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Success factors of theme parks - An exploratory study

Abstract

Theme parks are important products for the leisure and tourism industry but the analysis of their critical success factors seems to be a neglected area in leisure and tourism research. Most authors agree that authenticity as well as the staging of experiences is a main factor influencing consumer's decision to buy a leisure or tourism product. Thus, this paper discusses authenticity and the staging of experiences as critical success factors for the management of theme parks. Empirical data gathered from personal interviews with theme park managers in Austria, Germany and Switzerland reveal the assumption that the literature is not in line with the critical success factors of theme park management. The paper concludes by outlining future research on success factors of theme parks as well as implications for their management.

Keywords:
theme parks; critical success factors; authenticity; staging experiences

Introduction

Today's so called 'experience-generation' has, on the one side, a tendency to experience-intensity and life-hype as well as a tendency to impulsive and fast experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Horx, 2002; Grötsch, 2006). On the other side, tourists increasingly search for calmness, authenticity and 'soft' tourism experiences such as trekking, mountain-hiking, ocean-cruising or beach relaxation (Wang, 1999; Goulding, 2000; Taylor, 2001; Olsen, 2002). As rapid changes in the business environment take place, the tourism supply side is faced with new challenges: consumers search for multi-optional offers and experiences which are delivered in an exciting but also very comfortable and more and more authentic atmosphere (Opaschowski, 2000; Foot, 2002; Reiter, 2004).

Especially within mature markets, theme parks in its various forms have been viewed as central means to fulfill new leisure and tourism trends: they offer more quality for less, they are safe and clean, their offers are multi-optional and time-saving as well as emotional and sense giving and their visitation also meets the needs of soft individualism (Bieger, Dreier & Frey, 2002). Thus, they have become favorite modes of mass

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entertainment all over the world (Walsh-Heron & Stevens, 1990; Swarbrooke, 1995; Milman, 2001). Due to this expansion issues which affect the construction, operation and the success of theme parks have been neglected (Bieger, 2001; Prideaux, 2002). Thus, the aim of this paper is to analyze success factors for the management of theme parks: which factors are important for the management and the success of theme parks? Is consumers' increasing demand for authenticity and experiences taken into account by the theme park management? Hence, this paper is organized in several parts. First, the concept of authenticity and its role within new tourism behavior is discussed. Second, the staging of experiences as a main determinant of theme parks is analyzed. Third, the concept of theme parks and its success factors are presented. In the empirical part of the paper the result of the interviews are presented and compared to the theoretical debate within tourism and leisure research. Furthermore the result are discussed and possible gaps discovered between management perception and conceptual discussions. The paper concludes with some policy implications for the management of theme parks and by outlining future research questions for its management and development.

Authenticity

As the concept of authenticity seems to be still 'a fertile idea in the debates about tourist motivation and experiences' (Olsen, 2002, p. 159) authors try to explain that in this context for two reasons: first, authenticity is often claimed as one of the major trends in new tourism and consumer behavior and second, it is often discussed in contrast to pure artificial theme parks.

Three decades ago MacCannell (1973) introduced the concept of authenticity to socio-logical studies of tourist's motivations. He argued that tourists are damned to consume staged authenticity although they are looking for real authenticity. Authenticity as a feature has been characterized as something that is genuine as opposed to something simulated or forged (Golomb, 1995). This explains why the term was linked in his early usage closely to museums or heritage sites and has been extended at a later date to tourism experiences (Goulding, 2000). Its dialectic between object and subject, there and here, then and now is fundamental to the concept of authenticity (Taylor, 2001).

Cohen (1988) suggested treating authenticity as a matter of negotiation because it is based on individuals' knowledge about the object, education, previous experiences, images, and tourists' self concept such as imagination, beliefs, views, cultural back-ground and social ties. The latter is also stressed by Olsen (2002): 'If people's experi-ence of being tourist is what keeps them away from what they regard as authentic experiences, the analysis has to pay attention to how people are situated in social context when they label experiences authentic or not' (Olsen, 2002, p. 161). Most research on authenticity is focused on the analysis of individuals which try 'being authentic' (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). This existential authenticity seems to be the more customer driven and dynamic concept in opposite to the authenticity referring to objects.

For example in the past, mass tourists expected to be insulated from authentic experi-ences of both alien cultures and tourism hassles by an 'environmental bubble' such as staying in western- style hotels in non-western countries or participating in organized tours rather than swarming out on their own (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 312). Today it seems that also mass tourism can be linked to authenticity as the quest for authenticity does not necessarily require a search for the exotic, undiscovered and primitive. In contrast, even the most banal depthless aspects of tourism have the potential to facilitate existential authenticity (Taylor, 2001). Consumers´ decision to

buy or not to buy is based on how real they perceive the products, services or experiences (Yeoman, Brass & McMahon-Beattie, 2007). Therefore, it might be worthwhile for managers of theme parks as well as of other industries to consider the authenticity potential of their products and services more in detail.

Concluding the authenticity discussion with MacCannell's (1973) work it becomes obvious that theme parks are able to fulfill tourists need for authenticity. Modern tourists are alienated and seek authenticity as a form of personal fulfillment. In addition, tourists have a strong need to escape to other zones, times or places as a result of alienation from everyday experiences (MacCannell, 1973). Considering these two aspects of authenticity theme parks seem to be able to deliver both: personal fulfillment and escape to other places. As tourists search for personal fulfillment in theme parks another important factor arises: tourist's experiences in theme parks. The concept and discussion of how to stage successful customer's experiences will be addressed next.

Experiences

The experience value of a product is a dominant factor influencing consumers' motivation to buy a product. In this context the customer searches for emotional experiences such as fun, happening, adventure or excitement. In general, experiences take place whenever a company or a destination decides to use services as the stage and goods as props to engage an individual whereby memorability is the most important characteristic of experiences: 'While commodities are fungible, goods tangible and services intangible, experiences are memorable' (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 11). In order to transform the consumers' consumption of ordinary goods and services into 'a memorable experience', they have to be produced and marketed with the help of psychological insights which help to heighten the experiential character of consumer activities. For properly staging experiences psychological knowledge with respect to such phenomena as brain scripts, inferential beliefs, sentence framing and media literacy is required to evoke the desired associations, emotions or memories. E.g. media literacy is employed to create a play with human perception. The spectator wants to be tricked perceptionally as is the case with magicians. We let ourselves be immersed in illusions, which again can be created through particular materials, lighting or architectural design (Mikunda, 1997).

The latter is used for the most successful theme park within the Alpine area of Tyrol and the fifth most successful of Austria: Swarovski's Crystal World. This theme park hosted more than 725.000 visitors in 2004 (TourMis, 2006) and is located nearby the authentic cut crystal production in Wattens, Tyrol (Austria). Swarovski is the world's leading manufacturer of cut crystal and built together with the famous Viennese multimedia artist André Heller this theme park which immerses illusions by telling visual stories for adults. In 2003 they had a decrease of visitors for the first time. As a result many attraction points within the theme park were redesigned and the capacity of the whole theme park was expanded in 2004.

Following once more Pine and Gilmore's path breaking work on the experience economy four possibilities are reported as to how consumers can become involved or engaged in experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p. 30). The combination of the dimension 'consumer participation' with the dimension 'environmental relationship' defines the four 'realms' of an experience: entertainment, education, escape and estheticism. The passive participation of consumers is characterized by tourists who do not directly affect or influence the performance, e.g. when listening to an opera. In the case of

active participation, consumers personally affect or influence the performance, e.g. when skiing. The environmental relationship refers to the distinction whether the experience 'goes into' the tourist (absorption) or the tourist 'goes into' the experience (immersion): watching TV seems to be an example for absorption whereas playing a virtual reality game seems to be more an immersion experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

For the case of entertainment and theme parks individuals usually absorb the environment and take a passive part. This neither may be valid for all kinds of theme parks nor for all spheres of a specific theme park. E.g. the interactive brand park 'Ravensburger Spieleland' (www.ravensburger.de/spielelandL/ 2007) which is a modern brand park in Germany for children from two to twelve years delivers also space for immersion experiences, such as boat tours on a lake or visiting animals on a farm. Today's successful theme parks seem to be able to fulfill a wide range of experiences. Per definition theme parks offer an escape from every day's life and they entertain tourists. Sometimes they educate them and deliver an esthetic attraction, such as Autostadt Wolfsburg (www.autostadt.de/portal/site/www/ 2007) which offers educational information about cars in an esthetic atmosphere.

According to Hudson (2006) experiences are a key innovation in today's business across a variety of industries from health care to automobiles. Moreover, a recent study found that the number one ranked 'most memorable experience' for customers is in connection with vacation (Hudson, 2006, p. 138). The demand for leisure and tourism products which are able to engage customers' senses, to stimulate minds, to deliver unique moments or to interact with customers in an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual setting seems increasing. E.g. the demand for spa or so called 'wellness' products in the Alpine part of Austria is still growing but there seems to be a division of the market: on the one hand customers search emotional, high quality and more selfness than wellness products delivering authentic experiences in esthetic surroundings in very individual luxury hotels. On the other hand, standardized spa (wellness) products become part of many middle class hotels. Even in the spa (wellness) sector it has become of utmost importance to deliver customers extra-ordinary experiences which include both, body consciousness and mind awareness (Horx, 2002).

The latter brings us to another aspect discussing experiences within the leisure industry: experiences should offer not only fun and pleasure but also increasingly a clue, a message or sense (Grötsch, 2006). It seems as the future belongs to quick experiences, to leisure at the doorstep or to instant leisure, following the slogan: 'we do it shorter and shorter, but more often'. Consequently, the attractiveness of indoor entertainment and theme parks will not decline as long as they are located nearby populated areas and the demand for experiences will accumulate. Not surprisingly the importance of invested time grows for postmodern customers and short trips seem to promise a higher density of experiences and as a result a higher experience quality. Furthermore, the risk of potential disappointment is reduced in comparison to a two weeks sun and beach holiday (Reiter, 2004, p. 177).

Summarizing the discussion so far it can be assumed that theme parks as well as other branches have to face a new complexity of consumerism. Customers are seeking authenticity as a form of personal fulfillment and unique emotional quick experiences including meanings but at the same time look for comfort, convenience and choice of everyday life to which they have become accustomed in the past. This movement to

self-actualization is a search for deeper meaning; it is a fulfillment of moving beyond goods and services to experiences (Yeoman, Brass & McMahon-Beattie, 2007). Before the authors will empirically evaluate theme parks in terms of success factors the concept of theme parks will be stated briefly.

Theme parks

Following Camp (1997) 'a theme park can be defined as being an outdoor attraction which combines rides, attractions and shows; as being designed around a central theme or group of themes; and as being charging a pay-one-price admission fee to visitors' (Page, 2000, p. 227). According to the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions 'a theme park is an amusement park that has themed attractions, be it food, costumes, entertainment, retail stores and/or rides' (Wong & Cheung, 1999, p. 320). Similar an attraction has been described as a 'designated permanent resource which is controlled and managed for the enjoyment, amusement, entertainment, and education of the visiting public' (Middleton, 1989, p. 229). What seems to distinguish theme parks from other amusement parks or from attractions is a core theme of the park which runs through all or many park attractions. The theme becomes the main part of the experience. Although theme parks were thought of offering visitors one major theme, today most of them contain multi-themes in terms of different attraction points or themed areas (Wong & Cheung, 1999).

Analyzing the concept of theme parks from a positivist perspective neglecting thereby consciously the more critical works on theme parks ('Diznification') it seems to be a neglected area in tourism research. Some works have been done on the wider concept of visitor attractions (Swarbrooke, 1995; Stevens, 2000; Walsh-Heron & Steven, 2000; Bieger, 2001, Fyall et al. 2003) but until today only a handful studies have been carried out on theme parks (McClung, 1991; Fodness & Milner, 1992; Kau, 1993; Wong & Cheung, 1999; Milman, 2001; Johns & Gyimothy, 2002). In particular since the early nineties the research interest in theme parks decreases. Researching for theme park related papers e.g. in the 'Tourism Management' journal, the most recent paper has been published here in 2003 (Bigné, Andreu & Gnoth, 2003) while three papers have been published in the early 90ies (McClung, 1991; Fodness & Milner, 1992; Kau, 1993) and one paper before 1990 (Moutinho, 1988). In sum only five academic papers appeared and the most recent one (Bigné, Andreu & Gnoth, 2003) is focused on visitor emotions in theme parks lacking a conceptual framework or theorizing of theme parks.

Most research carried out on theme parks is concentrated on visitors' profiles and market segmentation (Moutinho, 1988; McClung, 1991; Fodness & Milner, 1992; Kau, 1993; Johns & Gyimothy, 2002; Bigné, Andreu & Gnoth, 2003) while very few major research works have investigated the management of theme parks. The authors found only one paper without empirical research which lists factors for failure. According to Penz & Rösch (2004) these are the following: a gap of or not appropriate theming, unspectacular attractions, insufficient gastronomy, poorly capacity management, contrary target markets, bad services and qualities, false pricing, not appropriate public relations and marketing strategies. One study has been found which analyzes theme parks from a management perspective. Milman (2001) interviewed 122 North American attraction and theme park managers about theme parks future from a management perspective. The respondents predicted that the family market will remain the core of the industry, attractions will become more service orientated and customers will require more active than passive interaction. All other works are concentrated on customers view and the reasons to choose a specific theme park. For example, McClung (1991)

found that the type of the theme is one of the factors affecting tourists' preferences for theme parks. More in detail respondents indicated four important influencing factors in their consideration of whether or not to attend a theme park: climate, preference for theme parks, children's desire to attend and cost. His results suggest that multi segmentation strategies which combine desired themes and attractions are essential for competitive attractiveness. The necessity to combine visitor's preferences for themes with specified attractions is also underlined by Wong & Cheung (1999).

No doubt, theme parks are important impulses for the leisure and tourism industry and its development (Middleton, 1989; Stevens, 2000; Milman, 2001). For the wealth of an area and its economic development theme parks are of utmost importance.

Table 1

SUCCESS FACTORS OF THEME PARKS ACCORDING TO THE LITERATURE

Success factors of theme parks	Literature
Multivarious range of options and attractions: Theme parks have to offer a wide range of attractions and possibilities which meet the requirements and desires of new multi-optional customers.	Bigné et al., 2005 Kagelmann, 2004 Stevens, 2000
Uniqueness: The offered product and set of experiences and attractions should be clearly defined to keep uniqueness against competitors and focus on selected segments of customers.	Prideaux, 2002 Swarbrooke, 1995
Innovation: A continuing process of innovation and redesign hedges success against changing patterns of customer behavior and fading customer loyalty.	Prideaux, 2002 Milman, 2001 Opaschowski, 2000
Continuity/Theming: The whole product including all activities and designs should be themed. Customers need to find a clearly	Wong & Cheung, 1999 Goronzy, 2004
Environmental integration: Theme parks have to be integrated well into the economical, social and ecological environment of their hosting destination. The local population should be	Kagelmann, 2004 Bieger, 2001 Garrod, 2003
Capacity and queue management: The management of the capacity during peak and off-peak times and seasonal variations in demand are a mayor factor for success and customer satisfaction.	Goulding, 2003
Functionality and infrastructure: Here one-stop solutions have to be brought up.	Bieger et al., 2002
Weather independency: All weather operations ensure a continuous business and declutch service from environmental factors.	Bachleitner, 1998
Escape/Imagination: Visitors want to get away from every day life and expect a temporarily change by the artificial and illus ional	Goronzy, 2004 Opaschowski, 2000
Emotions: Theme parks need to tell a story and have to impart impressions and emotions as persuasive as possible with that.	Grötsch, 2006 Reiter, 2004
Involvement/Interactivity: With an increasing involvement and interactivity of the customer the surplus (value added) rise strongly for customers.	Bigné, Andreu & Gnoth, 2003 Milman, 2001
Branding: A corporate branding enables theme parks to create a good image, increase security, trust and recognition to attract customers more efficiently.	Penz & Rösch, 2004 Hennings, 2000 Middleton, 1989
Quality: Customers expect a high level of quality along all areas of the theme park.	Penz & Rösch, 2004 Middelton, 1989
Safety and security: Users expect adventures and experiences in an artificial environment at a calculable risk.	Bieger, Dreier & Frey, 2002
Design: The design has to meet customers' requirements by illustrating the storyboard precisely taking architectural,	Wong & Cheung, 1999 Mikunda, 1997

Following Bieger (2001) the network effect of attractions should be examined as customer's value of an attraction is often increased by other attractions within the same area. Therefore, it might be appropriate to support management strategies which address both, tourists and locals, as the community support and the supporting infrastructure in the surrounding peripheral area are two important determinants for the success of an attraction (Swarbrooke, 1995; Prideaux, 2002).

According to a literature review the most important factors influencing the success of theme parks are summarized in the following Table 1. Every success factor has at least been mentioned once in the literature although the table is not exhaustive. Factors applying on general management matters, such as strategy, finance, human resource management are knowingly excluded as they seem to be too diversified from one park to another to compare. They might have caused a distortion of the results.

Although Table 1 is not exhaustive it lists some important success factors for the management of theme parks discussed in literature. Remarkably neither authenticity nor the staging of memorable experiences was discussed so far in a theme park context.

Next, these success factors will be empirically analyzed for its relevance in selected theme parks in Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

Empirical study

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

Since these factors seem to influence the success of theme parks it is important to ascertain more accurately what theme park managers' preferences in terms of success factors. For this purpose the importance of the success factors listed in Table 1 have been empirically evaluated by carrying our personal interviews with theme park managers in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Theme park managers were asked to rank the 15 success factors from Table 1 on a scale from 10 (very important) to 1 (very unimportant). In addition managers were asked to rank authenticity and the staging of experiences as success factors for theme parks using the same scale. Following this procedure it was possible to get a ranking of the success factors of theme parks. To verify the list of success factors the following open question was raised at the end of each interview: Which factors are important for failure of theme parks and their concepts?

Theme park managers were interviewed by telephone during May and June 2006. In sum more than 50% of all theme park managers were contacted of a total of counted 20 theme parks in Austria, 52 in Germany and 2 in Switzerland. Finally, from 40 contacted theme park managers 20 were willing to carry out the telephone interview which took between up to 20 minutes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Different to the literature view discussed above, the study shows overall interesting results. In the following Figure 1 the ranking of the success factors done by theme park managers is presented.

In the leading cluster with an average value of 9.0 out of 10 the factors 'quality' and 'safety and security' were rated highest. At the top rank the delivered quality to the customers leads with 9.0 and safety and security which means having fun and entertainment at a calculable risk hold 8.9.

Figure 1
RANKING OF SUCCESS FACTORS
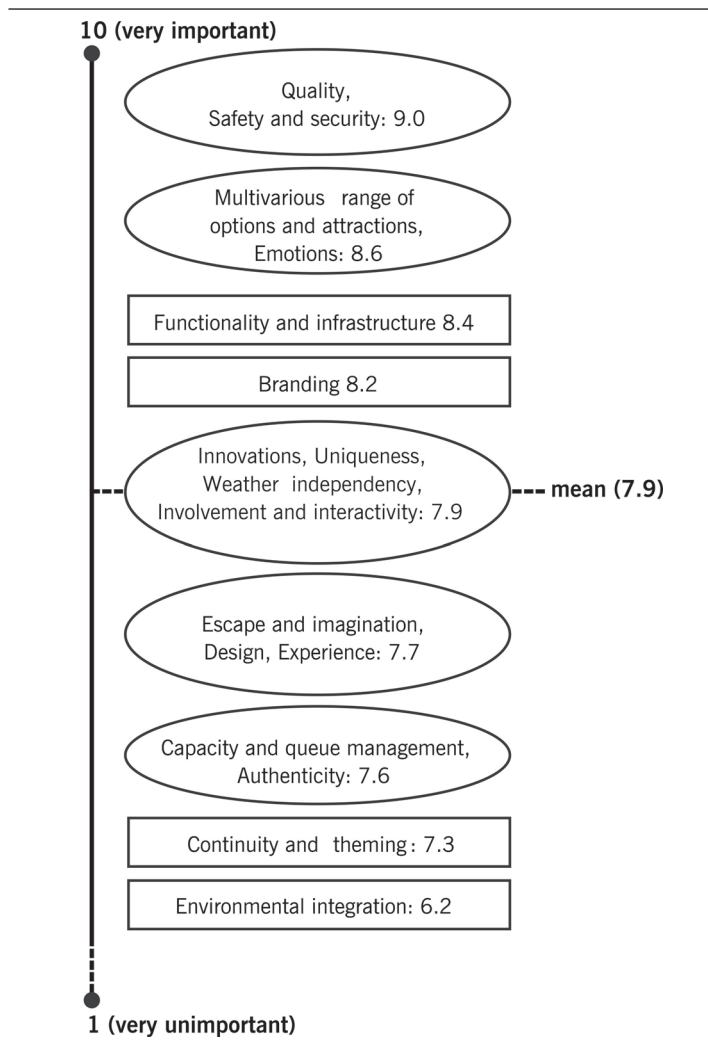
The interviewees noted that 'safety and security' has to be considered as a basis factor of course, but the 8.9 contributes to the trade off between absolutely no risk and adventure or entertainment. The second cluster of success factors contains a mix between hardware and software based arguments with an average rated importance of 8.6. This group contains the 'multivarious ranges of options and attractions' and the imparting of 'impressions and emotions' (both 8.6). Interestingly these points might be subsumed as the functional core concept of a theme park on the one hand hardware-sided by the number of attractions and software-sided by emotioning. Close to these points the factor of 'functionality and infrastructure' of the theme park was rated (8.4). Here, the arrangement and number of hardware seems to be important. The factor of 'branding' is also isolated and seen as quite important with a value of 8.2 still above the mean value (7.9). All interviewees found branding an important point but a difference was discovered between parks where the concept is linked to a strong product brand for e. g. toys such as Lego or Playmobil and parks with no supporting products or product brand. Managers of the latter found branding (8.2) more important than the former (7.7). So, branding seems to be an issue especially for parks with no relation to a product brand name. A third group of success factors meets the mean value with 7.9. These are 'innovations' (8.0), 'uniqueness' (7.95), 'weather independency' (7.95) and

the 'involvement and interactivity' of visitors (7.9). The fourth group of success factors were rated below the mean value with (7.7). This group contains clearly software related factors like 'escape and imagination', 'design' and 'experience' (all 7.7) and seems not that important. Further more, a fifth group containing the factors 'capacity and queue management' and 'authenticity' (both 7.6) was rated below the mean, too. Interestingly the postulated concepts like the staging of experiences and authenticity were relatively low rated with 7.7 and 7.6 respectively. The interviewees seem here to be more hardware minded than relying on software oriented factors discussed in the sections above. The factor of a consisting storyboard ('continuity/theming') was considered as not that important (7.3) as well as the factor of the 'environmental integration' (6.2) rated behind. Here it might be seen as confirmed that theme parks which are more or less artificial bubbles, may interact with their environment but need not crucial to do so.

The open question for reasons of failing theme parks delivered also very interesting outcomes while these answers seem to be more related to traditional management issues like the four p´s place, price, product and promotion in addition with finance and human resource management. The results are presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2
SELECTED FLOP FACTORS OF THEME PARKS

One of the most mentioned arguments were that failing theme parks do not meet and dissatisfy customers' expectations. This means e.g. that the product delivered gaps the description of the product, the product misses authenticity, credibility experience and adventure, the customer gets bored and misses a certain wow-factor and the park lacks of repetitive visits. As important as the right service to customers' expectations were valued marketing issues in general. Failing parks do miss the right and appropriate marketing concept, a wrong or non existent branding, wrong defined target groups and a lack of mouth-to-mouth propaganda. As a third point, the wrong location of the park was named as a flop factor. A wrong location implies also the missing catchment area as well as underdeveloped or missing transport connection and infrastructure. The interviewees did consider not appropriate pricing as a fourth point of failure. Here, the

price-quality ratio might dissatisfy customers as well as additional costs e.g. for catering, parking etc. during a visit. Furthermore the price worthiness of the entertainment has to be clear for the (potential) customer. As a fifth case of a cluster of arguments for failed theme park concepts were named: poor basic factors, missing innovations and a distressed concept of financing and investment policy. Here at first and like with other public infrastructure or transportation, theme parks might fail, if basic requirements like quality, safety, cleanliness and reliability are defective or missing. In addition poor or missing service was also mentioned here. Secondly wrong investments and missing innovations were claimed as critical issues, which are interdependent at many times.

Interviewees stated that parks enter a negative innovation cycle and face shortening life cycles of innovations, leading to an increasing and accelerating demand of investments into new attractions. Furthermore, an unbalanced short term cash management, stressed by unstable returns, seasonality and trends could lead many parks into financial troubles. Close to these points the interviewed theme park managers named here missing entrepreneurial abilities and a lack of know how as potential source of breakdowns. Here especially wrong ideas, ordinary or end-of-the pier concepts and a missing uniqueness were mentioned as well as a mistaken market positioning, poor management abilities, low operating experience and the lack of industry know-how. Last and least poor human resource management, no team spirit, a high fluctuation and a bad service attitude were also claimed for no-go factors.

It seems that theme park managers do see more management related issues as a potential source of unsuccessfulness than the lack of soft factors. Surprisingly new consumer behaviour concepts like authenticity and experience were rated as not critical for success. Of course, soft factors are found important, but the hard infrastructural and managerial factors seem to be more present within management board rooms. Out of the management point of view creativity, staging, good ideas and good story telling seem does not to cover poor managerial abilities, entrepreneurship on the on hand and missing customer attention on the other. Here, a gap between the discussion in leisure and tourism research and the managerial everyday life might still persistent.

Conclusion

The above observations directly lead to future research agendas concerning the evaluation of critical success factors in theme parks. Firstly, as theme park literature is missing a profound theoretical framework for analyzing success factors of theme parks, future research should empirically investigate the various factors influencing the success or the failure of theme parks. As the study shows success factors arise which are few discussed in theme park literature. A comprehensive analysis seems to be necessary: to investigate the critical success factors of theme parks management in terms of its management, its product bundle, its price, its place and its customers. Second, the above presented results must be interpreted with caution (i.e. they are neither adequate to be generalized for all kinds, business models or concepts of theme parks nor for destinations with a totally other cultural management background), future research should systematically foster new sampling and data gathering techniques to sketch representative critical success factors for various kind of theme parks in different destinations. Third, it might be more fruitful to carry out empirical studies in theme parks which are focussed on a similar theme or product bundle. Fourth, customers' evaluation of the product bundle of theme parks still lacks empirical research.

Nevertheless, the conclusion can be drawn that theme park managers are aware of many factors which do have a strong impact on the business. Surprisingly authenticity and the staging of experiences are still untended issues and are identified poorly as

success factors in literature. Neither the literature nor the data allowed investigating more in detail customers' evaluation of staging experiences and authenticity in theme parks.

For the future it can be stated, that theme parks at least within Austria, Germany and Switzerland and abroad has to face many challenges. As such for example, fluctuation in demand has to be brought up. Here, a success driver will be to shorten 'downtimes' between peak periods and flatten seasonality impacts (Goulding, 2003). Another important area of success factors of theme parks and attractions is the specific management and it has to become much more important to the operation companies than today. Once more this study has shown that especially quality management as well as queue and capacity management are underdeveloped fields in the theme park industry (Garrod, 2003; Penz & Rösch, 2004).

On the one hand, theme park management recognizes, that a permanent process of developing and implementing innovations (hardware) is a highly important key factor for attracting new customers and keep them returning at a steady flow. On the other hand, the management of theme parks just begins to discover that the consignment of experiences and emotions (software) leads the way to the development of new markets and segments as well as linking the available customers to the specific theme parks. Here, more potential is still ahead.

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