

**Relationships between Brand Personality, Self-Congruity and Tourist Satisfaction of Theme Parks**

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**Article History**

Received: 18.12.2018

Accepted: 28.12.2018

Published: 30.12.2018

**DOI:**

10.36347/sjebm.2018.v05i12.012



**Abstract:** With the fierce promotion of the construction of theme parks in China, the industry competition has been intensely and upgraded from the product level to the brand level. However, the research of theme park brand has not yet attracted enough attention. Based on literature review, this paper constructs a relationship model between theme park brand personality, tourist self-congruity and tourist satisfaction, collects sample data in Guangzhou Chimelong Paradise and uses Mplus7.4 for analysis. The results show that: (1) the theme park brand personality has a significant positive impact on the tourist satisfaction; (2) the tourist self-congruity has a positive impact on the tourist satisfaction in the theme park experience too; (3) the tourist self-congruity plays a partial mediation effect between theme park brand personality and tourist satisfaction. The research conclusions are intended to provide references for the theme park brand management work.

**Keywords:** Theme Park; Brand Personality; Self-Congruity; Tourist Satisfaction.

**INTRODUCTION**

Since the birth of Disneyland in California in 1955, theme park has begun to expand globally. In 1989, China built the first theme park in China, Shenzhen "Jinxiu Zhonghua" scenic spot. Since then, for the purpose of attracting tourists, stimulating the economy, promoting employment, theme parks have been rapidly promoted relying on the "Tourism & Real Estate" model.

According to incomplete statistics, there are more than 2,800 theme parks in China and still growing. However, while the number is growing rapidly, many enterprises in the theme park industry have suffered many problems such as homogenization competition, low-rate revisit, and serious losses. In this context, in order to achieve the differentiated advantages of enterprises the usage of brand concept has become an important way to enhance their own differentiation for the theme park. The difference in the development trend between Shanghai Disneyland and Wanda Group also shows the importance of the theme park brand and the difference in its brand power. When Disney announced its arrival in Shanghai, Wanda Group had "threatened" to make Shanghai Disneyland not profitable for 20 years. However, Wanda has encountered a business crisis rearlie, and in 2017 transferred 91% stock of its 13 corporate travel projects to Sunac Group. The current situation of Shanghai Disneyland is in stark contrast. Based on its long-established brand strategy and distinctive brand characteristics, Shanghai Disneyland announced the financial balance in its first operational year. This group contrasts show that even though the "Tourism & Real Estate" model has a certain additive effect on promoting the development of theme parks, the operation of theme parks still faces challenges. At

the same time, the difference between Disney and Wanda's brand also shows the importance of brand building in the theme park operation process.

In the brand building process, the brand trait is the key factor for the theme park to highlight its core advantages and generate brand recognition in the target market. This will help the theme park to form a distinction with competitors and enhance the attraction of tourists. In order to form a high brand recognition, theme parks need to deepen the impression of tourists. The researches show the destination brand personality can deepen the tourists' awareness and satisfy them. In addition, tourists can also measure the congruity degree between destination brand personality and tourist self-concept. They will be satisfied when the self-congruity is on a high level. Therefore, based on the theory of anthropomorphism and self-congruity theory, this paper explores the influence of theme park brand personality on tourist satisfaction by taking tourists' self-congruity as a mediator. The research results are expected to provide theoretical reference for the theme park brand management work.

**LITERATURE REVIEW****Theme Park**

In the existing research, there are two main definitions of theme parks. One is Wylson's. He believes that theme parks are the places based on science, culture and other themes, using artificial buildings as facilities, and modern technology to enable travelers to get the experience of sensory [1] For the definition of the National Amusement Park History Association, the theme park is an amusement park that builds attractions and provides relevant performances around similar themes. This article will use the definition of Wylson's, which believes that the theme park is a place based on artificial facilities and technology, so that tourists can get sensory and other experience.

The existing researches on theme parks mainly focus on the hardware elements and other aspects, and explore its influence on tourists' travel motivation, tourist experience, tourist satisfaction and post-tour behavior. McClung found that the clarity of theme parks is a major factor influencing the travel decisions of tourists [2]. Milman built a theme park evaluation system from the perspective of experience, including entertainment, cleanliness and safety, food, theme and design, family activities, transportation and attractions and fares [3]. Service environment and the quality of experience will affect tourist satisfaction and the willingness to revisit [4, 5]. Existing researches focus on the impact of product experience to tourists, and lack enough attention to the theme park brand. With the increasing similarity of hardware facilities, the theme park competition has

extended from the product to the brand. Therefore, how to improve brand competitiveness has become the challenge of operators. This article explores the impact of theme park brand personality on tourist satisfaction, thereby enriching the relevant research results of theme park brands.

**Brand Personality**

According to *Anthropomorphism*, in the process of cognitive abstraction of external things, people will be given the characteristics, motives and behaviors of these inanimate objects or animals and plants, then store this feature into their own cognition structure. Due to the constraints of physiological conditions, human phenomenological experience of other individuals can be directly and quickly accepted, while the phenomenological experience from non-human things cannot be so. Therefore, individuals tend to use humans or themselves knowledge as an inductive reference when they recognize non-human things. So for the individual cognition, anthropomorphism is an important abstraction process, it not only helps individual catch the perception characteristics of objects, but also enhances the emotional connection [6]. Brand personality in the field of marketing theory has shown as good and brand personification. Consumers give the brand certain qualities characteristic and store it into their own cognitive structure, thus deepening the cognitive impression [7]. Table-1 shows the definition of brand personality in the existing researches.

**Table-1: The Definition of Brand Personality**

Scholar	Brand Personality Definition
Levy	Brand personality includes demographic characteristics of major consumer groups [7]
Keller	A combination of personality traits of the brand [8]
Upshaw	Brand personality is the quality characteristic that the brand shows to consumers [9]
Aaker	A collection of demographic characteristics associated with brand users[10]
Capara et al.	Related brand associations about product characteristics or consumer benefits[11]

Source: The author sorted out according to previous research

Aaker defined brand personality, and point out the brand personality model contains five dimensions: *Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness* [12]. Due to its robust factor structure, this model is widely used in the study of brand personality. Ekinici and Hosany applied the brand personality concept and model of Aaker to tourism destination research and define the destination brand personality as “a set of personality traits associated with the destination and recognized by the tourist” [14]. Therefore, this paper combines the research of Aaker and Ekinici&Hosany to define the theme park brand personality as a set of characteristics associated with the theme park brand, that is, a set of personality characteristics that the tourists feel associated with the theme park.

In the field of tourism research, restaurants, hotels and destinations are the main research objects of brand personality. Consumers not only evaluate restaurants based on food quality, but also consider other intangible factors [15]. For example; coffee house consumers believe that the brand personality of a coffee house affects its brand reputation, which in turn affects the brand relationships and attitude loyalty of consumer [16]. Su's research on the US hotel market found that the sincerity, excitement and competence dimensions of brand personality positively influence consumers' perceptions of functional congruity and self-congruity, which in turn affects their brand attitude [17]. For top-grade business hotels and theme hotels, their brand personality includes two distinct dimensions of competence and sophistication, which

indirectly affects brand loyalty through brand trust [18, 19].

The study of destination brand personality is one of the main streams of tourism research [20]. After a survey among 133 residents and 120 tourists in Singapore by unstructured interviews, Henderson then found Singapore had distinct personality characteristics in individual cognition [21]; then Ekinci and Hosany made a research in Europe with Aaker's brand personality scale, and found the destination brand Personality is highly correlated with the emotional image of the brand [14]. Murphy's study found that the destination brand personality of the cities in Cairns, Australia will show an impact on tourists travel motivation and tourism experiences [22]. And it also affects tourist satisfaction through self-congruity, which in turn affect the willingness to revisit and recommend. In urban tourism research, urban brand personality also has a similar effect on tourist satisfaction and loyalty [23]. For example, Xie and Lee found that Beijing's brand personality includes four dimensions of excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness, which indirectly affects customer loyalty through self-congruity [24].

As it can be seen, brand personality is an important factor in creating the uniqueness of the destination, and also a key variable to affect the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists. In addition, according to the view of *Anthropomorphism*, tourist tends to use human phenomenological experience characteristics as a reference in the experience process of the theme park, so tourist would like to anthropomorphize the experience process and surrounding environmental factors to form a perception and evaluation of its trait characteristics.

**Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypothesis**

- Hypothesis-1: The theme park brand personality has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction.

**Self- Congruity**

Self-congruity refers to the fit degree between external things and individual self-concepts, and it is based on self-concept theory. In the current research in the field of consumer behavior, most scholars use Sirgy's definition of "self-concept", that is, the overall perception and feeling that individuals hold themselves as cognitive objects [20]. At the same time, in the field of tourism, the scholars also explore the influence of self-congruity on the concepts of the travel willingness and tourist satisfaction based on this definition [26, 27]. Therefore, this study also based on this definition to make the theme park tourists self-congruity as the degree to which tourists consider the characteristics of the theme park's external things and the tourists' overall perception of themselves.

In related research in the field of tourism, self-congruity has received attention in multiple tourism phases. First, Chon applies self-concept and self-congruity to the tourist satisfaction study in the post-tour phase [28]. The study indicates that the degree of congruity between the tourist's self-concept and the image of the destination is positively related to the satisfaction of the tourists; the actual self-congruity would affect the willingness to revisit, and the ideal self-congruity would influence the willingness to recommend [29]. Later, Litvin and Goh extended the research to the pre-tour phase. They found that tourists the likelihood that tourists choose for the destination will be [26]. In addition, a number of subsequent studies have combined tourist self-congruity with destination brand personality. Matzler et al. found that the destination brand personality perceived by tourists would affect self- congruity and then influence the willingness to travel [27]. A study by Usakli and Baloglu in Las Vegas shows that the city brand personality indirectly influences tourists' behavioral intentions through tourist self-congruity [31]. Pan et al. found through Chinese tourists' memories of their travel experiences that the perceived brand personality of tourists has a positive relationship on their self-congruity, which in turn has a positive impact on destination loyalty [32].

Relevant research results show that self-concept and self-congruity theory have certain applicability in the field of tourism, and as tourists pay more attention to individual needs in the tourism experience, the role of self-congruity in the tourism field is becoming more and more important. According to the theory of self-congruity, for the need to maintain and strengthen the self-concept, tourist would show more love to a brand which match higher degree of self-congruity. Therefore, in order to further explore the influence of theme park brand personality on tourist satisfaction, this study proposes the following hypotheses based on the self-congruity of tourists:

- Hypothesis -2: The theme park brand personality has a positive impact on the self-congruity of tourists;
- Hypothesis -3: Tourist self-congruity has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction;
- Hypothesis -4: The relationship between the personality of the tourist's self-consistent mediation theme park and the satisfaction of tourists.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

**Sampling Location**

This study selected Guangzhou Chimelong Paradise to collect the sampling data. The Guangzhou Chimelong Tourist Resort, where the theme park is centrally located, is a comprehensive theme tourist resort and has been awarded "the Cultural Industry

Demonstration Base”, “Science and Education Base”, “China’s first national AAAAA level scenic spots”. Since its official opening in April 7, 2006, the park has hosted more than 30 million tourists and has set a record for a theme park that has received 100,000 tourists a day in China. It is known as “the model of China’s new generation theme park”.

Based on years of good business performance and excellent marketing strategy, Chimelong Paradise has established a strong brand attraction in China mainland, attracting tourists from all over the country. At the same time, the author also found that many tourists compare Chimelong Paradise with Disneyland, Universal Studios and other internationally known theme park brands. It reflects the attraction and differentiation of the brand of Chimelong Paradise. These conditions are all supported by the process of this study, so this study chose Guangzhou Chimelong Paradise to collect the sampling data.

**Questionnaire Design**

The measurement system of this study is based on the existing mature scales, translated and revised according to the parallel translation method combined with the theme park scene. The questionnaire included four parts :(1) Theme park

brand personality measurement: using the scale of Aaker’s [8], there were five dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness; (2) Tourist self-congruity measurement: using the concept division model of Sirgy [33] and measuring the actual and ideal self-congruity; (3) Tourist satisfaction measurement: using single item measurement (“Are you satisfied with the experience of this theme park?”); (4) Tourist demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education, monthly income, source area, travel companions six items. The first three sections use the Likert 7 scale for measurements, and the fourth section uses a single selection method for measurements.

**Sample Collecting**

The official research work was carried out on the weekend of August-September 2018. In the form of on-site distribution and recycling questionnaires, a total of 286 questionnaires were issued, of which 255 were valid, the valid rate was 89.2%. The demographic characteristics of the official survey sample data are shown in Table 2. The male-female ratio is similar. The age of tourists is mainly between 19 and 30 years old. The education is mainly undergraduate, and the monthly income /living expenses are mainly less than 5,000 yuan. The source area is widely distributed, and the travel companions are mainly friends.

**Table-2: sample demographic characteristics**

Item	Option	Percentage	Item	Option	Percentage
Gender	male	43.7%	Monthly Income	Less than 3500	40.8%
	Female	56.3%		3500-4999	29.4%
Age	18 years old and below	14.9%		5000-7999	18.9%
	19-30 years old	80.8%		8000 and above	11.0%
	30-50 years old	4.3%	Source area	Guangzhou City	24.9%
	Over 50 years old	0.0%		Guangdong Province (outside Guangzhou)	34.0%
Education	High school and below	25.3%		other	41.1%
	College or undergraduate	69.6%	Travel companion	Alone	2.8%
	Postgraduate	5.1%		family	19.8%
		friend		77.5%	

**RESULT ANALYSIS**

The author uses SPSS24.0 to calculate the alpha coefficient of each dimension of the theme park brand personality and the tourist self-congruity and uses Mplus7.4 to calculate the corresponding Combined Reliability (CR). The results are shown in Table 3. The results show that the alpha coefficient and the combined reliability (CR) of each dimension of the theme park brand personality and the tourist self-congruity are greater than 0.7, indicating that the measurement scale has good reliability. Furthermore, the author uses Mplus7.4 to calculate the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each dimension and perform a confirmatory factor analysis (see Table 3).

The model fitting index showed that the measurement model had a good fitting effect ( $\chi^2/df=2.405, p<0.01, CFI=0.964, TLI=0.946, RMSEA=0.077, SRMR=0.034$ ). According to the standardized factor load results, the factor loading of all the items of theme park brand personality and tourists self-congruity is higher than 0.6 . At the same time, the combined reliability (CR) of each dimension is greater than 0.7, and the average extraction variance (AVE) is greater than 0.5. Therefore, combined with the above results, it can be determined that the theme park brand personality and the tourist self-congruity measurement scale have good reliability and validity.

**Table-3: Reliability and validity test of theme park brand personality and tourist self-congruity**

Dimension	Item	Factor Loading	Alpha Coefficient	Combined Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Sincerity	The theme park is considered to be down-to-earth.	0.613	0.832	0.817	0.531
	The theme park feels honest.	0.735			
	The theme park is considered to be wholesome.	0.721			
	The theme park is a cheerful one.	0.810			
Excitement	The theme park is a daring one.	0.722	0.855	0.843	0.573
	The theme park feels spirited.	0.790			
	The theme park is imaginative.	0.740			
	The theme park is an up-to-date one.	.843			
Competence	The theme park is considered to be reliable.	0.774	0.852	0.844	0.643
	The theme park is very intelligent.	0.807			
	The theme park is successful.	0.842			
Sophistication	The theme park is upper class.	0.724	0.807	0.775	0.634
	The theme park is very charming.	0.866			
Ruggedness	The theme park is considered to be outdoorsy.	0.729	0.763	0.719	0.562
	The theme park feels tough.	0.778			
Actual Self-Congruity	The personality of the theme park is congruity with the actual me.	0.880	0.755	0.804	0.585
	To travel here is in line with my lifestyle in actual life.	0.673			
	The image of other tourists in is similar to me in actual life.	0.840			
Ideal Self-Congruity	The personality of the theme park is congruity with the ideal of me.	0.979	0.778	0.834	0.627
	To travel here is in line with my ideal lifestyle.	0.807			
	The image of other tourists to is similar to the ideal one for me.	0.688			

This paper uses Mplus7.4 to conduct a path model test to explore the relationship between theme park brand personality, tourist self-congruity and tourist satisfaction. The path model test results are shown in Figure 1. The model fitting index indicates that the path model has a good fitting effect ( $\chi^2/df=2.846$ ,  $p<0.001$ , CFI=0.980, TLI=0.969, RMSEA=0.085, SRMR=0.018). The results show that the theme park brand personality has a significant positive

impact on tourist satisfaction ( $\beta_1=0.604$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), hypothesis 1 is supported; theme park brand personality has a significant positive impact on the self-congruity of tourists ( $\beta_2=0.834$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), hypothesis 2 is supported; tourist self-congruity has a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction ( $\beta_3=0.283$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), hypothesis 3 is supported.



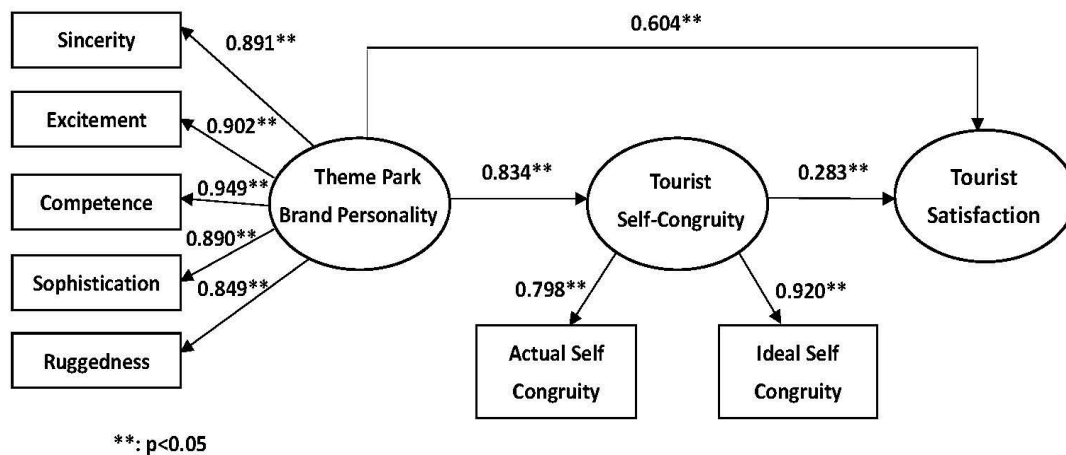


Fig-1: Model test result

Then, the author uses the Bootstrap method to test the mediation effect of Hypothesis 4. The results show the path that theme park brand personality indirectly effect tourist satisfaction through tourist self-congruity reached a significance level ( $\beta_4=0.236$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; [0.058, 0.590] 95% CI), thus Hypothesis 4 is supported. Combining the test results of Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 4, this paper believes that the self-congruity of tourists plays a partial mediation role in the theme park brand personality and tourist satisfaction.

**RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND TALKS**

Through the analysis of the official sample data, this study explores the relationship between theme park brand personality, tourist self-congruity and tourist satisfaction. First of all, the theme park brand personality has a positive impact on the self-congruity of tourists. Specifically, when a tourist perceives a strong brand personality, their self-congruity will increase. Based on the literature review, this study proposes the hypothesis relationship based on the personality perception and self-congruity measurement of the theme park brand in the pre-tour phase, and validates the relationship by means of the survey data analysis results. This conclusion is also consistent with the research conclusions of Usakli&Baloglu in Las Vegas and Xie&Lee in Beijing [31, 24]. Furthermore, tourist’s self-congruity have a positive impact tourist satisfaction. According to the theory of self-congruity, consumers need to consider the need to maintain and strengthen their own concepts, and they will show stronger love for brands which reach stronger self-congruity. Therefore, if the tourists think that their self- congruity is higher after the theme park experience, that is, the congruity of the theme park brand personality and the tourists' self-concept is higher, it will satisfy the tourists' need to maintain the self-concept, thereby enhancing their satisfaction. Finally, the self-congruity of the tourists mediates the relationship between theme park brand personality and the tourist satisfaction partially. In

other words, theme park brand personality will affect tourist satisfaction directly and through self-congruity indirectly. This means that when a tourist perceives a strong brand personality after the experience, it will show a high degree of self-congruity, and both will have a positive impact on the satisfaction of tourist. This illustrates the way in which the theme park brand personality influences the tourist's satisfaction, and the influence of the tourist's self-congruity on the tourist experience evaluation in the post-tour period.

This study verified the relationship between theme park brand personality, tourist self-congruity and tourist satisfaction, and finds that the self-congruity of tourists will affect the satisfaction of tourists in the evaluation process of theme park experience. This conclusion shows that self-consistent theory has applicability in the field of theme parks; enrich the scope of application of the theory. At the same time, this study put and verified the self-congruity of tourists as a mediator variable between the theme park brand personality and the tourist satisfaction. This relationship illustrates the rationality of matching destination personality and self-concept, and expands the research perspective of theme park tourists' satisfaction.

Brand personality is the core of the theme park brand and is a key indicator of the degree of differentiation from competitors. A distinctive brand personality is the foundation of high tourist loyalty. First of all, theme park operators need to combine their own brand positioning to shape their brand personality. With the help of hardware elements such as decoration, amusement facilities and staff service, the theme park is characterized by sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Secondly, the theme Parks need to pay attention to the way to convey brand personality.

Although this study has some inspiration in the theory and management, but because of many

reasons, there are still less than the following aspects: First, this study model for stability reasons, lacked to investigate the role of the various dimensions of the theme park brand personality. Secondly, this study is to collect the cross-sectional data and analyze. The selection of a single case led to the impact of the universality of the research conclusions. Therefore, Author proposes the appropriate view of the above deficiencies outlook: First, future research should obtain a larger sample volume, exploring the effects of different dimensions of brand personality, thereby providing a better basis for the theme park brand differentiation work; and then, expand the investigation by sampling at multiple theme park and analyzing multiple sets of sample data, test the stability of conceptual model, in order to enhance the universality of the conclusions.

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