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# The Impact of Consumers' Attitudes toward a Theme Park: A Focus on Disneyland in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area

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**Abstract:** We explore the impact of consumers' attitude toward a theme park on the image of the host city. We study how attitudinal aspects of Disneyland in Los Angeles can influence the image of Los Angeles. Using the tripartite approach of attitudes, we model consumers' attitude of theme parks with three dimensions: cognition, affect, and conation. We show the causal relationships among Disney content, attitudinal constructs, and attitudes toward Los Angeles. Results showed that Disney content influenced cognition, affect, and conation, and both cognition and affect were connected to conation. Finally, affect influenced attitudes toward Los Angeles. Our research provides several implications for both academia and practitioners.

**Keywords:** attitude; cognition; affect; conation; theme park; city branding

## 1. Introduction

Place marketing focuses on marketing an individual location in order to affect a city's brand image [1–4]. Especially, recent trends of well-being and green marketing make place marketing a more relevant [5–7]. Place branding makes an individual place as a brand of a city [8–14]. In this process, destinations are designed to be attractive to tourists and to be a valuable brand for residents [13]. City managers want to brand and market their city to such target audiences as residents and tourists. Customers' perceived images of a destination city are critical in city branding [15,16]. Place managers can build their city images through various communication tools, including commercial advertising PR and physical properties [17]. Among city properties, theme parks can have significant implications for city branding as one of the representative assets of the city [18]. For example, recent city branding research demonstrates that the Olympic Park of Montreal has played a significant role in improving the city's brand image [19]. Specifically, consumers' experiences with theme park visits positively influenced their perceived image of the city by transferring favorable images of a theme park to its positive city images, when common consumer associations are shared [20]. Likewise, as an important communication medium to consumers, a theme park can play a significant role in city branding.

It is important to understand the influences of theme parks on city branding. The number of people visiting theme parks is increasing over time. Approximately 186 million people visited the top

25 parks worldwide in 2008 [21–23]. In spite of the significant effects of a theme park on city branding, there is little empirical research to show the connection of theme parks to branding the city, destination marketing, and tourism literature. To fill this research gap, we highlight the role of a theme park in strengthening a city's brand image and making the city sustainable [5,7]. Then, we empirically show how a city's brand image can be enhanced by measuring customers perceived brand image toward the city. For doing this, we focus on how consumers' three attitudinal aspects (i.e., cognition, affect, and conation) of a theme park influence its city image to see the linkage between the favorable images from the theme park and perceived image toward the host city.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

We developed a conceptual framework as follows. First, we explain what theme parks are. Next, we show how a theme park affects the image of the hosting city. Third, we present how the image of the city is constructed, and added with the impact of media. Lastly, we show how actually these images are built in customers' minds expressed by perceived brand image of the city.

### 2.1. Theme Parks

The concept of theme parks is likely to originate in the 19th century in Europe [24]. In the U.S, this concept is from Walt Disney's first theme park, "Disneyland," which opened in 1955 in Anaheim, California [23]. Since then, several theme parks including Disneyland in Anaheim, California, Legoland in Billund, Denmark, have become essential parts of the image of these host cities [25,26]. Specifically, the current theme park industry in the U.S. is significantly influenced by the original philosophy of Walt Disney's first theme park [23]. For example, Disneyland contents create an artificial world that allows people to experience imagination, illusion, color, delight, and feelings of warmth and nostalgia [27]. Today's theme parks allow people not only to see this content, but also to have physical experiences via unified structures in the park [28]. For instance, Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom in Florida provides a diverse set of life-sized Mickey Mouse motifs that allow visitors to experience Disney content in a real-life setting [28].

Contemporary theme parks have several characteristics such as sideshows, historical presentations, educational presentations, parties including fireworks, food and beverage, and shows [29]. In addition, Clave [23] maintained that theme parks include several basic characteristics such as a thematic identity, themed areas, enclosed spaces with guest-controlled access, a single admission prices, and attractions for families. Furthermore, the theme park provides entertainment, food, and merchandise [30]. Most contemporary theme parks have one main theme and several sub-themes that are linked to the dominant theme. For example, Disney's Animal Kingdom, which opened in 1998 in Florida, promotes animal conservation as the dominant theme, and the sub-themes involve real, extinct, and mythical animals [30–34].

Lures such as theme parks create an atmosphere of another time and place, and focus on a particular theme. For example, Anaheim, CA has Universal Studios, Knott's Berry Farm, and Disneyland to draw the community, and further activities such as golfing, shopping, dining, and local events. Theme park visitation is representative of leisure activity forming a certain consumption trend. During these periods, residents and visitors including travelers form a favorable image of the place, theme park, ultimately which can cascade into the feelings of the city. Disney is a representative business player in the theme park industry.

### 2.2. City Branding

The concept of a brand is broad and is used in various fields. Brands are not defined narrowly as mere physical products [35]. By definition, the meaning includes personal brands, country brands, and city brands. Among them, the place-branding concept is applied to city branding [36]. City branding requires broader considerations, as compared to product or service branding such as geography, tourist attractions, natural resources, local products, institutions, residents' characteristics,

and infrastructure [37,38]. Research shows that places may be branded when their characteristics can be differentiated [39], and images are essential in place branding [15,16]. Cities can be the main targets of place branding.

City branding refers to communication with customers and stakeholders related to cities [11]. A city is a complex entity incorporating accommodations, catering facilities, tourist attractions, art, entertainment, and natural scenery [40]. Furthermore, cities could have a brand personality in which consumers hold certain images. Dimensions of a city brand personality that are known to exist include excitement, malignancy, peacefulness, competence, conservatism, and ruggedness [41]. Cities can be branded using various tools such as traditional advertising or public relations. Advertising necessitates a large budget and is not well-suited to capture a broad range of international consumers. Alternative marketing tools are adequate for cities. For example, public relations can be used, and hosting hallmark events can build a city's brand [42]. There is empirical consensus that the Olympic Games affect the development of the hosting city's tourism infrastructure [43].

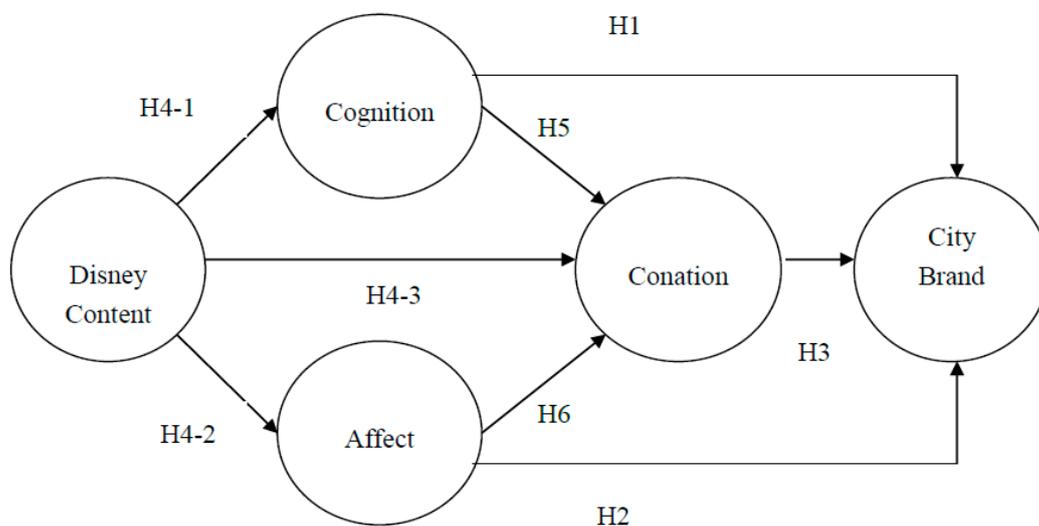
We focus on theme parks which can be regarded as the place of origin of products in a certain city [39]. Given that theme parks are the properties or extended brands of a certain city, we can assume that both brands share common images. Images of the theme park or attraction of the city can influence the image of the hosting city with the same feelings and memories. Recent studies in the city branding literature show that the Olympic Park in Montreal plays a significant role in improving the brand image of the city [19] and consumers' experiences with theme park visits positively influence their perceived image of the city by transferring favorable images of the theme park to its positive city images when common consumer associations are shared [20]. Therefore, we postulate the following set of hypotheses between consumers' attitudinal aspects of a theme park and city branding:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *Consumers' positive cognitive attitudes toward a theme park will lead to their favorable attitudes toward the brand image of the host city.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *Consumers' positive affective attitudes toward a theme park will lead to their favorable attitudes toward the brand image of the host city.*

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *Consumers' positive conative attitudes toward a theme park will lead to their favorable attitudes toward the brand image of the host city.*

As a conceptual framework, Figure 1 illustrates our proposed model, incorporating these focal relationships.



**Figure 1.** Proposed relationship model of a theme park and its city.

### 2.3. Tripartite Model of Attitudes

Attitude is defined as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” [44]. The attitude is a core concept employed to evaluate consumers’ responses. We use the attitude as the dependent variable in marketing and advertising literature [45,46]. Attitudes have been viewed as possessing a cognitive, affective, and a conational dimension [47]. The tripartite attitudinal dimension is a well-known model that many researchers have studied [48–51]. Our model has three dimensions: a cognitive, affective, and conative component. First, the cognitive component includes attention, awareness, comprehension, and beliefs. Second, the affective component comprises feelings, conviction, attitudes, and evaluation. Third, the conative component refers to behavior, action, and intention [48–51].

Lavidge and Steiner [52] propose a hierarchy of effects model. They classified the tripartite attitudinal dimensions as awareness and knowledge (cognition), liking and preferences (affect), and conviction and purchase (conation). Vaughn [53] suggests that the tripartite attitudinal dimensions have a sequential hierarchy of events. For example, consumer behavior occurs via awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, and conviction [53]. In terms of consumers’ brand attitudes, cognitive sense comes first, followed by affective sense, and finally, conative sense [54]. For example, Back and Parks [55] suggest that attitudinal brand loyalty is influenced by cognitive-affective-conative brand loyalty stages in the context of tourism. However, some researchers emphasize the importance of affect or emotion in the Tripartite Model of Attitude. Zajonc and Markus [56], proposing the affect-conation-cognition sequence, show that people can have a preference without a cognitive basis, focusing more on affect that leads to behavior.

We explore theme park attitudes by identifying the latent attitudinal dimensions and their consequences on the image of the hosting city. There have been many studies regarding emotional responses in advertising and marketing research within the past two decades [57–60]. This ample evidence shows that feelings or emotional responses have substantial effects on attitudes toward brands and consumer behavior [57–68]. In terms of emotional responses, the Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance (PAD) theory portrays well-known emotional dimensions and is first proposed as evaluation, activity, and potency by Osgood et al. [61]; and later, Mehrabian and Russell [62] redefine the theory (pleasure, arousal, and dominance). This theory is designed to describe emotional responses in three independent, bipolar dimensions: 1) Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance. These three emotions (PAD) are considered as the three basic human emotions. Mehrabian and Russell [62] assert that all human emotional responses are regarded as combinations of PAD to varying degrees; pleasure is measured by the degree of extreme happiness to extreme unhappiness; arousal ranges from frenzied excitement at one extreme to mental inactivity and mental inattentiveness; and dominance is regarded as the degree of feelings of power, control, or influence over a situation, from a high feeling of control/power to a lack of feeling control/power. The three-dimensional PAD approach allows researchers to explore diverse consumer emotional responses in consumption processes [58,62]. PAD explain the affective aspects of consumers’ evaluations of marketing communication messages [63]. For example, some scholars found that consumers’ affective intensity, both strong positive or negative, is one of the crucial factors in increasing brand recall [63,64]. Bigne, Mattila, and Andreu [65] confirm that affect impacts satisfaction during service consumption, and consumer satisfaction is directly linked to brand loyalty during post-consumption in a theme park.

Based on the literature, we investigate the attitudinal dimensions of theme parks. Specifically, the attitudinal images of Disneyland stem from the original Disney media services, including animations, TV shows, and movies. This content provides the primary source constituting the basis for the artificial reality of man-made theme parks. Given that attractions in Disneyland are based on stories from Disney media content, the positive relationships between Disney theme park content and Disneyland can be easily assumed. Positive roles of media content on subsequent attitudes are well documented in the international communication literature [66]. Furthermore, media are likely to influence consumers’ perception of places such as cities and destinations, according to media scape

theory [67]. Therefore, we hypothesize the individual relationships between consumers' evaluations of theme park content and the attitudinal dimensions toward the theme park as follows:

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *Consumers' evaluations of theme park content will lead to the tripartite attitudinal dimensions (such as cognitive, affective, and conative attitudes) of the theme park.*

**Hypothesis 4a (H4a).** *Consumers' positive evaluations of theme park content will lead to their favorable cognitive attitude toward the theme park.*

**Hypothesis 4b (H4b).** *Consumers' positive evaluations of theme park content will lead to their favorable affective attitude toward the theme park.*

**Hypothesis 4c (H4c).** *Consumers' positive evaluations of theme park content will lead to their favorable conative attitude toward the theme park.*

In addition, the hierarchical relationships among the attitudinal dimensions can be specified. It is an accepted belief that cognition and affects influence attitudes [63]. More specifically, cognition influences behavioral intentions [68], while affect influences attitudes and behavioral intentions [69]. These relationships can be applied to the attitudinal aspects of theme parks. It is reported that the cognitive and affective elements of destination images are positively linked to tourists' choices of theme park destinations [70]. Affective responses influence consumers' behaviors [71]. In this regard, the hierarchical relationships among attitudinal aspects can also be formulated. Given that cognition and affect are antecedents of behavioral intentions, we propose the following additional hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *Consumers' cognitive attitudes will be positively correlated with their conative attitudes toward the theme park.*

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** *Consumers' affective attitudes will be positively correlated with their conative attitudes toward the theme park.*

### 3. Methodology

Because the current research explores the role of theme parks in strengthening the brand image of the host city, the research focuses on how consumers' three attitudinal aspects (i.e., cognition, affect, and conation) of a theme park influence the brand image of the city. To answer this research question, in a survey for data collection, we focus on the Disneyland located in the Los Angeles as a representative case to examine such relationships. We collect data from the survey responses from Korean population as international customers to address the important international perspectives for creating a strong destination brand for tourists. We show that international consumers' attitudinal dimensions toward theme parks' images are connected to the images of its city brand. Our empirical results provide several useful implications for both academia and practitioners. The current study explores theme park attitudes by identifying latent attitudinal dimensions and their influences on city branding for getting sustainable marketing strategy. As a conceptual framework, Figure 1 illustrates our proposed model.

#### 3.1. Data Collection

The current study utilized surveys as a research method to validate the model. We collected and utilized survey responses from the international customer group. It is essential for city branding practitioners to create a destination brand for tourists, in addition to a strong brand for residents [13]. It suggests that place managers brand their city to such target audiences as residents and international tourists. As such, in terms of city branding, international perspectives are essential for creating a strong

destination brand for tourists; hence, city branding must incorporate international perspectives to attract international tourists.

In this regard, Korean consumers were chosen as an initial step to explore the effects of international consumers' attitudes toward a theme park on the brand image of the city. More importantly, Korean consumers perceived the broader metropolitan area of Los Angeles as an identical city. Even though Disneyland is located in the city of Anaheim, Korean consumers have the perception that Disneyland is located in the Los Angeles area because the Korean media always use the term "LA Disneyland." For this reason, the current study used the expression LA Disneyland and explored the perceived attitudinal relationships between Disneyland, as a theme park, and the LA Metropolitan area, as a city.

### 3.2. Sample

This study used a survey method in generating general samples. Survey questionnaires were randomly distributed in selected business districts in downtown Seoul, Korea. A total of 201 subjects participated in this survey. This sample size tends to be appropriate, as Kock and Moqbei [72] demonstrate via Monte Carlo experiments that a small sample of size 193 is adequate for structured equation modeling. Among the respondents, 96 (47.8%) were male, and 105 (52.2%) were female. The ages of the respondents ranged from 19 to 62, and their mean age was 27.42 years.

### 3.3. Measurement

Five latent constructs were investigated in this study: cognition, affect, conation, attitudes toward LA, and attitudes toward Disney theme park content. Table 1 shows the particular survey questions that were used to measure these constructs and key statistics of the constructs. Disney (theme park) content was measured on four seven-point semantic differential scales that have been frequently employed in marketing research: favorable, good, likeable, and positive [49]. We modified the measurement scales for cognition with reference to existing research suggesting that the dimensions of cognition are informativeness, contemplation, and distinctiveness [54], as shown in Figure 2. Accordingly, cognition was measured using various questions that evaluated the cognitive aspects of theme parks using seven-point Likert scales (1: strongly disagree, 7: strongly agree).

Affect was measured using PAD (Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance), which has been frequently employed to measure affective responses [73]. PAD is simple and easily covers a wide range of human feelings. Specifically, pleasure was measured with the following words: happy, pleased, satisfied, contented, hopeful, and relaxed. The items measuring arousal included the following: stimulated, excited, frenzied, jittery, wide awake, and aroused. Dominance was measured using the following words: controlling, influential, in control, important, dominant, and autonomous. Seven-point semantic differential scales were used to measure the affect items.

Attitudes were measured on four seven-point semantic differential scales such as favorable, good, likeable, and positive [49]. Conation was measured with four items asking about behavioral intentions regarding the suggested theme park. After a series of factor analyses and reliability tests, each construct was used as a main construct in this study. Table 1 shows the key statistics of each construct.

**Table 1.** Statistics of key variables.

Variables	Dimensions or Indicators	M	SD	CFA Loadings
Disney Content	To me, Disney content is: Unfavorable/Favorable	5.60	1.23	0.86
	Bad/Good	5.42	1.39	0.95
	Unlikable/Likable	5.45	1.42	0.92
	Negative/Positive	5.42	1.41	0.91
	Index	5.47	1.27	$\alpha = 0.95$
Cognition	Distinctiveness	4.67	1.33	0.93
	Contemplation	3.42	1.35	0.48
	Popularity	4.95	1.71	0.77
	Index	4.35	1.19	$\alpha = 0.74$
Affect	Pleasure	3.78	1.44	0.70
	Arousal	3.34	1.33	1.02
	Dominance	2.97	1.36	0.80
	Index	3.36	1.22	$\alpha = 0.86$
Conation	Information search intentions	3.85	1.70	0.70
	Recommendation intentions to friends	5.41	1.61	0.70
	Purchase intentions of Disney character products	4.37	1.52	0.88
	Visit intentions of the LA Disneyland	3.80	1.93	0.66
	Index	4.36	1.37	$\alpha = 0.82$
LA Attitudes	To me, LA is: Unfavorable/Favorable	5.19	1.28	0.88
	Bad/Good	5.05	1.34	0.94
	Unlikable/Likable	5.18	1.38	0.93
	Negative/Positive	5.05	1.38	0.80
	Index	5.12	1.23	$\alpha = 0.94$

Notes: The questions were on a seven-point Likert scale. M = Mean. SD = Standard Deviation. CFA = Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

## 4. Research Findings

### 4.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

To identify the cognitive, affective, and conative components of consumer responses to the theme park, we first conducted an exploratory factor analysis. This exploratory factor analysis was used to reduce a large number of variables to a small number of latent factors that were each linearly related to the original variables. The variables were different question items that constituted the constructs of cognition, affect, and conation. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy (0.92, larger than 0.50) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $X^2 = 6998.46$ ,  $df = 666$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicated that the appropriate correlations among the variables to be factor-analyzed existed.

Through a principal-component factor analysis, this study found three dimensions of the cognition construct (distinctiveness, contemplation, and popularity), three dimensions of the affect construct (pleasure, arousal, and dominance), and one conation construct specific to theme park evaluations. Seven principal components, explaining 73.66 percent of the total variance, were retained for varimax rotation and had eigenvalues greater than one. In interpreting the rotated factors, we focused on items that loaded at least  $\pm 0.5$  on the factor of interest and did not load higher than  $\pm 0.4$  on any other factor. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alphas) of the individual factors were all above 0.70. Figure 2 illustrates the individual cognitive elements of theme park evaluations.

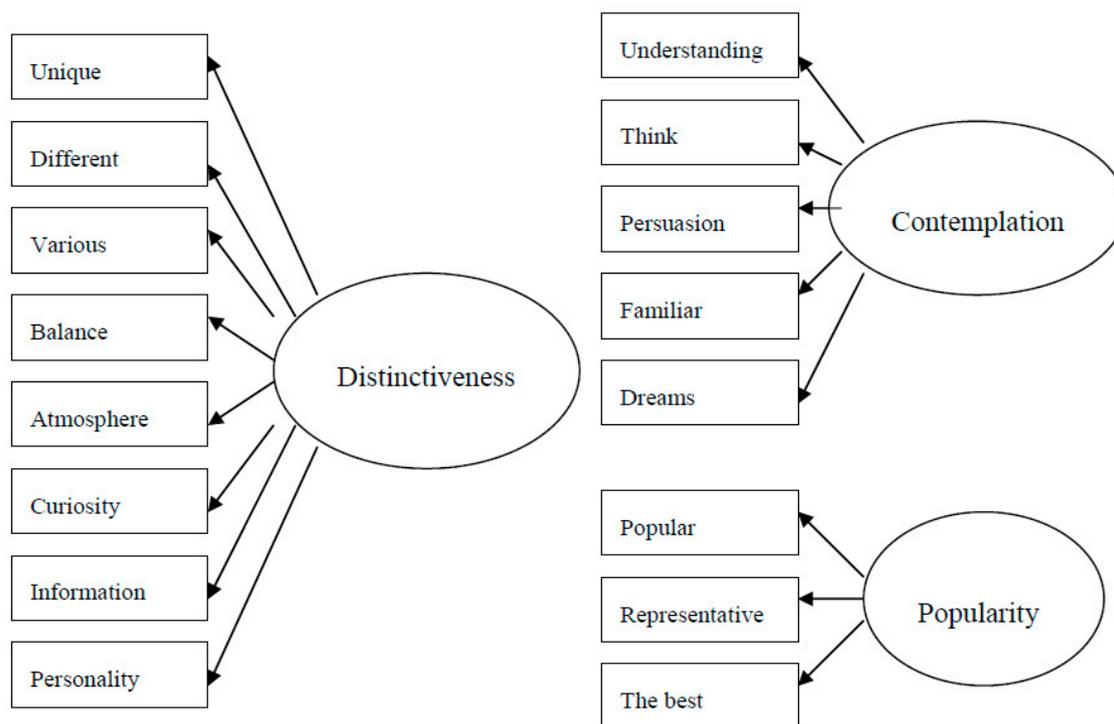


Figure 2. Cognition constructs.

#### 4.2. Model Testing

We tested six research hypotheses, using structural equation analysis, with the method of maximum likelihood. AMOS 16 was used to perform the data analyses. As Figure 1 shows, an exogenous variable was attitudes toward Disney content. Four endogenous variables included cognition, affect, conation, and attitudes toward LA. The results of estimating goodness-of-fit for the hypothesized research model showed that a  $X^2/\text{degrees of freedom}$  ratio was estimated as 3.47 in our hypothesized model ( $X^2 = 436.86$ ,  $df = 126$ ). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.89, the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) was 0.89, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.111, respectively. Based on these measures, we concluded that the model was acceptable, except for the RMSEA.

To improve the model, the significance of the regression weights was first examined. Modification indices were then used to identify any theoretically meaningful paths/relationships omitted in the original model. We found that attitudes toward Disney content were directly related to attitudes toward LA ( $p < 0.01$ ); therefore, the relationship was added to the revised model.

The revised model with the added path (Disney content attitudes  $\rightarrow$  LA attitudes) was tested (Figure 2), and the revised model was found to fit the data better than the original model,  $X^2(315.57)/df(121)$  ratio = 2.61, CFI = 0.93, IFI = 0.93, and RMSEA = 0.090. Then, the significance of the regression weights was examined for all constructs. Their associated measures and six relationships were significant at  $p < 0.05$ . Figure 3 illustrates that the final model provided support for six out of the eight hypotheses. In support of the first hypothesis set, Disney content attitudes led to positive cognition ( $\gamma = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), affect ( $\gamma = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and conation ( $\gamma = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Both cognition ( $H_5$ :  $\beta = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and affect ( $H_6$ :  $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were positively related to conation, and affect also led to favorable attitudes toward LA ( $H_5$ :  $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypotheses 1 and 3 were not supported ( $p > 0.05$ ). In addition, a new causal relationship (Disney content attitudes  $\rightarrow$  LA attitudes) emerged ( $\gamma = 0.49$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) in our model.

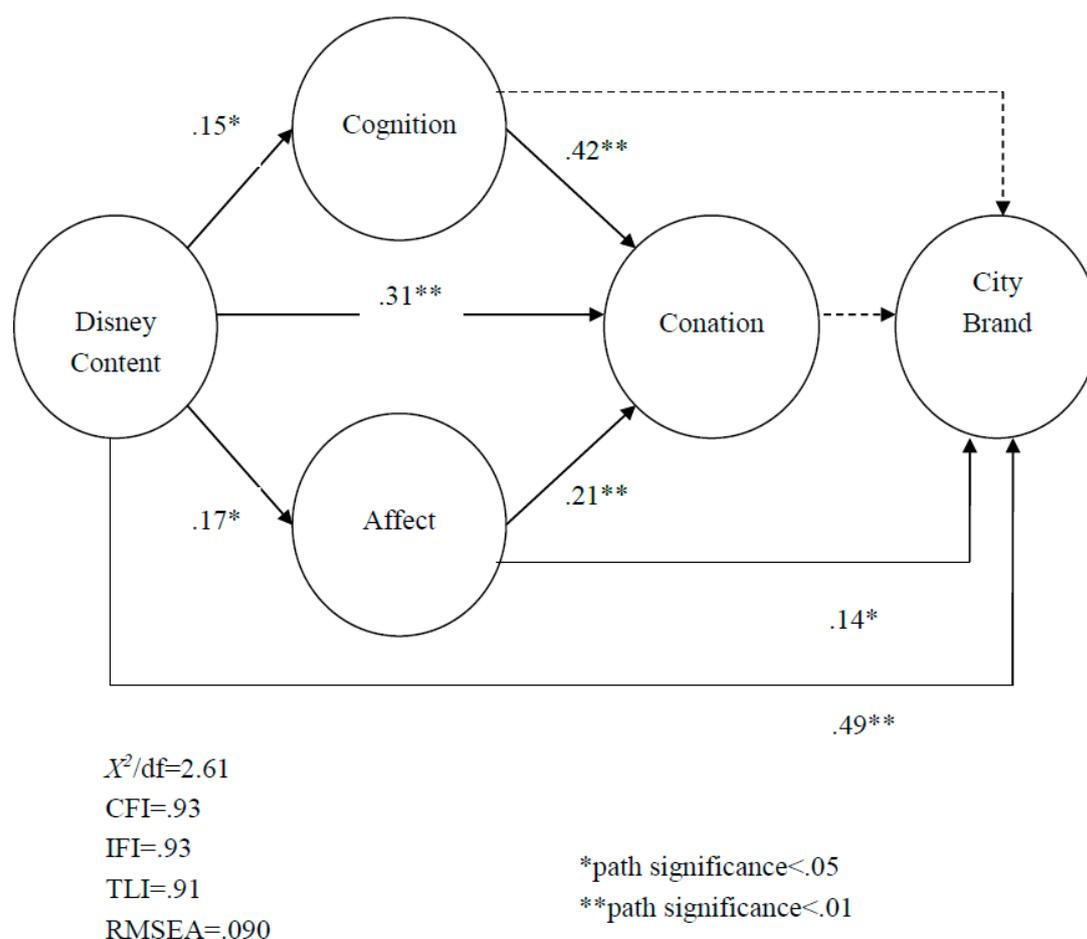


Figure 3. Hypothesis test results of the proposed model.

## 5. Discussion

We provide several contributions to the existing knowledge of city branding by (1) incorporating theme parks as an antecedent of city attitudes, adding the effects of media content on the attitudinal aspects of theme parks and city attitudes to the existing literature; and (2) examining the theoretical inter-relationships among them. We show that affect influence attitudes toward the city brand of LA (H2). the tripartite attitudinal model of theme parks (H4), and conclude that attitudes toward Disney theme park content positively influence the cognition, affect, and conation of Disneyland (the set of H4), and both cognition (H5) and affect (H6) were positively linked to conation. We show that attitudes toward Disney content directly influenced attitudes toward the city, LA. More specifically, this study identified the tripartite attitudinal model of theme parks. Consumers evaluated theme parks using cognition, affect, and conation. Furthermore, it was meaningful to find specific dimensions constituting cognition, affect, and conation. For instance, cognition was composed of distinctiveness, contemplation, and popularity. The three dimensions of pleasure, arousal, and dominance explained the affective dimensions of theme park evaluation.

Second, this study supports that media content can influence the attitudinal aspects of theme parks. Global consumers do not have direct opportunities to visit and to build specific images of international theme parks. They might have used simple heuristic cues to evaluate international theme parks, and media content might be important antecedents of theme parks in forming specific images. This result is coherent to existing researches suggesting that media consumption could affect the image perceptions of international audiences [57].

Third, we find that theme parks are effective antecedents of city branding. Particularly, affective dimensions were the key elements of theme park evaluations. We show that affect influence attitudes

toward the city brand. We draw more attention to the importance of affect. Our research supports the critical role of affection on city branding, meaning that emotional links are more important than other relationships when building the brand of a city. Moreover, the affective influence of a theme park on its host city's brand image. It suggests that appealing to tourists' emotions can be an effective strategy in leading them to visit the city, including the theme park, when we consider tourism as a representative hedonic service product [74].

We suggest multiple managerial implications. First, theme parks are effective communication tools for building city brand assets. Theme parks are considered as landmarks of cities, attracting domestic and international visitors. We suggest that government officers should notice the effects of theme parks on city brand assets. Government officials try to execute various communication strategies to build competitive city brand assets; however, it is difficult to find effective city-branding tools. Nevertheless, theme parks exist as city assets; thus, it is recommended that they be used as an efficient city-branding communication tool. Practically, co-marketing is recommended between theme park marketers and city brand managers to leverage both the theme park marketing and city branding. When the city and theme park share common images, it could result in synergy effects and ultimately it will help sustainability of the city.

Second, theme park marketers must understand consumers' responses in terms of cognition, affect, and conation. The results suggest that consumers evaluate theme parks using unique perceptions based on cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. Particularly, marketers should focus on individual cognitive and affective elements influencing consumers' perceptions. For example, cognitive elements can be used as marketing communication messages that consumers value regarding theme park evaluations. Redesigning the theme park can help customers satisfy the cognitive and affective needs of theme park consumers. Further, visitors to theme parks can be segmented according to their cognitive and affective responses, which can be used to target specific consumer groups.

Third, original content is the most important element in forming international consumers' attitudes toward theme parks and in making the theme park sustainable. The content of movies and TV shows share associations with theme park attractions, and the artificial reality of theme parks is based on original content. Therefore, theme park marketers need to incorporate more attractive content into theme park facilities. Opening new attractions requires large monetary investments, but it is beneficial to operate theme park businesses with a view toward long-term financial success. As a result, the new content can influence city's brand image. As the relationship between Disney content and attitudes toward LA confirmed, media content can be direct communication tools for city branding.

## 6. Conclusions

We empirically explore the role of theme parks in strengthening city brand images and discuss how our research can enhance city branding and tourism activities for city brand managers and theme park marketers. First, we explain what the theme parks are. Next, we show how the theme park affects the image of the hosting city. Third, we study how the image of the city is constructed, added with the impact of media. Lastly, we show how actually these images are built in customers' minds expressed by perceived brand image of the city.

This study has two limitations that may be addressed through future research. The first limitation primarily stems from the data utilized. The sample of the current study recruited only participants in Korea. Although the result provides meaningful implications for Korean consumers, the generalizability of the proposed model may be limited. This study can be improved with more diverse sample selections (e.g., different parts of the U.S., Europe, other Asian countries, and so on) in future research. Second, it is suggested that other relationships between theme parks and city images be investigated to extend the proposed model. For example, consumers' various characteristics (e.g., hedonic tendencies, tourism target knowledge, and gender) may influence the relationships we examined.

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