

Experiential Marketing, Customer Engagement, and Repurchase Intention: An Empirical Study based on Shanghai Disneyland

Yingting Fu*

School of Wuxi, Taihu University, Wuxi, China

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

Experiential marketing has become one of the most prevalent strategies in the theme park industry, aiming to elicit positive consumer feedback by enhancing their immersive experiences. As a well-established topic in marketing research, prior studies have indicated that experiential marketing is associated with brand loyalty and emotional attachment. However, the relationship between experiential marketing and repurchase intention remains underexplored, with limited empirical evidence clarifying their connection. A report issued by the China Tourism Academy suggests that one of the key success factors of Shanghai Disney Resort is its integration of immersive storytelling with elements familiar to visitors. For instance, the representative “Zootopia” land brings cinematic scenes to life, making guests feel as though they are part of the story. Therefore, this study takes Shanghai Disneyland as a case and investigates consumers’ repurchase intention toward its offerings through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative focus group interviews and quantitative questionnaire surveys. Structural equation modeling (SEM) and hierarchical regression techniques are employed to analyze the collected data, examining the relationships between experiential marketing and customer engagement, between experiential marketing and brand relationships (brand loyalty and emotional attachment), and between experiential marketing and repurchase behavior. Finally, recommendations are proposed for Shanghai Disneyland’s experiential marketing model to suggest pathways for further development.

Keywords

Experiential Marketing; Repurchase Behavior; Brand Loyalty; Shanghai Disneyland.

1. Introduction

Disney, a prominent representative of substantial U.S. investment in international cultural industries and products, captured global attention upon the opening of its Shanghai resort in 2016 [1]. According to statistics from the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), a leading global authority on theme parks, Shanghai Disneyland ranked among the world’s top 10 theme parks from 2019 to 2023. In 2023 alone, it received approximately 14 million visitors, securing fifth place globally (see Table 1) [2]. Experience is defined as a cognitive and emotional process and activity. The introduction of experiential consumption in 1982 opened up the research field of experiential marketing, within which consumer experience has become one of the most extensively studied topics. Previous research has advanced a more practice-oriented discussion by thematizing experience [3].

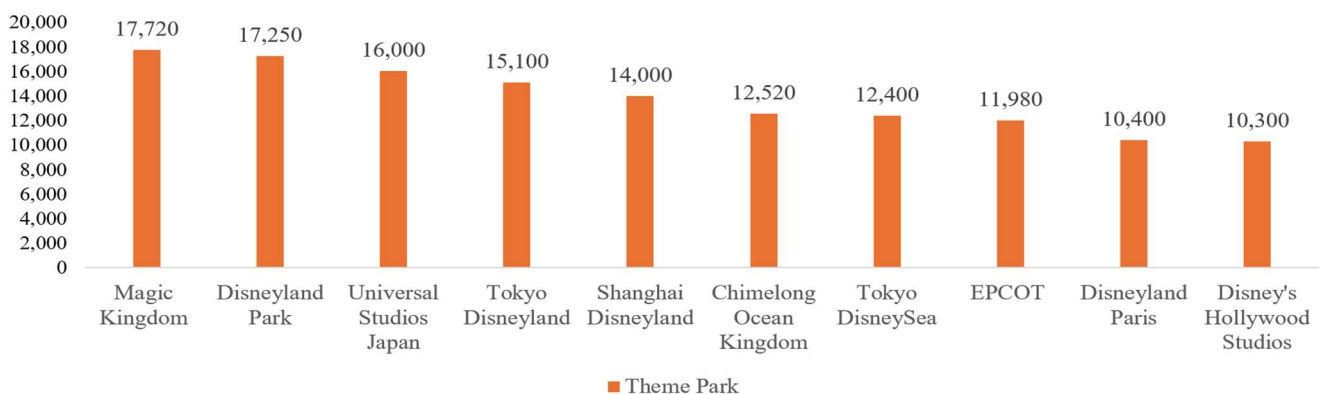
Within the experience economy framework of theme parks, experiential marketing serves as one of the primary strategies for Shanghai Disneyland. It has contributed positively to enhancing Disney’s market position and driving economic performance. Experiential marketing is an emerging approach aimed at improving consumers’ holistic perception of

brand experience. In contrast to traditional marketing, it places greater emphasis on a consumer-centered process of engagement and has gained considerable dominance in contemporary marketing practice [4, 5, 6].

Existing research has demonstrated a direct relationship between customer experience and emotional attachment as well as customer loyalty [7, 8]. Studies also indicate that customer engagement can actively drive brand attachment and brand loyalty [9]. However, compared with other constructs such as consumer attitudes and satisfaction, research on the relationship between experiential marketing and brand engagement remains relatively limited [3].

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the direct relationship between experiential marketing and repurchase behavior. Using focus group interviews and questionnaire surveys targeting consumers of Shanghai Disneyland, and employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) along with hierarchical regression techniques to test the proposed hypotheses, this research ultimately finds that experiential marketing exerts a positive influence on repurchase behavior. In comparison with prior studies, this work not only addresses an existing research gap but also offers practical insights for refining the experiential marketing model of Shanghai Disneyland.

Table 1. Visitor numbers of the world's top 10 theme parks in 2023



This chart shows the number of visitors received by the top ten theme parks worldwide in 2023, with orange bars representing the number of visitors received that year. Data source: TEA/AECOM 2023 Theme Index & Museum Index: The Global Attractions Attendance Report. (TEA/AECOM) [2]

2. Literature Review

2.1. Customer Engagement and Brand Relationships

2.1.1. Customer Engagement

Customer engagement refers to a consumer's personal connection with a brand beyond the purchase situation, manifested in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. By fostering this connection between brand and customer, engagement transforms consumers into brand advocates [10]. Consumers, as the focal participants in this process, demonstrate a positive willingness toward interaction and focused attention [11, 12].

2.1.2. Customer Engagement and Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty represents a deeply rooted pattern of consumer behavior toward a specific brand, characterized by a consistently positive attitudinal disposition [10, 12, 13]. As one of the central concepts in marketing research, brand loyalty serves to assess the relationship between consumers and brands within the realm of intangible benefits [14].

As a promising conceptual variable, engagement can enhance customers' loyalty toward a brand [10, 11]. Moreover, the degree of customer engagement is positively correlated with brand loyalty: higher engagement leads to stronger loyalty [9].

2.1.3. Customer Engagement and Emotional Attachment

Brand attachment is based on the emotional bond between consumers and a brand, indicating that customers feel an affinity for a particular product or brand [10, 15]. According to attachment theory, emotional attachment is profoundly reflected in three aspects: sense of connection, affection, and passion [16]. When consumers develop enthusiasm for a specific brand, they tend to express positive evaluations accordingly [8]. During the engagement process, factors influencing brand attachment are activated, thereby fostering customers' emotional attachment to the brand [10].

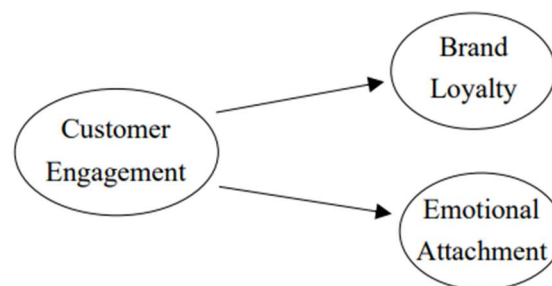


Figure 1. The relationship between customer engagement, brand loyalty, and emotional attachment

Sourced from the author

2.2. Repurchase Behavior and Brand Relationships

2.2.1. Repurchase Behavior

Repurchase intention refers to the likelihood of choosing a specific brand again in the future, reflecting a propensity to repeatedly purchase the same product from a company or to engage repeatedly with its offerings [17, 18]. Repurchase behavior describes the act of selecting the same brand again after recognizing its quality, value, and emotional appeal, and after having a positively perceived experience with its products or services [19]. As consumers' awareness of and loyalty toward a brand increase, they tend to prioritize familiar products [13].

2.2.2. Repurchase Behavior and Brand Loyalty

An essential prerequisite for consumers to make actual purchase decisions is customer loyalty [10]. Customer loyalty directly determines purchase frequency: when consumers exhibit high brand loyalty, they are more inclined to choose familiar brands rather than readily switching to alternatives [19]. Over time, consumers demonstrate their relationship with a brand or product through brand loyalty, resulting in repeated purchase behavior [12]. Therefore, higher customer brand loyalty corresponds to a stronger willingness to repurchase.

2.2.3. Repurchase Behavior and Emotional Attachment

A prerequisite for consumer purchasing is the fulfillment of cognitive and emotional needs [14]. The greater the emotional satisfaction a brand provides to consumers, the stronger their emotional dependence on that brand becomes [8]. Moreover, when influenced by emotional attachment, consumers tend to exhibit sustained loyal repurchase behavior toward the brand [14, 16]. As a key driver of repeat purchases, emotional attachment enhances consumers' brand preference, which in turn influences their repurchase behavior [16, 19].

2.3. Research Gaps

In the study of consumer experience, the significance of the consumer perspective is often overlooked, resulting in a limited understanding of consumer behavior [3]. However, research on the relationship between experiential marketing and consumers has increased in recent years, reflecting that a key focus in the current marketing field lies in examining consumers' responses to engagement with specific brands [5]. Previous studies have indicated that both experiential marketing and customer engagement exert positive effects on brand loyalty and emotional attachment, and that brand loyalty and emotional attachment also positively influence repurchase behavior. Nevertheless, research remains scarce concerning the relationship between experiential marketing and brand engagement, as well as the direct link between experiential marketing and repurchase behavior. To address these gaps in the literature, this study aims to investigate the role of experiential marketing in influencing consumers' repurchase behavior.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Hypotheses

This study empirically examines the extent to which experiential marketing influences repurchase behavior, while also exploring its respective relationships with customer engagement and brand relationships (comprising brand loyalty and emotional attachment). The research is guided by the following questions:

- To what extent does experiential marketing influence the level of customer engagement?
- To what extent does experiential marketing influence brand relationships?
- To what extent does experiential marketing influence customers' repurchase behavior?

To address these questions, the following hypotheses are proposed based on the literature review. The conceptual model and corresponding research hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 2.

H1: Experiential marketing has a positive impact on customer engagement.

H2: Experiential marketing has a positive impact on brand relationships (brand loyalty and emotional attachment).

H3: Experiential marketing has a direct positive impact on repurchase behavior.

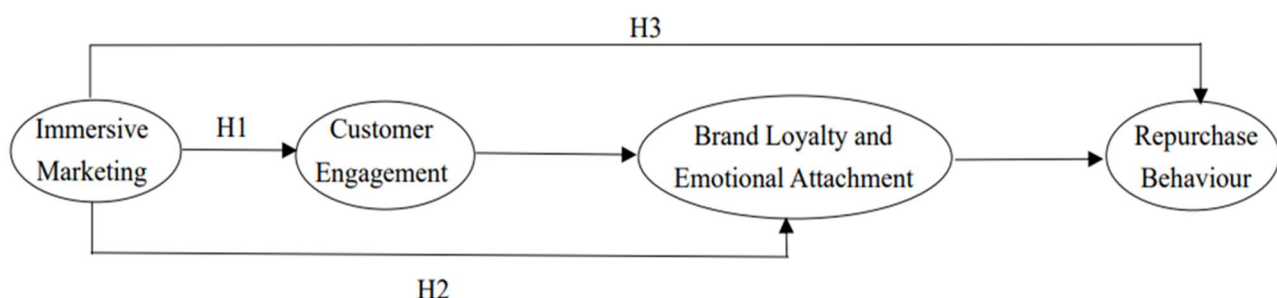


Figure 2. Conceptual model and related assumptions

Sourced from the author

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1. Questionnaire Survey

To test the proposed hypotheses, this study employed a questionnaire survey, with consumers of Shanghai Disneyland from various regions in China serving as the sample for data collection. In this field of research, the five-point Likert scale is commonly used for statistical analysis [15].

Accordingly, this study adopted the five-point Likert scale as the primary format for questionnaire design. Scores for each item ranged from 1 to 5, representing “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” to gauge consumers’ level of agreement regarding Shanghai Disneyland. The questionnaire included demographic questions, followed by sections on experiential marketing, customer engagement, brand loyalty and emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior (for specific items and sources, see Table 2 and Appendix A).

Table 2. Variable Construction & Source

| Latent Variables | Measurement Problem Items | Source |
|--|---|--------|
| Immersive Marketing (IM) | During my visit to Shanghai Disneyland, I felt like I was in a different world. | [8] |
| | The environment of Shanghai Disneyland is truly captivating. | [8] |
| | I felt excited while I was at Shanghai Disneyland. | [7] |
| Customer Engagement (CE) | I absolutely love Shanghai Disneyland. | [20] |
| | I follow everything about Shanghai Disneyland closely. | [20] |
| | I'm completely immersed in my interactions with Shanghai Disneyland. | [20] |
| Brand Loyalty & Emotional Attachment (BE) | I will share positive things about Shanghai Disneyland with others. | [10] |
| | I will get annoyed if someone criticizes Shanghai Disneyland. | [8] |
| | I have a lot of enthusiasm for Shanghai Disneyland. | [8] |
| Repurchase Behavior (RB) | I will definitely buy Shanghai Disneyland merchandise next time. | [21] |
| | If I had to choose again, I would still choose to buy Shanghai Disneyland merchandise. | [7] |
| | Even though other new options have emerged, I will not give up on buying Shanghai Disneyland merchandise. | [7] |

Sourced from the author

The questionnaire was distributed online via Chinese social media platforms. Data collection spanned one and a half months. Respondents accessed the questionnaire by scanning a QR code or clicking a link, confirmed their informed consent (see Appendix B for details), and proceeded to complete the survey. All questions were required to be answered to ensure data completeness. A total of 470 questionnaires were collected, of which 398 were valid and 72 were invalid, yielding a valid response rate of 85%.

3.2.2. Questionnaire Survey

The demographic profile of the collected sample is presented in Table 3. The first section covers respondents’ gender, age, education level, and annual household income. The subsequent sections include questions related to experiential marketing, consumer engagement with Shanghai Disneyland, consumer loyalty and emotional attachment toward Shanghai Disneyland, and repurchase behavior regarding Shanghai Disneyland.

As shown in Table 3, the number of female consumers (55.3%) exceeded the number of male consumers (41.2%). Research suggests that in material consumption, females tend to favor emotionally oriented purchases and place greater emphasis on pleasure [22], which may explain why more visitors to Shanghai Disneyland are female.

A larger proportion of respondents fell within the 18–27 age range (69.8%), while those over 38 years old were fewer (3.5%). Individuals aged 18–27, often referred to as millennials, are generally more open to social diversity, exhibit stronger willingness for experiences, and are emerging as a crucial demographic for economic and tourism development; thus, theme park visitors are predominantly young [23].

Table 3. Demographics of Main Study Sample

| Characteristic | Attribute | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 164 | 41.20% |
| | Female | 220 | 55.30% |
| | Other | 14 | 3.50% |
| Age (years old) | 18-22 | 129 | 32.40% |
| | 23-27 | 149 | 37.40% |
| | 28-32 | 70 | 17.60% |
| | 33-37 | 27 | 6.80% |
| | >38 | 14 | 3.50% |
| | Other | 9 | 2.30% |
| Education Level | Elementary school | 12 | 3.00% |
| | Middle school | 26 | 6.50% |
| | High school | 73 | 18.30% |
| | Undergraduate | 242 | 60.90% |
| | Graduate | 31 | 7.80% |
| | Doctoral degree and above | 14 | 3.50% |
| Annual Household Income (in ten thousand) | <20 | 221 | 55.50% |
| | 20-50 | 103 | 25.90% |
| | 50-80 | 47 | 11.80% |
| | >80 | 11 | 2.80% |
| | Other | 16 | 4.00% |

Sourced from the author

Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (60.9%), with very few having only primary education or a doctoral degree or higher (6.5%). In terms of annual household income, the majority reported less than ¥200,000 (55.5%), while those with incomes exceeding ¥500,000 gradually decreased (14.6%). In China, households with annual incomes between ¥100,000 and ¥500,000 are considered middle-income, and this group generally has higher education levels, with the majority holding at least a bachelor's degree [24]. Therefore, most participants had an annual household income below ¥500,000 and held a bachelor's degree.

3.3. Data Analysis

3.3.1. Reliability and Validity Testing of the Measurement Model

In quantitative research, measurement standards include reliability and validity. Reliability examines the consistency of the study, while validity assesses its accuracy, exploring whether the collected data covers all aspects of the research [25]. This study tested the reliability and validity of the questionnaire data, yielding the following results (Table 4).

Table 4. KMO & Bartlett's Test

| | | |
|---|------------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy | | 0.954 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approximate Chi-Square | 2404.023 |
| | Degrees of Freedom | 66 |
| | Significance | 0.000 |

Sourced from the author

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.954, close to 1. The approximate Chi-Square was 2404.023, a moderate value, with a significance level <0.001. A

KMO value greater than 0.7 is considered suitable for factor analysis, and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.05$) indicates correlations among the variables [26]. Therefore, the data collected via the original questionnaire were suitable for factor analysis.

This study utilized SPSS and AMOS software for data analysis. SPSS was used to compute Cronbach's α , while AMOS was employed to construct a structural equation model and calculate indicator loadings. The Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were then computed using the following formulas, resulting in Table 5.

Composite Reliability (CR):

$$CR = \frac{(\sum \lambda_i)^2}{(\sum \lambda_i)^2 + \sum (1 - \lambda_i^2)} \quad (1)$$

Average Variance Extracted (AVE):

$$AVE = \frac{\sum \lambda_i^2}{n} \quad (2)$$

Table 5. Reliability and Validity Testing of the Measurement Model

| Latent Variables | Observational Variables | Indicator Loading | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Customer Engagement (CE) | CE1 | 0.781 | 0.740 | 0.742 | 0.492 |
| | CE2 | 0.647 | | | |
| | CE3 | 0.668 | | | |
| Brand Loyalty & Emotional Attachment (BE) | BE1 | 0.746 | 0.723 | 0.732 | 0.479 |
| | BE2 | 0.587 | | | |
| | BE3 | 0.732 | | | |
| Repurchase Behavior (RB) | RB1 | 0.788 | 0.813 | 0.813 | 0.593 |
| | RB2 | 0.757 | | | |
| | RB3 | 0.764 | | | |

Sourced from the author

As shown in Table 5, both Cronbach's α and CR values exceeded 0.7, with those for Repurchase Behavior (RB) surpassing 0.8. Most indicator loadings were above 0.7, with only three slightly below the threshold but still within an acceptable range. The AVE for RB was greater than 0.5, while values for CE and BE were close to the standard. These results indicate good composite reliability and acceptable average variance extracted values.

3.3.2. Correlation Analysis

This study employed the linear regression function in SPSS, using Pearson correlation coefficients to analyze the relationships between experiential marketing and the three dependent variables: customer engagement, brand loyalty & emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior. The results are shown in Table 6.

All p-values in the table are <0.05 , indicating significant correlations between experiential marketing and the three variables (customer engagement, brand loyalty & emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior). The Pearson coefficients are all <0.8 , suggesting a substantially reduced risk of multicollinearity among the variables [27], thereby confirming good correlations among them.

Table 6. Correlation Analysis of the Measurement Model

| | IM1 | IM2 | IM3 |
|-----|---------|---------|---------|
| CE1 | 0.538** | 0.578** | 0.541** |
| CE2 | 0.448** | 0.523** | 0.388** |
| CE3 | 0.448** | 0.445** | 0.490** |
| BE1 | 0.474** | 0.504** | 0.518** |
| BE2 | 0.396** | 0.400** | 0.363** |
| BE3 | 0.502** | 0.477** | 0.459** |
| RB1 | 0.518** | 0.506** | 0.497** |
| RB2 | 0.490** | 0.497** | 0.489** |
| RB3 | 0.455** | 0.514** | 0.478** |

Note. N=398 participants. Excepted from the Full Appendix D for Convenience. *p<0.10, **p<0.05 ***p<0.01. From the author.

3.4. Structural Equation Modeling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) allows for the analysis of causal relationships among latent variables and can describe the magnitude of causal effects as well as the amount of unexplained variance [6]. This study employed SEM to process and analyze the data, further testing Hypotheses 1 through 3 to investigate the pathways through which experiential marketing influences consumers' repurchase behavior.

By constructing structural equation models (Figure 3-6), this study examined the interrelationships among the four variables: experiential marketing, customer engagement, brand loyalty & emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior.

As shown in Tables 8-10, the models satisfy the criterion of $\chi^2/df < 3$. The χ^2/df value in Table 7 slightly exceeds the standard threshold of 3. Across Tables 7-10, all models meet the criteria of GFI > 0.9, AGFI > 0.8, and RMSEA < 0.08. For the structural equation model examining the relationships between experiential marketing and the three variables-customer engagement, brand loyalty & emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior (Figure 6 & Table 10)-the CFI is > 0.9, and the χ^2 value is 114.440. All model fit indices thus meet the standard requirements.

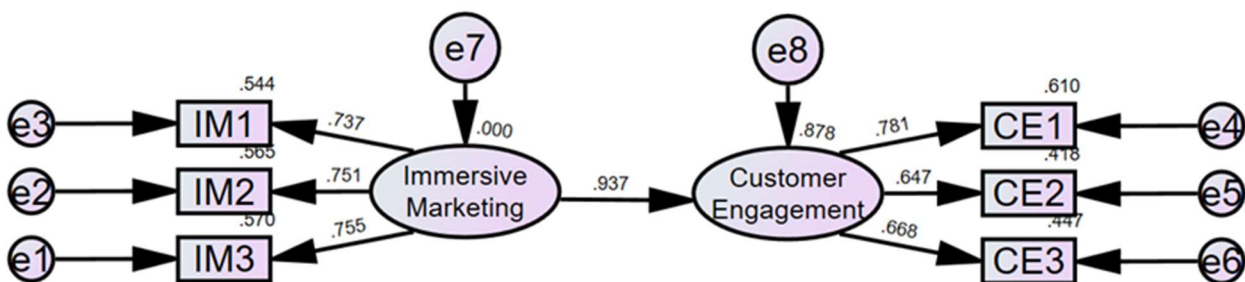


Figure 3. A preliminary model and standard path coefficients for the relationship between experiential marketing and customer engagement.

Sourced from the author

Table 7. Fit index value of structural equation model

| Fit Indices | Recommended Value | Actual Value |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| χ^2 | The smaller, the better | 25.715 |
| χ^2/df | <3.0 | 3.214 |
| GFI | >0.9 | 0.980 |
| AGFI | >0.8 | 0.947 |
| RMSEA | <0.08 | 0.075 |

Sourced from the author

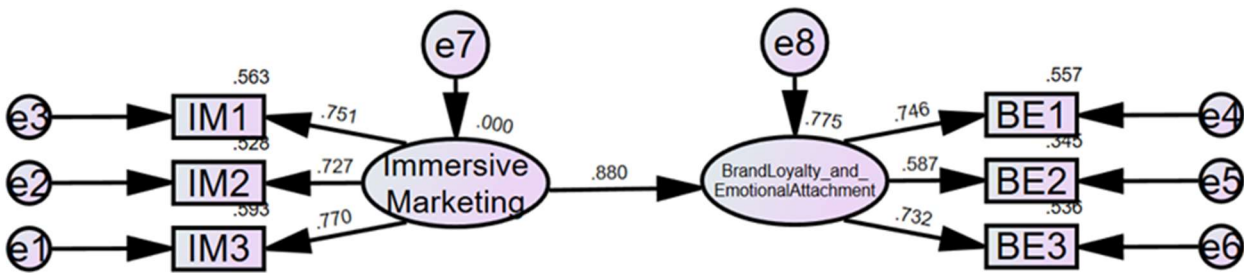


Figure 4. Preliminary model and standard path coefficients of experiential marketing with emotional loyalty and emotional attachment.

Sourced from the author

Table 8. Fit index value of structural equation model

| Fit Indices | Recommended Value | Actual Value |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| χ^2 | The smaller, the better | 10.244 |
| χ^2/df | <3.0 | 1.280 |
| GFI | >0.9 | 0.992 |
| AGFI | >0.8 | 0.978 |
| RMSEA | <0.08 | 0.027 |

Sourced from the author

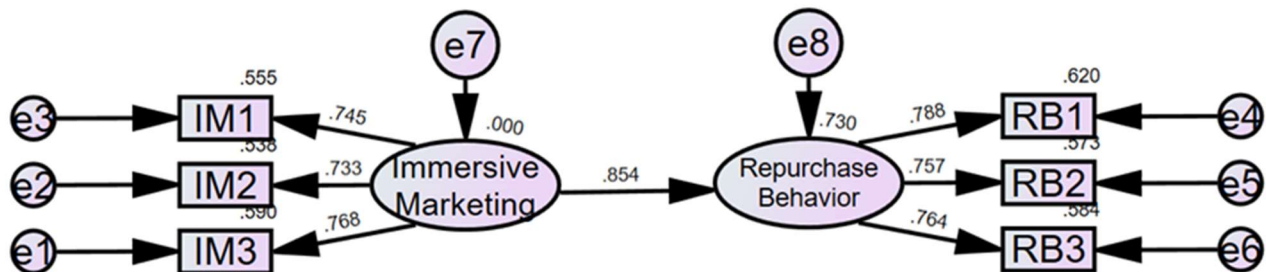


Figure 5. A preliminary model and standard path coefficient for the relationship between experiential marketing and customer loyalty.

Sourced from the author

Table 9. Fit index value of structural equation model

| Fit Indices | Recommended Value | Actual Value |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| χ^2 | The smaller, the better | 9.009 |
| χ^2/df | <3.0 | 1.126 |
| GFI | >0.9 | 0.992 |
| AGFI | >0.8 | 0.980 |
| RMSEA | <0.08 | 0.018 |

Sourced from the author

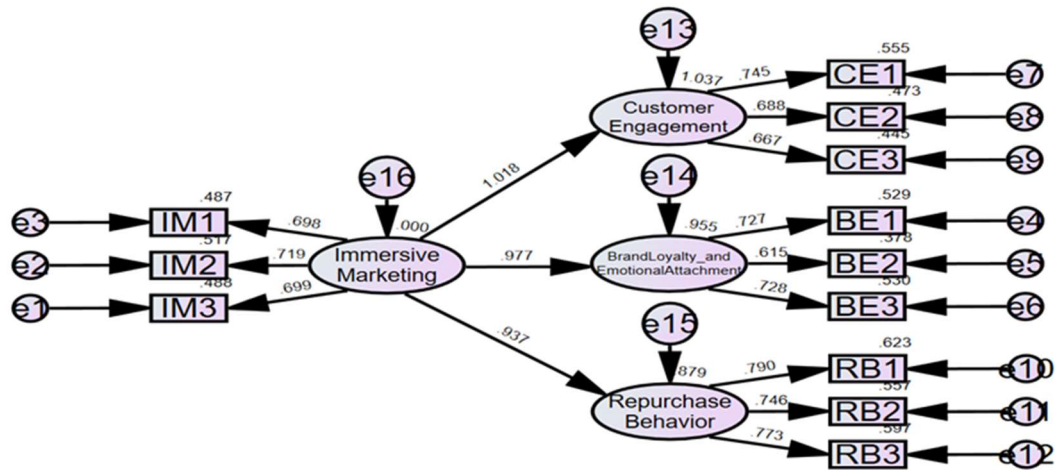


Figure 6. Preliminary model and standard path coefficients

Sourced from the author

Table 10. Fit index value of structural equation model

| Fit Indices | Recommended Value | Actual Value |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| χ^2 | The smaller, the better | 114.440 |
| χ^2/df | <3.0 | 2.244 |
| GFI | >0.9 | 0.952 |
| AGFI | >0.8 | 0.927 |
| RMSEA | <0.08 | 0.056 |
| CFI | >0.9 | 0.973 |

Sourced from the author

Table 11. Standardized path coefficients for the relationship between experiential marketing and customer engagement, customer loyalty and emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior.

| Pathway | Estimate | P Value |
|--|----------|---------|
| Immersive Marketing→Customer Engagement | 1.018 | *** |
| Immersive Marketing→Brand Loyalty & Emotional Attachment | 0.977 | *** |
| Immersive Marketing→Repurchase Behavior | 0.937 | *** |

Sourced from the author

Table 11 presents the standardized path coefficients. The p-values for all three paths are < 0.01, indicating significant pathways. This suggests the model possesses explanatory power and effectively demonstrates the interrelationships among the four variables: experiential

marketing, customer engagement, brand loyalty & emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior.

3.5. Regression Analysis Results

This study conducted regression analyses with experiential marketing as the independent variable and the three dependent variables of customer engagement, brand loyalty & emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior. The results are presented in Table 12.

All ANOVA p-values are < 0.001. The R^2 values range between 0.4 and 0.6. While these R^2 values are slightly below conventional benchmarks, lower R^2 is generally acceptable in social science research [28]. Furthermore, the proximity between the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values indicates the reliability of the model.

Table 12. Regression Analysis Results of the Measurement Model

| Dependent Variable | ANOVA p-value | R^2 | Adjusted R^2 | IM Coefficient (p-value) |
|--------------------|---------------|-------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| CE | <0.001 | 0.511 | 0.510 | 0.758 |
| | | | | (<0.001) |
| BE | <0.001 | 0.448 | 0.446 | 0.671 |
| | | | | (<0.001) |
| RB | <0.001 | 0.475 | 0.474 | 0.797 |
| | | | | (<0.001) |

Sourced from the author

3.6. Focus Group Interviews

The focus group interview is a specific method for collecting qualitative research data. It involves assembling a small group of participants who respond to questions posed by the interviewer while also engaging in discussion with one another [29]. Therefore, this study employed focus group interviews, conducting online discussions with 18 Disney consumers. Participants were randomly divided into 3 groups of 6 members each, with the aim of understanding the extent to which experiential marketing enhances brand engagement.

Prior to participation, individuals signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C for details). Interview times were scheduled based on participants' availability and conducted via online video conference. The entire interview process was recorded via screen capture, and the data were systematically analyzed. The discussions primarily revolved around the following core topics:

- Discussing participants' experiential perceptions of Shanghai Disneyland, including their feelings during visits and their impressions of the atmosphere and themed environments.
- Discussing participants' loyalty and emotional attachment to Shanghai Disneyland, including their frequency of visits, perceptions of merchandise, and consumption preferences.
- Discussing participants' repurchase intentions regarding Shanghai Disneyland products, including their past repurchase frequency, willingness to repurchase, and typical consumption volume.

Through the three group discussions, this study found that most interviewees provided positive evaluations of Shanghai Disneyland, particularly regarding its architectural style, staff service attitude, and interactions with classic character IPs. Most respondents indicated that the park's experiential scenes fulfilled their emotional needs, enabling them to maintain a sense of enthusiasm and loyalty toward Disneyland and fostering a strong psychological bond with the park and its related offerings. Consequently, they expressed a continuous willingness to consume.

In Focus Group 1, Participant A mentioned that the park's architecture enhances the visitor experience.

"I particularly like the lifelike street scenes in the 'Zootopia' land. The scenic design throughout the area shows a high degree of fidelity to the movie, making it perfect for photography. During the 'Hot Pursuit' attraction, characters from the film were integrated into the experience. The excitement it brought made me feel truly immersed, which makes me more willing to engage with it." (Participant, focus group 1, personal communication, June 26, 2025)

In Focus Group 2, Participant B highlighted the irreplaceable nature of character interactions and merchandise.

"Character interactions during parades increase my affinity for the characters. For example, when I waved to Mulan and received a response, the positive feedback enhanced my overall park experience. Furthermore, Disney's IPs are largely irreplaceable. After each visit, I want to purchase souvenirs, and sometimes I make special trips to buy limited-edition items. For my favorite IPs, I will continue to repurchase Disney merchandise." (Participant, focus group 2, personal communication, June 26, 2025)

In Focus Group 3, Participant C emphasized staff service attitude and the variety of merchandise.

"My sustained enthusiasm for Disneyland stems from fulfilling a childhood dream. After realizing it, I found the park experience to be excellent, including the staff's service attitude, which has left me with many fond memories. Therefore, I will definitely visit again. Additionally, Disney merchandise is quite unique, often releasing different types of limited-edition items for special occasions. Its exquisite craftsmanship consistently stimulates my desire to purchase." (Participant, focus group 3, personal communication, June 26, 2025)

4. Conclusion

Within the theme park context, consumers increasingly prioritize their experiential engagement to foster positive perceptions, thereby enhancing repurchase behavior. This study examined the relationships between experiential marketing and customer engagement, brand loyalty & emotional attachment, and repurchase behavior. The findings reveal close connections between experiential marketing and all three constructs.

Demographic analysis indicates that the majority of participants were between 18 and 27 years old, suggesting that younger consumers, who generally have more leisure time, are more inclined toward such consumption. Reliability and validity analyses show that the relationship between experiential marketing and repurchase behavior is particularly significant. In the constructed structural equation models, experiential marketing exhibits a stronger positive correlation with customer engagement compared to other variables.

Insights from the focus group interviews reveal that most respondents spoke positively about their visit experiences, noting that the park's environment fulfilled their emotional needs and provided positive affective feedback. When emotionally satisfied, participants expressed a greater willingness to purchase park-related merchandise. Thus, favorable experiences can directly or indirectly stimulate consumption desire, leading to actual purchasing behavior. Moreover, the unique and non-substitutable nature of Disney merchandise further encourages consumers to repeatedly purchase products from the park.

This study confirms positive correlations between experiential marketing and customer engagement, as well as between experiential marketing and emotional attachment & brand loyalty. It also demonstrates that experiential marketing positively influences repurchase behavior. In summary, experiential marketing exerts a favorable impact on customer engagement, emotional attachment & brand loyalty, and repurchase behavior.

The research provides an important explanation of how experiential marketing affects customers' repurchase behavior and addresses a gap in the existing literature. Consequently, beyond focusing solely on repurchase intention, Disney should place greater emphasis on enhancing the customer experience to strengthen repurchase willingness. For example, while visitors are in the park, providing emotional value and deepening immersive experiences can make guests feel more involved. When visitors' emotional needs are met, factors related to engagement, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty are activated, leading to more positive evaluations of Disneyland. Additionally, Shanghai Disneyland could improve its staff management systems by paying more attention to employee well-being and morale, thereby better delivering satisfactory experiences to consumers.

Although this study investigates the relationship between experiential marketing and repurchase intention at Disney, several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the sample size for the focus group interviews was relatively small, comprising only a subset of Disney consumers. "Group effects" may have prevented some participants from expressing their true opinions, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future research should expand the scope of respondents. Second, the quantitative data were collected solely through online surveys, which may be subject to self-report biases and does not fully guarantee data authenticity, potentially leading to sample bias. Incorporating offline survey methods alongside online ones could improve data reliability. Third, the gender distribution of respondents was uneven, with a significantly higher proportion of female participants. Future studies should aim for a more balanced sample. Finally, this study focuses specifically on experiential marketing in theme parks, which may not be fully generalizable to other industries. Future research could broaden the application of experiential marketing to other sectors to enhance its wider relevance.

References

- [1] Feng, W., Wu, D.D., & Yi, L. (2021). Transcultural brand communication: Disneyland's social media posts from USA to Hong Kong and Shanghai. *Discourse & Communication*, 15(6), 690-706.
- [2] AECOM (Ed.) (2024). Theme Index Report 2023. <https://aecom.com/theme-index/>
- [3] Schmitt, B., & Zarantonello, L. (2013). Consumer Experience and Experiential Marketing: A Critical Review. *Review of Marketing Research*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 25-61.
- [4] Davey, A., Sung, B., & Butcher, L. (2024). Revisiting experiential marketing: a Delphi study. *Journal of Brand Management*, 31(1), 16-37.
- [5] Urdea, A.-M., & Constantin, C.P. (2021). Experts' Perspective on the Development of Experiential Marketing Strategy: Implementation Steps, Benefits, and Challenges. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 14(10), 502.
- [6] Yuan, Y.-H. "Erin", & Wu, C. "Kenny" (2008). Relationships Among Experiential Marketing, Experiential Value, and Customer Satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 32(3), 387-410.
- [7] Cachero-Martínez, S., & Vázquez-Casielles, R. (2021). Building consumer loyalty through e-shopping experiences: The mediating role of emotions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 60, 102481.
- [8] Hwang, J., & Lee, J. (2019). A strategy for enhancing senior tourists' well-being perception: focusing on the experience economy. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 36(3), 314-329.
- [9] Sohaib, M., & Han, H. (2023). Building value co-creation with social media marketing, brand trust, and brand loyalty. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 74, 103442.
- [10] Li, M.-W., Teng, H.-Y., & Chen, C.-Y. (2020). Unlocking the customer engagement-brand loyalty relationship in tourism social media: The roles of brand attachment and customer trust. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 44, 184-192.

- [11] Hollebeek, L.D. (2011). Demystifying customer brand engagement: Exploring the loyalty nexus. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(7-8), 785-807.
- [12] Nadeem, W., Tan, T.M., Tajvidi, M., & Hajli N. (2021). How do experiences enhance brand relationship performance and value co-creation in social commerce? The role of consumer engagement and self brand-connection. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 171, 120952.
- [13] Shabbir, M.Q., Khan, A.A., & Khan, S.R. (2017). BRAND LOYALTY BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND EQUITY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF BRAND AWARENESS. *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, 19(2), 416-423.
- [14] Fetscherin, M., & Heilmann, T. (2015). *Consumer Brand Relationships*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- [15] Ghorbanzadeh, D., & Rahehagh, A. (2021). Emotional brand attachment and brand love: the emotional bridges in the process of transition from satisfaction to loyalty. *Rajagiri Management Journal*, 15(1), 16-38.
- [16] Grisaffe, D.B., & Nguyen, H.P. (2011). Antecedents of emotional attachment to brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 64(10), 1052-1059.
- [17] Azize, Ş., Cemal, Z., & Hakan, K.I. (2012). The effects of brand experience and service quality on repurchase intention: The role of brand relationship quality. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6(45), 11190-11201.
- [18] Cheung, M.L., Pires, G.D., Rosenberger, P.J., III, & De Oliveira, M.J. (2020). Driving consumer-brand engagement and co-creation by brand interactivity. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 38(4), 523-541.
- [19] Li, W., & Su, C.-S. (2025). Impact of Emotional Attachment and Self-Brand Connection on Repurchase Behavior: The Mediating Role of Attitudinal Loyalty and Behavioral Loyalty. *Journal of Management World*, 2025(3), 76-83.
- [20] Harrigan, P., Evers, U., Miles, M., & Daly, T. (2017). Customer engagement with tourism social media brands. *Tourism Management*, 59, 597-609.
- [21] Nam, J., Ekinci, Y., & Whyatt, G. (2011). Brand equity, brand loyalty and consumer satisfaction. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3), 1009-1030.
- [22] Segal, B., & Podoshen, J.S. (2013). An examination of materialism, conspicuous consumption and gender differences. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37(2), 189-198.
- [23] Kim, D.-Y., & Park, S. (2020). Rethinking millennials: how are they shaping the tourism industry?. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 25(1), 1-2.
- [24] Xie, C., & Yang, X. (2024). Expanding the Middle-Income Group Through Education: Preliminary Evidence From China. *ECNU Review of Education*, 20965311241265371.
- [25] Heale, R., & Twycross, A. (2015). Validity & reliability in quantitative studies. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 18(3), 66-67.
- [26] Rossoni, L., Engelbert, R., & Bellegard, N.L. (2016). Normal science and its tools: Reviewing the effects of factor analysis in management. *Revista de Administração*, 198-211.
- [27] Noora Shrestha (2020). Detecting Multicollinearity in Regression Analysis. *American Journal of Applied Mathematics & Statistics*, 8(2), 39-42.
- [28] Ozili, P.K. (2023). The Acceptable R-square in Empirical Modelling for Social Science Research.
- [29] Ryan, K.E. et al. (2014). Focus Group Evidence: Implications for Design and Analysis. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 35(3), 328-345.