Acknowledgement

Abstract

Nowadays tourists are willing to invest larger sums of money in order to obtain more exciting experiences. In this context, amusement/ theme parks have to keep up with the guests' wishes, aspirations and most importantly to be able to generate excitement. Compared to common touristic products, the excitement factor does not represent a must – e.g. its presence increases satisfaction but its absence does not generate dissatisfaction. In the context of amusement/ theme parks where consumers are interested in rides, the excitement factor is a must. In an environment where adrenaline and perceived risk are factors that generate the consumer's excitement, it is important for organizations to design an experience that can ensure proper settings and guarantee customers' satisfaction, minimizing the uncertain outcome of their experience.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the way amusement/ theme parks design experiences for consumers, taking into account their great heterogeneity. These types of organizations contain attractions with different level of risk. This risk can be perceived by consumer as fear, generating anxiety or excitement. Because of a higher level of uncertainty for the experience outcome (as the experience contains and instill risk), a greater level of control over the costumers 'experience is required. Therefore, the study focuses both on organization and consumer. Firstly, it tries to generate knowledge on how amusement parks design and influence the consumers 'experience through its control, and secondly it concentrate on the way the generated control is perceived by the consumers.

The knowledge gathered from both organizations and consumers are used to provide a deeper insight of controlled experiences and their impact on the consumers. Amusement/ theme parks and guests influence each other in the attempt of generating/ obtaining a satisfying experience. It is valuable for an organization to know its consumers, not only for being able to design pleasant experiences, but at the same time for knowing how what forms of control to exert over the experience and the consumers while trying to generate excitement and at the end, satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

"Across time and space, people have created a place within which they gathered in large numbers to participate in ritual, entertainment, amusements and spectacles, while consuming and exchanging foods, goods, and services. The theme park is the contemporary manifestation of fairs, carnivals, and amusement parks – a class of cultural phenomena which I will refer to as the amusementscape" (Botterill 1997:1). On the basis of the fact that amusement/ theme parks are perceived as a new concept of leisure characteristic for the contemporary society (Salvador 2007), the previous quotation expresses the roots of the today amusement parks. It cannot be established an exact place and moment for the beginning of amusement/ theme parks as it dates starting with the manifestation of commercial culture (Davis 1996). The reason why amusement/ theme parks were recognized as a new concept is, according to Salvador (2007), due to the fact that starting with 1970 they were no longer remarked just as a way of entertainment and leisure for the masses, but also as a way of stimulating the tourist activity (Ibid:3).

The beginning of 1970 does not represent a coincidence for the development of amusement/ theme parks as a touristic branch. In the Civic Trust Publication "The Challenge for Leisure" (1965) (cited in Oliver 1989:233) is mentioned that "three great waves have broken across the face of Britain since 1800. First, the sudden growth of dark, industrial towns. Second, the trusting move along far flung railways. Third, the sprawl of car based suburbs. Now we see, under the guise of the modest word, the surge of a fourth wave, which could be more powerful than all the others. The modest word 'Leisure'". The industrial revolution, the development of new means of conveyance had a high impact on tourists' activity: they disposed of more free time and were able to travel greater distances in shorter time. Before the 1970's, the amusement park industry registered fluctuations on its scale of development. Even if at the beginning of XIX century, the number of amusement parks was growing (especially in the United States), the competition with the cinema (during the 1930), and the World War II represented obstacles in their development (Davis 1996). The post- war period and the opening of Disneyland in 1955 established a new direction and provided new energy for the development of the amusement park industry (Davis 1996:400). The Disneyland opening had a massive impact on the future amusement parks (Smart 1999). Walter Elias Disney "changed forever our idea of what an amusement park should be like and created the very idea of a theme park. As a result, (…), many of those that have followed on from Disneyland, which opened in 1955, have adopted many of its templates." (Smart 1999:101). According to Smart (1999) and Milman (2001), the vision proposed by Walter Disney was for a park designed for both adults and children, presenting itself as a clean, safe, good qualitative place, emphasizing stories and themes in a designed space where architecture, rides, employees, landscaping, shows, are all harmonized together to create a pleasant experience.

The present study does not focus on the amusement/ theme parks history but it was considered valuable to inform the reader about its beginnings, in order to emphasize that even if the amusement park industry does not represent a recent activity, little research was developed about it. Starting with the second half of the XIX century, amusement/ theme parks began to impose themselves on the touristic market, attracting more and more consumers. The rapid growth of this touristic sector not only influenced the number of the amusement/ theme parks, but with it also increased the competitiveness among them (Milman 2001). In a market where "what was once extreme quickly becomes tame and what was unique is regarded as old" (Reidy, 2009: 22), developing new experiences is vital for an organization in order to survive on the economic market.

Theme/ amusement parks are characterized by the ability of being multisensory experiences, including "simulated environments, interpretations and performances, state-of-the-art-films, themed exhibit and eating places" (Salvador 2007:159-160). In accordance with the previous statement, amusement/ theme parks represent complex environments, composed of multiple elements. In order to simplify the image of the theme/ amusement parks, they can be compared to systems composed of multiple elements. The well functioning of the elements will determine the reliability of the system (LaPorte/Consolini 1991; Levenson et al. 2009). But in this system, the elements are designed based on the consumers' needs and wants (Swarbrooke/ Horner 2007). The purpose is to understand and predict the consumer's behaviour (Swarbrooke/ Horner 2007). Considering the fact that "leisure park business is not so predictable (…). It must still be considered, (…), as a risk venture" (Oliver 1989:234). As theme/ amusement parks design experiences for consumers, they must minimize the risk and ensure the consumers' satisfaction. Considering all these, the study focuses on two branches: organizations and consumers. On one hand, understanding how organizations create the experiences will help understand the way they work in order to succeed on the touristic market and ensure a continuous flow of consumers. On the other hand, as organizations try to predict something that is not very predictable may influence the consumers' behaviour, perception and feelings.

However, despite the numerous researches that focus on touristic experiences or experiences in general (e.g. Andersson 2007; Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989; O'Dell/Billing 2005; Quang/Wang 2003; Shaw/Ivens 2002; Pine/Gilmore 1999; Poulsson/Kale 2004), the academic research lacks studies that assess both experiences and control in the touristic context. Experiences have mostly been looked at as something that takes place in the consumers' minds (Andersson 2007), or as the result of the interaction between what the organization has to offer and the consumers' state of mind (Pine/Gilmore 1999). However, no studies have researched the experiences as directly and indirectly influenced by the organization. Moreover, consumers' controllability characteristic turned up to be intriguing and interesting. Hence, control and controllability displayed high potential and importance for the touristic studies. Tourism industry has numerous branches; hence, depicting from the first part of this chapter, amusement/ theme parks is one to focus this study upon. The amusement/ theme park industry has matched the study's interests, and this study oughts' to discover how much control the amusement parks/ theme parks have over their consumers' experiences. Same interest is given to the consumers' awareness of the control and their willingness to abide to it.

Pursuing this topic has not been an easy task. Despite the numerous scientific works that refer to experiences, selecting the right ones to use as framework for the topic was a challenge. Metaphorically swimming in an ocean of theories, we decided to choose the 4E's theory (Pine/Gilmore 1999) as a first research step. Researchers such as O'Dell and Billing (2005), Shaw and Ivens (2002) and numerous others are not less important for the current study. Adersson's (2007) theory regarding active consumers experiences, followed by Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory (1989, 2000) have represented two more pillars for the study. The next step was to confront flow theory with arousal theory (Anderson 1990; Zuckerman 1994). Having all four theories in one place, we have developed a framework (See page 40) further used as a skeleton in the data collection process, and nevertheless, the analysis section.

However, the complexity of our research drove us to topics such as the desirable and controlled risk (e.g. Ajzen 1991; Ek et al. 2008; Mohun 2001; Rose 2010; Song/Schwarz 2009; Thompson 1981; Zuckerman 1990), and nevertheless, satisfaction (Alegre/Garau 2011; Cadotte et al 1987; Linder – Pelz 1982; Oliver 1993; Zabkar et al. 2010)

Despite its intriguing characteristic, the current presents a number of limitations. Firstly, even if the thesis assesses leisure experiences, it does not refer to all the touristic experiences in general. Hence, experiences such as touristic events, maritime experiences (e.g. cruise ships), or other experiences that would fit the researched topic, have not been investigated in this study due to their individuality. Thus, as seen in section Generalizability (page 29), the findings of the research are only generalizable to the subject involved (Veal 2006). Another major limitation to the study is the missing cooperation with the researched organizations. Consequently, all the findings that relate to the organization's position are based on the use of online data, combined and confronted with the information obtained through the interviews. However, the selection process of the organizations used in the analysis was not a random one. The twelve participants in the focus groups and the 23 consumers that have completed the questionnaires were asked to name either the last visited park or their favourite one. Consequently, the parks enumerated by the interviewees were chosen for the analysis. The third major limitation relates to the moment in time the consumers have experienced the amusement/ theme park experience. It is believed that the experiences could not be remembered and recounted as accurate as it would have happened if the experience had been immediate or recent (e.g. some interviewees report experiences that took place 3-4 years ago).

Considering the above-presented aspects, the ambition of this study is to answer the following research question:

- ***How do amusement/ theme parks design and control consumers' experiences in their efforts to generate excitement, despite consumers' heterogeneity?***

However, the complexity of the main research question led us to use two sub-questions to guide our study. The first one focuses mainly on the experience part of the topic. The aim of the question is to reveal the connection between what the amusement/ theme park has to offer, and how the consumers will perceive it.

- *How do the consumers perceive the designed and the controlled experiences provided by the organization?*

The second sub-question concentrates on the emotions consumers experience in rapport to organization's attractions. Nevertheless, the most significant moments through out the experience are considered. The purpose of this question is to help discover what is the outcome of the merger between the consumer and the organization.

- *How does that influence their level of excitement and thus, satisfaction?*

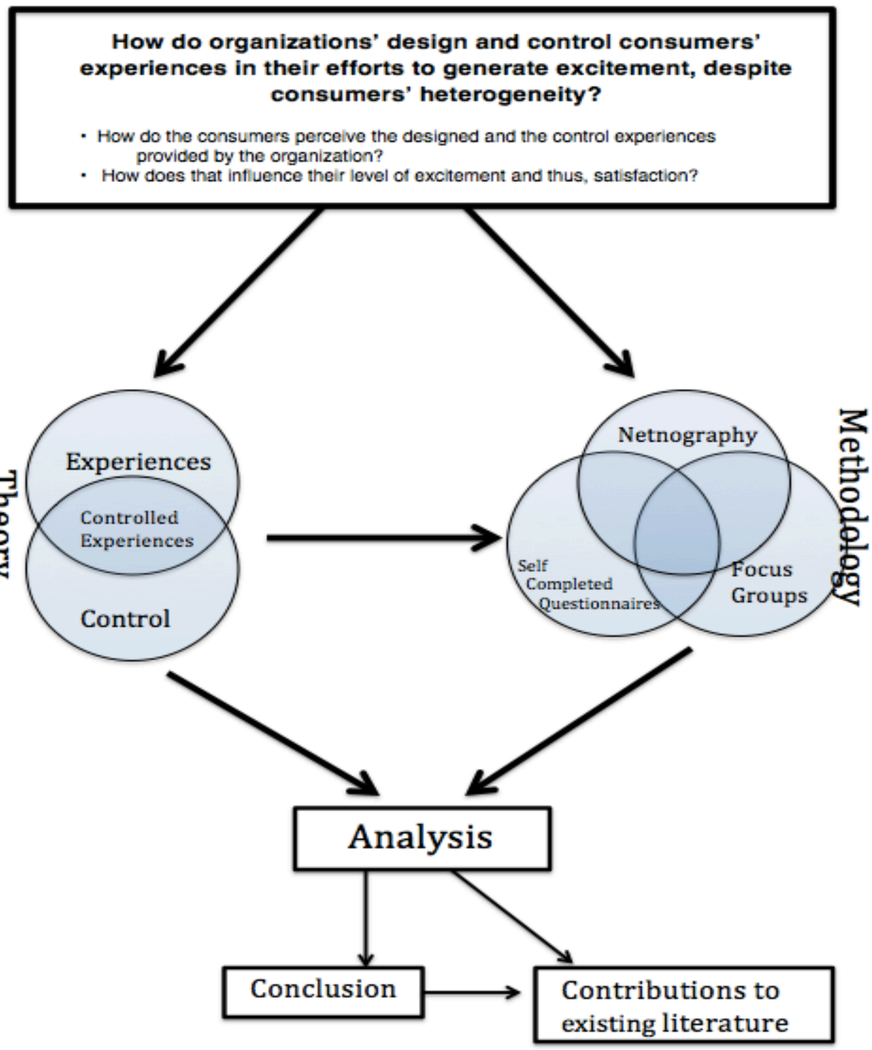
The following sections of the thesis are meant to develop answers for the above questions. They present in detail the researchers' position and methods used in elaborating this study, the backbone of the thesis represented by the theory section, blended with the collected data that will lead to the analysis section. The analysis section is followed by the theorization of the research question, in which a theory is developed based on the findings of the study. The conclusions chapter will complete the study, scrutinizing the answers for the previously enumerated questions.

THESIS METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The current study has been written under the socio-constructionist paradigm. The topic chosen for this study has led us to choose qualitative methods; hence, the study is best described as being qualitative hermeneutical explanatory. The following sections will help the reader get familiar with the above by explaining the scientific, philosophical and practical aspects that construct the methodological section of the thesis.

Research Design

The following is an overview of the research design, using a conceptual model that illustrates the research process, making the thesis easier to read and understand.



The model shows one starting point: the research problem. The model begins with the research question, which, as shown in the introduction (See page 6 -7), has two sub-questions. As it will be seen in this chapter, the research process for the current study is deductive, which means that we start with a problem, and we move on to the theory section. It can be seen in the model that the theory is the next step of the research, choosing to review numerous studies that focus on *Experiences* (e.g. the 4E's, flow theory, arousal theory) and *Control* (e.g. risk, satisfaction). The two concepts are placed in a circle each. The lack of theories for the researched topic determined us combine the existent ones, the intersection of them being the *Controlled Experiences* theory. Having the theories at hand, applying them over the studied problem requires methods, which are best described by the *Methodology* representation. The research question focuses on both the organizations and the consumers. Consequently, the following three methods have been chosen: netnography, self-completed questionnaires and focus groups interviews. The figure is meant to highlight the intersection of the three, completing each other's missing points. In line with the deductive characteristic of the research, the *Analysis* section is meant to help us confront the data with the problem raised at the beginning of the study. Nonetheless, the final two sections are the *Conclusions*, which should contain the answer to the research question based on the analysis section. However, of scientific importance is the *Contribution to the existing literature* through which we can show our contribution to the scientific world.

The above conceptual model has its weaknesses, and the reader should be aware of that. One major weakness is its descriptive character. Accordingly, the model is a chronological representation of the research steps, emphasizing also the deductive character of the study. It does, however, offer an overview of the study, metaphorically *'holding the readers hand'* while emerging in the reading process of the thesis.

Philosophy of science

The present study has been developed with the purpose of creating new knowledge in the field of tourism, focusing mainly on the lived experiences of tourist, while contrasting it with the organizations' contribution to the experiences. Touristic experiences have proved to be attractive for researchers. However, we found intriguing that experiences, in the tourism context, were approached from numerous points of view, except for one: controlled experiences. Consequently, the outcome of it is the current study. In order to reach the objectives of the current project, different approaches could have been chosen. However, due to reasons such as our perspective of reality and our suppositions, it becomes essential to explain our approaches to our readers.

Guba (1990) stresses the importance of choosing a paradigm, which is represented by the researcher's perspective of reality and how it constructs knowledge. According to Guba (1990:17), paradigm is "a basic sets of beliefs that guides actions, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplinary inquiry." Denzin (2010) easily defines paradigm as human constructions that represent the researcher's worldview. In terms of its usefulness, Tomas and Tazim (2010) explain how paradigms help the researcher in recognize where her/his standing point is with respect to the objects/things/phenomenon studied. Cibangu (2010:177) supports the above ideas by emphasizing how important is for us (researchers) to be "conscious of the research and practice paradigm from which we operate." Guba and Lincoln (1989:80) take the importance of the paradigm so far that they consider it to be the "touchstone in guiding our activities". Hence, according to the above named researchers, when diving into the research process, it is essential for the researchers to know in which paradigm they find themselves in, moreover, making sure the readers are fully aware of the researchers' position. According to Patton (2002), the fundamental assumptions the researcher has about reality can be unraveled by the use of theoretical constructs/paradigms.

Paradigms have the power of making the reader aware of how the research will go about and "take account of multiple conflicting and contradictory values" the researcher encountered (Lincoln 2010:7). As Cibangu (2010) affirms, paradigms, though useful, are hidden beneath the researchers' actions and reasoning. In order for the reader to better understand the paradigm the researcher finds himself/herself in, there are three basic questions that are characterized as the ontological, the epistemological, and the methodological questions. Denzin and Lincoln (2003:33) consider paradigm to be the "net" in which the three mentioned questions find themselves in. Consequently, the answer to the three questions will help the reader better understand the research and researchers' paradigm.

Andrews (2012) supports the idea of constructed knowledge and not created. The main goal of constructionists is to understand how the knowledge is being constructed. Andrews (2012:40) points out that constructionist researchers are focusing on understanding the "world of lived experiences from the perspectives of those who live in it", their focus being a social and not an individual one. Bryman (2012) goes ahead and explains how the social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction, and together with its meaning, it finds itself in a continuous state of revision. Consequently, the researcher is presenting only a version of the social reality, and not one that could be seen as definitive (2012).

Guba (1990) simplifies the meaning of the constructionist paradigm (constructivist) and presents it as being one that does not have the intention to control and transform the '*real*' world. What it does is to reconstruct the *'world'* that exists in the minds of the constructors (Guba 1990; Denzin 2010). However, Guba (1990) makes us aware of the flaws that human constructions (paradigms) have. Meaning that they are "subject to all the errors and foibles that inevitably accompany human endeavors" (Guba 1990: 18-19). The following section of the study is designed to familiarize the reader with the ontological, epistemological and methodological stances of the constructionist paradigm.

Ontology

As presented above, paradigm is characterized by the answers it has to the three basic questions: ontological, epistemological and methodological (Denzin/Lincoln 2003; 2011; Guba 1990). The ontological stance answers to the question "What is the nature of the 'knowable'? Or what is the nature of 'reality'?" (Guba 1990:17; Grix 2002), or simplified: what is to be researched? The answer to this question is the problem formulation (see page 6), in which the reader can discover that the aim of this study is to identify the ability of an organization to control the experiences of their consumers, and if their consumers are controllable. However, Grix (2002) stresses out the importance of understanding the meaning of the standard terms used in social science research. Misusing them may lead to unwanted outcomes in the research. The clear and transparent knowledge of both the ontological and epistemological stances are compulsory (Grix 2002). Hence, to be able to defend your own position you ought to understand the interrelationship between the major components of the research, avoid confusions when the theories and social phenomena approaches are discussed and recognize the others position (Grix 2002).

As social constructionists, our ontological position is a relativist one, and according to Bryman (2012:32), the ‘reality’ is “build up from the perceptions and actions of social actors”, consequently implying the existence of more than one truth (Denzin/Lincoln 2003). For the current study, the respondents (consumers) and the organization represent the social actors. Organizations address to consumers that embody a multitude of social factors. However, they have the power of constructing their own reality, and not always how the organization would want it (Andrew 2012; Bryman 2012). Subsequently, Guba (1990) explains that constructionists are those who admit and approve the existence of numerous realities, and most importantly that those realities are the result of the human minds. The human mind is in a continuous change; hence, the reality is constantly changing and constructing. The touristic experiences that this study is focusing on are ones that challenge the constructionist paradigm. The knowledge in the constructionist paradigm is seen as the consequence of human activity and interaction (Andrews 2012; Bryman 2012; Denzin/Lincoln 2003; Guba 1990; Grix 2002). In our case it means that even though we interview people and go online for gathering information representative about the organizations, their statements must be accepted by us as valid for the study. However, we acknowledge that their responses could be influenced by the social construction, their living style and also their pre-knowledge about the study. Additionally, according to Bryman (2012), by being inquirers, we become part of the respondents’ social construction. Hence, by asking the questions and by having them responding to the questions constructed by us, questions that arouse from our own social constructions, we involuntarily influence their answers.

Later in this project it will be explained the use of qualitative methods such as interviews and netnography. By choosing to interview consumers, netnography as a data source and the self-completed questionnaires, we are aware that the respondents' subjectivity and the inquirers will have a major influence on the outcome of the study. These methods have been chosen due to the fact that, as constructionists, we are trying to find meaning in both companys' and consumers' social constructions. As Grix (2002:179) points out, it is of major importance for the study and for the researcher to acknowledge how a particular view of the world affects the entire study". However, the view of the world can only be found out through human interchange, giving the meaning power to the words (Gergen 1997). Consequently, the choices made along the study and the joint constructed and perceived reality will influence the resulted knowledge.

Epistemology

Grix (2002) stresses out the importance of the interrelationship between what is to be researched (ontology), what we can know about it (epistemology) and how it should be done (methodology). However, according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, cited in Lincoln 2010) there is no connection between what we know and how we know. Being one of the main branches of philosophy, epistemology's concern is about gaining knowledge and the process that leads to that (Grix 2002). However, according to Guba (1990:26), what is to be known, and the one who comes to know, will fuse together, becoming a "coherent whole". Consequently, the findings will become the creation between the inquirer and the respondent as a consequence of the human interaction (Bryman 2012; Denzin/Lincoln 2003; Guba 1990; Grix 2002).

The socio-constructionist paradigm engages the researchers in choosing a subjectivist epistemology (Guba 1990). Therefore, the constructionists argue that interacting with the respondents will increase the researcher's ability to understand their view of the world. Due to the fact that the respondents and the researchers are self-interpreting beings, both of them play an essential role when it comes to arriving at a common understanding (Tomas and Tazim 2010). Having in mind that the epistemology stance is about the "the relationship between the knower (inquirer) and the known (knowable)" (Guba 1990:18), we are fully aware that our project's outcome will be influenced by certain aspects as: our background, our pre-knowledge about the topic but also our personal experiences in regards to the studied topic. Consequently, we are fully aware that our experiences both helped us in integrating and being accepted easier by the respondents, nonetheless the questions found in the interview/questionnaire were created based on our pre-knowledge, experiences and pre-suppositions.

Methodology

Methodology is the third stance of the paradigm. As Guba (1990:18) presents it, methodology is about "how should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?". The need of this section appears with the purpose of justifying the choice of the research methods used for the analysis and interpretation section (Marschan-Piekkari/Welch 2004). The used methods will help the researcher find out what he believes it can be known (Guba/Lincoln 2004, cited in Tomas/Tazim 2010). The three stances discussed in this chapter are complementary, and determine the latest one (Marschan-Piekkari/Welch 2004; Tomas/Tazim 2010). Methodology represents more than just theoretical descriptions; nonetheless it helps the reader understand the research approach. However, for the researchers, it represents the guideline that helps put together the theories, data gathering, analysis and conclusions (Tomas/Tazim 2010). Through methodology, researchers try to interpret and understand the meaning of the gathered data, while making sure the data and the theory merge together (Ibid).

The qualitative research does not have, as a focus, the subjective or objective stances, but more the relationship between the self and the other in the shape of the co-created knowledge (Tomas/Tazim 2010:1067). A concrete example of pre-knowledge is that one of the researchers has spent six months working in an amusement park in United States, hence, being both part of the organization, while in the free time being a consumer. For the second researcher, only the consumer pre-knowledge applies. As a common built pre-knowledge, the two researchers have been involved in a previous research that has involved amusement parks, which has influenced the decision of proceeding in researching this attribute of touristic experiences. Furthermore, not just the choice of topic has been influenced, but most likely, in other ways, the pre-knowledge has been influenced.

As discussed above, the pre-knowledge or prejudice influence the research process, and with the use of hermeneutics we can find out how the interpretative process is shaped by it (Denzin/Lincoln 2003:39). Tomas and Tazim (2010:1067) present the researcher and the participant as being "self-interpreting beings", and through interrelationship they arrive at common understandings of the '*real'* world. The co-construction of knowledge is perceived as being a hermeneutic process, where participants' experience is being processed together with the researchers' experience, adding meaning to the information (Tomas/Tazim 2010). Tomas and Tazim (2010:1056) rationalize the approach hermeneutic studies have, which is "from the perspective of meanings, understandings and interpretations", opinion shared by Wilson and Hutchinson (1991). Van Manen (1990, cited in Wilson/Hutchinson 1991:265-266) clearly explains that the aim of the study is to "understand how people experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying or starting it". The hermeneutics focus on the details that seem insignificant, finding meaning in aspects that may be taken for granted and understanding them (Wilson/Hutchinson 1991; Kvale 2008; Rennie 2000).

Hermeneutics has derived from the philosophy of phenomenology, it emphasizes on meaning and practices in lived experiences (e.g. the touristic experiences consumer go through when being in a controlled environment such as amusement or themed parks), orients towards discovery, focusing on knowing *how* (e.g.: our problem formulation: *How do amusement/ theme parks design and control consumers' experiences in their efforts to generate excitement, despite consumers' heterogeneity?*), finds textual data and language important (e.g.: the use of netnograpgy as data for the analysis, the language used when responding to the interview guide and during the focus groups) and finds interviews sufficient (e.g.: self completed interviews and focus groups) (Hesse-Biber/Leavy 2010; Wilson/Hutchinson 1991).

The dialectics in the present research are best described as being the method through which knowledge is created. Our research question is formulated as a '*how?*', the question that is meant to conclude "Why do things happen the way they do?" (Veal 2006:34). The question 'why?' is the one used for explaining, and 'what?' is for finding out (Ibid). Veal (2006:34) presents '*explaining'* as "attempting to understand that information: it goes beyond the descriptive." These processes are being facilitated by the research methods. The *Inductive* or the *Deductive* ways encompass the two above-mentioned processes. Veal (2006:43) describes the two: *Inductive* is when you begin at point A (observation/description), proceed to point B (analysis) and arrive at point C (explanation); *Deductive* is when you start at point C (Hypothesis), proceed to point A (Observation/description, gathering data to test the hypothesis) and last, proceed to point B (analysis, to test the hypothesis against the data). The research process for the current study is the *Deductive*, where we start with a problem formulation ('*How*?'), we continue with the theory section that will help us better describe the analyzed social phenomenon, and we end with the analysis – the confrontation between the data and the hypothesis.

Triangulation

Decrop (1999) raises an issue that is omnipresent in the qualitative studies: the lack of rigor and credibility. Hence, the main concern becomes the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have responded to this issue by developing four criteria for assessing qualitative research: credibility (the level of truthfulness of particular findings), transferability (the applicability of the findings to other settings or groups), dependability (the consistency and reproducibility of the results) and confirmability (the findings' neutrality and ability to reflect the informants and inquiry) (see page 27). According to the two, the credibility of the findings and interpretations will rise if the four criteria are fulfilled. The usefulness of the four criteria can only be harvest if implemented in the research design (Decrop 1999; Patton 1990). Triangulation is one of the methods used to ensure that the four criteria are properly used, while ensuring the researchers' credibility assessment in the project (Decrop 1999).

The triangulation concept can be done on either different designs or different data collection (e.g.: self completed questionnaires, netnography and focus groups as it is for the current project) (Lincoln/Guba 1985). The current study will use the road of the data collection triangulation. As a qualitative study, the inability to quantify the data requires us to use methods that will complement each-others gaps. The research question raises a problem that concerns both the organization and the consumer. The difficulties of obtaining the collaboration of any of the contacted organizations has lead us to choose netnography as a substitution for interviews that would have been taken with representative of the organization. The focus groups were chosen with the purpose of obtaining as much qualitative information as possible from a reduce number of participants (see Focus Group section, page 22), information that regarded both the participants' experiences, but also information about the organizations' characteristics; hence, a form of complementing the data concerning the organization (gathered through netnography), as well as confronting it with the actual reminiscent of the participants' experiences. The third method is the one of the self-completed questionnaires. The need for this third method came when we realized that the downsides of a focus group (e.g. participants may change/modify their answers after hearing the other participants' answers; the questions and the turn of the discussion, or the presence of the two 'moderators' may provide different answers than those given by a person found in its own intimacy etc.) may be complemented by the benefits of the self-completed questionnaires. One essential aspect of triangulation is that its purpose is not to demonstrate that different methods to the inquiry will lead to the same result, "the point is really to test for such consistency" (Patton 1990:248), and insuring that one method complements the other (Veal 2006). Therefore, the same phenomenon is looked at from different angles (netnography, self completed questionnaires and focus groups interviews) resulting in an illuminated research problem (Decrop 1999). Triangulation is a concept that should be kept in mind by the researchers, and used from the beginning of the project; however, it truly pays off in the analysis section (Decrop 1999; Patton 1990)

The researcher that uses triangulation must find himself/herself in a creative state of mind, constantly searching for convergence that would lead to solid and valid propositions (Decrop 1990). Convincing the readers of the scientific attribute of the qualitative research is supported by explicit discussions in the methodology chapter concerning the triangulation of the data (Ibid). Consequently, the triangulation of the methods is not solitary, accompanied by the investigator triangulation will raise the dependability of the research, ensuring that "under the same circumstances, the same interpretation would occur" (Decrop 1990:159). The investigator triangulation for the current study took place from the beginning of the writing process, as

Decrop (1999) and Patton (1990) suggested. Having two researchers engaged in providing deeper understanding for *'How do amusement/ theme parks design and control consumers' experiences in their efforts to generate excitement, despite consumers' heterogeneity?'* ensure a higher dependability of the study, which is ideal.

Netnography

Nowadays, the Internet's importance is stably growing as more and more consumers/ organisations are moving their interest to the computer-mediated communication (Kozinets 2002). It represents an easy way of searching information, but at the same time to engage its consumers in online communication (Bjork and Kauppinen - Räisänen 2012). In the context of a continuous grow of the Internet's role; it became obvious that Internet can represent a new field for developing research due to its online communication which is comparable to any other types of mass media communication (Langer/Beckman 2005). Netnography represents a recent method for collecting data, which, in order to be better understood by the readers, it will be firstly explained starting with the way the name 'netnography' is created (Bowler 2010). Understanding the root word of netnography – ethnography - will simplify the understandment of the term.

According to Bowler (2010), ethnography is the main method used for collecting netnographic data. Ethnography represents, as Bryman (2012) defines it, a method "of observing behavior, listening to what is said in conversations, (…), asking questions "(Ibid: 432). Therefore, netnography represents the method where ethnography is applied in an online environment. Semantically talking, netnography is a "modification of the term ethnography" (Bowler 2010: 1270). A definition that condenses all the mentioned lines from above was formulated by Kozinets (2002): "'Netnography', or ethnography on the Internet, is a new qualitative research method that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications."(Ibid: 62).

The present study focuses on the experiences lived by consumers and created by organisations. Consequently it concentrates on the designed experience in amusement parks – how organizations create it and present it to consumers.

Therefore, the chosen methods to conduct this study by using netnography are: observation - from the official websites of different amusement/ theme parks and self-completed questionnaires. As the contacted organizations refused to collaborate with us and to provide us the needed information to conduct this study, the Internet can provide the necessary data to help developing this study. According to Bjork and Kauppinen - Räisänen (2006) and Langer and Beckman (2005), we used a passive approach. We will observe the amusement/ theme parks official web pages and try to extract information viable for our problem formulation.

Another reason for choosing netnography as a method to conduct our study is due to the fact it allows us to easily access the web pages related to our topic. The online pages will offer us an insight of the way amusement/ theme parks design attraction in order to generate excitement, affecting the consumers' perceptions about the lived experience. Netnography is a, according to Kozinets (2002) a research technique that uses the information that is publicly available, permitting to identify and understand the way experiences are created. It offers us great accessibility to a broad number of online pages in a very short time, compared to other methods; therefore, the strength of time - saving and the economically viability (it is costless method) (Xun/Reynolds 2010) allows us to collect data from different platforms in the shortest amount of time.

The found data provide us raw material for our project, and it is the researchers' duty to interpret the information found online in order to provide results. As any method, netnography presents some limitations (which will be later presented in the study) that affect the results of the study. Therefore, for more accurate data, we considered that self-completed questionnaires (via Internet) and focus group should be used for a better understanding of the way experiences are designed and control and how the respondents perceive them. The two mentioned methods will be discussed and presented in the next pages.

Self - completed questionnaires and focus group interviews

The self-completed questionnaires and focus groups interviews are complementary methods; hence, they will be used in this study. The weak points of one can be balanced by the strength points of the other (see Limitations chapter, page 24) in order to provide us with data as accurate as possible. The two methods will be discussed separately in order to get a better insight of them.

Netnography offers us a view about how organizations try to create experience that can satisfy a larger spectrum of consumers and also that generate exciting experiences in over to produce an overall satisfying experience for the guest. As the attractions are specially created to based on the consumer’s wishes, a better understandment of the consumer will not only explain the way organizations design experiences but, at the same time, it will also help us explain better the feelings, perceptions, attitudes of a consumer in a controlled environment, which is specially designed for him/ her. By using questionnaires and interviews we were able to create questions that better fit our research question and obtain answer more helpful for our problem formulation.

For both methods, the respondents were selected by using the snowball sampling (Bryman 2012, Robinson 2014). Thus, we were able to easily identify individuals that lived at least once in their lives an amusement park experience. It is important to identify and use participants “who can best inform the research question” (Hamilton/Bowers 2006:823) in order to obtain optimal results. All our participants were of different nationalities. Due to the fact the self-completed questionnaires were sent on the Internet, this means that we were able to reach people from different part of the world. The same occurred with selecting the individuals for the interviews. Living in a city full of international people determined our participants to have different nationalities. Consequently, both questionnaires and interviews were conducted in English. The interviews and questionnaires contained open questions, allowing the interviewees to express with their own words the amusement park experiences.

Self- completed questionnaires

The self-completed questionnaires were conducted in such a manner that would allow us to obtain a better perspective over the consumers' thoughts regarding the amusement parks' designed experiences. Having used the snowball sampling helped us not only find participants for our project, but also obtained some e-mail addresses. Thus, we increased the rate of responses by approaching some of individuals through their emails. We created our questionnaire using Google Drive and this allowed us to have a link through which the respondents could easily access the questionnaire. We asked people from our social network to spread this link and gave them a four days deadline to obtain answers. Also the persons that were contacted directly by us were given the same deadline. During the four days time frame, we received 23 completed questionnaires. By using this method, we minimized the potential data fraud (Hamilto/Bowers 2006). Before sending our questionnaires, all the participants were informed about the project and were explained its purpose, as the questionnaire contained a short description at the very beginning. The respondents were of different nationalities: one French, one American, two Turkish, one Latvian, one Ukrainian, seven Italians, two Polish, one German, one Vietnamese and four Romanians.

The questionnaire was fragmented into two parts (see Appendix 2): the first part had the purpose to collect basic information about respondents (name, age, sex, nationality and last visited amusement/ theme park) in order to allow us create a succinct characterization of them. The second part contained 17 questions that followed a gradual development of their amusement park experience: from general questions which purpose was to offer a general perspective of the consumer over the park, to perceptions of arousal, rules, breaking rules, excitement, satisfaction and feeling of control. Thus, the questionnaires contained open questions created based on the project's research topic, representing a "technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic" (Mack et al. 2005:29). The open questions have the quality of providing us better answers as they allow the interviewee to formulate its own answer, in the frame of the question (Bryman 2012). Bryman (2012) considered that through this method the researcher can obtain "rich, detailed answers" (Ibid:470), as the interviewee has more time to reflect over the answers. By offering the possibility to meditate over the questions and, implicit, over the answers, the participant has the ability of reflecting more on the experience, reflection that will offer a deeper answer. It is not more the excitement that dictates the words, but the memory of the experience.

As the participants do not interact with the interviewer, the bias error is reduced (Phellas et al. 2011). The interviewer cannot interfere with the respondents, and pointing this, we are not just referring to direct verbal communication. The interviewer's skills of conducting an interview can influence the respondent in different ways, starting with non-verbal communication to verbal, and can have a positive impact on one participant and at the same time inhibit another.

Focus group

The reason for choosing to conduct focus groups was due to the fact that they "represent a more natural environment than that of individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others – just as they are in real life" (Krueger/Casey 2000: 11). The interaction between the participants will determine the participants to produce valuable data, through the action of understanding each other (Morgan 1998). At the same time, focus groups can encourage shy interviewees to participate to the discussion (Kitzinger 1995), due to the interaction between them.

Taking into account the previously mentioned statements, we decided to conduct three focus group interviews. Focus groups permit us to collect information from each participant in the same time interval allocated for the method (Grumbein/Lowe 2010). We interviewed 12 persons. As the number of participants used to conduct one interview has a great impact on the results of the focus group (Grumbein/Lowe 2010), we decided to use four to five members for each focus group. A higher number of participants can produce fragmentation of the group by determining people to regroup in smaller groups (Kitzinger 1995). Because some of the interviewees cancelled their participation to the focus group on the day of the interview, we could not respect the fragmentation we planned. Therefore, the three focus groups were divided accordingly: first focus group – five participants; second – four participants; third – three participants.

The participants were people who never interact before the day of the interview and they were of different nationality, with ages between 23 – 38: four Romanians, five Danes, one person from New Zeeland, one German and one Bulgarian. Therefore, in order to create a comfortable atmosphere and encourage the interviewees to express freely their thoughts (Kitzinger 1995), we chose to conduct our interviews in our apartment. The chosen room was the living room, as it represents a neutral place. One of the main reasons for choosing the living room and not a public space was also because of the noise pollution: we eliminate other noise sources and try our best to obtain clear records of the discussions. Dinner and breakfast were provided in order to make them feel more relaxed and comfortable and at the same time to allow them interact before starting the interview. Thus we try to establish a pleasant atmosphere, propitious for discussions.

During all three discussions, both moderators were present: one of them asking the questions while the other was interfering when needed (to explain the question if some participants did not properly understood it, to give examples, to make sure every person participates to the discussion and to interfere in case some of the interviewee was dominating).

The role of interviewer and moderator were switched between the two researchers.

At the first focus group, two of the participants could not come as they were living in a different city, so they were able to participate through Skype. Because of the Internet connection, sometimes the online participants could not fully understand the question and it was difficult to keep them focused on the whole discussion. At the same time, one of the Skype participants was losing his focus really fast, so it was difficult to keep him active during the whole interview. Otherwise, all the persons equally participated to the talk. With the second focus group, two of the interviewees tended to lead the conversations. When the two were answering they were starting to give examples that were not relevant for our interest. Also, while the other participants were responding, they were interfering by adding information about other experiences. However, we as moderators, we have tried to ensure that each of them will have an answer for the questions. Furthermore, we tried to moderate their answers by not by asking them directly, but trying to stimulate the other persons to participate more. During the third interview, one person could not come because of personal issues. Therefore, we had only three participants. All the persons had the same amount of participation to the discussion and there was no need for the researchers to interfere in the discussion, only to address the questions.

All three focus group interviews were transcribed (see CD – Appendix 4). During the process of transcribing, we tried our best not to alter the responses. The irrelevant parts of the discussions were noted in the word document, by mentioning the time interval when they occurred. We might have replaced some of the words from the recordings, but only conjunctions or meaningless words, as some of the times there were backup noises and we could not perfectly understand some of them. Thus, we might have guessed few words, but on overall the recordings were reproduce as accurate as possible.

LIMITATIONS

The researcher's position

The current study is influenced by the authors' socio-demographic characteristics. We considered that is important to mention that both authors come from the same country, sharing the same educational background, and cultural environment. Therefore, we can easily state that we share similar line of thoughts. Because our study has into consideration the amusement park industry, we find it appropriate to inform the reader that one of the researchers was an amusement park employee (Morey's Piers), two summers in a row. Consequently, we can affirm that one of us is an insider, having the possibility to be a part of a designed experience by an amusement park, while the other can be named an outsider. Sharing different perspectives about the topic and confronting our points of view represent a strong point in the process of writing this study. The two perspectives are complementary, determining us to debate more on our thoughts and to better try to understand perspectives different than our owns.

Nevertheless, this represents only the first base of our development, as it is the level on which we found ourselves during the previously study we conducted during the spring semester of 2013. We wanted to emphasize this aspect to inform the reader of the fact that both researchers possessed pre-knowledge regarding the topic of amusement parks and control. The experience gained from the last study (which was focused on how amusement parks regain control after losing it – in case of accidents), helped us better understand the concept of control and how organisations (where control constitutes a major concern) work.

The insider possessed deeper knowledge on how amusement parks work, safety measures, control, etc. while the outsider perceived the amusement park experience as a simple consumer. Therefore, one of us had a more critical approach due to the knowledge she already possessed. At the same time, because of the experience she gained by working two summers in a row at the same amusement park, the researcher might have developed embedded concepts on how things should be approached. Despite the embedded concepts, the researcher detained important information of how amusement parks try to control consumers' experience to avoid accidents, without alternating their excitement or making them feeling pressured by rules or by the sensation of feeling under control.

The empirical context

The social constructionist approach of the study influences the methods used to collect data, therefore, the study is centred on the apprehensive and understandment of the consumers' experiences in amusement parks. The qualitative research data selected to conduct our project was used to offer a deeper insight of consumers perceived control in a designed environment, where controlling the consumers is important as it is related to their safety and the outcome of the experience. The knowledge obtained from this study can be easily transferred to other organizations that create controlled experiences and who may fear that a high number of strict rules could jeopardize the consumers' feeling of freedom, negatively alternating his/her experience. Therefore, our study is not based on a case study. We are though interested on how organisations design experiences, but we considered netnography to be more appropriate for finding that. The unlimited amount of information and the easy access gave us the possibility to analyse more than one organisation and to discover if there is/ or not a pattern in creating controlled experiences.

The Internet abounds with information, which must be carefully selected in order to find the data that can be transformed into knowledge (Kozinets 2006). In the attempt to select the best web pages that could offer us valuable data, we agreed on selecting the official web pages of the last amusement/ theme park visited by the respondents. Therefore, we facilitate our work if taking into consideration the enormous amount of information the Internet holds. As web pages 'administrators design the page in a manner to be pleasant for the consumer, the found data needed to be interpreted, as the findings are strictly related to our capacity of understanding the online information (Bryman 2012). As we used netnography only to analyse textual web pages, we limited ourselves to textual communication (Kozinets 2006). Non-verbal communication is important in expressing feelings, perceptions. In consequence we decided to use other research methods to equilibrate the netnographic limitations.

We decided to conduct focus group interviews and self- completed questionnaires. We considered that the three methods combined will complete each other and will provide us an optimal data for developing knowledge. Consequently, we agreed on sending questionnaires online. Because we were unable to communicate with our respondents while they complete the questionnaires, the majority of the answers were reduced to some lines. Some of the received answers were not very elaborated. Another issue was represented by some questions that were not 100% understood by our interviewees. Thus, some of the answers were not expressing what we tried to find out when we elaborated the questions. The information gathered was somehow limited, as the answers were briefly formulated. We also know that approaching consumers' past experiences can be difficult, as they represent unique episodes from the consumers' lives that occurred in a specific time (Caru/Cova 2008). Because we could not communicate during the questionnaire with our participant, we were unable to stimulate him/her with questions for a more developed answer; we were unable to record visual and auditory cues (Bryman 2012), or to give explanations when needed.

Considering the mentioned limitations of netnography and self-completed questionnaires, we decided to use triangulation method and add the focus group interviews. We were able to interact with the participants and obtain more elaborate answers and at the same time, to record non-verbal communication. As we previously mentioned, we conducted three focus group interviews. Because the interviews were conducted in English, insignificant problems of translation were recorded, as the participants were not English native but with no consequences over the quality of the data. Taking into consideration that some participants are more talkative than others or may dominate the discussion, it was up to us to try and make all the interviewees have the same level of participation in the discussions. At a certain point it was difficult to interfere in the discussion when one of the participants was dominating by giving a complex, detailed answer. Even if not all the interviewees participate all the same in the discussion, we tried to keep a balance between them all and let the discussion take a simple course, similar to an act of normal verbal communication.

Although focus groups allow us to interview more participants in a shorter amount of time, the transcription of the interviews requested more time than for the self - completed questionnaires. Focus groups require the researchers' attention during the whole interview; both on the participants, in order to record non-verbal communication, and on the discussion – to be sure everybody contributes to providing data.

Another major limitation to the study is the reduced variety of the interviewees. Amusement parks address to a high variety of consumers e.g. families, children, elderly people, teenagers, people with special needs etc. However, we were unable to obtain answers as diversified as it would have probably been if some of the participants had been from a different age group or social status (family). We are aware that this limitation may have a major impact over the findings of the research.

VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND GENERALIZABILITY

The current methodology section has the purpose of highlighting the boundaries the thesis was created in. The practical, academic and formal limitations are verified through three terms, which represent the headline of this section.

Validity

"Validity is the extent to which the data collected truly reflects the phenomenon being studied." (Veal 2006:117). Validity is represented as both internal and external. The former one is focused on the match between the researcher's observation and the developed theoretical ideas (Bryman 2012). The degree to which the findings can be generalized across social settings is being referred to by the external validity (Bryman 2012). However, studies in the tourism field are facing difficulties when it comes to measuring attitudes, behaviors, the truthfulness of the responses obtained through surveys/interviews (Veal 2006). Validity is considered to be one that has an overall control over the quality of the research, at all stages of the knowledge production (Kvale 2008). As it will be seen in the following section, reliability is the prior condition for validity (Bryman 2012). Although the thesis can not be seen as seen fully reliable, hence, not fully valid, pointing out its weaknesses and taking measures to strengthen the validity of the research will lead to a final product that can be seen as valid within the borders of the mentioned characteristics.

Reliability

"Reliability is the extent to which research findings would be the same if the research were to be repeated at a later date, or with a different sample of subjects. Caution should be exercised when making general statements on the basis of just one study" (Vale 2006:117; Kvale 2008). However, considering our socio-constructionist approach. We argue that full replicability is not fully entirely possible, given the fact that we see individuals as constructing knowledge through interrelationship. Hence, changing the individuals, the questions and the pre-knowledge, replicating a study will not be doable (external reliability) (Bryman 2012). Nevertheless, we have tried to make this study reliable by ensuring its internal reliability (having more than one researcher that can confirm what they see and hear) (Bryman 2012). However, highlight the limitations of the study and offering detailed indications of how the study was done (Methodology chapter), attaching interviews, recordings, transcriptions etc. should enhance the study's reliability.

Generalizability

"Generalizability refers to the probability that the results of the research findings apply to other subjects, other groups, and other conditions" (Veal 2006:117). Measures can be taken to ensure a certain degree of generalizability of the study, however, strictly speaking, findings can only be related to the subject involved, considering the time and place the research was done (Veal 2006). This current qualitative study is done on a limited number of respondents, expanded on a limited time frame, offering results that can only be seen/ considered as representative for the current study. However, the findings can be looked at as indicators and directions for the studied concepts, and for possible future research.

THEORY

The theories that have been used in this project have the purpose of offering a better understanding of the concept *'controlled experiences'.* Having that in mind, the intention of this paper becomes to discover if control has any effects over consumer's excitement and satisfaction level and the way it is perceived by the consumers.

Experience - the concept

The definition of the concept '*experience'* has generated numerous controversial debates in the literature, without leading to an agreement. The tourist' experiences have been approached from different points, such as phenomenological, Durkeimian, psychological process, institutional pleasure seeking activity and type of gaze (Quang/Wang 2003). Having it looked at from so many points, Shaw and Ivens's (2002:1) analogy seems legit: "the customer experience will be the next business tsunami". A tsunami is a "massive tidal wave generated by seismic activity; fundamental sifts in the earth's crust" (Shaw/Ivens 2002:1). O'Dell and Billing (2005) are in line with Shaw and Ivens's idea (2002), expressing it as follows: "Experiences have become the hottest commodities the market has to offer. No matter where we turn, we are constantly inundated by advertisements promoting products that promise to provide us with some ephemeral experience that is newer, better, more thrilling, more genuine, more flexible, or more fun than anything we have previously encountered. In turn, consumers themselves are increasingly wiling to go to great lengths. Invest large sums of money, and take great risks to avoid *the beaten track* and *experience something new*" (O'Dell/Billing 2005: book cover). Pine and Gilmore (1999:10 - 11), known as the parents of the experience economy, put in short words the value of the experiences: "While commodities are fungible, goods tangible, and services intangible, experiences are *memorable*". O'Dell and Billing (2005) and Pine and Gilmore (1999) highlight a great characteristic of the experience, and that is its memorability.

However, in order to proceed further with the study, the reader needs to take knowledge of the experience's numerous definitions, which are put together in a way that expresses the meaning experience has for this research. Shaw and Ivens (2002:6) give a short but stirring definition: “The customer experience is a blend of company’s physical performance and the emotions evoked, intuitively measured against customer expectations across all moments of contact.” Andersson (2007), Csikszentmihalyi (2000), Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) O’Dell and Billing (2005), Pine and Gilmore (1999), Poulsson and Kale (2004) and Shaw and Ivens (2002) all agree that an experience is a blend between the organisation and the consumer, thus, between all the senses of a person (e.g.: smell, touch, sight etc.) and the goods and services provided by the other. The experience, as Shaw and Ivens (2002) affirm, is nothing but a blend of elements coming together. In order to have the consumers’ senses stimulated, they should be involved emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually (Föster/Kreuz 2002, cited in O’Dell/Billing 2005:61-61).

Pine and Gilmore (1999:98) shortly explains experience as deriving “from the interaction between the staged event and the individual’s state of mind”. Andersson (2007), Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) and Lorentzen (2008) underline that experiences are intangible, individual and dependable on internal and external factors (e.g. Andersson 2007:51: time, skills, money, social surroundings, goods, services etc.). However, many individuals can have comparable experiences, although, due to their individuality, they become harder to customize (Pine/Gilmore 1999).

Carlson (1997, cited in Mossberg 2007:60) emphasizes how organizations are not the ones that give the experiences to the consumers, however, what they do is to “create the environment and the settings in which consumers have the experience.” Can-Seng Ooi (2005, cited in O’Dell/Billing 2005:52) explains how, due to the diversity of the consumers and their unpredictable behaviour, tourists constitute an unmanageable group. Consequently, organizations offer the environment for the experience to take place. However, the consumers “interpret and experience tourism products in ways that please them, regardless of the ‘intended’ manner in which the products are supposed to be experienced” (Can-Seng Ooi 2005, cited in O’Dell/Billing 2005:52). Poulsson and Kale (2004) emphasize that from the co-creation of the experience between the provider and the consumer, a perceived value should result. That value needs to be high enough so that the provider would benefit from it in the means that the consumer would want to pay for it.

Can-Seng Ooi (2005, cited in O’Dell/Billing 2005:51-52) has raised three fundamental questions about experience. The first question is raised based on the fact that tourists are believed to have diverse interpretations of touristic products, all based on their different interests and backgrounds: "How is it possible to offer a single product that will interest and excite all customers?" The second question, "How would tourists, even if they have the same cultural background, notice and appreciate the product in the same way?" arises from the multifaceted aspect of experience. Hence, people, even if doing the same thing in the same place, their experiences are different. The third question is related to the emotional, feelings and moods aspects, which influence their experiences: "But how can the internal psychological and cognitive functions of tourists be, so that the tourism product induces only pleasurable experiences?" (Can-Seng Ooi 2005, cited in O'Dell/Billing 2005:52)

There are numerous important words that compose the definitions enumerated above: blend, physical, emotional, individual, positive, expectations, moments of contact and memorabilia (Andersson 2007; Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989; O'Dell/Biling 2005; Pine/Gilmore 1999 and Shaw/Ivens 2002). Elands and Lengkeek (2012:31) bring up the different sides of the experience concept and how it is being interchanged with concepts "such as perception, meaning, motivation and evaluation." Andersson (2007), Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), Elands and Lengkeek (2012), and Pine and Gilmore (1999) pinpoint a highly valuable characteristic of experiences: dissimilarity (e.g. outstanding experiences, meaningful experiences, memorable experiences etc.). The following sections will zoom in the different ways experience can be looked at, and most importantly, the type of experience this study intends to bring light over, and that is *controlled experiences.*

The 4E's ∩ Time, Skills, Goods and Services

Pine and Gilmore (1999:71) put out in a sentence the essence of what other scientists (e.g. Andersson 2007; Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989; O'Dell/Biling 2005 etc.) have tried to express in full studies: "Consumers today crave experiences, and the surest route to give them that sensation is through individualization like they used to receive from the corner butcher or baker. That's central to everything we design." According to this statement, when consumers buy an experience, they expect to receive something intangible, but memorable, something that will "engage him in a personal way" (McLellan 2000:2; Pine/Gilmore 1999). Poulsson and Kale (2004:271) express experiences as being "a product that does something to you". According to the two authors, what is essential in the act of experience consumption is what happens between the customer and the experience provider during the consumption phase, and highly relevant: the memory that results after the encounter (Poulsson/Kale 2004). The heterogeneity of the individuals makes the experiences unique, with one aspect in common among the experience seekers and between the consumers and the provider: the positive experience, memorabilia (Pine/Gilmore 1999; Poulsson/Kale 2004).

Pine and Gilmore's (1999) opinion is that organizations, when staging an experience, they do not intend to entertain the customers, but more to engage them. This is explained in the 4 E's theory (see Figure 1), which is presented next.

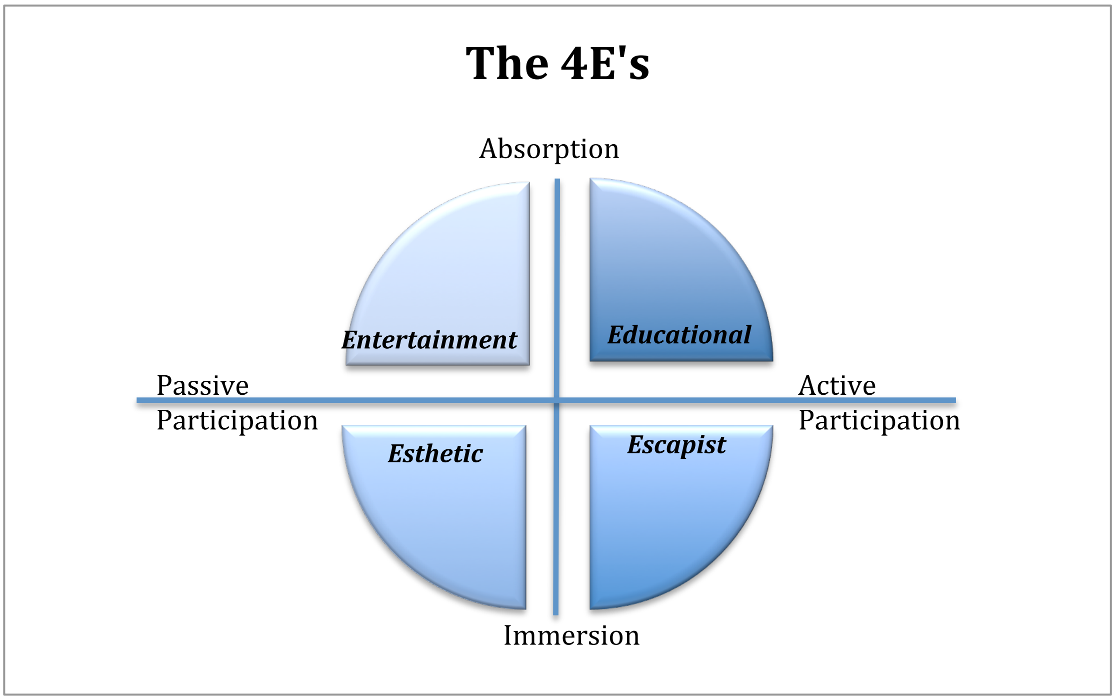


Figure 1 The 4 E's (based on Pine and Gilmore 1999)

The above figure is the essence of Pine and Gilmore's 4E's theory. As shown in the figure, the 4E's are separated into categories, dependent on the type of engagement the tourists have when experiencing. On the horizontal axis, we have the passive (Entertainment and Esthetic) and active participation (Educational and

Escapist), while on the vertical axis we have absorption (Entertainment and Educational) and immersion (Esthetic and Escapist).

- *Entertainment* is the *passive* aspect of the experience, when the guests are only enjoying and *absorbing* the entertainment provided by the organization (e.g. laughing, watching a performance, reading etc.). McLellan (2000:62) rises a very valuable question for the organizations "What can you do by way of entertainment to get your guests to stay?" (Pine/Gilmore 1999).
- *Educational* is the *active* aspect of the experience and the guests are *absorbing* the events "unfolding before him"/her (Pine/Gilmore 1999:32). The education requires the active participation of the individual and the absorption of new information and skills (McLellan 2000; Pine/Gilmore 1999).
- *Escapist* aspect is the one in which the guests are fully *immersed* in the activities and *actively* participating in the experience (e.g. theme parks, casinos, paintball etc.) (McLellan 2000; Pine/Gilmore 1999).
- *Esthetic* is the *passive* aspect in which the participants leave the environment untouched, having no effects over it while *immersing* in it (McLellan 2000; Pine/Gilmore 1999).

Based on the enumerated aspects, the companies aim to stage the unexpected, to surprise their customers by making sure that what the customer expects is less than what he actually perceives (Pine/Gilmore 1999). McLellan (2000") agrees with Pine and Gilmore (1999) that the compelling experience is the ultimate tool that makes "a place distinct from the uneventful world of goods and services." The ultimate goal is to create memorabilia (McLellan 2000; O'Dell/Billing 2005; Pine/Gilmore 1999; Poulsson/Kale 2004). According to McLellan (2000), the value of experiences has become so high, as people are willing to spend more money on experiences rather than on goods or services.

In contrast with Pine and Gilmore's theory, there is Andersson's (2007) theory. Andersson (2007:46) explains the touristic experiences as something immaterial that cannot be bought. According to him (Ibid), experiences only take place in the minds of the tourists, not even them being able to fully control their experiences. The provider of such touristic experiences is the one that has the power of the input so that it would fit the tourists' needs at the right time. Andersson (2007) goes ahead and makes an inventory of four categories of resources that are needed for the experience to take place. The first one is represented by *time* – seen as "the ultimate human resource", it is vital for producing any types of resources (e.g. money), but also, to use the resources in consuming experiences (Aho 2001; Andersson 2007:51). *Skills* come in second, having them mentioned in the flow theory (See next section) as well (Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 1988; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989). Skills are necessary for producing resources, and for consumption purposes, influencing greatly the novelty degree necessary for experiences (Andersson 2007). Third category is *goods*, followed by the intangible *services*. The goods owned by the consumers (e.g. car, boat, skis etc.) are used as an add-on for the experience. Experience services, in contrast with the goods, are meant to address the senses of the consumer (Ibid). Andersson (2007) sustains that touristic experiences are constructed individually, based on their previously enumerated resources. Consequently, in Andersson's (2007) view, the active tourist is "the true maker of his/her own experiences" (Larsen/Mossberg 2007).

Confronting Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theory with Andersson's (2007) theory, the latest would sustain that only two out of the 4E's discussed by the former are the true aspects of experience: educational and escapist. Although, what Pine and Gilmore (1999) express by 'active' may not be synonym with the 'active' Andersson (2007) is expressing in his work. What the two works have in common (Andersson 2007 and Pine/Gilmore 1999) is that one agrees over the power of input of the experience provider (Anderson 2007) while the other largely presents it (Pine/Gilmore 1999). Overall, the two works can be seen as complementary: one highlights the providers' contribution over the experience, while the seconds' main actor is the consumer as the only determinant for his/her experiences. However, be it the provider or the consumer, both aim for the positive experience – flow, more widely discussed in the next section.

Flow theory

Shaw and Ivens (2002:52) bring up the flow concept: "[e]xperiences emerge dynamically through the flow of tourist's attention". Flow is seen as the positive side of the consciousness state, however, little has been written about the positive side of the consciousness state. Csikszentmihalyi (1975, cited in Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989) talks about it as being the optimal experience, or flow. The heterogeneity of human being leaves the optimal experience in a point where it becomes individual, which challenges experience providers in designing experiences that would fit most of their customers' needs (Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989; Mossberg 2007; Pine/Gilmore 1999). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988:24), flow is obtained when "all the contents of consciousness are in harmony with each other […]. These are the subjective conditions we call pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment". Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988:32) describe flow as "merging of activity and awareness". Experiences seek is an escape from the everyday life, and by being emerged into the designed experience, the everyday problems are being forgotten. The goal becomes the flow, but due to its uniqueness, the experience cannot be replicated, adding an extra challenge for the experience providers: the creation of new and thrilling flow generating experiences (Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 1988; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989; Pine/Gilmore 1999).

Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) present the flow as being the result of the balance between challenges and skills. If boredom appears, the flow will most likely not occur (Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 1988). Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre (1989) have described the four types of context that derive from the mentioned balance. The first one is the *flow* context, in which the skills and challenges are greater than the consumers' average. The second one is the *anxiety* context, for which the challenges are higher than the consumers' skills. The third one is the *boredom* context, it occurs when the skills are greater than the challenges. The forth is the *apathy* context, and occurs when both challenges and skills are below the consumers average.

The first context emphasises how experiences can, and will be more positive when the environment offers enough opportunities (challenges) for the consumer to use his/her own abilities to act (skills) (Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Inghilleri (1975, 1982; 1986, cited in Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989:816), the process in which skills and challenges are high, the person is living in the moment and is pushing him/herself into learning new things, and this is being perceived as the optimal experience or *flow*.

The flow theory, or the optimal experience, has received great attention and has been intensively used in studies. Despite this, several scholars have pointed out serious limitations of the approach (Ellis et al. 1994; Vittersø et al. 2000; Voelkl 1990, cited in Vittersø et al. 2000). Flow, as presented above, has been measured as the relation between the skills and challenges a respondent/consumer posses/faces. Voelkl (1990, cited in Vittersø et al. 2000) has pointed out that indicators of flow (e.g. arousal, perceived freedom etc.) are less than 5% explained by the relation challenge – skills. Also, Ellis et al. (1994) has discovered that the experiences that have been placed in the 'boredom context' (Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989) due to the challenge-skills model, have often turned out to be highly positive and enjoyable for the respondents/consumers, and did not decrease their satisfaction. However, in relation to the flow theory, a more psychological aspect of the experience has been approached, and that is the arousal, largely discussed in the following.

Arousal

Arousal has been analysed by most scientists from the psychological perspective (e.g Berlyne 1924; Freud/Breuer 1895/1937; Haemoon et al. 2007; Horslen/Carpenter 2011; Zuckerman 1994). It took long years until a psychology topic reached a new domain: tourism. Experiences, as presented in the previous section (see page 31) were proved to be individual, unique, despite the common outside inputs or similarities in the felt experiences among the consumers (Andersson 2007, Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre 1989; Lorentzen 2008; and Pine/Gilmore 1999). Zuckerman (1994:143) presents Freuds and Breuer's (1895/1937) findings in regards to arousal, in which they discus the principle according to which there "is a tendency to maintain a constant level of "intracerebral

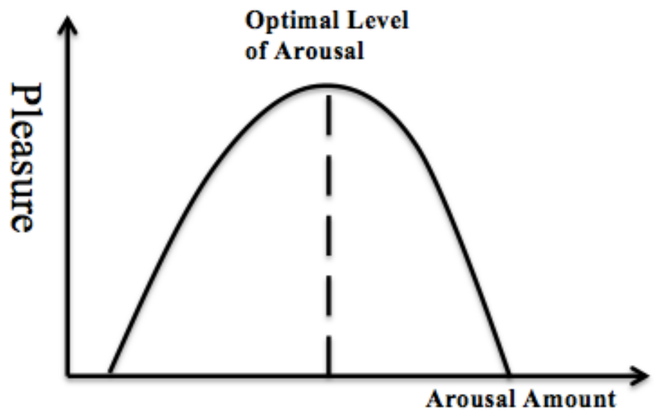


Figure 2 Arousal - The Inverted-U shape (own creation)

excitement'"'. When the levels of arousal go above the optimal level, they become annoying, more like a burden. However, below this level, the motivation to intensify stimulation increases (Fig. 1) (Zuckerman 1994).

The relation between arousal and pleasantness are presumably described best by the inverted U-shape, as its being shown in Figure 1. Accordingly, wellbeing increases up to the optimal point where it will start to decrease the further arousal is increased from that point (Andersson 2007:50). From a psychological point, arousal is best defined as the intensity of the response to a stimulus, which escalates from calmness to excitement (Ibid 2007).

The inverted-U (arousal) hypothesis has been long blamed for not being a good measuring tool, but more descriptive (Anderson 1990). It has been the primary model used to describe the arousal - performance relationship (Ibid 1990). The psychological studies that have discovered the arousal have proved to be transmissible to more practical studies, such as consumer studies. Evolution of research led to the use of the inverted-U hypothesis in studies concerning performance, consumer, satisfaction, experiences and tourism (e.g.: Anderson 1990; Andersson 2007; Mano/Oliver 1993; Oliver et al. 1997). Arousal, or the inverted-U hypothesis was named to be a motivational construct, along with anxiety and emotions (Anderson 1990) or a mediator when testing the subjects in designed settings (Horslen/Carpenter 2011).

The current study uses arousal with the purpose of highlighting the affects the companies' performance has over the arousal of the consumers, and how much is too much for them to decrease their arousal. As Oliver et al. (1997:319) describe, "arousal is a function of surprising levels of consumption". Companies have the task of ensuring excellent experiences for their customers; hence, "the arousal is evidenced in the context of consumption", which can be positive or negative, interrelated with the nature of the consumed experience (Oliver et al. 1997:319). Mano and Oliver (1993) emphasize the importance of arousal as a modifier of the consumers' state of mind in rapport to the consumption. Mano and Oliver (1993) are also highlighting that arousal is not synonym with pleasantness, and that experiences can be more than pleasant or unpleasant (e.g. elating, calming, frustrating etc.). However, experience providers aim to offer positive experiences for their consumers, hence, arousal is one of the most direct expressions of “high levels of either positive or negative affect” (Mano/Oliver 1993: 455). Consequently, according to Mano and Oliver (1993), negative or positive emotional reactions are best expressed through arousal.

Mano and Oliver (1993) make a valuable statement in regards to consumption experiences, which is very much determined by the value or relevance that the consumer attributes to the consumed product/service. Andersson (2007) relates the feelings after the consumption of a product or a service with the utilitarian and hedonic experiences, which are associated with arousal. Furthermore, satisfaction is viewed as the precursor of the purchase (Man/Oliver 1993; Oliver et al. 1997; Voss et al. 2003). Mano and Oliver (1993:455) take over and explain what utilitarian and hedonic evaluations mean and their contribution to arousal: “Since utilitarian evaluation is purely judgemental and absent of any explicit hedonic overtones, higher utilitarian evaluation should not lead to higher arousal. On the other hand, since hedonic evaluation encompasses not only elements of pure pleasantness but also fun and fantasy, hedonic evaluation could also evoke excitement and activation, and, therefore, arousal.” Therefore, according to their saying, and despite Andersson’s (2007) opinion, utilitarian evaluation has no influence in a higher consumer arousal, while the hedonic does.

Satisfaction (see page 42) is seen as the precursor of the purchase (Man/Oliver 1993; Oliver et al. 1997; Voss et al. 2003), but no connection between satisfaction and arousal has been found. Mano and Oliver (1993) do state that there can be positive relationships or negative relationships between satisfaction and the two forms of affects (See Figure 3). However, Oliver (1989, cited in Mano/Oliver 1993:455) argues that: “satisfaction is equally likely under low-arousal (“contentment”), moderate-arousal (“pleasure”), and high-arousal (“surprise”) conditions”. Due to the fact that high- and low- arousal products have the ability “to generate satisfaction

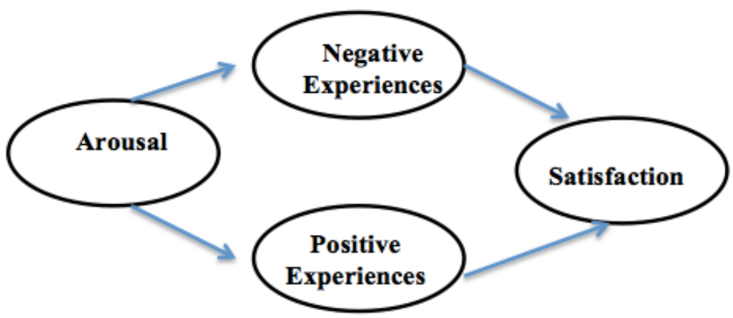


Figure 3 Arousal and satisfaction relation (own creation)

judgments with equal frequency", no relationship between the two is expected (Mano/Oliver 1993:455).

Moving over to tourism related arousal, Andersson (2007:49) describes arousal as "a descriptor of the state of mind of a tourist", and believes in its usefulness in the development of experience economy in tourism. Mano and Oliver (1993) enumerated above the three stages of arousal, one of which is the 'surprise'. According to Oliver et al. (1997:318), "[s]urprise has been described as one of the mechanisms by which activation or arousal is achieved." The element of surprise belongs to the organisation, and it is the one that has to ensure the experience of their consumers will be positive (Andersson 2007; Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989; O'Dell/Billing 2005; Pine/Gilmore 1999; Poulsson/Kale 2004 and Shaw/Ivens 2002). The relationship between arousal and pleasantness is best described in Figure 2 by the inverted U-shape.

4E's ∩ Time, Skills, Goods, Services ∩ Flow ∩ Arousal

The chapters above have presented a series of theories that will be used in the analysis section, having the goal of answering the problem formulated at the beginning of this study (see Introduction chapter – page 3).

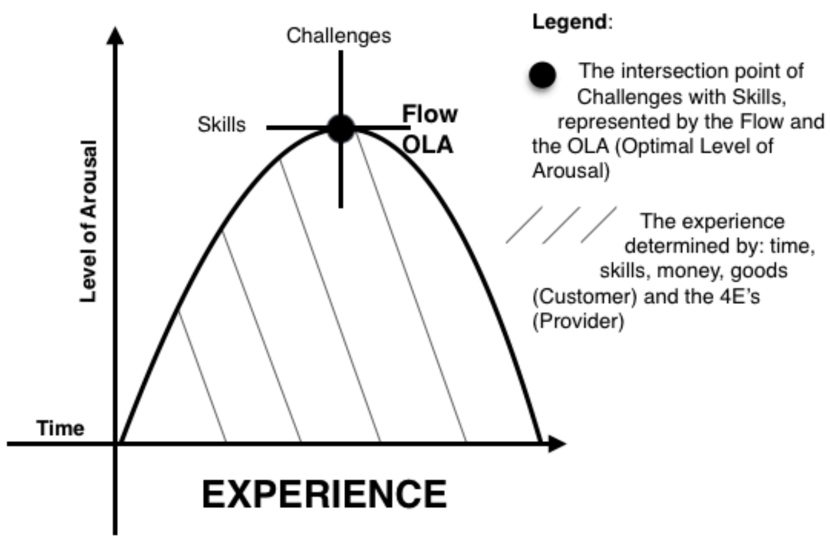


Figure 4 The merger of the experience theories (own creation)

The above image represents the merger of the previous discussed theories, having touristic experience as their main focus. Theories such as the 4E's by Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Andersson's theory (2007) have proved to be complementary: one with a focus on the organisation and the other on the consumer, having them represented together in the above image. Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1989, 2000) discuss about the flow theory. The flow is seen as the moment where the consumers reach the top of their experience, the apogee, the moment when they feel the best and that is most likely to have represented their aim, and what they will best remember after the experience will be over. However, psychologists discuss about arousal, and mostly, the optimal level of arousal (Andersson 1990; Oliver et al. 1989; Zuckerman 1994). Drawing from the two: flow and arousal theory, we have concluded that the optimal level of arousal coincided with the flow. Hence, in figure 4, we can see them represented at the top of the arousal curve, the point where the consumers skills and the challenges faced are best ideally intersect (Csikszentmihalyi et al. 1989, 2000). However, the best use for the above image will turn out to be in the Analysis chapter (see page 52), while here, it's purpose was to offer the reader a better overview of the theories used up until now and to easily relate them to the approached problem of this study. The next section will take the reader up to the second part of the study, which is represented by the control and other attributes of the experience (risk, satisfaction, risk taking and consequences).

Satisfaction

Measuring the level of consumers' satisfaction can help determining whether or not the experience lived by the consumers, in a particular place, was enjoyable or not. A guest's satisfaction represents a personal way of analysing and evaluating the destination's attributes, having a meaningful impact on the behavioural intentions of revisiting or re-experiencing that destination with its activities (Zabkar et al. 2010; Cadotte et al. 1987). Del Bosque and San Martin (2008) present in their study different perspectives on satisfaction of other scholars that have conducted studies about it. Thus, satisfaction is considered by other authors as a:

- Post consumption evaluation (Engel et al. 1993 cited in Del Bosque/San Martin 2008: 553).

- Emotional response of the consumed experience (Spreng et al. 1993 cited in Del Bosque and San Martin 2008: 553).
- An individual's cognitive-affective state deduced from the guest's experience (Bowen/Clarke 2002; Jun et al 2001; Van Dolen at al 2004; Wirtz and Bateson 1999, cited in Del Bosque/ San Martin 2008: 553).

The last perspective represents the one most of the researchers agree on (Del Bosque/San Martin 2008: 553) and as well the one that this study has taken into consideration. It focuses on the experience that first-timers and repeated/ experienced visitors perceive while consuming the touristic product. The role of satisfaction is vital for the organisations, as it is the "main predictor whether customers are likely to return (...)" (Geissler/Rucks 2001: 136). Therefore, it can be deduced that satisfaction leads to loyalty by determining the consumers to revisit the destination or to re-buy the touristic product (Kim et al. 2012).

Satisfaction differs from one consumer to another, being influenced by the visitor's expectations, experience/ experiences, perceptions and the way he/she evaluates the experience (Geissler/Rucks 2001). Beside the mentioned factors, Oliver (1993) affirms the importance of some additional elements. Their role in determining the consumer's satisfaction is not that important as the previous ones, but can diminish or amplify it in a certain manner. Thus, the author mentions how brand-based norms, standards of comparison and ideals influence consumers' expectations and consequently, their satisfaction. At the same time, a fair treatment among all the costumers will determine them to enjoy the experience but, "when they attribute favourable outcomes to themselves and unfavourable ones to others" (Oliver 1993: 419), the level of satisfaction was higher at the end of the experience. As every consumer is unique, a unique treatment will increase the guest satisfaction. From Oliver's (1993) point of view, it can be deduced that in order to increase the consumers' satisfaction, the consumer must feel special or get a special treatment, different from others.

A different approach is the one of Linder – Pelz (1982). The researcher refers to satisfaction as a construction of dependent variables or of independent variables (Ibid:557). The dependent variables are determined both by the consumers and by the service characteristics (service appertaining to the touristic product), while the independent variables follow the consumer's behaviour as a reaction to the experience. The service characteristics include factors that characterize the destination (Alegre/Garau 2011), which are perceived differently from one consumer to another. According to this, satisfaction can be approached as a process, developing on different stages, as the factors that influence it can be detected starting with the pre-experience and continuing with the experience and after-experience. Even if the factors appertained also to the pre-experience stage, satisfaction starts to take shape with the second stage (the experience itself) when the consumption of the touristic product/ experience actually occurs, and it is finalized in the post-experience stage, as an overall evaluation. In this process the consumer, who can be seen as a filter of the service characteristics, represents the determinant factor. The pre-experience stage is important in determining the level of satisfaction as it presents the stage where the expectations are formed, expectations, which will be confronted with the consumed experience.

One of the concerns of this study is to determine how to increase consumers' excitement, identifying and understanding the factors that can increase or influence the consumers' satisfaction can be useful. Thus, according to Alegre and Garau (2011), there are three factors that characterize a touristic product or a touristic destination: basic factors, performance factors and excitement factors. Each factor has its role in creating the experience. Therefore, based on Alegre and Garau' s (2011) study, the basic factors are the ones provided to the consumer without request. Their presence does not increase the consumer's satisfaction, but their absence causes dissatisfaction. "They are factors that determine certain minimum requirements. (...) and determine a minimum threshold for penetrating a market" (Ibid:78). The performance factors have a symmetrical effect on satisfaction: reducing it through their absence and increase it through their presence: "they are designed to meet consumers' needs and desires, and the service provider must offer them in a competitive way" (Ibid:78). The excitement factors are the ones that through their presence they increase the consumers' satisfaction, but they do not cause dissatisfaction if they are not.

In the attempt of trying to understand how to increase consumers' satisfaction in a strictly controlled environment (e.g.: amusement park, theme park, events etc.), the attention was centred on the rules that limit the consumers' behaviour. Despite this, controlled environments are able to attract visitors. Understanding the factors that determine the experience in such an environment will help understand how guests perceive the rules and in what way the rules influence their behaviour. Gotlieb et al. (1994) affirm that the perceived control can influence the consumers' satisfaction "in a variety of different contexts" (Ibid:877). Combining Gotlieb et al. (1994) theory with Oliver's (1993) it can be deduced that control in a controlled environment can be used not only to protect the consumer and ensure that his/her experience evolves without incidents, but also to increase the consumer's satisfaction by influencing his/her perception about the experience: making the consumer feel unique, special. In the attempt of classifying control in one of the three destination factors classification of Alegre and Garau (2011), it can be considered a basic factor as it ensure, as mentioned previously, the proper development of the consumer's experience; and if considering the capability of making the consumer feeling unique, it can be categorized as an excitement factor.

Risk – excitement factor

As it was previously mentioned in the **Satisfaction chapter**, satisfaction is considered to be a cognitive-affective process deduced by the consumer at the end of his/her experience (Del Bosque/San Martin 2008). During the consumer's experience, some factors (excitement factors) can determine if the consumer was/ was not satisfied by the experience. The present chapter focuses on risk (in the context of amusement parks and events) in trying to understand its affect on the guests' experience and on their satisfaction.

Risk definition and ways of approaching

Defining the term risk can be difficult as its sense varies from individual to individual and based on contexts, situations, hazards etc. (Boo/Gu 2010). The concept of risk is something personal, its proportion being determined by the person (Sjöberg et al. 2004). Therefore, the levels of risk are perceived different by the consumers, even if being in the same amusement park, same rides or event. Loewenstein et al. (2001) and Song and Schwarz (2009) consider risk to be a feeling and as well a perception that can affect the consumer's experience. The influence of risk can be perceived starting with the decision-making process and can have at the same time cognitive implications on the consumer (Loewenstein et al. 2001). Thus, it can be deduced that the role of risk in determining satisfaction is important as it can operate both on the consumer's cognitive and affective level, influencing the visitor's choices. For example, in an amusement park, some rides are rated to undesirable risk and some to desirable risk (Song & Schwarz 2009). Song and Schwarz (2009) explain the two terms by using "exciting and adventurous" for the desirable risk and "to make one sick" for the undesirable ones (Ibid:135).

Rose (2010) proposes another approach for risk, defining the term as a "situation or event where something of human value (including humans themselves) is at stake and where the outcome is uncertain" (Ibid:240). The present project agrees with both perspectives. If risk as a feeling is the one influencing the decision of purchasing a certain product (in this case a touristic experience), it can be said that that feeling of risk that characterized the consumer's decision was identified because the product itself holds a certain amount of risk. According to Rose (2010), risk occurs when three factors intersect: "a context or a scenario where some event is possible, the outcome of the event in that scenario is uncertain (and can be represented by probabilities) and where humans have some stake in the outcome" (Ibid:240). In the case of the current study, the context/ scenario is represented by the amusement park; the uncertain outcome of the scenario can be interpreted as the consumers' satisfaction/dissatisfaction; the last part "where humans have some stake in the outcome" (Ibid:240) shows that consumers are the ones that have the highest role in determining if their experience was/ was not satisfying.

A simpler way of explaining risk is by using Bauer's (1960, cited in Dowling 1986:194) perspective. According to him, risk has a bidimensional structure formed by: uncertainty and adverse consequences (Bauer 1960 cited in Dowling 1986:194). Because risk itself is difficult to define, also its two components have a relative meaning, depending on the elements that influence risk itself (individual, hazard, situations etc.). In the context of events and amusement parks, a way of interpreting the two components of risk can be as: excitement and satisfaction. Attributing excitement to uncertainty can be explained by using Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) theory: "experiences often contain exciting parts that get exciting because they balance on the borderline of fear" (Csikszentmihalyi 1990 cited in Andersson 2007:49). The term fear is the element that determines the uncertainty of the experience. Surpassing fear will determine the consumer to record an exciting experience and to be satisfied, while on the other hand, choosing a certain experience and not being able to surpass that fear will determine dissatisfaction. Consequently, satisfaction/ dissatisfaction is the term for Bauer's (1960) adverse consequence.

After trying to explain what risk is and the way it influences consumers, the focus will be now moved towards the factor that determines consumers to assume the risk of the experience. Therefore, the focus is now centred on the factor that determines the visitors to assume that risk in order for them to obtain that "exciting, adventurous" experience or the opposite one. In the case of amusement parks, Mohun (2001) explains that consumers choose rides as they offer " the sensation of being in danger without the possibility of real physical consequence-despite ever-present anxiety of risk in their lives" (Ibid:291), for which he uses the term of "ersatz risk". From the explanation he offers, it proves the fact that visitors accept to consume a certain experience as the "danger" they feel is controlled by the organisation that sells the specific experience. In these conditions, amusement parks operators focus not only on creating safer rides, but also on making the parks socially safer (Mohun 2001:291). It is not important to sale a safe product, but also to provide the consumers the perception of feeling safe. For the amusement parks, the feeling of risk is more dominant than in the case of events. As people engage themselves in different rides, the fact that the ride is not under their personal control may determine a high perception of risk (Sjöberg 2004). Besides the feeling of personal control, the context, scenario where the experience takes place is more risky in case of amusement parks due to the high mechanical part.

Another factor that determines consumers to take the risk is familiarity. This factor helps creating differences between the risk a first-timer feels and a repeated visitor. According to Zajonc (1986), familiarity with an object determines the consumer to perceive that object as being more accessible. In these conditions, a first-timer perceives the risk more intense than a repeated visitor. Familiarity has the role of transmitting the perception of safety among its consumers. Due to it, visitors will perceive the experience less risky. At the same time, a less risky experience will have an impact on the consumer's excitement. The way familiarity affects experience and the way consumers' react towards this will be further approached in this study. Beside familiarity, Song and Schwarz (2009) state that consumers may register different risk levels based on the name given to the purchased experience. In their study, the authors affirmed that rides with a more difficult name to pronounce were appreciated to be more risky than the ones with an easier name (Ibid:135).

The role risk plays on the market is crucial as it explains the consumer's choices in purchasing certain touristic products. Beside the role in the decision-making process, risk also influences the consumer's behaviour during the experience and will offer the explanation of why consumers avoid a certain ride for example or can predict if the consumer will be willing to repeat the experience (Boo/Gu 2010).

Risk taking and consequences

As it was previously discussed, risk can be perceived in two ways: as a feeling (Loewenstein et al. 2001, Sjöberg et al. 2004, Song/Scharz 2009) and as a situation or event (Rosa 2010). The common element that characterizes risk in both situations is uncertainty. For the first case (considering risk a feeling), risk is the feeling that will amplify the consumer's feelings during the experience, determining whether or not if she/he will be satisfied/ unsatisfied; in the second case, the presence of risk is not only the one that induces the consumer the feeling of risk but through the intersection with the place where the experience should happen, the situation itself will bear a certain amount of risk. The present subchapter focuses why consumers assume the risk of the experience and the way providers try to minimize their products risks (in the case of amusement parks and organized events).

For the first point of this subchapter (why consumers take the risk of doing something) a deeper look on their behavior and on the factors that determine a certain kind of behavior might be useful. Thus, the study tends now to have a more psychological approach in order to offer a deeper view over the consumer's behavior. Zuckerman (1979 cited in Zuckerman 1990) discusses about sensation seeking persons, defining them through certain characteristics. They are consumers that search for "varied, novel, and complex sensations and experience and the willingness to take physical and social risk for the sake of such experience" (Zuckerman 1979, cited in Zuckerman 1990:313). In order to understand the consumers' behavior, Ajzen and Madded (1986) consider that intentions are the antecedents of it and are able to predict it. According to them, the stronger the intention the likelihood for the behavior to be performed (Ibid:454). Beside intentions, the ability of performing a certain action has an important impact on their experience (Ajzen 1991). Therefore, in the case of an amusement park, the restrictions regarding a certain ride not only work as a safety measure for the consumers. They also emphasize the fact that certain consumers are allowed to experience it, based on some characteristics that permit them to perform the ride. This will also determine a rise of satisfaction, making the consumers feel different from the ones that are not able/ allowed to perform that experience (Oliver 1993). Therefore, from the presented theories can be concluded that intentions and the ability of performing influence consumers to assume the risk of an experience.

In the context of events and amusement parks, stating that consumers that look for satisfying experiences will be willing to "take physical and social risk for the sake of such experience" (Zuckerman 1979, cited in Zuckerman 1990:313) is too extreme. Firstly because the experience consumers live, is a designed experience. According to Ek et al. (2008), to design means "the constant delimitation or shaping in form" (Ibid:128) while experience, "the observation and spatial participation in an event" (ibid:128). The experience provided will be designed for consumers, based on observations from previous experiences. Therefore, the place where the experience occurs is shaped in order to fulfill the consumer's expectations and to ensure the experience will follow a certain direction, having the purpose of satisfying the consumer. For example, it was previously mentioned that amusement parks use restrictions to ensure the riders' safety. Safety has become a high concern for organizations among amusement industry (Avery/Dickson 2010). The presence of safety is the one that ensures the consumer that his/her experience will be "without the possibility of real physical consequence-despite ever-present anxiety of risk in their lives" (Mohun 2001: 291).

Based on Ek. Et al. (2008), a shaped experience has a certain form where the consumers' participation will fallow a certain course. Shaping the experience will reduce the risk and will minimize as well the uncertainty. By doing this, organizations try to predict the consumers' experience. Therefore, it can be stated that organizations try to control the consumers' behavior. The verb try from the former phrase was intentionally chosen. Organizations cannot be sure that all consumers will be satisfied. If the organizations can control the place where the experience occurs, it cannot be stated the same about the consumers' behavior. Thompson (1981) defines control as "the belief that one has at one's disposal a response that can influence the averseness of an event" (Ibid:89). The presented definition of control was selected as it offers a general perspective, without focusing on a certain type of control. At the same time it states that control does not have to be real so that consumers can fell it. It is enough for them to perceive it and it will influence their experiences (Ibid:89). In her study, the author not only defines control, but also presents different types of it: behavioral, cognitive, information and retrospective. The four categories present the control that can affect the consumer's experience.

Behavioral control refers to "the belief that one has a behavioral response available that can affect the aversiveness of an event" (Thompson 1981: 90). Therefore, the behavioral control can be explained as the behavioral response of the consumer to the experience. It comes as a natural response – people way to react to something. The ability of affecting the aversiveness of an event demonstrates the fact that consumers' experience cannot be controlled 100%. Cognitive control is defined as the cognitive strategy that one possesses and which can affect the course of the experience (ibid: 90). It was discussed in the subchapter related to risk that risk can have cognitive implications of the consumer (Loewestein et al. 2001), thus influencing his/her choices. From the cognitive control theory and Loewestein's et al. (2001) one it can be deduced that risk affects the cognitive control. Thompson (1981) further presents two strategies that characterize the cognitive control: avoidant strategies and nonavoidant strategies. The researcher mentions the organizing principle as being the one based on which the two strategies were built on.

The avoidant strategies determine the consumer to "ignore, deny, disassociate, distract" from the experience; while the non-avoidant ones "focus on the event through heightened sensitivity, rumination, and attempts to control psychological or cognitive reactions" (Thompson 1981:90). It can be stated that cognitive control can influence the consumer's participation to the experience based on the level of risk he/she attributes to that experience. Furthermore, Thompson's (1981) strategies can be correlated to Song and Schwarz's (2009). As it was mentioned in the Risk subchapter (see page 45), Song and Schwarz (2009) discuss about desirable risk and undesirable risk. Having into account Song and Schwarz's (2009) theory (see page 45-46), it can be concluded that desirable risk will lead to non-avoidant strategies, while undesirable risk to avoidant strategies.

Continuing discussing the types of control according to Thompson (1981), information was classified by the researcher as being a way of control. Depending on the way it is framed, information can transmit different messages to the readers (e.g. warning signal, stimulus etc.). The last type of control presented by the author is the retrospective control, which “refers to beliefs about the causes of a past event. The issue here is not feelings of control while experiencing an event but attributions about the cause of the event once it has happened” (Thompson 1981: 91). Based on the explanation it can be deduced that retrospective control is characteristic for the experienced consumers and it manifests itself as stress. The causes of the past event will have on impact on the level of stress the consumer experience during his/her new event.

ANALYSIS

The challenges faced in the current chapter are data scrutinizing, evaluation and add of new perspectives to the literature presented in the theory chapter. For doing so, Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E's framework, combined with Anderson's (2007) perspective of experience will be used. Diving into the experience concept, flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1989, 2000 et.) and arousal (Oliver et al. 1989; 1997; Zukerman 1994) result in being valuable components. The two will be combined, resulting in new perspectives. The purpose of this chapter is to provide answers for the main research question

'How do amusement/ theme parks design and control consumers' experiences in their efforts to generate excitement, despite consumers' heterogeneity?'.

However, due to the studies complexity and the multitude of literature and extended data, we decided to use two sub-questions that will make the study easier to read and understand. The first question (see Introduction – page 6), as the headline of this section presents, will evaluate the organizations way of designing and implementing control over the experiences and how the consumers perceive the experience and the control: '*How do the consumers perceive the designed and the controlled experiences provided by the organization?'* Nevertheless, to avoid repetition of the points already discussed in the theory chapter, the analysis section will only consider the new angles and disagreements of the data reported to the reviewed literature.

As explained in the methodology chapter, we have used netnography with the goal of finding out the organization's position. Yet, the data gathered through netnography is complemented by the answers obtained through focus groups: focus group 1, 2 and 3 (FG1, FG2 and FG3) and self-completed questionnaires (SQ). The transcriptions of the interviews and the completed-questionnaires can be found in the Appendix 2 and 3, while the recordings are in the attached CD (Appendix 4).

Amusement Park/ Theme Park experiences and their consumers

The researchers of experience support the idea of individualization, and Pine and Gilmore's (1999:71) clearly highlight this idea: "Consumers today crave experiences, and the surest route to give them that sensation is through individualization like they used to receive from the corner butcher or baker. That's central to everything we design." However, in the amusement/ theme park industry, the heterogeneity of the consumers makes it a challenge for organizations to design and provide such 'custom made' experiences. The variety of the groups of consumers e.g. children, adults, teenagers, adrenaline 'junks', wealthy, families, repeated visitors, passive consumers etc. make us acknowledge the difficulty of the task. However, amusement/ theme parks challenge themselves in overcoming this barrier:

> *"[...] provide a Spectacular Family Recreation Experience in an Exceptionally Safe, Clean, Friendly, and Unique Environment".* (Morey's Piers, 2014)

The above statement pre-sets one of the visited amusement park's goals, by promising to offer its guests an exceptional experience in a unique environment. Hence, that goes in line with how Pine and Gilmore (1999), O'Dell and Billing (2005) described experiences: individual and unique. However, a lot of the amusement parks promote themselves as a family recreation place. And that's how the consumers end up perceiving them as well:

> *"It is kind of made as a family place"* (Andrei, FG2)

This has appeared to be a general opinion found in all three focus groups. The respondents have discussed how amusement parks/ theme parks advertise and create themselves as family places. One of the interviewee's brought up the fact that there are no amusement parks that would address only one age group (e.g. only kids, only adults, only teenagers or the group of people that have the *'adrenaline craving'* age). Some of the respondents have been intrigued, even disappointed of this form of design. The complaints came more from those who chose amusement parks for the adrenaline. From those who think of amusement parks as the roller coasters' paradise:

> *"Why did I go there? There's a really cool, old, wooden roller coaster and ... Roller coasters are always fun, so I like going fast."* (Logan. FG1).

The roller coasters, or better said the adrenaline dose received from riding a roller coaster, becomes the main motivator for choosing an amusement park. However, amusement/ theme parks such as Dinseyland Paris start its description as a place where magic can be shared with the family in a place that is more than just a theme park. In line with the description Pine and Gilmore (1999) give to experiences, Disneyland Paris makes sure to highlight that the park is addressing to consumers of all ages, ensuring something memorable for each age group.

> *"Share magical family moments at the place that's so much more than a theme park. Alive with Disney magic all year round, there's always something unforgettable for the amazement of all ages."* (Disneyland Paris, 2014).

Making every age group happy, and every individual feel important is acknowledged by the consumers as well, despite their desire to have something that would fulfill just their own needs (O'Dell/Billing 2005; Pine/Gilmore 1999).

> *"But I think every amusement park tries to have stuff for all ages. So I think it's always about trying to fit the age group into it."* (Trine, FG2)

Despite the common understanding of what an amusement park goals are, some of the focus interviewees have taken for granted the amusement parks characteristic of being designed for all age groups. Their opinions have appeared to be deeply limited by their own previous experiences. Reviewing some of the enumerated parks visited by the respondents, one of them has proved to be a park that promotes itself as 'adrenaline dealer' park.

> *"Experience a non-stop adrenaline rush in 2013 at the nation's Thrill Capital, THORPE PARK, with some of Europe's most extreme rides, including a backwards twist to the UK's first winged rollercoaster..."* (Thorpe Park, 2014)

As already mentioned, most of the respondents to our interviews and questionnaires have indicted to be 'adrenaline addicts'. Amusement parks such as the one above are ones that would satisfy their needs the most. Roller coasters and thrills would ensure the right amount of adrenaline. However, the individuality of the consumers makes it hard to fit everyone's' needs, especially when the visitors choose to go there together with their family or friends. Two of the interviewees have engaged in a conversation from which they concluded that amusement parks are not ones to go alone to. Therefore, they do not reject the idea of parks designed to assess a high variety of tastes. Based on their answers, amusement parks/ theme parks are seen not only as a place where you can get your adrenaline dose, but also as a social space.

A place where you can go and have fun with your family or friends, get out of the daily routine, or even as a form of reward after a hard working week:

"Usually I leave for weekend breaks, long weekends, short weekends. So I think is the compensation for a week of working hard." (Nelu, FG3)

In conclusion, amusement/ theme park experiences do become a hot commodity (Shaw/Ivens 2002), often seen as a reward for the daily hard work. Amusement/ theme park experiences become something out of the ordinary (O'Dell/Billings 2005; McLellan 2000), an environment from which adrenaline addicts can experience the controlled forms of risk (Mohun 2001), but very important, a social place for family and friends.

Unfulfilled needs

Despite the efforts organizations invest in creating and designing such forms of leisure, consumers still find aspects that do not fulfil all their needs. One of the major aspects that seemed to have disturbed some consumers is the lack of good food. Spending an entire day in an amusement park, not only the adrenaline crave needs to be fed, but also the real hunger. Hence, some consumers find it very valuable to their experience to be able to eat good food and not just fast food or junk food.

"Usually, this kind of parks, there is one thing which I observed was missing almost all the times: good food. Usually they have junk food, fast food services and all these pizza and French fries." (Nelu, FG3)

A second valuable point was made in regards to the level of personalization of the attractions and up to which level they fit each consumers needs. One of the consumers expressed his need of having more impact onto the design of the park and the attractions (O'Dell/Billing 2005; Shaw/Ivens 2002).

"I'm not sure... Maybe... sometimes I would like to personalize things. In amusement parks, every attraction is already made as it is and maybe sometimes I could need to personalize things more" (Thomas, FG3)

One last comment was in regards to the way the parks are organized, and the lack of engagement into activities, staff that have the task of taking care of the visitors, ensuring they get the best out of their experience. Pine and Gilmore's (1999) opinion, as discussed in the theory chapter (see page 34), is that organizations wish to engage the consumers, not just simply entertain them. However, it appears that in this particular case, their theory does not apply. Hence, what appears to be needed is a closer connection between the park and their guests. As mentioned above, consumers perceive amusement parks as social places, while keeping their ‘adrenaline dealer’ role. Hence, this need of attention and entertainment may be determined by the patrons’ need of belonging, the insurance that you are not a stranger in the park.

> *“All the amusement parks I've been to, don't really guide you in some sort of way, give you any type of ...they don't have this friendly staff, and engaging staff...then it's up to you.”* (Andrei, FG2)

Of course, one opinion cannot be used to generalize. Firstly because every opinion is individual and is based usually on personal experiences, and second because every park is different and unique, hence, not every patron has the chance of visiting all of them. There, of course, exist parks that are more engaging with their consumers, with staff that would interact and contribute more to the experience. For instance, Universal Studios Orlando advertise itself as a place that detain the characteristics Andrei would have liked to find in the parks he has visited:

> *“Around every bend is another epic adventure. Around every corner awaits another once-in-a-lifetime thrill. Take an unforgettable journey through the uniquely themed islands of Universal’s Islands of Adventure, where the world's most cutting edge rides, shows and interactive attractions bring your favourite stories, myths, cartoons, comic book heroes and children's tales to life.”* (Universal Studios Orlando, 2014)

We can acknowledge that consumers are aware of how the environment is designed, and they embrace it. There are minimal complaints, and even less questions about why the experiences are designed as they are. No answers have led us to believe that consumers do consider contributing in any way to the design of the parks nor that they have the power to change it. Their expectations seem to be led by their own previous experiences, friends or relatives’ stories or the companies’ propaganda. On top of that, the responses have determined us to believe that organizations’ task is to make sure that the consumers’ needs are fulfilled, minimizing the influence of the patrons’ heterogeneity over the experiences (Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Elands and Lengkeek 2012; O’Dell/Billing 2005)

The ‘Memorabilia’ creation – ‘And the winner is?’

Experiences are ought to be memorable (Pine/Gilmore 1999; Poulsson/Kale 2004). Experiences belong to individuals, becoming individual as well. However, in the context of tourism, more precise, amusement/ theme parks, the experiences need to be ignited. The ignition point is considered to be the amusement park. However, it is intriguing and provocative to research and discuss about both sides accountabilities: organization and consumer. Some of the reviewed literature led us to believe that the individual solely determines its experiences. It is not denied the influence the organization has in the creation of the experiences, however, there seems to be a ‘battle of the giants’ with the hope to determine which one of the two is more important.

Pine and Gilmore (1999), through the 4E’s theory highlight the organizations part in the experience creation process. However, through the two axes, it pinpoints the role the consumer has in the outcome of the experience. What is common for the two sides (organization and consumer) is that both desire memorable experiences: one to offer and the other to receive/ or experience. Andersson (2007), however, has developed a theory through which he sustains the idea that the active tourist is the only one responsible for the experience.

Despite the results obtained through the review of the literature, our findings do not go in line with all the reviewed theories, offering new perspectives over the existing literature. In the case of amusement/ theme parks, we have discovered that very few participants are passive, according to Pine and Gilmore’s 4E’s theory (more elaborate discussions in the next section – page 60). Nevertheless, consumer’s opinion in regards to the experiences and who is the most responsible for them vary. There are consumers who attribute the outcome of the experience solely to the organization:

> *“I think the ingenuity and creativity of the park developers as well as the overall feeling that everything was approached with professionalism can give you the right state of mind for "enjoying the ride".”* (Silviana, SQ)

Also, there are the consumers that support Anderssons’ (2007) theory, attributing the experience solely to themselves. For example, Claudiu was one to say that he sees the park as a space for his emotions to be let loose. Thus, he is being the only one that could determine whether or not his experience will be one to remember. Hence, this affirmation supports Larsen and Mossberg's (2007) opinion expressed in the theory section (see page 36).

"Myself and my actions. The park is just the place to set loose the joy." (Claudiu, SQ)

Approximately half of the interviewees have agreed that their experiences are the result of their actions combined with what the park had to offer. Still, there have been a quarter of people who support the idea of them being the only responsible, while the other quarter believed that the park is the only one responsible for the outcome of their experience.

"So, I went to Disney, in Paris. The overall…feel of it was very…aaaa…Ok, was very crowded. But it was very organized. And it was very…I don't know, like you were in a …in a cartoon. You know like you were actually in that …environment…you know." (Vladina, FG1)

This statement reflects both Andersson's (2007) theory, which is explained by Vladina who invested financially and times wise for the trip to Disney. Yet, that is combined with Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E's theory. Hence, arriving there, she felt immersed in the environment designed by the organization, actively participating in the activities and using the attractions that the organization had to offer.

Disneyland Florida appears to be in line with Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E's theory. They present themselves as a place that can offer extraordinary experiences for everyone, not just a certain age group; numerous attractions that will engage people in riding them; immersing into the designing environment, while also being absorbed by the provided forms of entertainment and education (Pine/Gilmore 1999).

"Fairytale dreams come true for children of all ages at Magic Kingdom park. Delight in classic attractions, enchanting fireworks, musical parades and beloved Disney Characters across 6 whimsical lands. See fantasy become a reality as you explore Adventureland, Frontierland, Liberty Square, Fantasyland, Tomorrowland and Main Street, U.S.A areas. Zoom through space, become a swashbuckling pirate and watch fireworks light up the sky over Cinderella Castle. (Disneyworld, 2014)"

However, there was one respondent that gave us an answer representative for those who support the merger belief between the organization and the consumer:

"I would say 50%-50%. The park offers me the rides, the show, the games and everything. It's like I have the scene, but there I am the actor. So, I am also in charge to make myself enjoy my time there." (Vale, SQ)

Vale has presented, in few words, what for her, and for half of the respondents means to be in an amusement park. The analogy with a theater scene may lead the reader to think that amusement/ theme parks offer staged experiences, but, it is important to notice that she highlights the consumer's state of mind significance. According to her, simply being in an amusement park and expecting to have a memorable experience is not the right way to do it; hence, it's important to ensure yourself that the time there is become memorable (McLellan 2000; O'Dell/Billing 2005; Pine/Gilmore 1999; Poulsson/Kale 2004).

The following figure is based on Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E's theory and Andersson's (2007) theory. As discussed in the current sub-chapter and previously in the theory chapter (See the 4E's theory chapter), Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E theory refers mostly to the organization's position towards the experience. Andersson's theory though, is one that supports the consumers' role in the outcome of the experience. The figure below represents the confrontation between the two theoretical positions mentioned above and the findings from the empirical data. As seen in the image, the outcome of the intersection between the organization (amusement/ theme park) and the consumer is the experience.

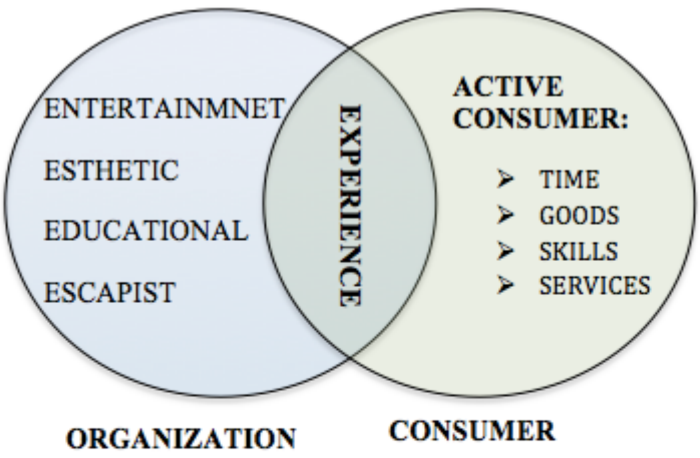


Figure 5 Merger of the organization with the consumer (Based on Pine&Gilmore 1999 and Andersson 2007)

As for who is the winner between the two, according to the collected data, the influence over the experience is in majority attributed to both actors: organization and consumer.

Active/Passive

Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theory is one to present both passive and active participation of the consumer. Andersson (2007), as already mentioned, argues that the only true experience is the one determined by the active participation of the consumer (See Figure 5). The former researchers present as active the consumers that immerge into the escapist/ fantasy and those who are absorbed by the edutaining experiences. Andersson (2007), however, argues that the only true experience is the one appertaining to the active tourist, one that cannot be bought, and the organization having only the power of input. For example, Tivoli starts its' presentation by inviting its' guests to pick their type of experience. Hence, its' an invitation for opposed types of consumers: wild or romantic, big thrills or delightful for the eyes.

> *"Make your choice – the high and wild or the quiet and romantic. Tivoli has 26 rides during the summer and 29 rides during the Halloween and Christmas seasons. Some give a big thrill - others are a delight to the eye."* (Tivoli Copenhagen, 2014)

One of the respondents confirms Andersson's theory in regards to the organization's input position. According to Doria, its' the consumers duty to have fun and not be afraid to try the attractions the park has to offer.

> *"The park provides the attraction/ride but if it is up to the individual to have fun. It is important to go into it with the intention of having fun and not being scared to try different things and thus compromising your fun."* (Doria,SQ)

Nonetheless, by active, Andersson (2007) refers to the tourists that invest time, skills, goods and services for obtaining the wanted experience. However, at least one of the four enumerated conditions is a requirement for all the consumers that proceed in gaining a memorable experience. In the context of amusement parks, confronted with the two theories, one valuable aspect needs to be brought up. The insufficient attributions of the participants assessed in Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E's theory and the amputation of the organization's contributions for the experience that exist in Andersson's (2007) theory.

Amusement parks/ theme parks are designed in such ways that will make them unique in comparison to the rest of the parks. Consequently, consumers' behaviour differentiates both because of the park and their own heterogeneity. The majority of the interviewees have declared themselves to be active participants. To be noted though that consumers' perspective of 'active' does not fully overlap with the perspectives the scholars reviewed in this study have. Hence, out of all respondents, only one described herself as a passive participant. The majority of the interviewees have described themselves as very active, or somehow active. The latest are the ones who choose to combine going on rides with spending time with their friends and just enjoying the environment, barbecuing or just watching the others go on rides. The following two respondents both declare as being somehow active. The first one, Oskar, is one to enjoy as many rides as possible, and after done so, he finds pleasure in watching children having fun.

> *"Well, I go to amusement parks to have fun and to try as many rides as possible. And also to look at the children having fun and I enjoy looking at the families where the kids are almost running away from their parents."* (Oskar, FG1)

The second respondent seemed to be rather reserved in which concerns the rides choices. Consequently, the choices he makes in regards to the attractions are deeply influenced by his emotions and fears. However, despite the fact he is not trying all the rides, he still finds himself to be active. Drawing from his response, the organization seemed to play an invisible role in the experience. Even though some of the rides have been inaccessible for his type, he has found himself able to have a positive experience. This outcome can be attributed to the organization due to its ability to design an environment that will ensure positive experiences for the majority of the patrons (Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989; Pine/Gilmore 1999). Also, it can equally be attributed to the consumer, himself being responsible for the outcome of the experience, basing it on his/ her choices of activities while in the park.

*"I usually avoid roller coasters and horror-related rides since those scare the s*** out of me :(. I tend to be somewhat active, although I don't get to try all the rides."* (Quang, SQ)

Choices are determined by numerous inner reasons. For the previous respondent, the determinant reason appears to be fear, for the majority of the respondents, adrenaline crave. Three out of the total respondents have declared to be very active and eager to try as many rides as possible. They even correlate the money spent on the ticket with the amount of rides/ attractions visited, trying to ensure themselves that the money have been well spent (see section Value behind action – page 65).

"I will try to maximize the ticket!" (Allan, SQ)

One of the many reasons people choose to go to an amusement park is to be able to go on the rides, therefore, what the organization has to offer becomes a pull factor for the consumers, while the adrenaline is nothing but a push factor.

"For me, it's I go to amusement parks to go on the rides." (Logan, FG1)

Another inner motive that determines patrons to be active in an amusement park/ theme park is their strive for trying as many rides as possible.

"I always strive to try as many of the attractions as possible, which means that I would consider myself as being very active during a visit to an amusement park!" (Kevin, SQ)

Yet, as we have mentioned earlier in this section, active participants oppose the passive ones. Maria has described herself to be a passive participant in the means that when she finds herself in an amusement park/ theme park, she avoids going on the rides because of fear. The fear turns into anxiety, stopping her from going in any of the rides/ attractions present at the site, turning into anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 2000; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989).

"I went to Tivoli, in Copenhagen. I really liked the park. I think I was overwhelmed mostly by the lights, by the Christmas lights. If you wanna know about the rides…they don't have too many rides, but I'm not really interested in rides because I'm afraid of everything. But it was really nice and really cozy and a lot of people, not many kids but …everybody." (Maria, FG1)

Maria's description of her visit fits her experience into the left side of Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E's diagram. From her depiction, the organization insured that her experience was entertaining and esthetic. Despite Andersson's (2007) theory, Maria finds herself to be a passive participant, even though she chose to spend her goods (e.g. money) and her time in a place that offered her 29 rides, from which she tried none. Consequently, she was absorbed by a space that was decorated with Christmas lights, immerging and being entertained by it. Thus, as she presented, her experience was still a positive one.

Novelty and repetition

Discussed in the theory section is the aspect of surprise, as well the numerously mentioned consumers' heterogeneity. Before we discussed aspects such as e.g. adrenaline, fear, attractions - this section aims to analyze the dares organizations' face when having to address new and repeated visitors. Nevertheless, it is of high relevance to discover the standing point of the consumers in regards to these aspects.

Starting with the organization, the overall impression that they leave after accessing their webpages is that they merely address to first time visitors. They describe themselves such as to attract the new comers. However, when attracting repeated visitors, the offer of novelty is still present and it is usually defined by a new attraction that the park has added to the previous format. Other ways of attraction are based on the previous experiences of the consumers, promising them to have the same unforgettable experience that they had on their previous visit. The formal way of addressing their consumers "Dear Guests" (Phantasialand, 2014; Morey's Piers 2014) makes the patrons feel respected and treated as the guests in a home. Morey's Piers is an example of company that names itself a big family, and welcomes and treats everyone as one, inducing a comfortable state of mind to the consumers, creating a bond and a level of trust and loyalty that brings their customers back every year. One of our respondents used Fårup Sommerland as an example, which reinforce what was expressed in the previous phrase:

> *"Yeah, I went to Faarup last year. And it is a family tradition that we go there every year. Yeah."* (Nicklas, FG2)

The respondents have pointed out three major reasons for choosing an amusement park/ theme park: fun and thrill, spending time with family and friends and doing something different (O'Dell/Billing 2005). For some of the consumers, going to amusement parks is a tradition, as it can bee seen in the above example. However, there are consumers that are attracted by the mix between the thrills and attractions offered by the organization and the chance to enjoy them with their family and friends (McLellan 2002; Poulsson/Kale 2004).

> *"For me, I guess, it's a lot about adrenaline, first of all, because I love roller coasters and things like that. And it's a lot about bonding and going with friends and things like that. That's really an experience: all around experiences."* (Andrei, FG2)

However, almost one third of the respondents named the attractions as a main determinant:

> *"The reason you go to an amusement park is for the roller coasters"* (Trine, FG2)

Consequently, the majority of the consumers choose to come back to the amusement parks either because it became a family tradition, having emotional meaning, or it des something to them, how Poulsson and Kale (2004) put it. Another reason is for the consumers to obtain their needed dose of adrenaline. However, there is also a meaningful amount of consumers that choose amusement parks because its' something different, out of the ordinary, and that is what the organizations are describing themselves to be: different (O'Dell/Billing 2005).

> *"Around every bend is another epic adventure. Around every corner awaits another once-in-a-lifetime thrill. Take an unforgettable journey through the uniquely themed islands of Universal's Islands of Adventure, where the world's most cutting edge rides, shows and interactive attractions bring your favourite stories, myths, cartoons, comic book heroes and children's tales to life."* (Universal Studios Orlando, 2014)

The presentation of the above organization aims patrons that are ready to experience memorable moments, unique and unforgettable adventures and myths. Hence, the patrons are invited into a world that is different from their daily life, and that is what some of the consumers are looking for:

> *"And why I chose to go there: it's really different from what your everyday life is like. So, it's, you know, the rides, its the thrill you don't get anywhere else."* (Martin, FG1)

"Because it's something different and exciting" (Gigio, SQ)

Consequently, the first time visitors choose amusement parks due to their wish to get out of the daily routine, do something different, spend time with their family or friends or curiosity. The repeated visitors will base their decisions on the same reasons, however, to it can be added the loyalty to a certain amusement/ theme park, familiarity and level of trust. One more reason may be attributed solely to the park, offering sales or different types of deals that would trigger the consumers' interest, and fit their budget. More about consumers goods will be discussed in the next section.

Value behind action

Andersson (2007) has discussed largely about the power consumers have over their experience. Among the four categories of resources that the tourists detain for obtaining a memorable experience, there is the *goods* category and *time*. What have been left out of the equation are the meaning and the motive behind the action. McLellan (2002), Poulsson and Kale (2004) already pinpoint that the choices consumer make are determined by the meaning and the effects they have over themselves. What we have discovered is that consumers add meaning/ value also to the time and money spent for an experience and not just the experience itself.

"Why anyone chooses to spend time/money on anything; because it makes them happy. [...] I love amusement/ theme parks because they allow me to go into the world of stories/ fairytales/ movies that I love, have child like fun, and experience high thrill roller coasters." (Doria, SQ)

It appears that there is more than meets the eye. The consumers do take the time to go visit amusement/ theme parks for which they pay a fee. However, the time and money spent on this type of activity is determined by the profound wish for thrill, the search of happiness, for moments of joy and childhood like.

"Just to spend quality time with my nearest, and yeah, it's a day full of activities and yeah. I think you get good value for your money." (Nicklas, FG2)

The previous section assessed three reasons for which consumers choose amusement parks as a form of leisure. If some choose it because it's different from the daily routine, and some do it for the family and friends, there were also those participants who did it for the fun and for the thrill. Nevertheless, this section does not intend to repeat the previous one. However, it is a deeper layer that is brought up now: the value that the time and goods are being shaped in. For some, as exemplified above, is happiness and childish joy, for others is the joy of being together with the family, and at last – the feeling of a time and money well spent. For others, value is added to the money and time spent on obtaining the adrenaline dose.

> *"Sometimes I think that we pay for adrenaline. For adrenaline freaks, that's the best place to go, or you pay the sensation of being there, relaxing, enjoying your time."* (Nelu, FG3)

> *"It's one of my favorite things to do! While others say it's a waste of money, I think I pay just the right price for my adrenaline dose."* (Sorina, SQ)

Nelu embraces the idea of paying for the adrenaline and the sensation he experiences. Sorina mentions the wasting money idea. Therefore, the data reveals both positions the consumers can have when visiting an amusement/ theme park in relation to money. The first one discussed the higher value of the experience in report to the monetary value. The second one brings up the value that is higher for the money. If most of the respondents have declared to be very happy with the investment, there were a few that did not find this form of leisure worth the investment, or an experience that should be done too often. Hence, the value of the experience was obviously smaller than the value of the money.

> *"The last one I was in was also Tivoli, Copenhagen. And I thought it was too expensive to go to the rides. So…my impression was that it was big and beautiful park but just too expensive."* (Oskar, FG1)

In conclusion, consumers, when having to choose an experience, the value of the experience becomes determinant. However, they determine the value through two concepts: time and money. Time is highly valuable, as these amusement/ theme park experience take place in the free time consumers have. Hence, it becomes highly important that the time spent on this is well spent. Also, in terms of money, some of the respondents have explicitly pointed out that they measure the quality of the experience according to the price they pay for it. The higher the price, the better the experience (e.g. Nelu, Trine etc.). Yet, as seen in this section, not all consumers find the experience as worth the invested money. Nevertheless, the overall conclusion is that consumers find experiences more valuable than money, and time valuably spent if the experience fulfilled their needs.

The experience's apogee

Csikszentmihalyi is one to bring up the concept of flow, or the optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi/Csikszentmihalyi 1988; Csikszentmihalyi/LeFevre 1989:24). However, this study has put together the concept of optimal experiences (flow) with optimal level of arousal (See Figure 4 – page 41) (Anderson 1990; Oliver et al. 1997; Zuckerman 1994). Both concepts refer to the peak point of the experience, which consumers' aim to achieve, and organizations to induce. Consumers, as discussed in the previous section, invest time and money with the hope of obtaining memorable experiences. However, according to Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988:24), a positive experience is one where *"All the contents of consciousness are in harmony with each other [...]. These are the subjective conditions we call pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment."*

This section aims to discover in which point of the experience the consumers found themselves to be the most aroused. In the context of amusement/ theme parks, most of the respondents pointed the arousal moment to be during one specific ride: their favorite ride or one ride that they perceived as the most dangerous, risky or surprising ride. However, there are respondents who identify their arousal moment as being before the ride starts, or after it has been done, when all their feelings can be better analyzed and they can be fully conscious of what just happened. Nevertheless, the majority of the people are those who find themselves feeling high (flow) when being on a ride, and most of the times feeling the fear that triggers their adrenaline.

"I could die but… I'm happy!" (Vladina, FG1)

"You stop thinking, you do everything you want." (Patrick, FG2)

"Riding the "riskiest" roller coaster in the park." (Sorina, SQ)

Maintaining the same line – fear, we have had one consumer that has reached the optimal level of arousal while being in one of the attractions. Yet, his optimal experience has been caused by the meticulously designed attraction, in which case the organization's influence over the experience was higher.

"*At Universal studios, I went on a tour-ride inside a dark tunnel which featured the movie 'Scorpion King'. On this ride, the lighting was generally dim; there were CG visual effects and complementing sounds. At one point, it became suddenly pitch dark and an unsettling feeling of bugs crawling on* *your skin was apparent. What was incredible about this experience was how the four senses were meticulously manipulated throughout."* (Quang, SQ)

Moving over from the fear element, there is one consumer who was in amusement/ theme parks for over 80 times. She pointed out Disney as her favorite park, explaining how the level of excitement she experiences when stepping into "the magic Kingdom" has remain the same. Oliver et al. (1997) said that surprise is a very important aspect in the experience. However, for this case, repeating the visits to the same attraction reduces the level of surprise. However, she still finds the same joy of being there as if it was the first time. According to her sayings, herself and the organization equally influence her level of arousal. Her words pinpoint a highly valuable aspect for this study, which is that the organization can design experiences and create magic, however, if the consumer does not play along and immerge into it,

"I wear my Minnie Mouse ears and I have the biggest smile in my face the whole time" (Kelly, SQ),

[i]t can be a lost battle:

"I don't like amusement parks. My parents took me there." (Zuzanna, SQ).

This section has revealed that both the organization and the consumer influence consumers' level of arousal. Of course, the organization offers the environment for the experience to take place, but it is up to the consumer to play along and 'enjoy the ride'.

Satisfaction: a satisfied consumer is the one who returns

The present subchapter investigates the factors that influence the consumer's experience and thus, his/ her satisfaction. At the same time, it tries to establish when consumers feel satisfaction: during or after the experience; and the impact of satisfaction on the consumer's behavioral intentions of repeating the experience. The respondents' answers will provide information that will help us determine how the consumers perceive the designed experience and the way it influence their excitement and satisfaction (it focuses on generating answers for the two sub-questions). As this study approaches satisfaction as a process (Linder – Pelz 1982 and Alegre/ Garau

2011), developed on different stages, understanding the moment/ moments when the consumer feels satisfied is considered important in determining the way consumers perceive the experience of amusement park and further more to understand the amusement parks way of designing rides (consequently, the subchapter tries to offer responses that would be use to comprehend how organization design experiences in order to generate excitement to consumers).

From the three focus group interviews and 23 self- completed questionnaires, the participants offered answers that could be categorized in different sections, according to the different stages of the satisfaction's process (during and after the experience). It is important to mention that most of the respondents from the self-completed questionnaires interpreted the question regarding the moment when they feel satisfied in a way different than the researcher. Their answered gave information about their overall experiences in the amusement parks they visited, and few were the ones that offered the needed answer: when they feel satisfied during an amusement park experience. Therefore, most of the answers were not taken into consideration, as they do not offer the needed information. By having mentioned this, the subchapter can be continued by stating that some of the participants mentioned that they feel satisfied while experiencing a ride, others at the end of the experience, while others mentioned both of the previous ones. Their answers show that satisfaction differs from one consumer to another, being an individual way of evaluating an experience (Zabkar et al. 2010; Cadotte et al. 1987).

Consequently, interviewees' responses regarding satisfaction were classified in three types based on the moment when consumers feel satisfaction:

1) During the experience:

"I feel kind of satisfaction when I am in the rides but afterwards I or when I'm leaving the ride I don't feel anything really". (Oskar, FG1)

The respondents stated that they feel satisfaction only during a ride. The end of it, or leaving the amusement/ theme park do not make them feel another satisfaction. Some of the interviewees, presented exactly the moment when they felt satisfied while being in a roller coaster: *"I think it was the moment when finally the roller coaster went down."* (Patrick, FG 2). In this example, satisfaction and excitement overlap. Thus, some of the interviewees reach satisfaction when they reach the highest level of excitement.

2) After the experience:

The quotations were selected to better explain the satisfaction after the experience: the first quote presents a consumer that reaches satisfaction at the end of a ride (Trine, FG 2), while the second one show a satisfaction that occurs at the end of the day, spent in the amusement/ theme park.

> *"It's really amazing when you come out of it."*(Trine, FG2)
>
> *"Usually at the end when you tried everything and you spend all day there you fill tired and a bit bored cause…you tried it"* (Daniele, SQ)

3) Both (when consumer feels satisfaction during and also after the experience):

Some of the respondents discussed about a mix between satisfactions: the satisfaction felt during a ride and the satisfaction perceived at the end of the day. It can be stated that this categorization combines the types of satisfaction presented previously at point 1) and 2). The satisfactions gathered from rides are accumulated at the end of the visit, resulting in an overall satisfaction. If in the case of the satisfaction felt during the ride, excitement was overlapping with it, in the case of the overall satisfaction, respondents described it by mentioning a feeling of joy, tiredness and inner peace.

> *"It's a mix (...) when you leave you are tired so… that's a kind of, you know, you feel like, you got something out of the day, you got some memories, you got some experiences there and that's what I'm feeling. But then there is when you are in the actual ride (...) that's where your satisfaction is. (...) You cannot say when it's the top level of satisfaction because, I think, it's a mix. It's two different kinds of satisfactions"* (Martin, FG 1)

By analyzing all the answers, it can be observed that the majority of the participants stated that they feel satisfied both during and after the experience (case 3); the person who stated they feel excited during the experience was lower than the first one and higher than the ones that only felt satisfied after the experience. It is important to understand the factors that influence their experience and influenced their satisfaction (positively or negatively). The respondents that mentioned they feel satisfied during the experience and both during and after correlated in their description satisfaction to adrenaline. But about the adrenaline will be discussed more in the subchapter related to analysis risk (see page 74).

> "*I think I get it two times. I think I get it in the moment, in the peak of the experience, the adrenaline, then I get the satisfaction from getting that adrenaline. Afterwards, when going home, you have a sort of satisfaction in the means that this was a good day, kind of satisfaction."* (Thomas, FG3)
>
> *"Sometimes I think that we pay for adrenaline."* (Nelu, FG3)

Understanding the factors that determine the level of satisfaction is essential for organizations in designing experiences. A good balance between the factors characterize an experience will influence the consumers' satisfaction and his/her behavioral intentions (Alegre/Garau 2011). Knowing how consumers perceive the experience and what determine their level of satisfaction can indicate the weak or strong points of the experience, providing thus valuable data for the organization. At the same time, the person who said they were satisfied both during and after the experience were more willing for re-experiencing. Even if the majority of the respondents mentioned that their overall experience was satisfying, they also mentioned factors that had a negative impact on their experience, causing moments of dissatisfaction.

> *"Usually, (...), there is one thing which I observed was missing almost all the times: good food. Usually they have junk food, fast food and all these pizza and French fries. (...) So probably the food, I think, is a huge problem."* (Nelu, FG3)
>
> *"I really think that they are missing this experience economy part. In the sense that…if they'd have some hostesses, someone to challenge you before you go on the ride (...) to explain the park, the new rides. (...) I feel like this human touch is missing."* (Andrei, FG3)

In the attempt of indentifying answers that mentioned negative factors that determine a decrease of the consumers' satisfaction at a certain point of the experience, from a total of 35 participants (focus group interviews and self-completed questionnaires), one answer related to this question was irrelevant (out of topic), and two persons gave no answer. Therefore, in the analysis of factors which influence the consumer's experience, only 31 answers were investigate as they offered the needed information. From the 31 answers, seven of them contained references to negative aspects from an amusement park experiences. Beside the previously mentioned factors that determine a lower level of satisfaction, extracted from Nelu's and Andrei's quotations (food issues and the lack of human touch), from the other answers it can be identify further factors: money issues (Patrick, FG 3), waiting in lines- crowded and time consuming (Gigio, SQ), the consumer's changeable mood (Vale, SQ). One of our respondents mentioned that in some of the parks she visited, the safety measure were not as good as they were supposed to be. As she described herself, being the type of consumer that needs to try as many rides as possible, this negative aspect limited her experience: she refused to go on some rides that she wanted to (Sorina, SQ).

Beside the mentioned negative factors, consumers experienced feelings that made them feel above the other consumers' experience, increasing their satisfaction. These factors are the additional ones (Oliver 1993), which are not part of the factors that characterize the amusement park. They can be considered excitement factors due to their quality of amplifying the consumer's experience.

> *"I wouldn't say you feel better because of you…but you feel like you accomplished something they didn't do. That's, that's a good feeling, so…"* (Martin, FG1)
>
> *"People trying to do flips on them. Show-offs."* (Trine, FG2)
>
> *"So sometimes you hear people whining, crying. Sometimes they are afraid or screaming because they are happy, and sometimes, first times, you see people who just had lunch or breakfast before. (...)When it happens and you are around. I think it's even better when you finish your ride and you're with your friends and you are laughing and then just make fun about it."* (Nelu, FG3)

It can be noticed that consumers are engaging themselves in some competitions through which they feel like accomplish something that others could not. Even if the number of interviewees who actually stated it, it is really modest (only three respondents out of 35); more than half mentioned that they do not go alone in amusement parks. From their answers it could be deduce that the experience they live it is a social one, as it is based on sharing the fun with family and friends. In their descriptions, key words like jealousy, excitement, adventure, thrill, were used to describe the shared experience. The respondents did not mention the fact that they report their experience to the one that other experienced, but by selecting one key word, for example jealousy and analyze the context in which it was mentioned, it can be deduce that the feeling of being jealous come out from a comparison, from a the act of reporting to someone else.

At the beginning of the subchapter it was mentioned that satisfaction influences the consumers' behavioral intentions and the choice of returning to the amusement park. Through the responses from both interviews and questionnaires, it could be extracted the factors that amplify or minimize the level of satisfaction. At the same time, the interviewees who expressed the fact that they feel satisfied at during the experience and both during and after, explained their experience as a course of satisfying moments alternating with moments of dissatisfaction (if taking into account the whole interview/ questionnaire).

> *"Of course there were moments when I didn't feel that satisfied. And I do think that this is normal. (...) But if the happy moments were the one dominating, for sure the overall experience would be satisfying."* (Vale, SQ)

Creating a parallel between the satisfied/ dissatisfied persons and with the intention of repeating an experience, it can be noticed that their answers regarding to repeating an experience are directly proportional to their level of satisfaction. People who stated they had a satisfying experience affirmed that they would repeat it while the ones that did not enjoy an experience in an amusement park were not so convinced about it or simply answered by saying no. In a descending order, the reasons why a consumer will repeat an experience would be because of: the feeling offered by favorite ride; the feeling of nostalgia; to see if they (consumers) changed through time; limited number of ride; other just affirmed they would repeat the experience without having mentioned the reason. Some respondents from the focus groups interviews offered more details to the question regarding a repeated experience. They mentioned that the excitement level diminishes with experience: the more a consumer tries a ride, less excitement he/she will feel. Consequently, satisfaction level can decrease in case of repeated experience. Valuable information was offered by some of the interviewees who mentioned in his answers the importance of expectations, which influences the level of satisfaction. Some of the respondents from the focus groups interview brought in the discussion branding and how they choose some amusement parks due to their reputation. Based on that, they develop some expectations that may or may not have been fulfilled.

"I would say the branding (...) maybe get you into a park. (...) I think that in amusement parks, there have to be some connection in between the brand and quality of the rides." (Martin, FG1)

Judging by the gathered data, it can be noticed the developing process of satisfaction as it was deduced from Linder-Pelz' s (1982) and Alegre/ Garau' s (2011) theories. Branding was identified as a factor of pre-experience stage which influences the consumer's expectations which will later have an impact on the experience: during and after experience. Related to satisfaction, excitement was considered an important factor with a high impact over it. Thus, the factors that influence satisfaction were considered to be noted: the excitement factor (Alegre/ Garau 2011) and the additional factors (Oliver 1993). From the respondents' answers, the excitement factor in an amusement park could be identified as the designed experience's capacity of generating adrenaline, surprise and the ability of scarring the consumers, while the additional factor was recognized in the respondents' answers when they were referring to other consumers' experiencing and used words like jealousy, excitement, adventure to create comparison between theirs and the others, as it was discussed previously.

Understanding the factors that can influence the consumer' s experience and determine both during and after satisfaction, can help organizations to improve the way they create experiences and at the same time keep or increase the number of visitors by influencing the consumers to revisit, or in another way to say it, to create loyal consumers. In this case, it is important to perceive satisfaction in all three stages of its process. By fragmenting satisfaction, a better look can be given to the factors that influence it. As the consumer's mood it is always changing because of internal or external agents, being aware of these changes can help the organization to take measures by adapting better the experience to the consumer's behavior.

Risk: between excitement and fear

As it was previously discussed while analyzing the factors that determine satisfaction, excitement factors and additional factors determine a higher level of satisfaction for the consumers. At the beginning of the antecedently subchapter was mentioned that consumers feel more excited when their level of adrenaline gets higher, while in the end of it the excitement factor in an amusement park was identify with the amusement park's capacity of generating surprise, adrenaline and the ability to scare its consumers through its designed experience. A small summarization was considered to be needed in order to create a bound between the present subchapter and the previously.

During both interviews and questionnaires, respondents mentioned, while describing their experiences, the perception of feeling scared. The context in which the word scared was used was mostly in relation to the questions regarding risk, and fewer in relation to the feeling of being challenged or how active they are in an amusement park. Therefore, it can be deduced the fact that the perception of feeling scared is related to the perceived risk from the experience. The majority of the interviewees relate scariness to excitement and to an intense experience, while others related it to fear. Thus, we can bring into the discussion the existence of desirable and undesirable risk (Song/Scharz 2009).

> *"Before: scared. During: f**king scared/excited. After: excited/ proud and ' mocking' (for who didn't do that =P"* (Daniele, SQ)
>
> *"The best ones, are the scariest ones. You don't wanna miss a really cool ride just you are too scared. So…* " (Logan, FG1)
>
> *"So, if I'm going to an amusement park, I'm not going for the rides cause I'm really…they really scared the s**t out of me"* (Maria, FG1)

The first two quotes illustrate the idea of desirable risk. Even if the consumer perceives the ride/experience as risky and feels scared, the risk represents an excitement factor, increasing the consumer's experience. What was at first felt as something scaring (pre-experience) turns out to be the factor that increases excitement (during), leading to a high level of satisfaction (after). The second quote proves the opposite compared to the first one. The risk is perceived as a negative element, determining the consumer to believe that the outcome of the experience will not be pleasant. Therefore, risk does not work anymore as a stimulative factor to determine the guest to do something, but it inhibits her participation to the experience: *"I'm not going for the rides cause I'm really…they really scared the s**t out of me"*. Thus, it can be noticed that risk is a variable concept, depending on the way the consumer senses it (Rose 2010).

Focusing on the respondents on who risk had a stimulative action, they accepted the risk because is controlled by the organization (Mohun 2001), which is named 'ersatz risk' – "the sensation of being in danger without the possibility of real physical consequence-despite ever-present anxiety of risk in their lives" (Mohun 2001:291). Amusement parks create and sell safe experiences. The buyers do understand the experience as dangerous but they perceive it as being safe due to the organization's control over the experience.

"Usually I don't think that the amusement parks are made to hurt people, to injure people. Having this idea, I always think that: if something goes wrong, definitely someone will be there to help me. (...)I think and I read some that they have all these safety procedures and safety plans, and sometimes is really hard to go beneath, over or to invade these rules they have." (Nelu, FG3)

Taking into the account the present context, risk becomes an important factor in generating excitement and be considered an excitement factor in case of amusement parks. The answers proved us that boredom corresponds to lack of risk in these types of experience. Therefore, amusement parks, while designing experiences, try to make the rides challenging, risky for the consumers for a greater excitement. It is important not only to create safe rides, but also to instill to consumers the feeling of safety (Mohun 2001). As the next quote gives a consumer's description regarding 'ersatz risk', the human perceives fear which is not real.

"I think …as he said… I don't know …the park has a reputation …I'm not really scared that something may actually happen but like… But, I don't know, I'm never really scared that something might go wrong. (…) You know, but it's not real fear of something…'ll happen." (Vladina, FG1)

The reason why fear is replacing now the term of risk is due to the fact that the consumer knows the outcome of the experience he/ she tries. If risk was defined as "situation or event where something of human value (including humans themselves) is at stake and where the outcome is uncertain" (Rose 2010:240), knowing that the organization is in charge of everything makes the consumer confident about the ride and most important about the outcome of the ride. The respondents explained fear as the trigger factor for adrenaline.

"Well, before the fear kicks in and you know adrenaline makes you high. After the ride you feel free and confident that you can do whatever you want (at least for a short while)." (Andreea, SQ)

But as consumers return and become familiar to the place and rides, we were interested in finding out how familiarity affects the perception of risk and the level of excitement. Therefore, respondents were asked how repeating rides affects the feeling of being safe but at the same time also their emotions during the ride. In consequence, familiarity increases the safety feeling but at the same time it diminished the excitement. The majority of the interviewees confirmed the fact that repeated experience make them feel more comfortable about the experience and they do not perceive the rides as risky as before. This influences their level of adrenaline, making the experience less intense.

"I feel like the more you try the same ride you know exactly what is going to happen, there is less fear hence less adrenaline" (Andreea, SQ)

It is important for organizations to maintain a certain level of risk for the designed experiences. For amusement parks, a level of risk is needed for the consumers to be felt in order to determine a higher level of excitement. As it was show form the received answers, a lower level of excitement is attributed to the reduced perception of risk. Few were the interviewees who declared that they did not register any alternation of their excitement during the same ride and that they perceived the risk as they did the first time. As the respondents were asked to name the last theme/ amusement park visited, we were able to do online research regarding the visited place. Therefore, by analyzing their official web pages, we tried to identify what they promise to consumers. We find it appropriate to remind the reader the majority of the interviewees declared themselves satisfied by the amusement/ theme parks they visited and mentioned in their description fear, adrenaline and the feeling of being challenged. Thus, observing the web pages provided information regarding the amusement/ theme parks experience. The majority of them were presenting the rides and the overall experience through words as: adventure, adrenaline, extreme, thrill, challenge, wild, adrenaline rush. Online the amusement parks that promoted family experiences used milder words for describing their touristic product: paradise, thrill, magic, adventure.

*"(...) you are challenged to take a death-defying flight in reverse on the UK's first winged rollercoaster, THE SWARM. Fearless riders who brave it backwards will speed unknowingly towards a terrifying new near-miss that will see **THE SWARM** rip through the mangled metal of a devastated billboard. Hard-core thrill addicts will need a place to crash after all the stomach-churning action and*

with some of Europe's most extreme rides in its back garden, exciting evening entertainment and a comfy bed, ***The Crash Pad hotel*** *will catapult guests from dream to scream in less than 60 seconds."* (Thorpe Park, 2014)

This quote was chosen as it condenses most of the key words used by the majority of the respondents' last visited amusement parks. Facing the collected answers with the amusement parks description, it can be stated that they match - in the meaning that respondents described what amusement parks presented them. The interviewees talked and wrote about excitement, thrill, adventure, scariness, all mentioned as factors that led to a rise of the excitement level. Amusement parks challenge their consumers, thus the perceive risk does not come from the organization (e.g. the organization is not able to ensure the consumer's safety), but from the consumer who is the one supposed to rise at the level of the ride. The consumer senses fear, as it was previously discussed in the subchapter, but the majority not because of something bad may happen to them during the ride. Therefore, the perception of fear is related to the inner side of them. On the other hand, the majority amusement parks that promote family, as it was mentioned, use less challengeable words to describe their experiences. One of the respondents stated:

"It's impossible (related to the subject from the focus group to beat your friends online in amusement parks), because it's a family place. There are children, there are grandparents. You cannot have a competition when so many other people are in this amusement park." (Nicklas, FG2)

The idea of family place is described as a paradise for all the visitors, were family members work together for a memorable experience.

The risk perceived by the consumers can have two types of impact on them: it can stimulate the consumers to try a certain ride (risk determines fear which will generate excitement) or it can inhibit them (the perceived risk will generate only fear). It is vital for organizations to know how to induce to the consumers a certain level of risk in order to provide a higher level of adrenaline that will result in excitement, obtaining satisfied consumers.

The consumer that assumes the risk is the satisfied one… or the one that gets too scared to try the ride again

From what was previously debate, it can be deducted that the consumer who assumes the risk of an experience (e.g. getting on a ride that scares him/ her) is the one that gets more excited and also satisfied. The perceived satisfaction is not detected only during the experience, but also at the end of it. The previously subchapter affirmed that consumers take the risk of the experience due to the organization's control, which ensures them about the outcome of the experience (nothing bad can happen). But the way consumers perceive the control is important in determining their choices and actions, ensuring a satisfying experience, minimizing the uncertain outcome (Gotlieb et al. 1994; Ek et al. 2008). But as organizations try to minimize the uncertainty of the outcome, this means that the control created may affect in both ways (negatively and positively) the consumer. By taking this into account, the respondents were asked if during their whole experience in amusement/ theme parks they felt restricted in some ways. Thus, more than half of the respondents stated that they do not feel restricted while being in an amusement/ theme park. The rest mentioned that: some of them felt restricted as a child – height- when wanted to try dangerous rides; others considered money as a restriction; few affirmed that some rules of rides restricted them (to ride a car in certain direction) or that they faced physical restriction (losing shoe on the ride and being too drunk to get on the ride).

Most important is the fact that respondents (mainly from the focus groups interviews) acknowledge the existence and perception of control and the fact of being restricted. Restriction was not attributed to control and was perceived as a measure of assuring consumer's safety. Our respondents acknowledge the existence of restrictions, but their presence induced positive perceptions towards the experience. In the satisfaction section from the analysis (see page 68), Sorina (SQ), stated that weak safety measures determined her not to try some of the rides she wished to. As she described herself, being the type of consumer that needs to try as many rides as possible, this negative aspect limited her experience: she refused to go on some rides that she wanted to (Sorina, SQ). Her example shows that not a low perception of control and safety measures, have the effect of inhibit the consumer.

"Sure, but somehow I like being restricted like this. I mean, it's for safety... Restriction could be something interesting or good." (Patrick, FG 2)

Breaking the amusement/ theme parks rules is attributed with putting yourself in danger. Therefore, the majority of the respondents who were aware of the presence of the restrictions, referred to them as positive elements of the experience. It is important to have a good time but to be sure that nothing bad will happen. Thus, the concept of safe fun is prioritized by organizations which create logos through which they easily transmit the idea to their consumers:

"Safety first" (Morey's Piers, 2014)

"Serious about fun" (Thorpe Park, 2014)

Thus, the message of a safe, excitement experience is easily communicate with less effort to the online consumers. The organization can fulfill the costumer's expectations, being designed to ensure the guest's safety without affecting his/her experience in an organized space (Gotlieb et al. 1994/ Ek et al. 2008). Inspecting the amusement parks websites, it was noticed that most of them did not contain a menu for reading the safety regulations or control. Few had at the section with 'FAQ', questions followed by answers regarding safety tips, ride participation, how should the consumer act in case of different situation etc. (for example Morey's Piers official web page). Even though, the amusement park description contained words that induce the idea of top experiences:

"Special designed for young children" (Faarup Sommerland, 2014)

"Professional sport/ training camp" (Surrey Sports Park, 2014)

The usage of the words 'special designed' and 'professional' transmit to the consumer the idea of experience that fit his/ her needs. Ensuring the guest's requirements through a special designed experience, to organization tried to ensure firm direction of the experience' s course, minimizing the risk of something unexpected to occur. But, as it was discussed in the subchapter "Risk: between excitement and fear factor", the experience is perceived differently by each customer. The risk awareness is unique for every single customer, determining fear or excitement. Presenting a risky ride to consumers, the persons who will agree on trying it are the ones that transform risk into excitement. Zuckerman 1979, cited in Zuckerman 1990, discusses about such consumers, who are eager to try risky rides just to be able to feel complex sensations, naming them sensation-seeking persons. Knowing that consumers decide to experience a risky ride for the sake of excitement, we wanted to discover if they broke the organization's rule in order to increase the level of excitement. The majority of the interviewees responded no, considering a way of jeopardizing their own safety. The same responded were asked as well how much in control they think they are during their experience. Creating a parallel between the two questions, the persons who responded that they did not break any rules were the ones who considered that their experience is also influenced/ controlled by the organization. Of course, the level on how they perceived this differs from one consumer to another. Nonetheless, two respondents mentioned that: one broke the rules by standing up during some rides while the other tried to go on a roller coaster while being drunk and on another experience he lost one shoe during a ride. The first person stated that:

"I don't think there are risky rides" (Gigio, SQ)

The second person stated that the only moment of excitement is recorded during the ride, and the time period before and after the ride are perceived as boring and both of them considered that they are the one controlling their experience. Thus, it can be concluded that the persons who broke the rules during an amusement park experience were the ones who considered that the outcome of the experience depends only on them, without feeling any type of control from the organization.

Moving the attention now towards the consumers who affirmed that also the organization contributes in a certain manner to their experience, there are two dominant parts: the ones that consider that they have a higher impact on the experience than the organization and the other part that considers that the organization is the one with a greater impact on the experience. Only few of the respondents stated that they never thought about this perspective and were not able to provide us answers.

Understanding the way consumer perceive control and the organizations' way of control can provide knowledge on the consumers' reactions, behavior, intentions in an designed place with a higher level of risk, compared to normal touristic experiences. According to Thompson (1981), there are four types of control: behavioral control, cognitive control, retrospective control and information. The first three types of control are characteristic for the consumer and they developed when he/ she starts interacting with the designed place of the amusement park. The behavioral control is the consumer's natural way of behaving in the amusement park, offering a fine characterization of the consumer. Thus, we recorded that most of the respondents are active while visiting a theme/ amusement park and only one of the total represented a passive consumer. The behavioral control is recorded during the whole experience.

The cognitive control can be determined, in the amusement park context, by risk. As it was stated before in the theory section regarding risk, risk, in the case of the consumers, is a personal feeling. Attributing a level of risk to some rides, the respondents stated that they perceive some of the rides as being dangerous and some of them not. The cognitive control influences weather or the costumer decides to go on a ride or not - avoidant and nonavoidant strategies (Thompson 1981).

> *"Ok. So, if I'm going to an amusement park I'm not going for the rides cause I'm really…they very really scared the shit out of me."* (Maria, FG1) – avoidant strategy
>
> *"Yes, I did. Why? Because of THAT feeling. Because it makes you feel amazing, because all your senses are alerted, because you perceive a second as a minute, and because it's just so difficult to explain. It is just amazing."* (Vale, SQ) – nonavoidant strategy

The majority of the respondents shared a nonavoidant strategy, being willing to try different rides. They are the consumers that perceive risk as trigger factor for excitement. Maria, on the other hand, because of her fears, adopted an avoidant strategy. In describing her experience in an amusement park, she mentioned she usually avoided rides and enjoyed more watching other people doing it. The risk perceived by her is more an inner fear as she agreed on the amusement parks 'safety.

Retrospective control, in the case of repeated visitors, can be identified with the loss of the excitement (in amusement parks). More than half of the respondents confessed the fact that their feelings and emotions changed after trying more the same ride a couple of times. At the same time, bad experiences could have represented a factor of stress in determining the present behavior of the consumer. Andrei, a respondent from the second focus group interview, mentioned during the discussion that one of his friends died in an amusement park. Even though, he was able to control the stress of past experience, having his amusement park experiences unaltered by this unfortunate event.

Information was considered a way for the organization to control its customers. Based on the way it is presented to the public, some of the consumers may not perceive it as method of control. Analyzing the official web pages of the last visited amusement parks by the respondents, we found that all the rides contained information regarding rules or regulations. Some of them were succinctly presented rules regarding height or age restricted rides (Thorpe Park, 2014), others described in detailed information regarding safety and maintenance (Morey's Piers, 2014), while others just presented information regarding the park itself (facilities) and restriction about animals (Gardaland, 2014). The majority of the amusement parks were shortly presented restrictions regarding the activity in the park. The rules and restriction are presented to the customers as questions fallowed by answers which contained the description of the rule/ restriction.

Contribution to existing literature – control and controllability in touristic experiences

The introduction (see page 3 - 7) of this study brought up the lack of studies that investigate control and experiences in the tourism field. This section aims to assess the two mentioned concepts in an environment where weak forms of control would increase the risk in the experience, having an impact on its outcome. The pillars of this subchapter are the theories and the analysis presented in the study. As mentioned before, the lack of theories that approach this topic, putting together a series of theories and combining them with the data led to the this new theory. This section follows the analysis chapter as it resulted from the merger of theory with the findings of the analysis. This chapter will be divided in three sections. The first one presents the organization's direct role in designing the context for the experience and the control over the consumers' experience. The second one argues the indirect role of the organization over the consumer's experience – the heterogeneity of the consumers determines the variations of approaching the designed context. The major asset of this section is the consumers' individuality, which is reflected on the experience. The third one condenses the two previous sections, offering a deeper insight of the controlled experience concept.

First section – organization's direct control

A large section of the theory chapter was dedicated to explain the concept of touristic experiences. Scrutinizing the literature led to the conclusion that experiences have become the most attractive commodity on the touristic market (Shaw/Ivens 2002). For the current study, amusement/ theme parks represent the environment for experiences to take place (O'Dell/Billing 2005). However, as any touristic experience that occurs in a designed environment, certain forms of control adapted to that specific environment become necessary. From the organization's position, the control becomes necessary for minimizing risks. Thus, it become important for amusement parks to insure the consumers safety, but still allow them to perceive the assumable risk. Consumers filter the assumable risk, resulting in excitement, fear and adrenaline.

Control must be designed by the organization in such ways that it will not represent a restriction, affecting the overall experience negatively.

The analysis extended our knowledge gathered from the theory, allowing us to better understand the concept of control. Thus, two ways of control have been identified. The first to discuss is the direct control. The second form of control is the indirect control, which will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. The direct control represents the enactment that is clearly defined and communicated to the consumer. Through the analysis, three forms of direct control were identified: regulations, safety rules and fees.

- Regulations – it entails a series of guidelines that ensure and maintain the consumers in continuous flow propitious for the environment and experience; secure the well being of all guests (e.g. respecting the lines, smoking in the smoking areas, not being drunk etc.)
- Safety rules – series of rules purposely designed to ensure the consumers safety while in the park and on the attraction (e.g. height, age, medical condition etc.)
- Fees – allows the access in the park and allows or restricts the access to certain attractions (e.g. entrance ticket, ride ticket etc.)

This form of control is considered direct because it gives to the consumer only two choice: to accept them and be allowed to experience the experience or not.

Second section – organization's indirect control

The second section of this chapter assesses the indirect role the organization has over the consumers' experiences. However, compared to the first form of control, the current one offers the consumer a higher flexibility through multiple choices. The options don't come directly from the organization but through its environment (e.g. attractions, other patrons etc.). An important variable in this equation is the individuals, defined though heterogeneity. Heterogeneity is the one that influences the consumers' choices from the given options. The aim of the organization is to provide unique and personalized positive experiences based on the consumers heterogeneity. The search for something out of the ordinary determines the consumers to pay for the experience (as mentioned in the above section). The willingness or unwillingness to pay is determined by the value the consumers attribute to that specific experience (O'Dell/Billing 2005). The willingness to pay is as well influenced by how active or passive a consumer is (Andersson 2007; Pine/Gilmore 1999), also for competitive reasons and the peer effect. Both peer effect and competitiveness is influenced by the proximity with other people. Amusement/ theme parks have been described as social places, hence, is a place that engages and strengthens the social bonds among consumers. Consumers develop a feeling of risk when interacting with numerous and diverse attractions. Risk determines the feeling of fear, which is seen as a mental challenge. Fear can lead to two outcomes: excitement (e.g. when consumers decide to still go on the ride and experience the adrenaline) and anxiety (e.g. when consumers are too afraid to experience the ride). In the context of a place abounding with social bonds, the consumers that perceive anxiety may feel the peer pressure and end by going on ride. For those who experience excitement, engaging in competitions can also be the result of peer pressure.

The direct and indirect forms of control have been condensed in the below image (Figure 6).

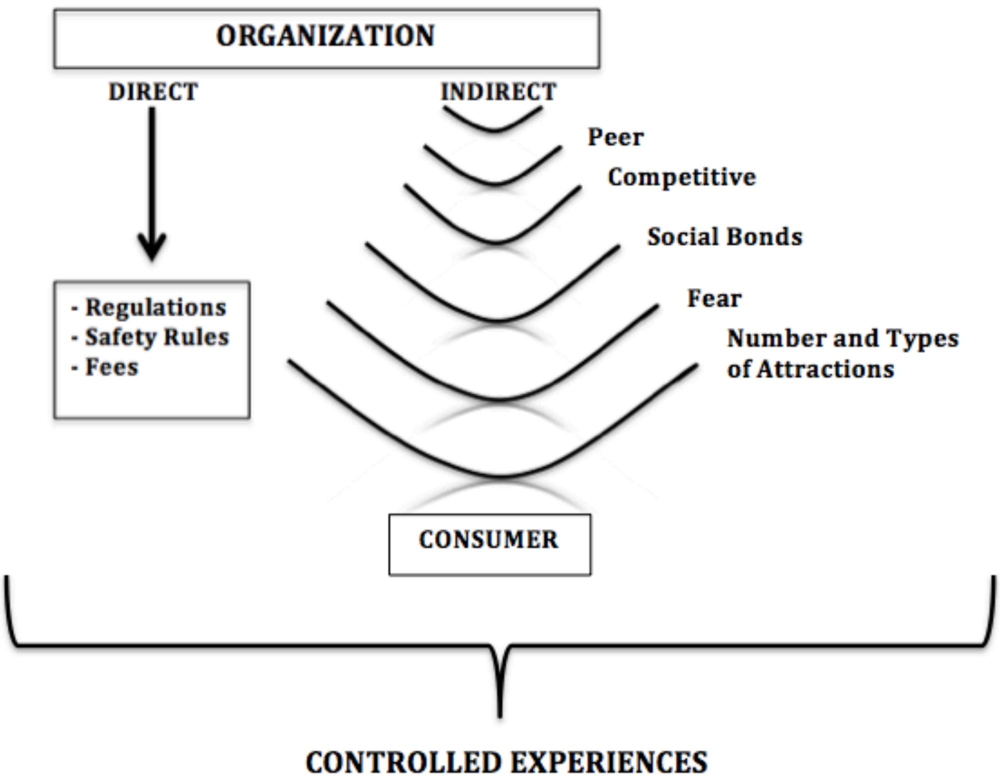


Figure 6 Types of control in an amusement/ theme park

The components that ensure the realization of the controlled experience are condensed in the above figure. The organization and the consumer represent the determinants of the experience. Organizations design an experience based on the consumers' wishes and needs. The direct control is meant to ensure the well functioning between the park and the consumers. However, the indirect control has a greater impact over consumers' experience. The organization offers multiple choices for the consumers, engaging them in the process of creating their experiences, but in the limits of the organisation's desired experience. Yet, consumers' heterogeneity makes it impossible for the organization to have utopic visitors.

Third section – controllable consumers

The previous two sections explained the process through which the organization controls consumers' experiences. The current section is meant to explain the consumers' response towards the control. Figure 7 presents not only the organizations' actions but also the consumers reaction, represented in the figure through the backwards waves. Individuals respond differently to the organizations' forms of control, intercepting in a personal manner, thus, affecting the overall experience. Another outcome of the intersection between the organizations' forms of control and the consumers' reaction is the level of consumers' controllability. The below figure aims to summarize the factors that influence the level of controllability a consumer has.

$$\text{Controllability} = \frac{\text{Organization}}{\text{Consumer}} = \frac{\text{Direct} + \text{Indirect}}{\text{R+A/P} + \text{A/H/Mc} + \text{M}}$$

<u>LEGEND</u>

Direct = Direct control
Indirect = Indirect control
R = Risk
A/P = Active/ Passive Consumer
A/H/Mc = Age/ Height/ Medical condition
M = Money

Figure 7 Consumers' controllability

The above formula was limited by the project's data. The study's focus was not only the consumers' controllability, but also how experiences are designed and controlled in an amusement park. The factors differ from one consumer to another, or other consumers may experience different factors. However, the variation of the factors is one to influence their level of controllability.

CONCLUSIONS

Tourism literature abounds with studies concerning tourist and touristic experiences. Despite the impressive number of studies, we found ourselves intrigued by the lack of research regarding controlled experiences and controllable consumers in a designed environment (for this study, amusement/ theme parks). The novelty of the study challenged us into selecting theories that could be used as pillars for our study. However, the study not only selected and used existing theories, it also generates new knowledge. In order to reach the goal of the study, we found helpful theories regarding touristic experiences from the organization's perspective and from the consumer's one. The research problem for this study has aimed to equally research both sides of the touristic experience: organization and consumer. The backbone of the study is represented by the research problem *'How do amusement/ theme parks design and control consumers' experiences in their efforts to generate excitement, despite consumers' heterogeneity?'.* The complexity of the problem and the high amount of reviewed theories led us to create two sub-questions that would give more fluent course for the study.

The first sub-question is '*How do the consumers perceive the designed and the controlled experiences provided by the organization?'.* Through it, we firstly aimed to present how organizations design experiences. In the theories that argue about experiences, in the touristic context they are presented as a hot attraction, quickly developing. Due to its fast development, organizations are challenged to keep up the competition, but most important with the consumers' needs and desires. Consumers expect experiences to be different than their daily lives and the one that choose amusement/theme parks as a reward expect not only something different than their daily lives, but something more intense. Thus, organizations such as amusement/ theme parks are ought to create experiences that match these types of consumers needs. Consumers associate two major needs to the amusement/ theme parks: the need for adrenaline and the need for social bonds (family and friends). However, repeated visitors register a decreasing level of excitement/ adrenaline when experiencing the same rides. Hence, the challenge for amusement/ theme parks appear when they have to meet the consumers expectations and be able to keep the excitement alive for both new and repeated visitors. Based on that, organizations are in a continuous process of reinventing themselves. Three major aspects influence the consumers' expectations: their previous experiences in amusement/ theme parks, the stories they heard from the near ones and the organization's propaganda. For first timers, the last two aspects are the ones that have a greater impact on their expectation and choices. A repeated interaction with the organization determines a continuous flow of tourists Ensuring a flux of tourists that because of a constant interaction with the organization create a level of trust based on which consumers become loyal to the amusement/ theme park. One of the findings showed that consumers show their loyalty by naming the repeated visit a family tradition. The choice of naming a repeated visit a family tradition is not random. Some of the amusement/ theme parks sell themselves as places for the entire family, regardless the age. Other amusement parks, however, build themselves the image of extreme/ thrill parks that will challenge the adrenaline seekers. Even though the amusement/ theme parks attempt to satisfy all consumers, because of the consumers' heterogeneity, some patrons record unsatisfied needs. Our study registered the following unsatisfied needs: the reduced human touch/ interaction of the staff with the patrons; the lack of healthy food; the inability of the patrons to perceive the attractions as custom made; safety measure that do not satisfy patrons needs for security.

The heterogeneity of the consumers manifests itself also in their level of activeness in the amusement/ theme park. There are two categories of guests: active and passive. The active consumer is recognized through his/ her level of engagement. Firstly, the active consumer, compared to the passive one, invests more time and money into the experience. Hence, the value attributed to the experience is higher. Secondly, these are the consumers that are more likely to return. Thirdly, active consumers are those who maximize the time and money invested by trying as many attractions as possible. Passive consumers are those who are less engaged in activities, their experiences resume at gazing and creating social bonds (time spent with family and friends). However, both types of consumers have in common the value that they add to the experience. Money and time are valuable possession for the patrons, and through their choice to spend them in an amusement/ theme park, value is transferred to the experience.

The consumers' investment in the experience is not without interest. The engagement in the experience generates a certain level of excitement. The second sub-question is one that evaluate consumers' excitement and satisfaction: '*How does that* *influence their level of excitement and thus, satisfaction?'*. Each experience is unique, thus, the excitement associated to the experience differs from one experience to another and from one consumer to another. The length of the experience determines fluctuations in the levels of excitement. Experiences tend to be evaluated based on the produced level of excitement. Also, optimal experience is when consumers reach the highest level of arousal. In amusement/ theme parks, consumers feel aroused in different moments of the experience: before a ride, during the ride or after the ride. Their personal way of evaluating the ride generates or not their optimal level of arousal.

The experience is materialized in satisfaction, which represents a personal evaluation, which can occur on different stages of it. Respondents pointed out different moments of satisfaction. Some of them affirmed that they felt satisfied during a ride; others stated that the moment when they felt satisfied was after the ride or after the overall experience (when leaving the amusement/ theme park); the rest of the interviewees responded that the moment of satisfaction was a mix between 'during' and 'after' satisfactions (the ones mentioned previously). The respondents that declared they reached satisfaction during a ride or after a ride pointed out excitement and adrenaline as factors that generate satisfaction. The ones that affirmed they record satisfaction after the overall experience described the feeling of having enjoyed a pleasant experience as the trigger factor. Satisfaction has a major role in determining the consumers' behavioral intentions. Consumers were more willing to return if they had a satisfying experience. At the same time, the repeated visitors affirmed that the level of excitement was decreasing with the increasing number of amusement/ theme parks experiences. Hence, their level of satisfaction recorded variations compared to their first experience.

A major factor for generating satisfaction in amusement/ theme parks is represented by risk. In the case of organizations, risk is perceived as a situation with an uncertain outcome. For the consumers, risk is sensed as a trigger for excitement or fear. Due to the different ways of approaching risk, consumers involuntary create avoidant or nonavoidant strategies in relation to attractions/ rides. Thus, the patron will accept to experience a ride if the risk, even if generates fear, will lead to excitement. But if fear will generate anxiety, the patron will refuse to experience the attraction/ ride. In order to avoid anxiety and satisfy all the consumers, organizations design attractions with different levels of risk.

Amusement/ theme parks represent environments where the excitement factor should always be present. The bound between risk and excitement determines organizations to be stricter in matters of control and design to reduce the uncertain outcome of the consumers' experience. The control is greater than compared to other touristic forms of leisure, hence it has effects over the consumer and thus over the experience. The consumers that perceived the control do not seem to be bother but it but more willing to engage in the experience. Control is perceived as natural, being responsible for safety, order and well functioning relation between the organization and consumer.

Amusement/ theme parks aim to create memorable experiences. As their experience is based on generating excitement through the perception of risk, their goal is to generate a satisfying experience for all their guests. In order not to inhibit consumers participate to different attractions and also due to the high diversity of the patrons, these types of organizations attempts to cover all types of consumers' needs and wishes. Though, the presence of the risk requires forms of control that will minimize it. Developing direct and indirect forms of control offer the guest certain flexibility in creating his/ her own, individual experience. The level of flexibility is within the limits of the designed experience. The high variety of attractions, the consumers' heterogeneity and the bonds that results among consumers while being in an amusement/ theme park generate experiences that cannot be replicated, nor for the same consumer (in repeated visits), nor between different consumers.

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