

# Disney Shanghai Park: A Cultural and Psychographic Assessment

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## Abstract

Amusement parks occurred in Europe and North American as early as in 19 century (Clave and Clarke, 2007). Theme park in China is relatively new. Not until 1989, first attraction development, the Splendid China, was established in Shenzhen (Ap, 2008). However, witnessed the rapid economic development in China in the past decades, Chinese consumers rapidly and significantly raised their leisure expenditure, one of key growth area is to attend theme park (Martin, et al., 2018). The theme park collects recreational entertainment, leisure activities, and seeking excitement into one entity, often preferred by visitors as one stop vacation-taking place. More important, theme park is often a center for cultural manifestation, responsiveness, and appreciation, and these attributes are often associated with the place where it is built. The purpose of this manuscript was to understand the cultural and psychological demands for the Disney Shanghai Park in China. A Triangulation method of Critical Analysis, Word Cloud, and Thematic Content Analysis was used. Two data points were analyzed: Hotel Comments and Park Remarks. The common thread through the Shanghai data was group processes and decisions that relate to the development of the group.

**Keywords:** Theme Park, Hotel Evaluation, Culture, TripAdvisor, Word Cloud

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## Introduction

The China today is a country inherited a rich history of more than five-thousand years. The China has the largest world's population on the earth (about 1.4 billion) and the country's population is great diversified in term of their leisure interests and pursuits. The heavy population is distributed among various geographic regions that makes it difficulty in being able to design effective programs. Every regions has its local cultural basis, which is, reflected in the food, leisure pursuits, beliefs, and desires (Kwon, 2012; Zhang, et al 2019). Today, the way this ancient culture has adapted to new social trends adds to the complexity (Martinstaff, 2015; Wang, et al., 2019). China has an ancient culture and it is mirrored on Chinese leisure consumption and participation. Additional to this cultural influence is the adapting to new technology, while holding on to the traditional mores, especially those of a particular region (Chancellor, et al., 2011). There is no doubt that China is in the process of change and is at a crossroads looking back and reaching forward to keep up with the constant progress of new technologies.

It is important to understand what factors influence the decision-making by Chinese in relation to a specific attraction/activity. This will help in the future development and planning to increase the quality of forthcoming leisure event and activities (Flannery, 2015; Jin-Hyung, et al., 2002; Wu, et al., 2017A; Wu, et al., 2017B). This does not suggest that the current process is flawed, only that the population is changing and different factors are influencing their decision in today's society. Planning, in this context, depends upon realizing that there are differences by attractions/activities (Elmwood, 2011; Flannery, 2015; Kang, 2016). Many times, leisure pursuits are perceived in terms of a collection of diverse attractions/activities. In order to be effective, each attraction/activity must be examined to determine a population's beliefs and values (Jin-Hyung, et al., 2002). It must also be realized that demand for an attraction/activity change through time. These demand curves reflect an attraction/activity's popularity (Fronzetti, et al., 2019). It is essential to not only understand the level of

popularity but what influences the change in this popularity in relation to cause and effect (Manhas, et al., 2016). Many times demand curves only reflect attractiveness and do not examine causes or influences. Often the symptoms of an attraction/activity and its influence upon society are examined in a cursory framework. The cause of the change must be examined and not necessarily the symptoms and their influence upon society. An example of this type of approach is that certain activities during the Olympics receive extensive television coverage and the popularity of that activity increases proportionately. It eventually wanes until the next Olympic. The cause of change is directly influenced by the media and its coverage as well as the star athletes and their image related to success.

The purpose of this manuscript is to examine a popular attraction/activity in Chinese society. The primary focus of this study was the Disney Theme Park in Shanghai. What is immediately recognized is that the geographic locations have a significant influence upon the attraction and the attraction-related activity. It is important to understand the geographic location, as well as the values and beliefs of the individual participating. It is equally important to understand this research is to keep in the mind that the Disney Park is primarily a family destination.

### **Background of Shanghai Disney Park**

The primary characteristic of Shanghai/Disney area has a perspective related to the past, but has a progressive trendy approach to the future. Disney is in the development of fantasy, romance, and adventure, and the elaboration of new stories for a new cultural perspective. This does not suggest that the Shanghai is not modernizing or branching out to add the new approach to the entertainment product, but it still has a strong relation to the cultural past. The historical perspective has limited the new approaches to other areas of china, but Shanghai has an innovative perspective of building on a new cultural base.

The review of the historical perspective of Shanghai did not include the entire history because we are only interested in the recent development of Disney. It is important to realize that the cultural aspect of Shanghai is the most important elements to understand. A brief history of critical aspects was reviewed because these are the more important influences in regard to Disney's development. The primary focus is on individuals who attend Disney as a destination. Therefore, the primary hotels reviewed were those that were in proximity to the Disney attraction. It must be further emphasized that the primary audience is one related to families.

Shanghai in relation to the Asian communities is one of the world cities that compares with such places as New York, London, Paris, Berlin. It is a community that is very high-tech and trendy. Fashion and innovation are elements that are highly prized in the culture. The culture is reflective of youth. The primary focus of the youth is motivation for advancement and money. Entrepreneurship is a hallmark of the culture.

Since the reform in the 90s, Shanghai has become one of the centers of commerce and business. This is led to prosperity in the area with unprecedented growth and development. It is located at the mouth of the Yangtze River and is a deep water port in the southern part of China. Its location has always brought it prosperity, but with the economic growth of China it has become a center of commerce and business. Shanghai is a very popular tourist destination because it's historical landmarks and culture. It is a city that has maintained its charm and yet is one of the most modern cities in the world. It is one of the largest cities in the world and has a high density population. It is one of the four districts in China directly control by the government.

Qinglong Zhen, the "Garrison of the Green Dragon", was the first garrison in this area, and was founded in 746 during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) in what is now the Qingpu District of Shanghai. There were over 105,000 foreigners registered in 2009. The Japanese, the Americans, and Koreans were the most foreign nationals residing in Shanghai. Shanghai is the largest city in China with a population of 25 million. It is the fastest growing region in China. Shanghai has a dual party system, like every other city in China.

The first country to colonize China was Great Britain. It was under the terms of Treaty of Nanking and Treaty of Whampoa that allowed for international influence in settlement of the area. This was just the first of many countries to colonize and exploit the Shanghai region. Because of its location and the international settlements, it became an entry point and market place for the rest of China. During the first part of the Peoples Republic era, there was a period of dormancy based upon the limited contact between China and the rest of the world. The reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping allowed for the redevelopment of the area. Shanghai has more European architecture than any other city in China because the colonial period was most prevalent in this area. As a result, residents of Shanghai often consider themselves more sophisticated and a closer link to European communities.

Shanghai Disney is a joint venture of The Walt Disney Company and Shendi. The Disney Company has 43% interest and Shendi 57 percent interest. The park opened June 16, 2016. The initial attendance was 5.6 million. It is located in the Pudgon area which has many family attractions.

The Park currently has seven themed areas: Mickey Avenue, Gardens of Imagination, Fantasyland, Treasure Cove, Adventure Isle, Tomorrowland, and Toy Story Land. An eighth themed area will be added named Disney's Zootopia. The construction of the park had several delays and significant overruns in costs.

There were also infrastructural costs on hotel, high-speed rail, etc. Revenues have to be balanced against the developmental costs of the new Park. The return on investment may not be seen for a number of years because it takes time to recapture costs. Currently, it is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest attraction in Asia. The growth rate is 4%.

The philosophy of the Disney development was a blending of the fantasy, romance, and adventure of Disney and the blending of the Chinese culture. The basis of the Park is the development of stories related to Disney movies and the development of stories about the Chinese culture. The idea is to blend these two cultures into one. The basis of the Chinese culture is centered on storytelling of the past as it relates to present interpretation of experiences. Teams of cultural specialist were hired to design and blend these two philosophical elements. The primary philosophy guiding the design team was cultural sensitivity and the rebranding of some of the Disney images. They are still working and redesigning to come up with a successful design to meet the Chinese audiences, especially families. The idea is to build memories and develop a new culture around the experiences.

There are several entertainment parks and zones in the Disney location: Happy Valley of Shanghai, Shanghai Renmin Park, Thames Town, Changfeng Park, Shanghai Chedun Film Park, Jinjiang Amusement Park, Changfeng Ocean World, and Great World (Da Shi Jie). The primary theme of most these parks are water-based. The unique position of the Disney Park is its themes and cultural base stories.

Shanghai Disney is primarily a family area. The common dimension is the cultural aspect and how it is being interpreted into today's activities. The primary focus is trying to understand the decisions that are made in regard to a specific type of attraction/activity that will help us better comprehend the demand curves and the influences.

## Methods

Triangulation was used in this study to provide depth of understanding and data from different perspectives. Analysis included Historical Critical Incident, Word Cloud (R), and Thematic Content Analysis.

The following data bases were reviewed to try to determine the best source of information: Booking.com, Kayak, Priceline, Hotels.com, Hotels Combined, Expedia, Agoda, TripAdvisor, Trivago, and Google (Hsu, et al., 2012; Mayzlin, 2014). TripAdvisor was the secondary database that was chosen for this study.

The Critical Incident method identified significant or important elements that have influenced the development of recent Disney related events in Shanghai (Butterfield, et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954; Mahrt and Scharkow, 2013). Basic sources were reviewed and critical Incidents were identified, based upon three content experts review. The reviews were events and elements that influenced Disney development and popularity. The events detected were common to more than two sources.

In terms of the Word Cloud, it was used to identify the frequency of important words in regard to hotels in the area (Data Point 1) as well as comments about the Park (Data Point 2) (Berson and Berson, 2009; Joseph, et al., 2017). Data was reviewed from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018. The hotel comments provided insight into the individuals and their personal choices about the nature of the destinations and the remarks about the Park about the experience. Therefore, it helps to understand the cultural and psychological decision process and what conditional factors influence these choices (Banerjee and Chua, 2016). The hotel information can be subdivided by audience type, visitor location of origin, etc. The hotel information can be subdivided by audience type, visitor location of origin, etc. The Word Cloud procedure identified the relationships among words. The first Word Cloud matrix was used, even if the primary words were in the mix. This provided pure data bases for interpretation because once words are eliminated different understandings are possible through manipulation.

The Thematic Content Analysis identified word relations and themes (Donada and Nogatchewsky, 2009; Gonzalez, et al., 2011; Myong, et al., 2005; Kim and Jeong, 2015; Tetteh and Burn, 2001). There were three content experts used in the review process Data Points 1 and 2. This was a system of judgment based upon 100% agreement among the judges. Once these elements had been established, the content experts recommended a framework to help better understand the information isolated.

## Data Perspective

This is a companion manuscript of three other data sets about community comparisons. The similar methodology was used in each of the studies, but slightly modified based upon the experience with the previous study. A Triangulation methodology was employed as in the previous studies. Content experts were used in each of the studies to review and evaluation the data. A Thurstone Scaling system (Method of paired comparisons) of judgment was used. Critical Incident Historical Method, Word Cloud (R Method), and Thematic Content Analysis were the approaches used (Lee et al., 2014). These processes were revised from the previous studies. In the Critical Historical Incident, only events related to Disney Shanghai were reviewed other than the historical context of culture (Teeth and Burn, 2001). The primary emphasis of the review was on factors that influence the elements related to Disney's development and associated factors. The main focus was to understand of demand changes and its causes. The Word Cloud was used to identify significant word patterns. These word patterns

helped focus on the issues from the previous investigation (Joseph et al, 2017). The Thematic Content Analysis was employed to isolate the relationships among words to develop themes, based upon the two previous analyses (Myong et al., 2005). The Thematic Analysis was modified from the previous study by having the judges agreeing 100% on issues as well as the causes. This new approach helped eliminate some of the issues because they had no causal relationship or influence to the theoretical model. The emphasis of the analysis was to help understand the decision processes and the how's and why's of what attracts the individual to these areas. The key is understanding the demand for this single attraction and what influences it based upon cause. Again, the important elements in this study are not economic based but the cultural and psychological factors. The revenues and economic base is already well understood and easily obtain data (Donada and Nogatchewsky, 2009; Van Laer and Izberk-Bilgin, 2019). It is difficult to obtain a cultural and/or a psychographic perspective from current data sources. Data is extremely difficult to obtain about individuals' decision-making processes. In terms of tourism, one of the approaches is to understand the nature of a common decision. The most common decisions, in either of these communities, are food, lodging, attractions, etc. Thus, lodging is first data point. The second data source is the attraction/activity and individuals comments about the nature of their experience.

This study used the qualitative approaches outlined above. The reason this approach was used is that it provides a depth of understanding that surpasses quantitative numbers (Lee, et al, 2014; Liang, et al, 2019; Shahrokh, et al., 2017). The use of a narrative qualitative approach allows for the understanding of reasons why certain decisions are made and helps complete the stages and cycles of an individual's thought (Foroudi, et al., 2016; Murphy and Boyle, 2006). Even with this additional information, it is difficult to determine cause. Additional research is needed to verify the results and to test the model that is developed (Liu, et al., 2017; Parvazi and Goudarzi, 2013). The combination of these methods will give a different perspective. This will help acquire absolutes in regard to different position statements.

Even though hotel data in general is the best source to study traveler's experience, many of these are contaminated because of the way the information is collected and the popular use of incentives. Thus, secondary data that allows for comparisons is the preeminent source. Of the secondary data sources, TripAdvisor has the best reputation (Law, 2006; Vásquez, 2011) and it also provides information on the attraction/activity. These two data sources will provide a comprehensive approach to understanding cultural and psychological basis of decisions. TripAdvisor also provides a wide geographic information base and also has the ability to be segmented by audience types, based upon demographic characteristics (Ayeh, et al., 2013). The system is more comprehensive than any of the other secondary data sources. Hotel information from TripAdvisor gives the best data in regard to reflective influences in terms of decisions from a diversity of respondents. This is a good data source with Disney because most of the attendees are using the hotels in and around the park. There are limitations to this type of data: questions about representativeness, respondent non-respondent, information about those that respond in terms of motivation, concern about marketing comments from hotels, and respondents who are trying to make the inflammatory comments (Vásquez, 2011). These issues must be addressed to improve the quality of the data. The data was screened to review comments that address these issues.

#### *Hotels - First Data Point*

Data collected from hotels is relatively reliable sources in regard to decision made for their visiting experience within a destination. This type of data provides a micro assessment. Some of the elements that define a property are the price, amenities and services. These are attribute that often explain why people make decisions (Choo and Tan, 2017; Elmwood, 2011; Xie et al., 2016). Popularity, satisfaction, and success are outcomes influenced by these factors. These elements also give an indication about what is important to different audience types. Decisions about hotels reflect personal choice, and show how and why individuals make decisions (Martinstaff, 2015; McCabe, et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2011; Wilson, 2012). Guests can be segmented, based upon their choices, which gives an indication about the cultural and psychological nature of a particular destination (Oriade and Robinson, 2019; Vásquez, 2011). The primary element of stratification used in the study was Satisfaction. This is the factor that gives the best indication about choices as a final outcome (Jeacle and Carter, 2011).

#### *Disney Shanghai - Second Data Point*

Trip advisor has information about comments about Disney Shanghai. These remarks provided a second data point for analysis (Wang, et al., 2019). Most of these comments are about the experience which provides insight into the structure and function of the Park (Wu, et. al., 2017). This type of information will allow for a macro view in regard to the development of the overall experience. The general comments about the Park can be isolated and compared to the Hotel Data Points. This comparison will allow for the comprehensive development of the models. It will give insight into the overall experiences and help to provide a basis for interpretation. This interpretive aspect is very important to the expansion and understanding of the decision process because it adds depth in regard to the attraction/activity (Flannery, 2015; Rodriguez-Diaz and Pulido-Fernandex, 2018). This information also helps to understand likes and dislikes and potential areas that need improvement. These

comments can be collected into positive and negative and associated with strengths and weaknesses (Kang, 2016). This is similar a SWOT analysis. Strengths and weaknesses can be directly associated to satisfaction level. Obviously the higher satisfaction indicates more of the strengths and the lower satisfaction indicates more of the weaknesses.

## Results

It is possible with Word Clouds to do comparisons, but in this study direct comparisons were not appropriate. This is because the data sets were not congruent and therefore comparisons may lead to spuriously relationships. When the data sets are not compatible, it is better to do a theoretical comparison to isolate similarities and differences. As a result, the Word Clouds were compared on a theoretical basis and once the comparisons were complete the data sets were reviewed for thematic content. (Hotel Comments and Disney Park Comments) This Thematic Analysis was completed by using the significant theme and trying to develop the relationships among the words to discern a clearer topic. The Thematic Content Analysis was performed with three different judges and a discussion ensued to establish consensus. The reviews were completed independently, so as not to contaminate the data. After the independent reviews, consensus meeting was held to determine a basic theme among the words.

The demographics are very clear in terms of the populations. Shanghai Disney is a family area that serves more of an Asian and Pacific Rim population. In this study, Hotels and Disney Park statements were used as an indicator of the psychographic elements of decision-making.

### Hotels (Data Point 1)

The data from the hotels were divided into three groups based upon satisfaction rankings. They were divided by 15% difference in satisfaction. These represent a high, medium, and low position. These positions represent different decision styles. Three representative hotels were selected to represent each category. Hotels were selected based upon number of comments and popularity. The names of the hotels will not be provided as to not embarrass the hotels. Anonymity is the key to maintaining privacy.

### Low Scores/Hotels (Table 1)

The primary element that characterizes the Word Cloud was value. The issue was standard expectations, which is, cleanliness, cost, etc. The Characterization of this community was atmosphere. Shanghai Disney had a fantasy/adventure approach. The Shanghai approach, in this context, was a focus upon the story and its relationship to the audience, especially the children. The primary question is how have the children been socialized into the stories through family activities.

Table 1. Low Satisfaction Level



When a thematic content was performed on the Shanghai data, in relation to word comparisons, the bases of

the decisions was the seeking of value in terms of the ways that stories are told and the services that are provided for the experience. The individual is seeking a new experience and adventure. The experience is one that is associated with the image of the story.

#### Medium Scores/Hotels (Table 2)

The characteristics of this Work Cloud were amenities. The principal concern was the attributes and the way they are viewed. This population is seeking flexibility and normative experiences that are perceived by the larger group as a quality experience related to status within the group. The Shanghai approach, in this context, is one of providing quality to the family experience. The amenities are perceived as a status in terms of providing quality experience. The common dimension is one of success in the achievement of personal outcomes.

Table 2 Medium Satisfaction Level

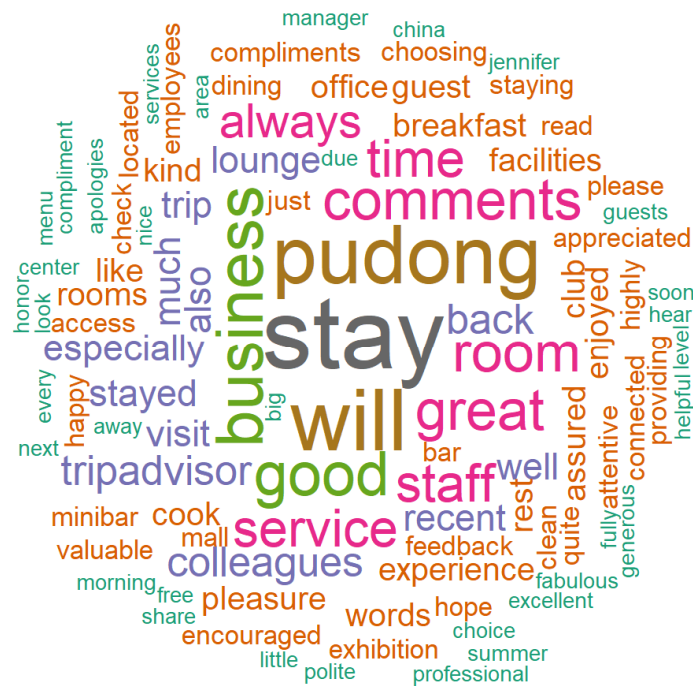


When the thematic content analysis was performed on the word associations, the basis of the decisions was the position of the attributes selected based upon status. The attributes selected were the ones that provide comfort to the family and depths of the experiences related to the amenities. The interpretation of the experience is based upon, not so much the story, but the positive experience with the amenities.

#### High Scores/Hotels (Table 3)

The primary element that characterized the Work Cloud was status. The focus was upon reputation and the importance of image in relation to the physical resources. Price and exclusiveness were also part of this experience. The Shanghai approach is one of having an immersion experience. The more intense the experience was the greater the status in terms of its quality. The atmosphere created is a one-of-a-kind experience that is related to individual importance. It is how the individual is treated in terms of reputation and respect. It is their cultural position that is most important.

Table 3 High Satisfaction Level



When the thematic content analysis of Shanghai Disney was completed, the basic decisions focused upon the uniqueness of the experience. The total experience was important, especially in the hotels and meals. The more unique the privilege more important is the individual's position. Decisions hinge upon the image of the privileges provided.

*Disney Park (Data Point 2)*

Data from the Disney Shanghai Park was divided into two data sets. An overall Word Cloud was provided for perspective for the two data sets. (Table 4) One data set was high satisfaction and the other data set was low satisfaction. High Satisfaction data set was composed of scores of four and five on the TripAdvisor. This represents Excellent and Very good. The low satisfaction scores were three, two, and one. This represents average, poor, and terrible.

Table 4 Disney Park Total Data Set (Scores 1-5)



*Low Satisfaction: Scores with 3, 2, and 1 (Table 5)*

The characterization of those with low satisfaction score depended upon more of the amenities that were provided. The focus was not the experience, but more of a desire to escape the daily routine or to be entertained. The quality of these amenities had a direct bearing upon the satisfaction level. This does not suggest that the experiences provided were not top-quality. The individual could not focus on the experience but focus more upon the conditions. For example the lines were too long, the cost of the experience was too great, parking was a problem, etc.

Table 5 Low Satisfaction Disney Park (Scores 1, 2, and 3)



When the thematic analysis of the Shanghai Park was completed, decisions focused more upon meeting the comfort needs of the clients. The ease of experiencing the Park was a primary element to achieving some degree of success, thereby, satisfaction. When the amenities caught the attention of the participant, which was motivation to experience the themes of the Park. The understanding was very superficial, even though there was an appreciation of the story and the experience. The primary focus of improving satisfaction among this group is development of motivation through the structure and function of the architecture. The architecture is important, but the programming and education of the client is the critical element.

*High Satisfaction: Scores with 4 and 5 (Table 6)*

The primary characteristic of the high satisfaction scores were in regard to the atmosphere and the fulfillment of the expectations of the clients. The traditional stories that they had familiar with is the primary ones that had the greatest impact. The non-familiar stories had an impact but they did not have the depth of understanding needed to have a great did agree of appreciation. It is the Parks architecture that develops the atmosphere in which to set the stories that are being told. This architecture is made up of the structure and functions and must be well integrated to achieve the proper atmosphere to execute the design programs.





term of its reliability. As it was mentioned earlier, some comments could be well-inflamed other than accurate. We recommend future research to use this finding as a springboard to further look into theme park goers' expectation and satisfaction in the context of cultural appreciation. A combined of qualitative and quantitative research approach is strongly recommended for future research as well.

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