Resort apart from its competitors. Cast Members who agreed to participate in this study were asked about their specific role within the theme parks, their experiences in Traditions, the model for guest service for Cast Members, and their favorite part of being a Cast Member.

All interviews were conducted via Zoom and were recorded for analysis, and notes were dictated either during the interview or soon after to record emotions or body language. Through these interviews and interactions, I have the ability to examine each of my interview questions through the theoretical lens of symbolic interaction, culture capital, and the consumer/producer relationship through the eyes of the employees and their relationship with Walt Disney Company.

One of the first questions asked in interviews was, “In your opinion, what do you think sets working for Disney apart from other theme park/entertainment companies?” Although meant as a sort of ice breaker, this is where the majority of passion and appreciation for the Disney brand came in during the interview. For example. Aaron, a 25-year-old male employee who has been working for the company for nearly seven years, remarked on the difference between Universal Studios and Walt Disney World Resort:

Working for Disney is a lot different than working for Universal, I feel like. I have friends who work at Universal, and it just seems like it’s an entirely different environment. Disney focuses a lot of the values at work and the cleanliness of the entire place. At Universal, you’re just an employee. But at Disney, they’re a lot more detail-

oriented and really look at the small things to make a big difference with guests.

Especially now, Disney takes more time to ensure that the guests and Cast Members are happy. Other employees at other companies don't feel the same way...like their opinion is valued. (Aaron, personal communication, March 12, 2021)

This feeling of differences between the Walt Disney Company and its competitors, such as Universal Studios, was a common theme throughout the interviews. Like Aaron, many employees may choose to work for the Walt Disney Company as opposed to other theme park companies because they feel like they are a part of something and are not just another cog in the machine. An essential piece “at Disney is to provide highly intentional training for all incoming Cast Members,” explains Jones (2018). As previously mentioned, Cast Members are taught that their common purpose is to provide next-level service to guests so that they can continue the legacy of storytelling, which, in turn, reinforces brand love from consumers. In addition to the upkeep of the magic and storytelling within the parks, interviewed Cast Members also touched on the fact that the Walt Disney World theme parks are more immersive than its competitors. Sam, who has been with the Walt Disney Company for nearly two years, explained one of the key differences she finds between Disney and Universal Studios is the fact that the lands within the Disney parks are fully immersive, which reinforces the feeling of “another world” to consumers and furthers the connection to the brand and the feelings it evokes in consumers:

The entire experience of Disney is more immersive than Universal. The [Disney] company thinks of everything from how the ground looks to what it smells like. On the other hand, you can stand in Marvel and see Jurassic Park. One of the main ways that the Disney parks are created is so that you are fully in one land without seeing the theming of

another— I think that’s what one of the main differences is between the two.” (Sam, personal communication, March 15, 2021)

Many interviewees, such as Aaron and Sam, mentioned the stark differences in training and Cast Member lingo as opposed to other entertainment/theme park companies. Aaron, who is a front-line merchandise Cast Member in Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge, touched on the experiences Cast Members provided guests with so that they feel completely immersed in another world:

The theming in Galaxy’s Edge is top-level when it comes to the lingo, name tags, and all that. In Galaxy’s Edge, we’re trained to use the word ‘points’ instead of ‘dollars’, and our nametags are even in the Star Wars language. All of these things are, what I think, makes you feel like you’re in another world. (Aaron, personal communication, March 12, 2021)

In addition to these small differences in theming and storytelling within the theme parks as the main point to build brand love and loyalty, the Cast Members see themselves as integral pieces of the “story” and of bringing to life the characters that the guests come to see and interact with.

Sam explains her ideas on the impact that Cast Members have on guest experience:

Cast Members are part of the experience...People come back for Cast Members. We offer magic. The theming and storytelling is a huge part of Disney. It’s the reason guests keep coming back. (Sam, personal communication, March 15, 2021)

Marina, a 22-year-old female Cast Member, who worked for the Walt Disney Company for nearly two years explains the impact that the course had on her idealisms as a Cast Member:

I think it’s just the storytelling, that’s what they’re known for. And, their caliber of the Cast Members that they have, I think their training is really important and they really emphasize being really courteous to all the guests. And, the Four Keys just really take it

above and beyond. So, I think it's a mixture of the Cast Members and the storytelling.
(Marina, personal communication, March 8, 2021)

After asking questions about the differences between Walt Disney World Resort and its competitors, I transitioned to asking questions pertaining to the training and guest service that Cast Members are taught to uphold throughout their time as a Cast Member. These questions concerned the Traditions course and the "Four Keys" that are taught within the course and during Cast Member training. Some of the most insightful answers were from the question asking, "What is the model for guest service for Cast Members?" This question revealed a variety of answers, all involving the guest and that their experience and satisfaction come first in all scenarios. Olivia, a 22-year-old female Cast Member who worked for the Walt Disney Company for a year, explains the main points that make Walt Disney World one of the premier theme park destinations:

Disney's really strict about the quality of customer service. Everything is set at a higher standard than it would be at any other place-- with how you talk to guests and how you present yourself. There was a lot of focus on what the dos and don't were working for the [Walt Disney] company. I loved the idea that I was working for such an impactful and well-known company that I've wanted to work for since I was eight years old, which gave me a lot of motivation and inspiration to be the best Cast Member possible for guests. (Olivia, March 18, 2021)

The Traditions course, as previously mentioned, provides a large foundation of what is expected of each incoming Cast Member. The class had a large impact on the interviewed Cast Members and their realization of expectations as an employee for the Disney Company. When it comes to the guest experience and the model for guest service itself, a lot of Cast Members touched on the

fact that the guest is the main priority. Jane, a 23-year-old female Cast Member, who worked for the Walt Disney Company for approximately eight months, explains how important guest interactions were to upkeep the immersiveness of the stories the guests were experiencing:

I always remember learning how important it was to be understanding of the guests and what they're going through. You always wanted to be a reason their vacation went for the better and a reason that they wanted to come back. It was really important to be polite and make the situation about them since they're paying the money to come [to Disney World]. (Jane, personal communication, March 11, 2021)

A completely unique feature to working for Walt Disney World Resort was the class where the Cast Members learn the importance of show and magic in their everyday work. Marina explains the impact that Traditions had on her as an incoming Cast Member:

Of course, it [Traditions] was really exciting because everyone always talks about it. But, it definitely gave me knowledge about what the company wants from me, and then, what they expect from me and how I can provide that to them. It was also special because, you know, Mickey would show up. So, it was a little bit better than a regular company meeting or learning experience. (Marina, personal communication, March 8, 2021)

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Being a previous Cast Member of Walt Disney World for nearly two years, I have experienced firsthand the commitment and dedication to the guest experience that cast members feel. It was awe-inspiring and humbling to have the opportunity to work “behind the scenes” to create countless memories for countless families.

From day one of my Traditions class, I was trained on the previously mentioned “Disney’s Four Key Basics.” The Four Keys helped me process every decision I made as a Cast Member. The entire course of Traditions was designed to help Cast Members like myself recognize and appreciate the connections they have to the Disney story, as well as “the daily impact [they] can have on the quality of the Disney show and the role [they] can play in our company’s growth and success” (*Disney Internships & Programs Program Guide (Walt Disney World Resort)*, n.d.). Each of the keys mentioned throughout the class helped us as Cast Members realize how impactful they were on how the Disney theme parks run daily. This, in turn, inspired me to follow Walt’s wishes of the keys’ implementation and make him and the prestigious company proud.

From my personal experience in this class as well as my experience as a Cast Member in general, I can reaffirm that this class inspires employees who take it. I cannot imagine any other company that would take the time to inspire and teach every employee that has a job in its company to the extent that Disney does. From my first day, I felt inspired to create happiness and next-level guest experiences. To really take everyone’s efforts to the next level, leaders, coordinators, duty managers, land proprietors, and all Cast Members were encouraged to give out digital “Grape Sodas” as a reward. These were a way to pat your coworker on the back, so to speak, and encourage an overall supportive workplace. “Disney uses an approach, coined the

loyalty profit chain, which is adapted from the Harvard Business Review's service profit chain. The idea is that everyone must exemplify internal service quality. When cast members are happy and satisfied with their work, they are more productive and better at their job which leads to excellent guest service” (James, 2013). This method is one of the reasons why the brand is so successful at creating lasting customer interactions and impressions.

To the Disney brand, looking at each interaction and experience that a guest has with a Cast Member is seen as an opportunity to increase brand connections and awareness. Disney has labeled the more important of these occasions as “magic moments” or “creating magic.” From a personal standpoint, I was often encouraged to create these magic moments for families and, specifically, children. Whether that be handing out themed stickers or feeling extra magical that day and letting a child have a free bubble wand. Also, a larger, more specific example is when a guest was limping in pain from her shoe choice that day. Seeing her in pain, my supervisor suggested I offer her a pair of complimentary flip-flops “on Mickey,” which is a phrase we frequently use to continue the presentation of Disney magic. Although it took a great deal of effort on my end to locate her specific size in the shoes from another merchandise location, the guest’s satisfaction and happiness were the only concern at the moment. Jones explains that “Disney’s success in customer service and building loyalty is more than magic; it’s grounded in time-tested business practices refined over many years” (Jones, 2013). Working for a company with such a profound legacy makes us Cast Members proud and awed almost every day at work. All of this inspiration and legacy instilled within us is what sets the company and its employees apart from others.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

After analyzing the literature as well as the primary research conducted for this thesis, the researcher concluded that the data supported the hypothesis. Walt Disney World Resort successfully creates, maintains, and builds unparalleled consumer engagement through integrated experiences. The theming and storytelling in the Walt Disney World Resort theme parks greatly impacts and reinforces consumer behavior, loyalty, and brand love. The experiences are delivered through highly engaged Cast Member. Most importantly, the results demonstrate a direct relationship with theme park storytelling and immersiveness and brand love and consumer loyalty.

In conclusion, creating experiences and products based on movies, shows, and character through the one-two approach that the Walt Disney Company utilizes is immensely effective in creating fans and brand love. Integrated marketing through the use of immersive storytelling and creating a product then experience is an effective way for a brand to gain a level of fandom and brand loyalty that the Walt Disney Company has acquired.

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APPENDIX A

Walt Disney World Perceptions Survey

The researcher created a 31-question survey titled, “Walt Disney World Perceptions.” The survey was intended for all generations of persons above the age of 18 and asked general questions regarding individuals’ thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of Walt Disney World Resort.

The survey opened March 8, 2021 and received 123 responses before closing on March 28, 2021. It was distributed via Facebook and Instagram posts. No incentives were offered, but the researchers encouraged responses by providing these explanations of the survey link, “Hi, everyone! I’m completing a thesis on the perceptions of Walt Disney World Resort for the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at Ole Miss. I would really appreciate it if you would take this survey for my research— it only takes about 7 minutes, and I need as many responses as I can get! Feel free to share this post— thanks!” via Facebook and “hi ! I’m doing my SMBHC thesis on the perceptions of walt disney world + would love if you did the survey in my bio ! it only takes about 7 minutes 😊” via Instagram.

The response rate on Facebook, Instagram , and LinkedIn was very low, as the researcher did have 597 friends on Facebook, 1,991 followers on Instagram, and 125 connections on LinkedIn. However, the response rate for all mediums combined generated an estimated ___ response rate.

Out of the 102 respondents that completed the survey, 105 of the 102 fit the age range, 18-24 and 3 of 102 fit the age range, 33-54 and 2 of 102 fit the age range, 55-84. The majority (83%) of respondents were females residing in the southeast. The next

1. How old are you?

- 18-24
- 25-32
- 33-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 or older
- Prefer not to answer

2. What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Other - write in below
- Prefer not to answer

3. Which best describes you?

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

- Other - write in below
- Prefer not to answer

4. What is your marital status?

- Single, never married
- In a relationship
- Married or domestic partner
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Other - write in below
- Prefer not to answer

5. How many children do you have?

- Zero
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four or more
- Prefer not to answer
- Not applicable

6. How old are your child(ren)? (Check all that apply.)

- 0-2

- 3-5
- 6-8
- 9-11
- 12-15
- 16-17
- 18+
- Prefer not to answer
- Not applicable

7. In what part of the country do you currently live?

- Northeast
- Southeast
- Midwest
- Southwest
- West Coast
- Northwest
- Other - write in below
- Prefer not to answer

8. Which of the following best describes you?

- Employed full-time for wages
- Employed part-time
- Self-employed

- A homemaker
- Student
- Military
- Retired
- Unable to work
- Other - write in below
- Prefer not to answer

9. Approximately what is your annual household income?

- Less than \$50,000 per year
- \$51,000 - \$75,000 per year
- \$76,000 - \$100,000 per year
- \$101,000 - \$150,000 per year
- \$151,000 - \$200,000 per year
- \$201,000 - \$300,000 per year
- Over \$300,000 per year
- Prefer not to answer

10. How often do you take vacations?

- Every few years
- Every other year
- 1-3 times per year
- Other - write in below

11. Which of the following theme parks have you ever visited? (Check all that apply.)

Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL

Universal Studios in Orlando, FL

Disneyland Park in Anaheim, CA

Universal Studios in Los Angeles, CA

Six Flags Theme Parks

Other - write in below

12. Which of the following theme parks would you describe as your favorite?

Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL

Universal Studios in Orlando, FL

Disneyland Park in Anaheim, CA

Universal Studios in Los Angeles, CA

Six Flags Theme Parks

Other - write in below

13. In your lifetime, how often have you visited Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL?

0 times

1-3 times

4-6 times

7-10 times

10+ times

14. How often have you visited Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL in the last 5 years?

- 0 times
- 1-3 times
- 4-6 times
- 7-10 times
- 10+ times

15. When was the last time you visited Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL?

- March 2020 - the present (during COVID-19)
- January 2019 - February 2020
- January 2018 - December 2018
- January 2017 - December 2017
- Before January 2017
- Not applicable

16. Based upon your most recent visit, rate your satisfaction with your experience in the Disney theme parks from 1 to 5, with 1 being extremely satisfied and 5 being extremely dissatisfied.

- 1 - Extremely satisfied
- 2 - Somewhat satisfied
- 3 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 4 - Somewhat dissatisfied
- 5 - Extremely dissatisfied

- Not applicable

17. Based upon your most recent visit, where did you stay?

- A Walt Disney World Resort hotel property
- A nearby hotel
- A timeshare
- With friends/family
- Other - write in below
- Not applicable

18. When thinking of Walt Disney World Resort, what are some of the words or emotions that come to mind? (Check all that apply.)

- Magic
- Fun
- Family
- Vacation
- Perfect
- Hassle
- Expensive
- Pointless
- Other - write in below

19. What are some of the occasions you have visited or would visit Walt Disney World Resort?

- Special occasion - wedding, birthday, anniversary
- Family vacation
- Spring/Christmas/Summer break
- Event
- Competition
- Business
- Other - write in below

22. What age did you first visit Walt Disney World Resort?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21+
- Not applicable

20. If you've been to Walt Disney World Resort more than once, what are some reasons you continue to return? (Check all that apply.)

- The food/dining offerings
- The attractions
- The resort hotels
- The theme parks
- The water parks

- The merchandise
- The atmosphere/surroundings
- The Cast Members/staff
- To give children an experience
- Other - write in below
- Not applicable

21. What ages do you think Walt Disney World Resort is primarily for?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21+
- I do not associate age with Walt Disney World Resort.

23. On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to recommend Walt Disney World Resort as a place to vacation to your peers?

- 1 - Extremely likely
- 2 - Somewhat likely
- 3 - Neither likely nor unlikely
- 4 - Somewhat unlikely
- 5 - Extremely unlikely

24. On a scale from 1 to 5, how well does the Disney Company execute storytelling in Walt Disney World Resort?

- 1 - It executes storytelling extremely well.
- 2 - It executes storytelling somewhat well.
- 3 - It executes storytelling neither well nor poorly.
- 4 - It executes storytelling somewhat poorly.
- 5 - It executes storytelling extremely poorly.

25. Do you make time to do school/business work when at Walt Disney World Resort?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable

26. Why do you believe that adults visit Walt Disney World Resort? (Check all that apply.)

- To escape for life's day-to-day stresses
- To make memories
- To entertain children
- Marriage/wedding celebrations
- School functions
- Other - write in below

27. When thinking about COVID-19 and Walt Disney World Resort,

- It's safe.

- It's an escape - like another world.
- It's risky, but worth it.
- It's like any other place.
- I'll wait for COVID-19 to be under control before visiting.
- Other - write in below

28. How would you compare the Walt Disney World Resort experience to Universal Studios?

- Better
- Same
- Less
- Other - write in below
- Not applicable

29. If you prefer to visit Universal Studios as opposed to Walt Disney World Resort, what are/is some reasons you do so?

- Customer service
- Better food/dining offerings
- Attractions (roller coasters, thrill rides)
- Themed rides ("other world"/themed environment attractions)
- Immersive experiences
- Cost/prices
- Other - write in below
- Not applicable

30. On a scale of 1 to 5, how knowledgeable are you of the Disney brand (movies, shows, merchandise, parks)?

- 1 - Extremely knowledgeable
- 2 - Very knowledgeable
- 3 - Moderately knowledgeable
- 4 - Slightly knowledgeable
- 5 - Not knowledgeable at all

31. On a scale of 1 to 5, how emotionally connected are you to the Disney brand?

- 1 - Extremely emotionally connected
- 2 - Somewhat emotionally connected
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Somewhat not emotionally connected
- 5 - Not emotionally connected at all

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS WITH WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT

CAST MEMBERS

1. Can you tell me when you decided to join the Disney Company and why?
2. What is your job within the company?
3. In your opinion, what do you think sets working for Disney as opposed to other theme park/entertainment companies?
4. What makes Disney theme parks different from its competitors?
5. How did Traditions impact you when you first started with the company?
6. What is your favorite part about being a Cast Member?
7. What is the model for guest service for Cast Members?
8. What is the most important key of the “Four Keys” to you?
9. When is a time that you went above and beyond for a guest?