



Original Article

Optimizing Experiential Quality to Drive Positive Post-Consumption Behaviours in Kenyan Theme Parks

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and Theme Parks.*

Experience quality has become increasingly important, particularly for the theme park sector. This is because visitors' post-consumption behaviours are influenced by experiential quality, and this has an impact on theme parks' overall success. There have been studies on the relationship between psychological outcomes such as perceived value, image, experiential satisfaction, and behavioural intentions in theme parks and experience quality; however, most of these studies have focused on the global north. In light of this, this study examines management' and guests' perceptions of experiencing quality, perceived value, and post-consumption behaviours (satisfaction and behavioural intentions) in what are thought to be Kenya's top theme parks. According to the research findings, improving experiential quality is critical for nurturing favourable post-consumption behaviours from both managerial and tourist perspectives. Furthermore, visitors place a premium on cost/affordability, outstanding service, and enjoyable and thrilling encounters as critical components of delivering visitor value and creating quality and memorable experiences. Both managers and guests reported high visitor satisfaction and positive behavioural intentions. The authors suggest that optimising the quality of visitor experiences at theme parks leads to beneficial post-consumption behaviours and overall park success.

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INTRODUCTION

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry had experienced rapid growth and had established itself as a prominent economic sector. The industry's impact on the global economy has been increasing over time. As of 2019, the industry generated 334 million jobs, or 10.6% of all employment, and 1 in 4 new jobs globally. It also contributed US\$ 9.2 trillion to the global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019 (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2021). The industry employed 24.7 million people and added US\$ 169 billion to the GDP of Africa in the same year (WTTC, 2020). According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020), the industry in Kenya grew at a 3.9% annual pace in 2019, contributing an estimated \$1.63 billion to the country's GDP. Nearly twice as many jobs as there were in 2000 (11.6 million jobs) were in this industry in Africa in 2014 (20.5 million jobs), or 8.1% of all jobs in the region (World Bank Group, 2018). Africa's tourism industry was increasing at the second-fastest rate in the world, it grew by 5.6% between 2017 and 2018, second only to Asia and the Pacific (AFDB, 2021). Owing to its anticipated sustained rapid expansion in developing countries, the industry is positioned to play a significant role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (World Bank Group, 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 severely impacted the industry globally particularly the attractions sector, undermining years of progress. The sector suffered losses of about 4.5 trillion dollars and as a result, its overall GDP contribution decreased by 49.1% in 2019 to just 4.7 trillion dollars in 2020. A total of 62 million jobs had also been lost globally by the year 2020, leaving just 272 million people in employment (WTTC, 2021). Depending on the type of theme parks and the seriousness of the pandemic in different regions, the worldwide attractions industry saw a 50% to 90% decrease in tourist

attendance in 2020 compared to 2019. The limitations placed on operation days and capacities due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a decline in attendance (Castro et al., 2021).

In the past, pandemics, natural disasters, terrorist acts, and international economic crises have all had an impact on the travel and hospitality sectors worldwide. However, none of these crises led to a sustained decline in the growth of the global tourist and hospitality industries, indicating the industry's resilience to outside shocks (Gössling et al., 2020). The industry continues to bounce back from the COVID-19 shock. Particularly in the theme park industry, the global attraction sector is still recovering from the COVID-19 shock (Careless, 2022). Even if the industry performance is not as good as it was in 2019, the industry is recovering as of 2022. The tourism sector contributed 7.6% of the global GDP (US\$ 7.7 trillion), additionally, it accounted for 9% of all jobs globally (295 million jobs), an increase from 2020 but a decrease of 11.4% from 2019 (WTTC, 2023).

Owing to the allure of consumers seeking hedonistic experiences, the theme park sector of the tourism industry is expanding quickly (Dong & Siu, 2013; Fu et al., 2017). Theme parks are one of the most well-liked entertainment options in the world, mostly serving families (Wang et al., 2019), with millions of individuals of all ages visiting theme parks annually (Wei et al., 2021). According to Dong & Siu, (2013), theme parks are vital leisure and tourist products that draw visitors seeking hedonistic experiences. People's inclination to visit them as a weekend destination is continuously increasing, and they concentrate on fostering a sense of fantasy and escape as well as happy experiences (Duan et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2022). Visits to theme parks are hedonistic experiences that involve experiencing consumption, where guests react more strongly to emotional content than to typical aspects of

service provision (Torres et al., 2018). Thus, a theme park's capacity to provide memorable guest experiences is essential to its success (Fu et al., 2020).

A growing trend among theme park visitors is to demand experiences that provide superior facilities and services. This trend is evident in the ongoing enhancement of critical aspects of the experience, such as queue waiting, rides, entertainment, food services, and merchandise, which are critical for creating value and creating a 'wow' factor (Torres et al., 2018). Existing literature has emphasised the significance of visitor experiences at theme parks and attractions to overall satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Experiential quality describes the emotional reactions of visitors to the anticipated psychological advantages of a theme park visit. (Jin et al., 2015; Torres et al., 2018).

The importance of experiential quality has increased, especially for the theme park industry. This is evident from the many existing studies on psychological outcomes like perceived value, image, experiential satisfaction, and behavioural intentions in theme parks and their experiential quality (Başarangil, 2018; Ghorbanzade et al., 2019; Godovykh et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2015; Kuo & Wu, 2014; Lee et al., 2020; Moisescu et al., 2021; Tasci & Milman, 2019; Zhu et al., 2022). The main reason for this is that experiential quality influences the post-consumption behaviours of visitors, which in turn affects the success of theme parks measured by factors such as overall satisfaction, perceived value, and behavioural intents like revisit and positive word-of-mouth (Ghorbanzade et al., 2019).

However, these studies mainly focused on the developed world and carried out in mega and branded destination or regional theme parks. In addition, most of these studies were mainly quantitative and only gave the perspective of theme park visitors ignoring that of the park managers. No studies were identified that focused on local and medium urban or regional theme parks despite their influence on local economies in the global south. These local and medium urban

or regional parks comprise the bulk of the theme park sector particularly in developing countries such as Kenya (Li et al., 2021). This study aimed to give the perspectives of both theme park managers and visitors on the sector in the global south with a focus on the local and medium urban or regional theme parks. Thus, this study investigated managers' and visitors' perspectives of experiential quality, perceived value, and post-consumption behaviours in presumed leading theme parks in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiential Quality

The concept of experiencing quality originates from the service quality paradigm; with the differences between the two ideas emanating from how they are measured (Feng et al., 2020). The gap between what customers expect from a service and their perception of the service they receive is known as service quality. Conversely, experience quality is characterised by the combination of characteristics that the customer brings to the table and those that a supplier provides (Wu et al., 2018b). It illustrates how customers evaluate their experiences on an emotional level when interacting with the surroundings, service providers, other customers, and other components of the service environment during consumption activities (Altunel & Erku, 2015). Service quality in the travel and tourism industry is associated with attribute-level service performance, while experience quality is associated with the psychological impacts of a customer's travel-related activities (Ghorbanzade et al., 2019).

The assessment of service quality is contingent upon the customer's reflective thinking and attitude toward the functional and technological characteristics of the external service environment of a service provider. Nonetheless, the assessment of experiential quality is inherently subjective and contingent upon the visitors' emotions throughout the engagement in recreational pursuits. In contrast to service attribute-based evaluation, experiential quality is usually evaluated holistically, emphasising the individual over the

service environment. Individuals' subjective assessments of the quality of an experience are influenced by their sociodemographic and psychological viewpoints (Wu et al., 2018b).

Therefore, service quality alone will not shape visitors' post-consumption behaviours in the context of the tourism and hospitality industries, especially in the case of hedonic services. Because of this, scholars have proposed adding experiential quality to the definition of service quality (Hussein & Hapsari, 2020; Lemke et al., 2011). Since tourist services are hedonic and give consumer experiences, it is crucial to investigate consumer experiences in the tourism sector from both a theoretical and practical standpoint (Wu et al., 2018b). Therefore, the concept of experience—especially when it comes to leisure activities—should replace the concept of service as used in traditional marketing. Immersion, surprise, participation, and fun have been the key focuses of the majority of research that has been done on evaluating the quality of experiences in theme parks (Başarangil, 2018; Ghorbanzade et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2015; Kao et al., 2008).

Many researchers have characterised these experiential quality components. Immersion refers to consumer participation during consumption that results in people losing track of time, forgetting about their surroundings, and focusing more on the process of consumption than the end product (Jin et al., 2015; Kao et al., 2008; Wei et al., 2019a). Wei et al., (2019b) claim that to create an immersive experience, theme park operators must invest in brand-new, state-of-the-art rides or theming specific areas of the park, which calls for the adoption of innovations or reconstructions. The feeling of novelty, freshness, or originality that guests get from their experiences at theme parks is known as surprise. When using theme park services, visitors receive unique feelings from unforeseen situations, therefore this is an essential part of the experience. Participation is the degree to which customers spend time and money interacting with services or goods. The degree to which a consumer interacts with products, services, or environments while

consuming them can also be used to define participation. Theme parks ought to do more than provide visitors with entertainment—they ought to engage the visitors in the creation of unique experiences. Lastly, fun is defined as visitors' satisfaction and delight from participating in leisure activities at the theme park (Feng et al., 2020; Ghorbanzade et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2015; Kao et al., 2008).

Post-Consumption Behaviours

Monitoring consumer behaviour patterns is essential for tourism and hospitality organisations to remain competitive (Spyriadis, 2010). Marketers need to know what their customers want from their purchases and recognise consumer behaviours that will help them expand their businesses, since it can be challenging to build truly enduring relationships with customers (Kang, 2018). The popularity and prosperity of theme parks, in particular, are greatly impacted by the behaviours of their visitors (Szu-Ju Lin, 2012).

According to Tien et al., (2021), consumer behaviour encompasses the psychological and social processes that occur both before and after an individual acquires and uses a commodity or service. The experiences a consumer has before, during, and following the use of a service product are all included in their decision-making process. Post-consumption behaviours are especially important in situations where consumers cannot assess a product's quality before consumption, such as theme park experiences. The responses following consumption mostly reflect the attitudes and behaviours of the customers. They support the explanation of why a customer sticks with a firm and aid in forecasting the behaviour of a client in the future (Hernández-Ortega, 2020; Pansari & Kumar, 2017).

An expression of a consumer's experience is known as post-consumption behaviour (Hernández-Ortega, 2020; Loureiro, 2017). A comparison between visitors' perceptions generated during service consumption and their initial expectations defined before consumption forms the basis of post-consumption behaviours (Xu, 2020). Researchers have identified post-visit

behaviours as visitor perceptions of value, satisfaction, loyalty, behavioural intentions, and brand image (Fu et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2018a). Perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions are three concepts that are commonly employed in service research (Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2020). According to Choi et al., (2015), perceived value is mostly preceded by experiential quality and ultimately leads to satisfaction and behavioural intention.

Consumer perceptions impacted by outcomes such as pre-consumption information, circumstantial assessments, and the time of purchase, establish perceived value (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Jamal & Sharifuddin, 2015; Kim & Thapa, 2018). The rising global rivalry in the tourism business has brought more emphasis to the significance of perceived value (Song et al., 2015). Scholars have generally agreed that the consumer's overall evaluation of a product's utility based on perceptions of what is supplied and received constitutes perceived value. Researchers also stress that perceived value is a multifaceted construct. In the context of the travel and hospitality sector, the functional and emotional components of perceived value have gained acceptance and widespread use (Feng et al., 2020; Song et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2018b).

The park experiences can have both functional and emotional value. Functional value states that visitors will not use park services if the experiences they have are not worthwhile enough to justify the cost of consuming park activities. Each visitor evaluates experiences differently visitors today seek out enjoyable and fulfilling experiences on an emotional level (Song et al., 2015). Previous studies have shown that value perceptions have a major impact on visitor satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Feng et al., 2020; Kim & Thapa, 2018). This is relevant to leisure pursuits in theme parks, which are seen to be beneficial for improving guests' well-being (Choi et al., 2015).

Today, it is commonly accepted that experience-based attitude changes depend heavily on

satisfaction. According to Jin et al. (2015), visitor satisfaction is a crucial component in the tourism industry's ability to forecast long-term consumer behaviour and a vital predictor of future patron behaviour. However, winning over customers' satisfaction might not be sufficient to foster loyalty, according to several studies. A return visit is not assured, even in cases where a customer is happy and feels that they had a pleasant experience. The competitive nature of the tourism sector, especially theme parks, may lead some customers to consider other possibilities (Dolnicar et al., 2015; Rosli et al., 2020). The degree of satisfaction does, however, encourage good future behaviours like positive word-of-mouth and visitor price acceptance, even though it is insufficient to foster loyalty to a theme park. Although these clients may not be as profitable as recurring ones, they may be willing to recommend the park (Kang, 2018).

To secure an organization's long-term survival it is imperative to emphasise boosting client loyalty. Behavioural intention, a crucial component of loyalty, characterises customers' intended behaviour (Lee et al., 2020). The commitment of tourists to engage in a specific behaviour in the future, such as using a service or collaborating with a service provider, even while they have alternative options, is referred to as "post-consumption behavioural intention" (Adam, 2021). Travellers' inclination to recommend, return, and spread good word of mouth is an expression of their post-consumption behavioural intentions (Bayih & Singh, 2020). The efficacy of marketing tactics employed by theme parks can better be evaluated by the willingness of guests to recommend service brands and spread good word of mouth about their experiences to others (Adam, 2021; Bayih & Singh, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Using an inductive methodology, this qualitative study focused on the experiential quality and post-consumption behaviours in presumably outstanding Kenyan Theme Parks. Specifically, only those theme parks with both adult and kid activities were considered for the study. The

methodology used in this study was an embedded case study design, which involved gathering qualitative information through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with both managers and visitors (Chaiprasurt, 2019). For this study, two distinct sets of interview schedules were developed based on the existing literature. Park managers were asked questions about how they provided their guests with high-quality experiences and how they saw the resulting visitor behaviours. On the other hand, the questions posed to the visitors were centred on how they felt about the quality of their experiences, value perceptions, overall satisfaction, and behavioural intentions.

The interviews were carried out in six theme parks located in five counties in Kenya namely Nairobi (Maji Magic Aqua Park), Mombasa (Wild Waters Park), Kiambu (Burudani and Paradise Lost Adventure Parks), Kajiado (Nkasiri Adventure Park) and Kilifi (Stage Park) Counties. The counties are also some of the leading tourist sub-destinations in Kenya. The initial theme parks were purposively identified from TripAdvisor (Tripadvisor, 2022), after which snowballing was done to identify additional theme parks. By becoming the go-to internet resource for travel information over the past ten years, TripAdvisor has completely transformed the travel and hospitality industries (Olorunsola et al., 2023). The interviews were conducted over three months from August to October 2023.

Purposive sampling was used to identify manager respondents, whereas convenience sampling was used to reach possible visitor interviewees at the six theme parks. Initially, access was made possible by visiting the parks and interacting with park managers. Interview appointments were sought and then conducted with six managers, one from each theme park. Additionally, the managers were asked for permission to conduct interviews with visitors within the parks. Twelve theme park guests in all theme parks were interviewed. In total, 18 interviews were conducted, which aided

the researchers in reaching data saturation (Giousmpasoglou & Hua, 2020). Detailed notes were made for all the interviews. Additionally, a brief explanation of the study was given to each interviewee, and they all verbally consented. Murang'a University of Technology and the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation in Kenya granted their clearance for the study and the research instruments used. The participants were coded and anonymized in transcriptions due to concerns about confidentiality.

For this study, several data analysis techniques were taken into consideration, including narrative analysis, thematic analysis, and grounded theory. Both thematic and narrative analysis were determined to be the best approaches for assisting in the identification of the major themes that emerged from the gathered data set. Researchers familiarised themselves with the data set by reviewing and revising extensive notes. The next stage was creating codes to represent crucial information. This approach assisted researchers in identifying themes and representing data through early code collation (Sirakaya-Turk & Uysal, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The opinions of theme park managers and guests about experiential quality and post-consumption behaviours are examined and critically evaluated in this part. This research aimed to explore the subject matter comprehensively, rather than pinpointing the differences in opinions among the parties involved. That is, how the replies from the participants support one another. The themes derived from the responses of each type of respondent are used to portray the research findings. A total of 18 thorough semi-structured interviews with 12 tourists and 6 managers produced the findings. Tables 1 and 2 display the coding of the participants, along with a general demographic summary.

Table 1: Manager respondents' coding

Participant	Coding	Gender	Age	Position	Education	Training in the Sector	Sector Experience (Years)
Manager 1	M1	Male	33	General Manager	Master Degree	No	7
Manager 2	M2	Male	44	General Manager	Degree	Yes	20
Manager 3	M3	Male	39	General Manager	Degree	Yes	10
Manager 4	M4	Male	22	Chief Instructor	Diploma	Yes	2
Manager 5	M5	Male	25	Supervisor	Degree	Yes	3
Manager 6	M6	Male	30	Chief Instructor	High School	No	4

Results from Manager Interviews

Manager One (M1) through Manager Six (M6) were the codes given to the management responses. Five themes were established for the manager interviews, derived from the interview questions and the managers' responses: "factors contributing to memorable visitor experiences," "target customers," "delivering value to customers," and "customer post-consumption behaviours."

Theme 1: Factors Contributing to Memorable Visitor Experiences

The managers identified the factors they believed influenced the memorability of visitor park experiences. The factors identified included unique park activities, quality food and beverages, great customer service, great team-building programs, unique facilities, and a clean and safe environment. Four managers (66.7%) identified the uniqueness of their park activities as an important contributor to visitor experiences. M1 and M3 believed that visitors were particularly happy with the unique water sports activities in their parks. They stated that:

"We are the only Aqua Park of our kind in Kenya. You will not find what we offer here elsewhere in Kenya. Even international visitors are surprised to see such here in Kenya. Our water slides are particularly very popular with visitors" (M1).

"Our Aqua Park obstacle course, kayaking, and stand-up paddle boats are unique and are the main attractions of visitors to our park" (M3).

Four managers (66.7%) cited the quality of food and beverages and assurance of visitor safety when engaging in park activities respectively as also important factors. Other factors cited were as mentioned by managers, three managers (50%) mentioned great customer services and the combination of adult and kids' activities respectively, and finally, two managers (33.3%) mentioned unique facilities. Concerning unique facilities, the two managers gave oral testimonies as follows:

"You did see for yourself our type of accommodation inform of the camping pods is very unique, the visitors are always excited about the accommodation" (M2).

"We always provide life jackets to all our visitors and very unique cold water wet suits. The wet suits are quite expensive, and you will rarely find them in other places around" (M3).

These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Ali et al. (2018), who looked into how visitor experience affected satisfaction and loyalty practices in theme parks. They found that tourist satisfaction and loyalty behaviours were positively and significantly impacted by the physical environment of theme parks as well as interactions between guests and staff.

Additionally, the results corroborate those of Wu, et al., (2018b), who found that interactions with staff members and the physical environment's quality both had a positive and significant impact on visitors' post-consumption behaviours. Their study examined the impact of experiential quality on visitor satisfaction and intention to return to a theme park. The physical environment includes the theme park's architecture and layout as well as its amenities. Therefore, theme park management should improve the aesthetics of their establishments, such as by updating aged infrastructure or remodelling the park entrance. Customers may be delighted when new amenities and activities are introduced because they are likely to experience the element of surprise.

Target Customers

The managers identified various target customer groups for their theme parks. These included families and couples, domestic tourists in their regions, schools, colleges, corporates, team-building groups, and walk-in guests. M1, M2, and M5 stated that their main target customer groups were families and couples. M1 also cited domestic tourists to their regions as an important target group. For M2, M4, and M6 they stated that their main target customer groups were corporates and team building groups but also have a significant number of family and walk-in visitors. M1 and M4 also identified schools and colleges as an important segment that they were making an effort to attract:

“Currently our clients mainly comprise families and domestic tourists visiting the regions. We are also working to attract corporates, team building groups, schools, and colleges” (M1).

“Mainly here we host families, couples, walk-ins and team building groups” (M5).

Delivering Value to Customers

The managers discussed several strategies they employ to ensure they deliver value to their clients. The strategies identified included offering package rates for different target clients,

providing time allowances or not being too strict on time allowed for visitor activities, keeping the promise or providing services as promised, offering superior services, offering superior accommodation, offering a wide variety of field activities and ensuring visitor engagement throughout the consumption of activities. The managers M1, M2, M3, and M6 stated that they ensured flexibility on the time allowed for various activities to ensure visitors were contented. Managers M1, M3, and M4 insisted on ensuring that the promises made to the clients are maintained throughout the visitor experience process.

“We have package rates depending on the customer groups, we are also flexible with time allowed for various visitor activities and we ensure our services are superior always keeping promise to the clients” (M1).

“We ensure that we maintain engaging participation of clients as they consume our activities, guiding them as necessary and keeping our promises in all activities they participate in” (M4).

“We offer a wide range of field or time building activities which are more affordable to most of the clients and our accommodation is also superior” (M2).

According to Lee et al. (2020), genuine and unique experiences can significantly increase the value of goods and services. This validates the observation that theme park managers implement tactics including providing unique lodging in the form of camping pods, an assortment of activities, and package deals to provide value to patrons. The management's tactics are consistent with Tasci & Milman (2019) findings, which show that, given the high cost of recreational activities, theme park management needs to prioritise delivering better consumer value through experience design.

Customer Post-Consumption Behaviours

The managers explained various ways they use to assess the satisfaction of their clients. Among the strategies mentioned were; informal discussions

with the clients during, and after their experiences, internal visitor surveys, monitoring online reviews, and monitoring the level of repeat business and growth of revenues. All the managers mentioned the use of informal discussions with clients to obtain their feedback. Four of the managers also cited the monitoring of visitor reviews on social media sites. Three managers stated that they also have short customer surveys that they administer to their clients. Manager M1, particularly highlighted monitoring of the level of repeat business and growth of revenues. The manager observed that their revenues had continued to reflect a steady growth. All the managers acknowledged having in the recent past experienced repeat clients, and clients through referrals by previous visitors which was a good indicator of positive attitudes towards the parks by their previous visitors:

“We have brief visitor surveys that we administer to our clients, our instructors also have informal discussions with our clients. We also look through the visitor comments on social media. For some time now we have seen repeat clients and our revenues have shown a steady growth” (M1).

Results from Visitor Interviews

From the interviews with theme park visitors, four themes were identified based on the interview questions and their responses which included; “nature of visit and theme park choice”, visitor expectations”, visitor experiences and perceived value”, and “satisfaction and post-visit behaviours”.

Table 2: Visitor Respondents’ Coding

Guest	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education Level
G1	Female	32	Kenyan	University Degree
G2	Female	30	Kenyan	University Degree
G3	Male	54	Kenyan	Secondary School
G4	Female	25	Kenyan	University Degree
G5	Male	28	Kenyan	University Degree
G6	Female	26	Kenyan	Middle-Level College
G7	Female	29	Kenyan	Middle-Level College
G8	Female	25	Kenyan	University Degree
G9	Male	30	Kenyan	University Degree
G10	Female	36	Kenyan	University Degree
G11	Male	33	Kenyan	Mid-level College
G12	Female	29	Kenyan	Mid-level College

Nature of Visit and Theme Park Choice

From the visitors interviewed, eight of the visitors (66.7%) had visited the parks as a family while four of the visitors (33.3%) had visited in the company of friends. Their choices for the parks they visited were informed by various reasons. Six of the visitors (50%) stated that their choice was made through referral or influence of accompanying friends:

“My group of friends suggested we have a day out and the park was suggested as the place of choice” (G4).

Four of the visitors (33.3%) resided near the parks and therefore had easy access to the park, one visitor (8.3%) had visited the mall where the park is hosted, and one visitor (8.3%) was a repeat visit to the park.

“It was the first time for me, we came for a visit to the mall, and we came across the Aqua Park and decided to experience some activities in the park” (G2).

The findings show that the primary factors influencing visitors' choice of theme park were proximity to other important attractions, influence from friends, and the parks' proximity to visitor regions of residence. The results are consistent

with those of Pan et al. (2018), who also noted that a park's proximity to visitor residential areas played a significant role in their choice of park. However, additional characteristics that were found to be important in influencing park choices were park type, cost of park activities, internet ratings about child-friendliness, and length of stay. The results corroborate the impact of park distance from visitors' areas of residence, as reported by (Graham & Wall, 1991).

Visitor Expectations

Eleven of the visitors (91.7%) had purposed to visit the parks and therefore had prior expectations about their park experiences. One visitor however had an impromptu visit to the park and therefore no prior expectations. Seven of the visitors (58.3%) cited having fun with friends or family and exciting experiences in the park as their key expectations. Two visitors each (16.7%) mentioned good hospitality, having thrilling experiences, and friendly charges for the activities respectively as their expectations before the park visit:

"I expected to have a great time with my friends" (G6).

"My expectations were a day full of fun and exciting memories" (G8).

The findings show that among the expectations that park visitors had before visiting their preferred park were having an enjoyable, exhilarating experience, receiving excellent service, and reasonably priced park activities. The results align with those of Hernandez et al. (2023) and Tsang et al. (2012), who also noted that park visitors hold significant expectations about staff hospitality and exhilarating adventure activities. Nonetheless, the two studies also found that other crucial factors for park visitors to take into account include the physical surroundings, which include clean facilities, food and beverage outlets, and visitor security and safety.

Visitor Experiences

All the visitors (100%) stated that their park experiences were fun. G1 stated that:

"The experience was fun, the water sports were exciting and challenging, especially the obstacle course".

"The experience was fun, and we really enjoyed ourselves as a family." (G7).

All the visitors also agreed that the activities in the theme parks were quite engaging and required the full attention of the participants.

"Sure, the activities are daring and require total concentration, always very attentive when up on the lines" (G3).

G10 also observed that:

"The water sports were quite involving in absorbing one's attention".

The visitors also responded to the element of surprise in their park experiences. Seven of the visitors (53.3%) mentioned there was an element of surprise in their park experiences while five (46.7%) did not come across any surprise. Mainly the element of surprise for the seven visitors was from new activities they experienced or facilities in the parks. Some activities mentioned included the Aqua Park obstacle course, sky cycling, dark water slide tunnels and long-distance zipline, while some unique facilities identified included the camping pod and cold-water suits provided to visitors. G2 stated that:

"Some water sports such as the obstacle course were new to us. The provision of cold-water wetsuits was also a surprise".

Regarding their experiences, the visitors also had preferences. The guests talked about the aspects of their park visits that they found most enjoyable. They emphasised features like fun activities, excellent instructors, unique accommodations, and a beautiful and relaxed park environment. For instance, some of the theme parks were located in the middle of large coffee and tea plantations giving a serene and fascinating environment.

They highlighted things such as lack of package prices or discounts for families, lack of secure guest lockers at swimming and water sports areas, poor directions and signage to the park, lack of adequate children's activities, some facilities not functioning properly, and high cost of food and beverages in some of the theme parks.

The findings show that fun, surprise, and immersion are among the experiential quality factors present in the encounters of theme park guests. The guests also mentioned what they found most admirable about their experiences. This is significant since a theme park's capacity to succeed mostly depends on the quality of its visitors' experiences (Lee et al., 2020). Theme parks must attend to the problems raised by guests to improve their views of experience quality and, consequently, their behaviour after consumption.

Perceived Value

On the visitor perception of getting value for their money all the visitors agreed to have somehow gotten value for their money. However, they also had concerns about the pricing of activities or entry charges being relatively high. For instance, G1 stated that:

“Though the experience was good, the charges were relatively high. It was expensive to participate in many activities as a family”.

Similar sentiments were expressed by G9:

“Relatively expensive but for the unique experience, I think it was worth the charges especially doing this once in a while”.

The findings show that, despite the relatively high cost of activities, visitors felt they got some value for their money. This was particularly true given how infrequently they visited the parks. However, the prices limited the activities that visitors could afford to participate in. Therefore, theme park managers must verify that their pricing is appropriate to their target clients. Visitors' perceived value and satisfaction are significantly related to their likelihood to switch (Cheng et al., 2016). With alternatives to parks with similar

facilities and activities and reduced pricing, the visitors could reconsider their park choices.

Satisfaction and Future Behavioural Intentions

Finally, the visitors were requested to evaluate their overall satisfaction with the park experiences and state their intentions to revisit and recommend the park as a result of their experiences. They were requested to rate their overall satisfaction with park experiences on a scale of one to ten. Six respondents (50%) rated their overall satisfaction at seven out of ten (70%), five respondents (41.7%) rating at eight out of ten (80%), and one respondent (8.3%) rating as nine out of ten (90%). The visitors also revealed their intentions to revisit and recommend the parks. All respondents stated that they would consider visiting the park again and would also consider recommending it to others. G1 stated that:

“Yes, I will probably come again and can also recommend the park to friends”.

“I would consider visiting again and will surely recommend the park to friends” (G6).

“Sure, this is our second visit, and we would recommend the park to others”. (G8)

The findings show a rather high level of visitor satisfaction and positive behavioural intentions. Visitor satisfaction is the most important aspect of increasing visitor loyalty and reducing switching behaviour. However, when it comes to theme parks, visitors choose those that they believe would provide them with the best value out of all the possibilities available. Their standards for appraising these parks change over time, influencing visitor satisfaction and loyalty. As a result, theme park operators must devise effective marketing tactics to align customers' pre-visit expectations with their actual park experience. Cultivating brand loyalty may assist reduce brand-switching behaviours (Cheng et al., 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

This study's findings agree with existing literature that optimizing experiential quality in theme parks drives positive visitor post-consumption

behaviours. The park managers recognize the importance of optimizing visitors' quality and memorability of experiences. This was evident from the strategies adopted such as providing unique activities, great team-building programs, serene and fascinating park environment among others. This resulted in visitors feeling their experiences were fun, and engaging and had some elements of surprise. The visitors particularly identified exciting park activities, excellent instructors, unique accommodations (camping pods), and a beautiful and relaxed environment in the parks as uniquely contributing to the quality of experiences.

However, there were also some disappointments on the part of visitors' experiences. The visitors cited a lack of package pricing for park activities or discounts for families, secure guest lockers, dysfunctional facilities, poor signage to the parks in remote areas, and high costs of food and beverages. Despite the disappointments majority of the visitors expressed to some extent getting value for their money, being satisfied with their choice of the parks, intending to revisit, and even recommending to others.

This study offers important insights for theme managers and decision-makers. If park managers continually identify the expectations of their target customers and design the visitor experiences in a manner that they respond to the expectations this would cultivate positive post-consumption behaviours. It is also important for the managers to understand the influences of visitor park choices. In delivering value the park managers must be guided by the expectations of their target customers and not their propositions.

Study Limitations

This study has limitations due to its limited sample size and research conducted in only six theme parks located in five counties. The six parks also being the presumed leading parks in Kenya.

Recommendations for further studies

Future studies may include a high number of theme parks and not only the highly reputable ones and cutting across more counties. Future

studies may also focus on the kids' amusement theme parks which dominate the theme park sector in Kenya. A comparative study can also be carried out on the experiential quality and post-consumption behaviours across the parks. Finally, finding any discrepancies in the opinions of various stakeholders, such as guests, managers, and employees, would be another area of investigation.

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