

VOLUME 1

AI, Sustainability and Digital Transformation: Shaping the Future of Business and Society

Theme and fun parks: a review paper (2020-2024)Michaela Nechojdomová¹, Iva Slivar², Bojana Ostojić³¹Comiens University, Bratislava, Slovakia,²University of Juraj Dobrila in Pula, Faculty of Economics and Tourism „dr. M. Mirković“,³Univerzitet "Educons"

Abstract: Theme and fun parks have become integral components of the global tourism industry, serving as major attractions that drive both domestic and international travel. A comprehensive approach systemizing research, relevant to the words theme / fun parks and tourism from the Scopus database, shows how these parks have changed from basic entertainment spots to complex, immersive experiences that combine storytelling, technology, and themed environments. The paper also explores the various ways these parks benefit local economies, such as by creating jobs, boosting tourism revenue, and supporting regional growth. The issues related to the role of theme parks and fun parks in tourism, primarily their economic, social, and cultural impacts, are also examined. Furthermore, the paper signals the need to explore more the challenges and sustainability concerns that the growth of these parks entails, such as environmental impacts, over-tourism, and resource management. The paper's originality stems from the lack of similar systematic research and the identification of under-researched relevant topics. The review concludes with a reflection on future trends in the theme park industry, including the increasing use of technology, the slowly growing emphasis on sustainability, all in order to facilitate the expansion of tourism markets.

Keywords: theme parks, fun parks, tourism entertainment, economic impact of theme and fun parks, sustainability of theme and fun parks.

JEL Classification: L83, Z32, R11, Q01

1. Introduction

Theme and fun parks have become key attractions in the global tourism industry, offering immersive experiences that blend entertainment, technology and storytelling. Nowadays, they play a crucial role in local economies, regional branding, and cultural exchange, drawing millions of visitors annually (Hsieh, Yi-Chih You, Peng-Sheng, 2024). They have overgrown their function of entertainment centers and become narrative and technology based and tourist destinations (Liang, Zengxian & Li, Xiang, 2023).

Despite their popularity, the growth of theme parks presents challenges, including sustainability issues, environmental impacts, and the management of large visitor flows. Furthermore, the integration of digital technologies and virtual experiences is reshaping the future of the industry.

This review paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of researched topics which address theme and fun parks in tourism, analyzing their economic, social, and cultural impacts, while addressing the challenges and opportunities they present.

The aim of this review paper is to explore the impact of theme and fun parks on the tourism industry detecting their key challenges and under-researched correlated topics in order to tackle better future issues, focusing on:

- The evolution and integration of theme parks into global tourism along with their economic contributions, including revenue generation and job creation.

- The social and cultural impacts on communities and visitors.
- The challenges related to sustainability and technological innovation.

The goal is to analyze the impact of theme and fun parks on tourism, particularly related to visitor demographics, economic contributions, and emerging industry trends, and to provide actionable recommendations for future developments in the sector.

This paper consists of four chapters. After the introduction, the second chapter is the methodology, followed by the results of the desk analyses of the available relevant papers according to the Scopus database. The last chapter is the conclusion, which provides a summary of key findings, contributions to theory and practice, along with limitations of the research and future research suggestion directions.

2. Methodology

This review paper was based on a comprehensive search of academic literature to gather relevant sources that address the relationship between theme and fun parks and tourism. The Scopus database was used to choose and examine these sources. The desk research was carried on from October 2024 till Novembre 2024.

The first step in the methodology involved defining the criteria for selecting sources relevant to the topic. The primary focus was on articles that explore the intersection of theme and fun parks with the tourism industry. To ensure the relevance and quality of the sources, the following criteria were applied to the Scopus search within the article title for the key topic (fun/them + parks) and by using a broader search criterion (Article title, Abstract, Keyword) for the field of application (tourism):

Table 1 Search strategy

SEARCH WITHIN	SEARCH DOCUMENTS
Article title	theme
OR	
Article title	fun
AND	
Article title	parks
AND	
Article title, Abstract, Keywords	tourism

Source: authors' contribution

Secondly, to ensure the sources were current and relevant to the field, only documents published between **2020 and 2024** were included in the search results. This time frame was chosen to capture the latest trends and research on theme and fun parks and their role in tourism.

After applying the above search criteria and date limitations, a total of **58 sources** (11/2024) were found. Namely, the article title search for all terms provided a list with 1/3 less papers, while almost double where the titles found by searching for all the relevant terms using the filtering option “within article title, abstract and keywords”

These 58 sources were then screened to determine their relevance to the review topic.

- *Exclusion of Irrelevant Sources:* Four sources were excluded because they did not directly relate to the theme and fun park-tourism nexus.
- *Unavailability of Documents:* Thirty-two sources were excluded due to the unavailability of full documents, making it impossible to analyze them further.
- *Access Limitations:* Three sources were inaccessible due to restrictions in accessing the full text.

Finally, following the screening process, **19 sources** remained that met the inclusion criteria and were available for analysis. These sources formed the basis of the review paper and were summarized and analyzed in the final discussion.

3. Results

YEAR	AUTHORS	TITLE	RELEVANT FINDINGS	SUMMARY	METHODOLOGY / METHODS / DATA
2024	Song, Xiaoqing, Wu, H., Jiang, W. <u>Zhi Junjun</u> <u>Xia Xinyu</u> <u>Long Yi</u> <u>Su Qin</u>	Using geotagged facial expressions to visualize and characterize different demographic groups' emotion in theme parks	This research underscores the necessity of considering demographic factors in tourism studies to better understand and cater to the emotional needs of different tourist groups.	Tourism is an emotional sphere, and researchers focus on emotions to optimize tourism experiences. Tourism studies on emotions mostly ignore differences in emotions across demographic tourist groups by gender and age, thus limiting the understanding of emotions to the explicit characteristics of tourists' emotions. On the basis of geotagged facial expressions on social media platforms, this study aims to visualize the emotions of groups in scenic spots and then reveal the variations between groups' emotions within theme parks. By employing a facial recognition algorithm, an emotion distribution graph was proposed to represent groups' emotions in detail. Some analytical methods were combined to characterize of the emotion distribution of each group. Through a comprehensive comparison, the results suggest that there are unique characteristics of emotion distribution for each group and considerable variations between them.	Photos of visitors collected from social media, facial emotion recognition software analyses / secondary data
2024	<u>Hsieh Yi-Chih</u> You, Peng-Sheng	A comparison of three evolutionary algorithms for group scheduling in theme parks with multitype facilities	This research provides valuable insights into addressing operational challenges faced by theme parks and improving the overall visitor experience,	During the peak tourist season, large theme parks often experience a simultaneous influx of visitors, resulting in prolonged waiting times for popular attractions. This extended waiting significantly reduces tourists' satisfaction and may negatively impact their willingness to revisit the theme park. In Taiwan, schools at all levels often plan graduation	Developed a novel approach called the Theme Park Problem with Multitype Facilities (TPP-MTF). Implemented and compared three evolutionary algorithms: a)

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			particularly for student groups.	trips to theme parks for their students. Students are divided into groups and must enter and exit the theme park at the same time. This article presents a new theme park problem with multitype facilities (TPP-MTF) for student groups. Based on the group's preference for theme park facilities, multitype reserved tickets with popular facilities are designed for groups, so groups do not need to wait for the reserved facilities. Since the waiting time for groups can be reduced, the theme park can also obtain ticket fees in advance and estimate the number of visitors to the theme park, so the theme park and the group can achieve a win-win situation. This article proposes a new decoding approach for a random permutation of integer sequence and embeds it into an immune-based algorithm, genetic algorithm, and particle swarm optimization algorithm to solve the TPP-MTF problem.	Immune-based algorithm b) Genetic algorithm c) Particle swarm optimization algorithm. Retrieval of data from one park (case study) and experiments of group scheduling system / Secondary data

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2024	Ryndach, Marina Kazak, Anatoliy Selivanov, Victor Gurevskikh, Olga Dolgushina, Yulia Leonid, Maksimov Chudnovskaya, Tatyana Kryukova, Anastasia	Recreational and health aspect of theme park activities	The paper highlights that theme parks can be a viable alternative to new hotel construction in resort areas, supporting the Russian government's goal to double tourist flows by 2030. It emphasizes improving occupancy rates of existing hotels and notes that year-round theme parks can mitigate tourism seasonality. Overall, the study argues that theme parks can enhance local economies by attracting millions of tourists.	The paper examines the recreational and health aspect of theme park activities. This study substantiates the idea that theme parks in the modern tourism business should become an alternative to the prohibitive construction of hotels in resort areas and traditional recreation areas. This paper is also devoted to understanding the problem of fulfilling the ambitious goals formulated by the government of the Russian Federation to form a new domestic tourism industry by 2030. According to this project, the tourist flow should double, reaching 140 million tourists per year. By 2030, 300 thousand rooms will be built; this is approximately a third of the existing ones. However, there is an alternative solution to this problem. For the development of the tourism industry, today it is more important not to build new hotels, but to create an additional tourist flow in order to increase the occupancy and profitability of existing hotels. The most effective tool for this is the creation of year-round theme parks.	Conceptual analysis and analyses of available strategic documents and studies of the effects of parks vs. hotel construction / Secondary data
2024	Florida-Benítez, Lázaro	Analysis of Latin American Theme Parks in a Tourism Context	The manuscript analyzes Latin American theme parks as key tourist attractions to boost post-pandemic tourism. It evaluates the most visited	The main goal of this manuscript is to analyze Latin American theme parks as tourist attractions for stimulating future tourism demand after the pandemic crisis. The methodology used in this study is a set of qualitative and quantitative indicators for measuring the most visited Latin American parks	Multiple case study, qualitative and quantitative indicators from various sources, correlation analyses / Secondary data

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			parks from 2011 to 2022 and their locations, finding that parks like Six Flags Mexico and Beto Carrero World significantly enhance local tourism. A key finding is that buses are the most efficient transportation mode, and there is a strong correlation between a park's success and its accessibility.	from 2011 to 2022 and where they are localised to address the importance of the location of these theme parks and the cities in which they are operating. The results reveal that Latin American parks such as Six Flags Mexico, Beto Carrero World, Hopi Hari, La Feria de Chapultepec and Parque Xcaret are tourist attractions that promote and improve the tourism industry in Latin American cities, and their entertainment activities attract millions of visitors each year. One of the most important findings from this study is that the bus is the primary and most efficient (regarding travel time) mode of transportation in the cities analysed, as well as that there is a high correlation between the success of tourist attractions, their accessibility by plane and on land and their distance to Latin American cities.	
2024	Yuan, Li Marzuki, Azizan	What keeps historical theme park visitors coming? Research based on expectation confirmation theory	The article explores the impact of culture on tourist experiences at historical theme parks in China, particularly the Song Dynasty park in Kaifeng. It highlights the park's role in promoting local history and culture. The study identifies five key constructs: tourism motivation, service quality, tourism experience, satisfaction, and post-trip behavioral intentions. It finds that	In China, "theme park" is a new field of tourism research, an excellent theme park can not only drive the development of a city's tourism industry, but also help it better publicize its history and culture. The article takes Kaifeng, China as the background, and selects the Song Dynasty historical and cultural theme park, which was established based on the traditional ink painting Qingming Riverside Drawing, as an example, to study the factors affecting tourists' travel experience in historical and cultural theme parks, and based on which it explores the reasons for the formation of tourists' satisfaction and post-trip behavioral intentions, to provide references and suggestions for the development of cultural theme parks from the point of view of travel experience. Based on the expectation confirmation	Expectation confirmation theory, case study / primary data

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			tourism motivation and service quality significantly influence the overall experience, which affects satisfaction and future behavior. The research emphasizes the need for cultural theme parks to improve service quality and understand tourist motivations to enhance experiences. The study examines how thematic influences affect visitor satisfaction at Shanghai Disney Resort using 112,000 reviews from June 2016 to March 2022. It finds that satisfaction is closely linked to service quality and enjoyment. Early visitors focus on specific rides, while later visitors emphasize the overall experience. Additionally, the relationship between review content and ratings weakens over time, indicating that reviews capture subjective experiences better than ratings.	theory, this paper introduces five constructs, namely, expectation (tourism motivation), performance (service quality), confirmation (tourism experience), satisfaction, and post-trip behavior intention, to construct a model of the factors influencing tourists' satisfaction by tourism experience in historical theme parks and analyze the intrinsic correlation among the factors within the model. It is found that tourists' tourism experience is mainly affected by tourism motivation and service quality, satisfaction and post-trip behavior intention are jointly determined by the above three. This study aims to explore thematic influences on theme park visitors' satisfaction through user-generated data. To this end, the authors first used an unsupervised machine learning method, structural topic modeling, and analyzed 112,000 reviews post by visitors to Shanghai Disney Resort from June 16, 2016 to March 4, 2022. The findings suggest that visitors' satisfaction is highly related to service in the theme park and their playing feeling, and early tourists pay more attention to the experience of specific playing items while later tourists focus on the overall playing experience. In addition, an empirical study is conducted by treating the ratings associated with each review as dependent variable and each topic represented by comments as independent variables, which shows that the relationship between the customer reviews and ratings by tourists becomes less pronounced over time. In other words, as time goes, customers review can reflect their subjective feelings or experience, but the rating is not.	Empirical study, case based, demand side / primary data
2023	Bai, Shizhen He, Hao Han, Chunjia Yang, Mu Yu, Dingyao Bi, Xinrui Gupta, Brij B. Fan, Weijia Panigrahi, Prabin Kumar	Exploring thematic influences on theme park visitors' satisfaction: An empirical study on Disneyland China			

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2023	Liang, Zengxian Li, Xiang	What is a Theme Park? A Synthesis and Research Framework	The article defines theme parks using five main characteristics: thematic identity, controlled access, hybrid consumption, performative labor, and merchandising. It highlights the need for a uniform framework in theme park research, proposing a multidisciplinary approach to assess these characteristics. A research framework covering four domains is introduced.	Theme parks have been studied from various stances, yet a uniform definition and integrated framework remain lacking for theme park research and practice. Based on a comprehensive review and research synthesis, this paper defines a theme park as a dedicated space featuring five main characteristics: thematic identity, closed space with controlled access, hybrid consumption, performative labor, and merchandising. This paper further considers multidisciplinary lenses in theme park studies, particularly in terms of how these five characteristics can be assessed. A research framework covering four domains (industry, tourists/visitors, environment, and impacts) is accordingly proposed to inspire theoretical advances, identify research gaps, promote relevant research, and facilitate managerial practices. Scholars are encouraged to move beyond current empirical confines and shape the interdisciplinary future of theme park tourism research.	Synthesis of secondary data and research papers
2023	Wang, Xiaohuan Fan, Zhi-Ping Li, Haibin Li, Yujie	Discriminatory Pricing Strategy for Sustainable Tourism in Theme Parks considering Visitors' Price Fairness and Service Value Perceptions	The paper examines how discriminatory pricing strategies can enhance sustainable tourism in theme parks amid rising carbon emissions. It emphasizes the need for parks to invest in clean energy, funded by admission fees and in-park spending. The proposed pricing model aims to secure revenue for low-carbon initiatives	With the increase in carbon emissions in the tourism industry, more tourism enterprises need to make sustained investments in clean energy and green technologies. From the perspective of theme park revenue and operational management, such investments mainly come from admission fees and in-park consumption. The objective of this study is to discuss the role of discriminatory pricing strategies in supporting sustainable tourism in theme parks. Based on transaction utility theory and equity theory, visitors' price fairness perception and service value perception are incorporated into the visitor utility function. On this basis, a goal-programming-based discriminatory pricing model with three goals	Statistical model and its testing according to data collected from visitors / primary data

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			while ensuring equity among visitors and fairness between them and the parks. By considering perceptions of price fairness and service value, the strategy helps generate funds for sustainability and improves visitor satisfaction, brand loyalty, and revisit likelihood.	is proposed: achieving the established revenue target, achieving distributed justice between visitors with unequal status (advantaged visitors and disadvantaged visitors), and achieving distributed justice between visitors and theme parks. The research results show that, for one thing, the proposed discriminatory pricing model can enable theme parks to secure sufficient funds to invest in low-carbon activities (Goal 1) while for another, visitors' satisfaction, brand loyalty, and willingness to revisit and sustainably consume in theme parks are improved by the realization of distributed justice through the discriminatory pricing strategy (Goals 2 and 3).	
2023	Li, Shugang Dou, Qian Chen, Hui Yu, Zhaoxu	The Impact of Consumer's Adaptation to the Creative Culture of Theme Parks on Review Usefulness	The study reveals that consumers' cultural adaptation to creative symbols in theme parks enhances their evaluation of online review usefulness, especially when reviews exhibit high symbolic creativity. Cultural factors also help simplify the information consumers process during decision-making, making reviews more effective. Furthermore, advanced ticket levels influence the usefulness of reviews, moderating extremely positive ones	There has been limited exploration into the influence of consumers' cultural adaptation to creative symbols in theme parks on the usefulness of online reviews, which is significant for enhancing tourism experiences, targeted marketing, personalized services, and informed tourism choices. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how cultural adaptation factors interact and impact the review usefulness, and by considering the role of cultural adaptation in simplifying information during consumer decision-making processes. The study investigates how consumers' decision reference points, represented by advanced ticket levels, moderate their attention to attribute consistency when evaluating the review usefulness. A sample of 5929 consumer reviews of Disney theme parks from 2019 to 2022 on Meituan.com is analyzed using latent semantic analysis and Tobit regression to test the proposed hypotheses. It was found that high	Semantic analyses of reviews on available platforms / secondary data

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			but not extremely negative ones, with the impact varying based on the symbolic creativity of the reviews.	symbolic creativity reviews stimulate cultural adaptation and increase attention to service attributes when evaluating review usefulness. Moreover, advanced ticket levels do not moderate the usefulness of extremely negative reviews. However, they do have a moderating effect on the usefulness of extremely positive reviews.	
2023	Bai, Shizhen He, Hao Han, Chunjia Yang, Mu Bi, Xinrui Fan, Weijia	What makes a theme park experience less enjoyable? Evidence from online customer reviews of Disneyland China	The study explores reasons for tourists' less enjoyment of theme parks by analyzing reviews of Shanghai Disney Resort. Key issues identified include "parking," "service attitude," "recommendation feeling," "experience comparison," and "entrance" processes. Group travelers often face dissatisfaction with parking and fast track issues, while solo or small group visitors are more concerned about staff service and entrance procedures. The findings can help address dissatisfaction and enhance visitor experience.	The aim of this study was to explore the causes of tourists' lesser enjoyment of theme parks through an unsupervised machine learning approach—structural topic modelling. Specifically, the research extracted a comprehensive list of discussion topics about the travel experience of tourists through the analysis of 112,000 customer reviews released by visitors to the Shanghai Disney Resort from 16 June 2016 to 4 March 2022. Then, sentiment analysis was used to distinguish positive and negative topics and to explore the relationship between tourists who buy different ticket types and sentiments in negative topics. The results show that problems such as “parking,” “service attitude,” “recommendation feeling,” “experience comparison,” and “entrance” may be the main reasons for an unpleasant experience. In addition, it was also found that when tourists travel in groups (e.g., via family tickets), customers feel unhappy because of parking and fast track problems. Moreover, when tourists travel alone or with small groups, staff service attitudes, experience comparisons, and entrance processes are the sources of greater concern.	Content analyses of online reviews / Secondary data

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2022	Wang, Xi Yu, Yun Zhu, Zhe Zheng, Jie	Visiting Intentions toward Theme Parks: Do Short Video Content and 'Tourists' Perceived Playfulness on TikTok Matter?	The study examines factors influencing customers' visiting intentions toward Universal Studios Beijing on TikTok. Key findings reveal that social interaction, informativeness, and trust significantly affect perceived usefulness, which in turn impacts visiting intentions through ease of use and playfulness.	The purpose of this study was to look into the potential determinants of customers' visiting intentions toward Universal Studios Beijing on short video platforms such as TikTok. In addition, descriptive analysis was also conducted to show the demographic and other basic characteristics of the sample. The findings revealed that social interaction, informativeness, and trust had significant effects on perceived usefulness, as well as significant influences on the related visiting intentions from the perceived usefulness, ease of use, and playfulness. This study filled in the research gaps of the TikTok studies based on the extended technology acceptance model (TAM) and explored the effects of perceived playfulness on the theme park. The study provides insights for theme park marketers, internet vloggers, and local governments.	Demand side analyses, extended technology acceptance model (TAM) / Primary data
2022	Zhou, Liting Ouyang, Fei Li, Yang Zhan, Jieling Akhtar, Nadeem Itrfaq, Muhammad	Examining the Factors Influencing Tourists' Destination: A Case of Nanhai Movie Theme Park in China	The study explores theme park tourism in China using a stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) framework. It identifies a second-order tourism experience made up of four factors: activity, environment, facility, and interaction experiences, with activity experience being the most impactful. The research highlights a critical pathway from brand identity to brand	The present study used a stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theoretical framework to examine the relationship between theme park tourists' experience, brand identity, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty in China. By using the structural equation model (CB-SEM), this paper illustrates the process of forming destination brand loyalty for sustainable tourism on theme parks. The results suggested a second-order structure of tourism experience. The first-order four factors have different impacts on the second-order tourism experience. Activity experience is the most important factor influencing tourism experience, followed by environment experience, then facility experience, and finally interaction experience. In terms of tourism experience, individual brand	SEM (Structural equation modelling), structure and path analyses of model / primary data

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			satisfaction and then to brand loyalty, which influences tourists' behavior. Additionally, brand satisfaction plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between brand identity and destination loyalty.	identity-brand satisfaction-brand loyalty is the most important path of a theme park on tourists' behavioral intention, among which brand satisfaction plays the most significant partial mediation effect in the relationship between individual identity and destination loyalty. It is expected that the results of this study provide a reference for improving tourists' brand loyalty to achieve sustainable development of theme parks.	
2022	Wu, Meiju He, Jianmin	Horizontal Tourism Cooperation Strategy for Marketing Performance – Evidence From Theme Parks	The study examines how COVID-19 has prompted tourism enterprises in China to adopt new management strategies, focusing on the role of cooperation in marketing and performance. It finds that cooperation—comprising resource similarity, market commonality, and willingness to cooperate—acts as an intermediary in the relationship between tourism marketing and performance. The results indicate that cooperation positively impacts non-financial performance more significantly than financial performance.	Unprecedentedly impacted by COVID-19, tourism enterprises are pushed to adopt new strategic management to cope with the changes in tourists' consumer perception for sustainable development, such as corporate and compete simultaneously with their competitors. The study aims to investigate the intermediate role of cooperation, including the three dimensions of resource similarity, market commonality, and willingness to cooperate in the marketing and performance relationships. Primary data on 360 observers were collected via questionnaire distribution to theme park managers in China with 85.3% accuracy in response rate. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to verify the intermediate effect of cooperation on marketing performance in tourism enterprises. The results of SEM indicate (1) the intermediate role of tourism cooperation, including the three dimensions existing in the relationship between tourism marketing and performance, (2) more significant positive impact on non-financial performance than that on financial performance, and (3) the mechanism of implementing cooperation. This study gives supportive evidence for tourism enterprises to	Regression analyses of financial data from 31 theme parks in China / secondary data

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			The research also highlights effective mechanisms for implementing competition strategies.	implement competition and highlights the implications for appropriately developing competition strategies and tactics to achieve the synergy effect for the individual enterprises and the spillover effect for the destination regarding policy-making, mindset, and partner selection.	
2022	Zhu, Chris Fong, Lawrence Hoc Nang Shang, Ziye Gan, Manrong	Rethinking the Impact of Theme Park Image on Perceived Value and Behavioral Intention: The Case of Chimelong Ocean Kingdom, China	The study examines the role of theme park image in enhancing tourist experiences during COVID-19. It finds that both cognitive and affective aspects of destination image positively influence tourist-perceived value, including functional, social, and emotional value. While social and emotional values boost behavioral intentions, functional value does not.	The emergence of theme parks is enriching the tourist experience in the COVID-19 period. This study rethinks the impact of theme park image on tourist-perceived value (functional, social, and emotional value) and behavioral intention during COVID-19. Data were collected from 304 respondents who visited Chimelong Ocean Kingdom during COVID-19. This study results indicated that theme park destination image (cognitive and affective) positively predicts tourist-perceived value (functional, social, and emotional) during COVID-19. Moreover, this study also indicated that although social and emotional value positively predict tourist behavioral intention, functional value does not positively predict tourist behavioral intention during COVID-19.	Survey of visitors, model definition and its testing using SEM / Primary data
2022	Pan, Yu Xu, Jing Luo, Jian Ming Law, Rob	How Fear of COVID-19 Affects Service Experience and Recommendation Intention in Theme Parks: An Approach of Integrating Protection Motivation Theory	The study examines the impact of COVID-19 on theme park visitors' recommendation intentions. The findings reveal that fear of COVID-19 increases perceived risk, reduces the desire for active participation, and	The unprecedented public panic caused by COVID-19 will affect the recovery, especially in theme parks, which are generally crowded due to high visitor volume. The purpose of this study is to discuss these effects. This study aims to predict recommendation intentions of theme park visitors by exploring the complicated mechanism derived from the fear of COVID-19. It uses a quantitative research method, and SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 22.0 were used for data analysis. An online survey was conducted with 420	Online survey of visitors, SEM for hypothesis testing / primary data

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		and Experience Economy Theory	negatively affects service experience. While perceived risk does not directly harm recommendation intentions, these factors collectively impair them.	Chinese respondents who visited Shanghai Disneyland after its reopening. The study explored the relationship between Fear of COVID-19, perceived risk, participation, service experience, and revisit intention. Results indicated the perceived risk of theme park visitors will not directly ruin their recommendation intention. Visitors' fear of COVID-19 enhanced their perceived risk, reduced their desire for active participation and impaired their service experience, which affected their recommendation intention.	
2021	Chang, Min-Yen Hsu, Yi-Sheng Chen, Han-Shen	Choice experiment method for sustainable tourism in theme parks	The study explores tourists' preferences for theme park attributes using the Choice Experiment method and analyzes willingness to pay (WTP) through Conditional Logit and Random Parameter Logit models, surveying 549 respondents in Taiwan. Key findings reveal that the most valued attributes are recreational facilities, followed by theme characteristics and fast pass services. Respondents are willing to pay most for thrilling recreational facilities and unlimited fast pass services. They believe	Previous relevant studies on theme parks lack an exploration of various tourism attributes, e.g., recreational facilities, themes, wait times, fast pass drawings, and pricing, etc., all of which inspired the research motivation of this study. First, the Choice Experiment (CE) method explores tourists' preferences for theme park attributes. Second, the Conditional Logit (CL) and Random Parameter Logit (RPL) models explore the differences in tourists' willingness to pay (WTP) for various attributes from the perspective of their socioeconomic background. The study used purposive sampling to survey questionnaire answers face-to-face in Taiwan, and 549 copies are valid, with an effective recovery rate of 80.7%. The research findings suggest the following: (1) The most valued theme park attributes for consumers are the recreational facilities, followed by theme characteristics, and fast pass drawing. (2) Regarding the respondents' WTP for various attributes, they are willing to pay the highest price for thrilling recreational facilities, then for unlimited fast pass	Face-to-face questionnaire and within statistical analyses: conditional logit model and random parameter logit to test the willingness to pay / primary data

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			that having both enhances overall satisfaction but show limited purchase intention for fast pass services.	services, and cartoon character themes. (3) Respondents believe that if thrilling recreational facilities and fast pass drawing are available at the same time, then the overall effectiveness will be improved. (4) Respondents relatively have no purchase intention for fast pass drawing. It is hoped that the research findings can provide theme park operators reference basis for making plans and decisions.	
2021	Zhang, Zi'ang Liang, Zengxian Bao, Jigang	From theme park to cultural tourism town: Disneyzation turning of tourism space in China	The study explores the impact of theme parks and cultural tourism towns on urban tourism in China, focusing on the trend of "Disneyzation." It highlights that theme parks serve as models for cultural tourism towns, exemplified by the "Wuzhen Town Mode," which features theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, and performative labor. A unique aspect of these towns is their residential function, distinguishing them from traditional tourist destinations. The Disneyzation process is driven by local government initiatives, tourist demand, social	Theme park development has become an important choice for tourism space development in Chinese cities, and the theming of space as well as the implied consumption symbols and cultural implications are usually viewed as examples for the development of other urban spaces, such as cultural tourism towns. The result is the Disneyzation of urban tourism space. With the construction of characteristic towns being vigorously promoted throughout China, cultural tourism towns are springing up. They are typical of the "Wuzhen Town Mode" and represent the process of the Disneyzation of tourism space in China. This research reflects on the evolution of the characteristics of tourism space in China. Taking the Wuzhen Town Mode as an example, this study reveals the characteristics and conversion mechanism of the Disneyzation of tourism space in Chinese cities. According to this research, the Wuzhen Town Mode of the Disneyzation is characterized by theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, and performative labor. Residential function is a unique characteristic of the Disneyzation of cultural tourism towns in China.	Case study approach, in-depth interviews, observation, strategic document analyses (content analyses) / primary and secondary data

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			environment, and capital investment. The study also offers policy recommendations for managing this trend.	Moreover, the Wuzhen Town Mode of the Disneyization is jointly motivated by the driving force of local governments, the propulsive force of tourist demand, the attractive force of the social environment, and the driving force of capital. Finally, suggestions and policy proposals are provided for the Disneyization of tourism space.	
2021	Sarinastiti, Eska Nia Wicaksono, Muhamad Sidiq	Commercialization and tourism: Challenges in sustainable wildlife animal conservation-based Theme Park management in Central Java area	The study explores the impact, challenges, and concept of ecotourism in managing theme parks for sustainable wildlife conservation in Central Java. It finds positive outcomes from conservation and sustainable tourism practices but also identifies management challenges. Externally, tourists often do not comply with conservation guidelines, while internally, insufficient funding hampers effective management and infrastructure development..	The purpose of this study was to determine the impact, challenges, and concept of ecotourism in managing theme parks based on sustainable wildlife animal conservation in Central Java. This research uses qualitative exploratory research. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews and direct observation as primary data, while documentation, questionnaires, and literature studies are secondary data. Data analysis is divided into several stages: data coding, finding patterns, labeling themes, and developing category systems. The results showed that, first, positive impacts were obtained from conservation and sustainable tourism. Second, management challenges include external (outside the company scope) and internal (within the company scope). The external challenge most often faced by managers is the behavior of tourists who do not comply with the appeal in the theme park area. Meanwhile, the most crucial internal challenge is insufficient funding sources for the management and development of infrastructure. Third, ecotourism offers an alternative concept for sustainable management of theme parks economically and in conservation but requires large funds for realization.	Qualitative descriptive study, in-depth interviews, observation and document analyses & thematic analyses of transcripts / primary and secondary

YEAR	AUTHORS	TITLE	RELEVANT FINDINGS	SUMMARY	METHODOLOGY / METHODS / DATA
2020	Yang, Zhang Jiacheng, Li Lei, Li	Time-dependent theme park routing problem by parthenogenetic algorithm	The study addresses the challenges tourists face in planning visits to theme parks due to excessive information on park websites. It introduces a Time-Dependent Theme Park Routing Problem (TDTPRP), based on the Traveling Salesman Problem (TSP), which factors in walking time, congestion, and fatigue. The model aims to maximize the number of attractions visited while minimizing queues and walking time. To validate its effectiveness, the research uses the Partheno-Genetic Algorithm (PGA) and an improved Annealing Partheno-Genetic Algorithm (APGA). Results show that the APGA offers better optimization than the standard PGA, especially with larger data scales.	With the improvement of people's living standards and entertainment interests, theme parks have become one of the most popular holiday places. Many theme park websites provide a variety of information, according to which tourists can arrange their own schedules. However, most theme park websites usually have too much information, which makes it difficult for tourists to develop a tourism planning. Therefore, the theme park routing problem has attracted the attention of scholars. Based on the Traveling Salesman Problem (TSP) network, the study proposes a Time-Dependent Theme Park Routing Problem (TDTPRP), in which walking time is time-dependent, considering the degree of congestion and fatigue. The main goal is to maximize the number of attractions visited and satisfaction and to reduce queues and walking time. To verify the feasibility and the effectiveness of the model, the Partheno-Genetic Algorithm (PGA) and an improved Annealing Partheno-Genetic Algorithm (APGA) was used to solve the model in this paper. Then, in the experimental stage, two experiments were conducted, and the experimental data were divided into real-world problem instances and randomly generated problem instances. The results demonstrate that the parthenogenetic simulated annealing algorithm has better optimization ability than the general parthenogenetic algorithm when the data scale is expanded.	Model development; algorithm implementation: developed a Partheno-Genetic Algorithm (PGA) and created an improved Annealing Partheno-Genetic Algorithm (APGA); experimental design and 2 experiments / primary data

Source: authors' contribution

Across the reviewed literature (2020–2024), theme and fun park research converges strongly on the visitor-centered paradigm. A dominant similarity among most studies is the treatment of theme parks not merely as entertainment venues but as complex experiential systems where emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses mediate tourism outcomes. Studies on visitor satisfaction, emotions, and experience formation—whether through expectation confirmation theory, stimulus–organism–response models, or user-generated content analyses—consistently confirm that service quality, experiential intensity, and perceived value are the primary drivers of satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention.

However, clear differences emerge in how experience is acknowledged. Earlier and conceptually oriented papers emphasize holistic experience elements (e.g. motivation, image, brand identity), whereas more recent studies increasingly rely on granular, data-driven approaches, such as facial emotion recognition, sentiment analysis, and structural topic modeling of online reviews. This signals a methodological shift from perception-based surveys toward behavioral and digital data, although both approaches arrive at similar conclusions regarding the role of experience quality.

A second major similarity lies in the growing interest towards application of technology, distributed across different topics. Operational and optimization-focused studies (e.g. group schedules, pricing algorithms) adopt advanced computational models to address issues such as congestion, waiting times, and revenue efficiency. In contrast, technology in marketing and experience research is mainly based on social media and big data analytics, focusing on short-video content, online reviews and social media engagement metrics. Despite these advancements, the literature remains fragmented, with limited integration between operational technologies and visitor-experience technologies, indicating a gap, signaling the need for a more integrated approach to technological use.

In terms of economic and managerial perspectives, most studies acknowledge theme parks as catalysts of tourism development, destination competitiveness, and regional growth. However, economic impacts are more often indirectly included within studies on satisfaction, pricing, or branding rather than examined directly. Only a small subset explicitly addresses macro-level tourism development, seasonality reduction, or infrastructure substitution (e.g. theme parks as alternatives to hotel expansion). This clearly shows a stronger micro-level focus on individual visitor behavior, rather than to a destination-level.

Sustainability represents one of the clearest points of divergence. While sustainability is frequently invoked rhetorically, only a limited number of studies operationalize it through concrete actions such as low-carbon investment, discriminatory pricing for equity, cooptation strategies, or conservation-based park management. Environmental and social sustainability concerns—over-tourism, resource use, wildlife protection—remain marginal compared to economic and experiential priorities. This imbalance suggests that sustainability is still treated as an additional objective, rather than a core dimension of theme park tourism research.

Culturally oriented studies examine historical theme parks, cultural tourism towns, and Disneyization processes. These works extend the conceptual boundaries of theme parks beyond enclosed attractions to broader tourism spaces and hybrid urban forms. Compared to experience-focused studies, they focus on symbolism and spatial transformation, thereby enrich the theoretical landscape but remaining relatively isolated from the most empirical tourism research.

Regarding the geographical concentration of case studies, these are fragmented and oriented particularly in China and selected emerging markets. While this provides depth in specific contexts, it constrains generalizability and limits comparative international perspectives.

The researches are unified in recognizing theme and fun parks as multidimensional tourism systems driven by experience, technology, and branding, yet fragmented in its treatment of sustainability, macroeconomic impact, and integrated technological application.

Most researches reveal the dominance of demand-side studies, thus many macroeconomic aspects are not enough explored (e.g. governance, policy, labor and impacts at the destination level)

The most significant emerging trend is the methodological shift toward data-intensive and algorithmic approaches, while the most persistent gap remains the limited alignment between rapid technological adoption in practice and its systematic examination in academic research.

4 Conclusion

This review examined the role of theme and fun parks in tourism, analyzing their impacts on local economies, communities, and tourism trends. After screening 58 sources from the Scopus database, 19 relevant articles were selected for analysis. The findings provide valuable insights into the theoretical and practical contributions of these parks while highlighting some key challenges.

The analyzed papers contribute to the understanding of theme parks as major influencers in tourism. They show that parks are not only entertainment venues but also key drivers of tourism economies. The integration of new technologies and immersive experiences is also a growing theme, reflecting changing consumer expectations. Various sustainability aspects are less frequently investigated, signaling a gap in the literature, with the exception of the economic aspects, which are more prominently addressed. Almost 25% of studies apply the case study format or multiple case studies while almost 70 % are focused on investigating the demand side. Out of the studies analyzed, 8 use primary data, 9 use secondary and 2 use both sources of data. Quantitative methodology is used in more than half of the studies. The use of content analyses in various variations along with models and relationship testing among variables using SEM is pretty often used.

Based on the provided research summaries, here's an analysis of the most frequently researched topics within theme and fun parks in the timespan of five years:

- visitor experience and satisfaction: 25% (includes studies on emotions, cultural adaptation, and factors affecting enjoyment)
- marketing and pricing strategies: 20% (covers research on discriminatory pricing, coopetition, and social media marketing)
- operational management: 15% (focuses on group scheduling, routing problems, and facility management)
- economic impact and tourism development: 10% (examines the role of theme parks in local economies and tourism growth)
- technology and data analysis: 10% (utilizes methods like facial recognition, structural topic modeling, and online review analysis)
- sustainability and environmental impact: 5% (addresses issues of sustainable tourism and low-carbon initiatives)
- brand management: 5% (explores brand identity, loyalty, and image in theme parks)
- cultural and historical aspects: 5% (studies historical theme parks and cultural tourism towns)
- health and recreation: 3% (examines the recreational and health benefits of theme park activities)
- transportation and accessibility: 2% (analyzes the relationship between park success and transportation infrastructure).

This breakdown reflects the diverse range of topics studied in theme park research, with a clear emphasis on understanding and improving visitor experiences, as well as optimizing marketing and operational strategies. This is one of the rare review papers which systematically collected and analyzed the topic of both theme and fun parks vs. the study regarding only theme parks of Liang, Zengxian & Li, Xiang (2023). This fact, along with the signalization of under researched topics, represents the theoretical contribution.

Theme parks have significant economic benefits, such as job creation and tourism revenue which, along with the detection of concrete case studies, represents a contribution to practice. Furthermore, case studies also highlight challenges, such as environmental issues and over-tourism, particularly in regions with major parks.

This review paper has several limitations that should be acknowledged:

- *Errors in Analysis:* Some sources may have contained errors due to incomplete or inaccessible data, affecting the overall findings. The exclusion of unavailable documents limited the scope of analysis.
- *Source Selection Limitations:* The search focused on English-language articles from 2020-2024, possibly missing relevant studies outside these limits.
- *Incomplete Topic Search:* The search criteria may not have fully captured all relevant aspects of the topic and some important terms may have been missed.

Future studies should explore theme parks in emerging markets and further investigate sustainability, digital innovations, and the long-term social effects of over-tourism. Expanding research to smaller parks and their local communities would provide a more holistic understanding of their impact. Surprisingly, the research focusing on technological aspects is not following the rhythm in of its application in real-world theme and fun parks.

Theme parks play a vital role in tourism and addressing the challenges of sustainability and over-tourism remains crucial. This review provides insights and directions for future research and practice in the industry.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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