

Marketing the Magic in a Nature-Based Experience: A Case Study on
the Walt Disney Company

A Senior Project

presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Experience Industry Management

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Science

by

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December 2016

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ABSTRACT

MARKETING THE MAGIC IN A NATURE-BASED EXPERIENCE: A CASE STUDY

ON THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY

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DECEMBER 2016

Customers focus on different values when looking for a travel experience. Experiential marketing is able to connect customers with companies and experiences that match their values, including ecotourism and nature-based experiences. The Walt Disney Company is an international brand of entertainment features and is able to provide guests with customized experiences. The purpose of this study was to examine experiential marketing techniques in relation to the Walt Disney Company's ecotourism and nature focused experiences. The researcher used a best practices matrix on the Walt Disney Company, Disney's Animal Kingdom, and Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa. This study found that the Walt Disney Company is effective in their experiential marketing efforts regarding ecotourism and nature-based experiences for guests who value sustainability. In order to continue to market ecotourism and nature-based experiences effectively, Disney should understand their target market and research the lasting effects of their experiential marketing efforts.

Keywords: ecotourism, nature-based tourism, experiential marketing, the Walt Disney Company, Disney's Animal Kingdom, Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

Companies across the world are utilizing experiential marketing tactics in order to build brand relationships and customer loyalty. According to Schmitt (1999b), these companies have been able to innovate new products, increase sales, and improve communications with partners and customers. This field is steadily growing as more and more companies are establishing themselves through the use of experiential marketing. Experiential marketing is not limited to a specific industry; its breadth ranges across all markets – ecotourism and nature-based experiences are simply two examples.

Ecotourism aims to engage, empower, and inspire guests to move them towards sustainability and to gain awareness about their environment (The International Ecotourism Society, 2016). It is only natural that the ecotourism industry exercises experiential marketing techniques in order to gain publicity, unite with customers, and advertise nature-based experiences. Through experiential marketing, ecotourism companies can publicize its mission of responsible travel, a need for a sustainable future, and nature-based destinations (The International Ecotourism Society). Ecotourism companies can connect to customers in a way that impacts and motivates them to make positive changes in their travel practices. These techniques can raise awareness for ecotourism and nature-based experiences and also arouse other companies to make changes in their industries. A field that is immersed in the experience of customers will be able to adapt their perspectives to move others in the same direction – toward

sustainability and conservation. Other companies will be able to analyze these perspectives and mirror them to build their own brand. The purpose of this study was to examine experiential marketing techniques in relation to the Walt Disney Company's ecotourism and nature-focused experiences.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Hospitality and Tourism Complete, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. This review of literature includes the following subsections: experiential marketing, experiential marketing in tourism and hospitality, and experiential marketing in ecotourism and nature-based experiences.

There has been a transition in marketing techniques from the industrial age to present time. Schmitt (1999a) explains that traditional marketing refers to the industrial age of marketing. It is the analytical and rational view of products and consumers and the principles that have guided them since the 1970s. In modern times, traditional advertising does not appeal to customers as much. According to Vila-López and Rodríguez-Molina (2013), customers are becoming less and less receptive to traditional marketing techniques. They are expecting more than the usual marketing campaign that includes reliable brands, quality products, and practical features. These aspects are predictable. Customers want more in a marketing campaign. They want to feel, to inspire, and to engage in a product or company; they want an experience (Schmitt, 1999b).

Tsaur, Chiu, and Wang (2007) states, "...experiential marketing is distinct in four key ways: focusing on consumer experiences, treating consumption as a holistic experience, recognizing both the rational and emotional drivers of consumption, and using eclectic methodologies" (p. 48). To interest customers, marketers must look to stimulate their senses. Triggering a positive emotional reaction to a brand or company will connect the customer to the brand or company. It will further build and strengthen brand loyalty and brand reputation (Vila-López & Rodríguez-Molina, 2013).

In addition to creating ways to build brands and providing consumers with an engaging experience, marketers must also analyze their target audience to ensure that the advertisements are appropriate. A study conducted by Raju (1980) examines the relationship between various optimum stimulation levels (OSL) and also informs the implications for marketers regarding consumers' OSLs. Raju defines OSL as, "a property that characterizes an individual in terms of his general response to environmental stimuli" (p. 272). Every organism has an optimum stimulus level that they prefer and can handle. Individuals with high OSLs prefer more stimulation and exploratory behaviors, while low OSLs prefer less stimulation and are less responsive to unknowns. Marketers must understand that their audience can handle different amounts of stimuli in an advertisement for a new product. Audiences will perceive this new and unknown stimulus in different ways. Those with high OSLs will be enticed by the novelty of the product and will want to experience it. Experiential marketing can utilize the high range of stimuli and touch those who can accept the unknown. On the other hand, experiential marketing can also touch those with a low OSL by appealing to their small range of stimuli and creating experiences that will engage their senses.

Experiential marketing can be applied to various industries, such as the arts, sports, and tourism (Vila-López & Rodríguez-Molina, 2013). The hospitality and tourism industry's product is an experience. Tourism can utilize the fast-growing experiential marketing industry in order to sell experiences at a myriad of destinations. According to Oh, Fiore, and Jeung (2007) "Everything tourists go through at a destination can be experience, be it behavioral or perceptual, cognitive or emotional, or expressed or implied" (p. 120). In this industry, the tourists value the quality and desirability of the experience. Visitors want an authentic experience. They want to visit a place to observe the scenery, to see exotic animals, to learn about the environment, or to feel good about participating in conservation (Bulbeck, 2005). Publicizing the experience without making it seem staged or practiced is the key to impacting the visitors.

An experience is intangible. A desirable experience will last and be at the forefront of an individual's mind, consequentially affecting their future behavior. They will want to return to those feelings and choose similar tourism experiences. Tourism specifies experiences for individual people; no two experiences are alike (Tsaur, Chiu, & Wang, 2007). Tsaur also states that experiential marketing plays a critical role in overall visitor satisfaction to destinations. Experiential marketing can exploit the individuality of experiences and entice people to buy that product.

After tourists are presented with different enticing advertisements, they must choose what experience they want to take advantage of. Personal values guide their life, and in turn guide their decision making process (Oh, Fiore, & Jeung, 2007). Their choice of travel or destination is influenced by these values. An experiential marketer must also look at what values the target audience embodies, and create advertisements that are in

line with those values. Breaking up the target population by similar values will allow marketers to tailor advertisements just for them in order to provoke the highest response (Blamey & Braithwaite, 1997).

There are many different lifestyles that tourists value, one being sustainable travel. According to Schmitt (1999b), Ceballos-Lascurain defined ecotourism as, “Traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas” (p. 9). In addition, Schmitt (1999b) states that the term has been traced back further to the work of Hetzer in the 1960s. Hetzer used ecotourism to explain the relationship between people and the environment. It is broken down into four pillars: minimum environmental impact, minimum impact on and maximum respect for host cultures, maximum economic benefit to host’s grassroots, and maximum recreational satisfaction to participating tourists (p. 10).

Tourists sometimes value nature-based experiences, which are experiences in which participants have direct interactions with nature. The International Ecotourism Society (2016) also refers to this as nature-tourism. Uniting communities, conservation, and travel experiences through interactions with nature and biodiversity can help promote ecotourism and responsible travel. In addition, Shanahan et al. (2016) explains that experiencing nature can lead to several health benefits, including decreased blood pressure, and a reduced risk of depression and obesity (p. 2). Longer and more intense durations in nature are significantly linked to these health benefits, too. If more people were involved with nature and if there were more interactions with animals and plants,

the health benefits could be greater. In addition, it can provide a pleasant area for physical activity, such as walking or cycling. Each travel experience is unique to the tourist depending on what they value most.

As mentioned earlier by Tsauro, Chiu, & Wang (2007), no two experiences are alike. Pine and Gilmore (1998) state that the experience will fall into one of the following four realms: entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist (p. 11). Tsauro, Chiu & Wang add that entertainment experiences grab the visitor's attention and occupy it for the duration of the experience. Educational experiences inform the tourist and engage their mind or body through participation while increasing their skill. Esthetic experiences allow the tourist to be present. The tourist is content with present life and observing the destination without altering the environment they are in. Finally, escapist experiences allow tourist to be removed from their daily life and to be immersed in a new destination or activity. Pine and Gilmore go on to state that the richest and most rewarding experiences encompass all four realms in some manner. Advertisements that incorporate these four realms will encourage consumers to buy in to the company's quality experience.

Environmental problems, such as water contamination, deforestation, and air pollution, that the world faces today resulted from individuals' behaviors and actions (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011). Ecotourism has been growing steadily and consistently. It is now considered the fastest growing subsection of the tourism industry (Donohoe & Needham, 2006). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2015), international tourism reached a new level in 2015 due to economic growth as well as job creation in countries around the world. In addition, 2015 is the sixth consecutive year of

above-average international tourism growth with international arrivals increasing by 4% or more every year since 2010. To add, Ballantyne and Packer state that, “The tourism industry is increasingly adopting a conservation-based ethic that recognizes its dependence upon the natural environment and seeks to minimize its negative environmental consequences” (p. 202).

Unfortunately, the tourism industry must be careful of ecotourism imposters. These are industry professionals who advertise their ecotourism practices, but do not actually follow through. For tourists to be inspired and to change their lifestyle, they must feel that their experience is authentic (Donohoe & Needham, 2006). Donohoe and Needham go on to suggest that international standards for ecotourism, including certificates, accreditation programs, and a code of ethics. These standards would discourage fake advertisement and portrayal of ecotourism. It also makes true ecotourism companies and advertisements authoritative and credible. Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung (2007) state that tourism destinations are a means of staging authenticity that cannot be found in a tourist’s daily life. These true ecotourism experiences allow the tourist to have the opportunity to grow and reach self-actualization.

Several ecotourism organizations have been established as a result of the need for a set of standards that Donohoe and Needham (2006) explained above. The International Ecotourism Society (2016) is a nonprofit organization committed to promoting ecotourism. It has helped develop ecotourism, set standards, guide trainings, and provided educational resources for both travelers and businesses. The International Ecotourism Society adapted their own definition of tourism ecotourism, and explained it as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-

being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (para. 4). They combine the concept of sustainable travel practices as well as the need to educate travelers about various issues. Through press releases and research, they promote issues as well as the need to be an aware and responsible traveler or company. Also, TIES advertises different nature-based places, or ecoDestinations. Providing this important information to travelers and companies will empower them to make knowledgeable travel decisions. In addition, Green Globe (2016), a global certification body for sustainable tourism, assesses various companies to certify their sustainability practices. They award different levels of certifications depending on the company’s practices and the amount of time the company has practiced sustainability. Green Globe has developed specific criteria the companies need to achieve in order to receive a certification. This review holds companies accountable to regionally defined standards and maintains a baseline of sustainability around the globe.

Both companies and travelers should make a change towards sustainability. Marketers can advertise a sustainable mode of transportation, an ecofriendly lodging accommodation, and an educational experience to consumers. This will also help encourage consumers to be aware of their environment and their actions. It could even motivate them to adopt and incorporate a more sustainable lifestyle.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine experiential marketing techniques in relation to the Walt Disney Company’s ecotourism and nature focused experiences.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What experiential marketing methods does the Walt Disney Company use to promote travel to their resorts?
2. What techniques does the Walt Disney Company utilize to protect the environment and promote sustainability?
3. What ecotourism practices and nature-focused experiences are implemented specifically in Disney's Animal Kingdom and Aulani Resort and Spa?
4. How effective are the Walt Disney Company's experiential marketing methods?
5. How effective are the Walt Disney Company's protection and sustainability efforts?
6. How effective are the specific ecotourism practices and nature-focused experiences in Disney's Animal Kingdom and Aulani Resort and Spa?

Chapter 2

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine experiential marketing techniques in relation to the Walt Disney Company's ecotourism and nature focused experiences. This chapter includes the following sections: description of organization, description of instrument, and description of procedures.

Description of Organization

A case study was conducted on the Walt Disney Company. Walt and Roy Disney founded the Walt Disney Company (2016) in October 16, 1923. Disney's mission is to be one of the world's leading producers and providers of entertainment and information. Using a wide variety of brands and networks, Disney is able to create and develop innovative and profitable experiences and products worldwide. Disney manages the world's largest media company and has created some of the most well known brands in the world. They seek to expand to new markets through the use of the latest technology and design.

Disney (2016) is not only a mass marketer of entertainment, but they also seek to improve the world around them. Their long-term goal is to reduce their product footprint to a minimum. In addition, Disney holds themselves and their suppliers to a sustainable economic standard and has targeted different areas for sustainability measures, including paper and plush toys.

Disney (2016) has eleven parks and resorts around the world, including Disney's Animal Kingdom, in Florida. It was founded in 1998 and has attractions such as an African Safari, where guests can observe native African wildlife. They are committed to the planet and seek to protect the planet as they grow as a business. Disney Conservation Fund is designed to connect people to nature and to protect wildlife and wild places. After 20 years, Disney Conservation Fund has helped protect over 400 species of biodiversity and has instilled in families a love of nature.

Description of Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study was a case study matrix developed by the researcher (see Appendix A). The instrument was developed after synthesizing different aspects of experiential marketing, ecotourism, and nature-based experiences through the review of literature. The instrument displays various areas of practice, level of priority, and details about the areas of practice. A pilot test was conducted on Sea World San Diego on November 2, 2016. After the pilot, the researcher altered the instrument to better evaluate experiential marketing efforts in relation to ecotourism and nature-based experiences. The researcher added recycling/paper use, cultural incorporation, inspiration efforts, and media efforts to the matrix. The matrix was also reformatted so that the details column had more space for information.

Description of Procedures

A case study was conducted on the Walt Disney Company. The instrument utilized in this study was a case study matrix developed by the researcher. Research for

this study was conducted during a two-week period during November 2016. The analysis included both quantitative and qualitative information in order to explain all aspects of practice. The researcher used the Walt Disney Company owned websites to gather information. The environmental tab, media tab, about us tab was used from the Walt Disney Company website to analyze ecotourism and experiential marketing efforts in general. A Disney account was made on the My Disney Experience website to gather information experiential marketing efforts before a vacation. Disney's Animal Kingdom website and Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa websites were used to gather information about cultural and nature-based experiences.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine experiential marketing techniques in relation to the Walt Disney Company's ecotourism and nature focused experiences. A case study was conducted on the Walt Disney Company. This chapter includes the following sections: experiential marketing techniques, resource management, conservation efforts, Disney's Animal Kingdom, and Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa.

Experiential Marketing Techniques

In order to become one of the leading producers and providers of entertainment and information worldwide, the Walt Disney Company must take steps to fulfill their mission. One way is to market customized experiences before, during, and after the guest's visit.

First, guests have the ability to begin their trip months prior to actually stepping foot in one of the many Disney parks. They have the ability to customize their experience as much or as little as they desire on the My Disney Experience website. After creating an account, they can choose a Disney character profile picture and start to decide the biggest and smallest details of their trip. They are able to add friends and family members to trip profile and send invitations, book hotel reservations, buy and link tickets and FastPass+, make dining reservations, and find show times for activities that are occurring all of the park at various times throughout the day. In the process of choosing different aspects of their trips, guests can view pictures of other people vacationing in Disney. In

addition, guests can navigate to specific resort sites and find more information about the resort's features through both pictures and descriptions. Through visual stimulation, Disney encourages the guest to imagine themselves and their families or friends participating in the activities depicted in each picture. Disney engages their guest from the start of their trip and markets products and experiences to them in an interactive manner.

Next, the guest's experience is brought to life when they arrive at the resort of their choice. Through stage performances, character appearances, and actually meeting the characters, visitors are able to experience Disney to the fullest capacity. There are a wide variety of attractions that guests can choose from and they can download a map of the Disney Park to see where each attraction is located. In addition, Disney also offers a photo pass product for customers to take advantage of, called Memory Maker. While in the park, Disney Photopass Photographers take pictures of the guests at iconic locations and with their favorite characters. Through the photo pass, the pictures are linked directly to the guest's Disney account where they can instantly view and download the photographs taken. Through direct immersion with the stories and characters, Disney creates an environment that invites the guests to be a part of the story, too. This interaction forms an emotional connection to the brand and is reinforced visually by the pictures taken during the trip.

Finally, Disney does not want the magic to stop just because the trip at the park ends. They can keep in touch with customers by sending special offers for their next trip, connecting on social media, and offering consumer products. Tying the guest's emotions to the Disney brand during their vacation and then marketing Disney products and

apparel to them after their vacation maintains the connection with customer until they are able to plan their next trip. Again, Disney visually and emotionally stimulates their guests by reminding them of their past vacation. Disney is able to bring stories and characters to life and stay engaged after the trip ends.

Resource Management

The Walt Disney Company has an environmental mission to establish and support a positive environmental legacy for both the Walt Disney Company and for future generations of employees and guests. The company is committed to minimizing their environmental impact and fosters environmentally conscious behavior in cast members, guests, and business partners globally. Specifically, they have set several long-term goals that aim to reduce green house gas emissions (GHG), waste, and water and energy.

One of Disney's goals is to reduce GHG emissions to a net zero state. In 2015, they reduced their net emissions by 34%. By 2020, they aim to reduce it by 50%. To do so, Disney has identified the major sources of the emissions and implemented ways to cut down. They are analyzing the supply chain to make improvements, increase efficiency, increase the use of cleaner fuels, and decrease the use of other fuels and transportation.

Another goal is to reduce waste in Disney's businesses and operations. In 2015, they diverted 49% of waste from landfills and incineration. By 2020, they plan to divert at least 60% of waste. They are trying to reduce excess waste in products and operations and to promote a "reduce/reuse/recycle" standard for operations.

Disney's third environment goal is to conserve water and energy. They hope to maintain 2013 potable water consumption levels at existing sites by 2018, and to develop

water conservation plans for new sites. In addition, they focus on improving water and energy efficiencies at existing sites and investing in innovative technology to augment water and energy conservation. They also will prioritize water and energy conservation in future plans for new developments.

Conservation Efforts

The Disney Conservation Fund was founded in 1995 with the goal of aiding in protecting the planet and instilling lasting responsible conservation values in both kids and families. The fund supports researching wildlife and environments, protecting habitats, developing conservation programs for communities in critical environments, and creating experiences that strengthen a bond amongst kids, families, nature, and the environment throughout the world.

Through the fund's annual conservation grants program, over \$40 million has been raised to conserve and protect wildlife and environments. They have supported over 330 nonprofit organizations in 115 countries around the world. Over 400 species have been protected through the grants program, including big cats, rhinos, elephants, butterflies, great apes, monkeys, migratory birds, sharks and rays, sea turtles, and coral reefs.

Not only does Disney donate annual grants and partner with other organizations, but also educate children through characters, stories, and experiences in parks and resorts. Disney has a responsibility to kids and families and believes that a commitment to nature begins with experiencing it. In addition, the time kids spend in nature can lead to several benefits, such as smarter, happier, and healthier kids as well as strengthening

conservation values. Disney starts by creating programs to help kids experience nature and remove any barriers that prevent a connection. Since 2012, Disney has helped over 52 million kids and families connect to nature and have meaningful experiences.

Disney's Animal Kingdom

Disney's Animal Kingdom combines an amusement park with environmental education and awareness. Disney is host to 14 different animal species that guests can take time to observe. Although Disney admits that the animals are not in their natural, home environment, Disney has taken considerable effort to design their enclosures as realistic as possible for both the health of the animal and the authentic guest experience.

One animal that Disney helps protect and preserve is the African lion. Disney built a true African savannah for lions to roam about that includes open spaces, tall grasses, native trees for shade, rocks, and shrubs. This wild and large area allows guests to take a safari trip through the enclosure. The natural and life-like area that the lions live in encourage the lions to exhibit natural behaviors that could be seen in the wild, such as playing, stalking, and scent marking. The ability to act natural in this enclosed habitat allows for the lions to grow physically and mentally just as they would in the wild. In addition, Disney provides world-class veterinary care for all animals on site. Professionals are able to check on the animals and perform routine inspections to ensure the maximum fitness of each animal.

Guests are able to choose from several nature-focused experiences that expose them to the animals and environmental issues around the world. Disney provides safari rides, animal encounters, a conservation station, and much more that demonstrates

Disney's commitment to the environment and to spread awareness. The conservation station is an area that provides guests with clear information on Disney's actions to promote environmental awareness. Guests can find out conservation efforts that are happening around their area and around the world, a veterinary treatment room where guests can watch professional animal care, and a backstage tour of animal habitats that guests can control using an "animal cam." In addition, guests can attend the Song of the Rainforest event with Grandma Willow from Disney's *Pocahontas*. This 3D audio journey guides guests through a rainforest and surrounds them with the sounds of nature. These experiences engage guests visually, emotionally, verbally, and tactilely, which shows guests issues threatening biodiversity worldwide. This allows for collaboration with guests towards the goal of protection and preservation of the environment.

Disney continues to spread awareness about animals and conservation through information on their website and explanations at exhibits on site. They promote the conservation of animals and environments, especially endangered or threatened ones, and are helping to preserve them around the world. They give guests the opportunity to contribute and be involved in the conservation of animals through a donation to the Disney Conservation Fund and instructions on how to spread awareness. Walt Disney is even quoted to say, "I have learned from the animal world, and what everyone will learn who studies it, is a renewed sense of kinship with the Earth and all its inhabitants." His belief is implemented in Disney's operations in several parks worldwide.

Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa

Disney has also focused on combining ecotourism with their specialized service through the establishment of the Aulani Resort and Spa on the Ko Olina beaches in Oahu, Hawaii. With the goal of creating the ultimate family getaway, Disney cultivated the relaxing spirit of Hawaii and integrated the unique culture into the resort design. "Ko Olina" translates to "place of joy" in Hawaiian and was originally a place where Hawaiian royalty would come to relax and rejuvenate. "Aulani" translates to "messenger of a chief" in Hawaiian. Disney chose this name and location to explain the legends of the Hawaiian Islands and royalty as well as to include the history and culture into the guest experience, too.

Disney also created and marketed several Hawaiian inspired excursions, including a luau, island tours, marine life encounters, zip line adventures, and much more. There is even a day care center where a supervisor, respectfully called "Aunty" in Hawaiian style, teaches children Hawaiian history, traditions, music, and art. When reserving any excursion, guests can read a description that is accompanied by several pictures. The pictures provide a visual stimulation for guests to help them envision the activities they will venture on during their vacation. Exposing guests to the culture, history, inhabitants, and features of the Hawaiian Islands, Disney is combining education with a fun, relaxing vacation.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Walt Disney Company has made great strides in being environmentally friendly while still maintaining a magical customer experience. Disney has successfully provided several nature-based experiences for guests to be immersed in. This concluding chapter includes the following: a discussion of the major findings (including implications), limitations, conclusions (based on research questions), and recommendations for the organization, industry, and future research.

Discussion

The Walt Disney Company utilizes experiential marketing techniques in an iconic Disney style. They create magical stories, movies, and characters, and through customer interaction with characters and stories on site, Disney creates a marketing experience unlike any other. Because each experience is unique to each guest, everything that the customer is engaged in will impact them in different emotional ways that will further strengthen their connection to Disney (Oh et al., 2017). In addition, Disney implements experiential marketing tactics before, during, and after a guest's trip. The ability for visitors to customize their experience on the My Disney Experience website supports a positive connection between Disney and the consumer. As noted by Vila-López, et al. (2013) triggering a positive emotional connection between the company and consumer will strengthen brand loyalty and brand reputation. Also, Disney allows the guest to become as immersed as they want in their individual experience; customers can opt in to

different features or passes that Disney markets, or opt out depending on what they want their experience to look like. This customization allows guests to reach their optimum stimulation level (Raju, 1980), which will further enhance the customer's experience. Disney's experiential marketing techniques after a guest's trip has ended can be more effective by incorporating visual and auditory stimulation and interactive media. Disney's experiential marketing is effective in bringing guests into each story before and during a guest's trip. They cater experiences directly to their target market, children and families of all ages, which makes Disney's resort marketing experiences one of a kind. Disney is able to include their guests when they start to plan their experiences and can indulge in each guest's interest. They provide guests with the opportunity to have nature-based experiences for those guests that desire an environmentally friendly vacation.

Disney also practices sustainable resource management that spans across the entire company and resorts. Their main goal is to reduce their carbon footprint while promoting and preserving the environment. The Disney Conservation Fund has already successfully preserved several environments and species as well as partnered with environmentally focused organizations. The Walt Disney Company embodies two of the four pillars of ecotourism that Hetzer described, minimal environmental impact and maximum recreational satisfaction to participating tourists (Schmitt, 1999b). Disney's Animal Kingdom and Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa embody the other two pillars of ecotourism, minimum impact on and maximum respect for host cultures, maximum economic benefit to host's grassroots (Schmitt, 1999b). Through bringing in a host's or natural history and culture enhances the guest's experience as well as strengthening a desire to preserve the host habitat. Marketing the cultural and authentic experiences

promote Disney's contribution to ecotourism. Although it is evident that Disney cares about the environment, they do not have an official certification that they are an ecotourism company. A Green Globe (2016) certification would provide authoritative proof of the strides Disney has made towards ecotourism. Disney does not need to necessarily focus their advertisements on their environmentally friendly operations and ecotourism focused resorts because their company is so established. However, for smaller companies, advertising ecotourism can be an enticing factor to customers or could turn customers. The company must look at their target market to strike a balance between their environmental efforts and the features of their resort and facilities. For those customers that do not focus on an environmentally friendly vacation, low impact company operations are an added bonus.

There were several limitations that impacted this study. First, a best practices approach was used to analyze the Walt Disney Company, which limited research to online resources. The effectiveness of Disney's experiential marketing tactics in relation to ecotourism was difficult to analyze due to the lack of quantitative marketing analytics made available to the public to interpret. In addition, Disney owned websites were the only website used in the research, which could lead to a favorable company bias on information made available. Not all of the practices are displayed on the websites, so some practices could have been overlooked. Finally the researcher could have been influenced by a personal bias in favor of Disney due to past, personal experience when attending the resorts. Despite these limitations, the study provided quality information about Disney's experiential marketing tactics in relation to ecotourism.

The Walt Disney Company is an international company and has touched many families around the world. They have established themselves and cultivated a loyal customer base. Although Disney is a great example of an environmentally conscious company, they do not need to rely on that aspect of their company for marketing or promotion purposes. However, other companies can still look to Disney as a model of and can implement specific practices to their own operations. Disney is unique in that it creates magical experiences as well as supporting important conservation programs.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The Walt Disney Company uses several experiential marketing methods, including visual, audio, and tactile stimulation, through interaction with products and characters over the duration of a guest's trip.
2. The Walt Disney Company is environmentally conscious and implements efficient waste and resource management in parks while supporting the Disney Conservation Fund, protecting animals around the world, and leaving a minimal impact on the environment.
3. Disney's Animal Kingdom and Disney's Aulani resort offer multiple authentic, nature-based experiences for guests to learn about culture, tradition, and conservation issues.
4. The Walt Disney Company's experiential marketing methods engage guests of any age, create a bond between the experience and the company, and ultimately encourage guests to return to the park or resort.

5. The Walt Disney Company prioritizes their sustainability and protection efforts by setting long-term attainable goals and sponsoring programs to support endangered environments and animals.
6. Disney's Animal Kingdom and Disney's Aulani Resort and Spa incorporate some ecotourism practices, but mostly focus on a wide variety of nature-based experiences that promote awareness for the environment and different cultures.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The experience industry must have an excellent understanding of their target market to create customized experiences.
2. The Walt Disney Company can advertise specific features of their parks to appeal to the customer's values.
3. The Walt Disney Company can implement more experiential marketing methods, and stimulations, after a guest's trip has ended.
4. The Walt Disney Company can partner with an accredited ecotourism organization, such as Green Globe or TIES.
5. Future research should analyze the short term and long term impact of Disney's nature-based experiential marketing efforts.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Instrument

INSTRUMENT

Areas of Practice	Priority Level (Low, Medium, High)	Details
Emissions		
Waste		
Water		
Cultural Incorporation		
Conservation Fund		
Recycling/Paper Use		
Inspiration Efforts		
Media Efforts		