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Enchant to Retain: an instrumental study about the relationship between Walt Disney World Parks and its Brazilian customers

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Abstract

The relationship marketing, or CRM (Customer Relationship Marketing), is seen as a proficient competitive edge in a world living in constant growing competitiveness. Considering the lack of CRM measures, especially in Brazil, this article has as a main goal the elaboration and validation of the Disney Parks Customer Relationship Scale, based on the Customer Relationship Scale (CRS), validated by Rozzet and Demo (2010), regarding an organization which is considered a model on customer loyalty, the Walt Disney Co. The research is characterized as multimethod (qualititative and quantitative) and the results shows that the Disney Parks CRS presents good psychometrical rates, constituting an important diagnostic instrument for Walt Disney Co. or other entertainment-based organizations who plan to improve its relationship with customers. Regarding academic issues, this research adds to CRM studies when it produces a scientifically validated instrument which allows realizing relational studies on entertainment, more specifically, theme parks, fulfilling a gap noted on scientific literature.

Keywords: marketing; customer relationship management; customer loyalty; scale development and validation; exploratory factor analysis.

1 Introduction

It is already consensual, among the main authors on Customer Relationship Management (CRM) (VAVRA 1993; WILSON and VLOSKY, 1997; MCKENNA, 1999; NGAI, 2005; PAYNE, 2006), the relevance of relationship management between organizations and its customers. On that track, the adaptation of the organizational capacity to detect opportunities in the market and the constant effort of companies on establishing long term relationships with its business partners and, especially, with its clients, has been established as a priority on enterprises (DEMO; PONTE, 2008). Vavra (1993) defends that relationship marketing advocates the creation and maintenance of long term relationships with strategic customers, the main source of organizations profit, in other words, the transactional approach was overcame by CRM.

The Walt Disney World parks, in Florida, USA (hereafter Disney parks) are a successful case on customer retention, presenting rates that exceed 90% on customer revisit (CONNELLAN, 1998). Nowadays, this enterprise is part of a company which owns the 9th most valuable brand in the world: it is worth US$ 29 billion. When studying communication and media market itself, the company takes the top and maintains a significant distance from the second place, Thomson Reuters, which is worth US$ 9 billion (INTERBRAND, 2011).

Thus, this research is based on the following question: "How Brazilian customers notice aspects of their relationship with Disney parks?" Therefore, the main goal of this essay is the elaboration and validation of Customer Relationship Scale (CRS) aimed on theme parks, called Disney Parks CRS, built in order to allow the identification of Brazilian tourists relationship perceptions with Disney parks. Furthermore, it was identified customer perception in three separate variables of control: gender, age group and number of visits. Finally, the results gathered were presented and discussed. Final considerations are outlined, with special focus on the study's contributions and future research recommendations.

2 Theoretical Background

It is important to consider, on organizational studies, the competitiveness perspective. Among with globalization and new technologies, competitiveness is imperative, resuming, in its core, the non-stop organizational search for competitive edge. In this context, the achievement of customer loyalty has been established as a priority in organizations (DEMO; PONTE, 2008).

According to Porter (1991), the competitive edge is the result of the organizational capacity on realizing, in an efficient way, a set of activities required to obtain a lower cost compared to competition or organizing such activities in an unique way, capable of creating an unique value to customers. Kumar et al (2011) investigated if market orientation is, indeed, a source of sustainable competitive edge and discovered a positive effect of market orientation when crossed with business performance on either long or short terms. Then, in order to obtain high levels of prosperity, capacity on reinventing themselves and competing, the relationships between organizations and their clients acquire special meanings and the CRM, comprising aspects of satisfaction, customer loyalty and, mainly, the non-stop offer of unique and enchanting experiences to them, present themselves as a profitable differential when talking about competitiveness.

For Grönroos (1994), Sheth and Parvatiyar (2002), and Payne (2006), relationship marketing represents a paradigm shift on marketing concepts, defending a change on marketing orientation from winning customers to customer retention and loyalty. On Payne's (2006) view, CRM provides opportunities to use information, knowing clients better, offering value by customized sales and developing long-term relationships. It is, then, required that the company owns know-how on processes, operations and integration in order to allow that the core of marketing may become the philosophy which guides the business. This vision confirms the holistic idea of relationship marketing, where there is interaction among all parts of the organization.

Vavra (1993) also considers the acquisition as the beginning of the relationship. The constant after-sale interaction represents an extremely important piece in order to allow the relationship to be settled, being as important as the sale itself. He defends the change from the "make a sale" spirit to "begin a relationship" one and from "close a deal" to "built loyalty". Such switches reflect the transition from the transactional marketing to the relationship one. On the same line, McKenna (1999) presents a strategic relationship marketing approach placing the customer in first and changing the marketing role of manipulating customers to maintain a real commitment with them. Therefore, defending the principles which emphasize the retention of profitable customers, multiple markets and an approach regarding multifunctional marketing, in which the responsibility for marketing strategies development and relationship with the customer is not limited to marketing department only.

According to Reichheld and Sasser (1990), as the relationship between the organization and the customer extends, the profits grow. The authors state that "firms can increase profits in almost 100% retaining just 5% of its customers" (p.105). The authors further contend that the clients who generate greater profits for each additional year remain with the company. Due to the large increase in competition and the constant technological improvement, customers own a much larger range of choices in comparison to what they had previously. Within this context, Payne (2006) states that the distinguishing factor, then, become the delivery of an exceptional service, distinct and consistent. Competitive edge can be acquired by knowing the expectations, preferences, and customer behavior. Thus, retaining customers, developing a relationship and continuously satisfying them can be considered the basis for a successful trajectory for most organizations. "Long-term customers buy more, take shorter time from the company, are less susceptible to price and bring new customers, spite of not having acquisition costs" (REICHHELD, 1996, p. 02). Following this path, Demo and Ponte (2008) say that it costs around 10 times more to acquire customers than to maintain them.

With its emergence in the nineties, CRM quickly became an extremely relevant proposal. However, the comprehension of what CRM means is still limited. Many companies do not understand CRM as a

marketing synonym and see it as a technological solution, committing a mistake of equaling customer relationship marketing with support systems for CRM implementation.

For Payne (2006), CRM is a strategic holistic approach to manage the relationship with customers in order to create a value to the stockholder. He defends that the CRM provides more opportunities to the data and info utilization with the goal of understanding the customer and implementing, in a better way, the relationship marketing strategies, but that does not limit it as just an information system or just as a technologic tool. The author stresses that the importance on defining CRM correctly is not a semantic preciousness. Such definition significantly impacts the way how CRM is understood, implemented and practiced in organizations.

Regarding this controversy, Bygstad (2003) conducted a longitudinal 6-year case study of a company implementing CRM both as a marketing principle and as an information system, concluding that the high failure rate of CRM projects illustrates the gap between intentions and outcomes. Based on his study's results, Bygstad (2003) purposed two options to improve CRM practice. From a managerial view CRM projects should be treated as complex challenges, needing tight project control and the application of change management techniques, focusing on the marketing process and data quality. In contrast, it's important to accept that the mechanisms at work at the micro level are only partly controllable by management techniques, so that companies must let the infrastructure grow organically.

In this sense, Payne (2006) highlights that CRM, to be well-succeeded, needs to be infused with strategic vision to create value to the stockholder through the development of relationships with strategic customers, bringing together the potential of information technology (IT) to the relationship marketing strategies which will result in the establishment of profitable long-term relationships. The recent production about CRM on international articles bring studies that confirm those ideas such as Mishra and Mishra (2009), who presents the successful implementation of CRM from process perspective in a transnational organization with operations in different segments. According to the authors, as more and more organizations realize the significance of becoming customer-centric in today's competitive era, they adopted CRM as a core business strategy and invested heavily.

Huang and Xiong's (2010), who noticed that CRM reached a strategic maturity and it influences the whole cycle of life of a product and not only the before or after-sales stages. Still on the enlargement of CRM influence, Ernst at al. (2011) sustain that its potential has been only investigated on already existent products cases, but it should be considered on the development of new products as well, once their studies showed that CRM has a positive correlation with performance and success of new products. Also considering that corporative culture has not been sufficiently studied on relationship marketing, Iglesias, Sauquet and Montaña (2011) presented a model of corporative culture from a CRM-oriented organization. The results showed two primary factors needed for its effectiveness: "client orientation" and "high level of care for employees". Moreover, other six shared values (confidence, involvement, teamwork, innovation, flexibility and results orientation) also would facilitate the orientation development towards relationship marketing.

As for literature reviews regarding CRM, it was considered as a milestone Ngai's (2005) first article that, considering the academic literature about customer relationship marketing, analyzed 205 articles in different databases and published over 85 different academic reviews from 1992 to 2002. Ngai's (2005) study concluded for the force of CRM research, questioning about the low percentage of essays related to CRM privacy, and predicting that the field will continue to present significant growth during the next years.

The latest revisions were from Ngai, Xiu and Chayu (2009) and Wahlberg et al. (2009). Ngai, Xiu and Chayu (2009) did the first academic revision about the application of data mining techniques for CRM. The article provides an academic database about the literature from 2000 to 2006, which comprehends 24 scientific reviews and proposes a classificatory scheme that comprises 900 articles, which were identified and analyzed regarding the direct relevance for the application of data mining techniques for CRM. The categorization took into account 4 CRM dimensions (customer identification, customer attraction,

customer retention and customer development) as well as 7 data mining functions (association, classification, cluster, prediction, regression, discovery of sequential patterns and visualization). The results showed that customer retention area is the most researched of all and for the most investigated themes, the one-to-one marketing and loyalty programs. On the other hand, models of classification and association are the most commonly used in data mining regarding CRM.

Wahlberg et al. (2009) contributed to the CRM research knowledge questioning how has been the evolution of CRM research through time, identifying trends and research topics from 4 investigation areas: strategic CRM, analytical CRM, operational CRM and collaborative CRM. 468 articles were selected and the result showed that the number of articles about CRM as a specific topic was relatively low until the end of the nineties, just like it was pointed by Ngai (2005), confirming the aspect of novelty CRM holds on marketing research. According to the authors, the results showed a maturity in the CRM scientific research field, which is dominated by CRM subfields of strategic and analytic CRM, including a change from analytic CRM to the strategic one, which was the most popular by the end of the studied period of time. Another conclusion withdrawn from the study was the predominance of the research on great companies at the expense of medium and small businesses whose characteristic must be taken into account.

Finally, to evaluate satisfaction, loyalty and customer value, it can be mentioned as examples the scales validated by Rust, Zeithaml and Lemon (2001), Perillo (2007) and Huber, Hermann and Henneberg (2007) notwithstanding with respect to CRM measures, it is observed a still shy production of scales, considering that it has only been identified 4 scales, with differentiated approaches, being two of them on international scientific literature and the other two on national scientific literature. The first one was elaborated by Wilson and Vlosky (1997) for corporate market, and after validated and adapted to the Brazilian reality by Viana, Cunha Jr. and Slongo (1999). The third one was built and validated by Sin, Tse and Yim (2005) which aims to measure the CRM dimensions practiced by the company, and the most recent of all was built and validated by Rozzett and Demo (2010) and Demo et al, (2011) for consumer market.

3 Methodology

The research is classified as instrumental, descriptive, transversal and multimethod, merging both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

For the qualitative research, 23 Brazilian people, who had already been to Disney parks in Florida, were interviewed. These individuals contributed for the construction of new items about relationship to be added to the items from Customer Relationship Scale (CRS), developed and validated by Rozzett and Demo (2010) which served as a base to this study. Thereafter, it was utilized a categorical thematic content analysis proposed by Bardin (2011). According to the authoress, on descriptive researches, the quantity of participants must constitute a variable and representative group. It was done in accordance to Pasquali(2008), and the items of theoretical analysis comprise both semantic and judge analysis.

For the quantitative research, it was gathered a sample containing 432 subjects. Pasquali (2008) affirms that the sample must have between 5 and 10 subjects for each item that composes the scale. On the other side, according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), a sample with less than 300 subjects turns the factor analysis inadequate. The sample was mainly characterized by women between 18 and 30 years old and who had already visited Disney parks at least twice. After the data treatment, it was eliminated 41 subjects and the final sample gathered 391 people, meeting Pasquali (2008) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) criteria.

Finally, the answers to the application scale were submitted to an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), analysis of means, standard deviation for each item and analysis of variance. The factor validation of a scale refers to, basically, data collection, to its treatment, factor analysis itself and reliability or precision tests using the Cronbach's Alpha index (α), according to the threshold recommended by Nunnally and

Bernstein (1994) and Peterson (1994). The statistical software used on these analyses was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Qualitative Analysis

Following the standards set by Bardin (2011), it was performed the categorization from the interviews content and the enumeration of the frequency for the approached topics and critical incidents. The most mentioned points by visitors as important to their loyalty and satisfaction were organization, attractions, tidiness and quality, as the Table 1 shows.

Tabela 1: Most mentioned points – Interviews

Most mentioned points – Interviews	
Point	Number of mentions
Organization	20
Attractions	13
Tidiness	11
Quality	9

Fonte: Assembled by the authors

Repeatedly, the interviewees cited how the parks operational system seemed to work properly in an efficient and affective way. Indeed, Nickels and Wood (1999, p. 205) showed that consumers "judge service quality in different ways, creating special challenges and opportunities to companies that search to establish and sustain long-term relationships with customers".

Regarding the semantic analysis of the items, it was presented a version of the Disney Parks CRS to 31 students from University of Brasília – UnB, who pointed problematic items and suggested changes in order facilitate the comprehension of each item. The judges analysis was performed by 7 specialized professionals on marketing theory and, as well, on the studied company: PhDs, marketing teachers and former Disney Parks employees in order to judge if the items from the CRS made clear reference to "customer relationship" construct and if these items were well applied to the Walt Disney World day-by-day reality, task delegated to the organization's ex-employees.

As results taken from the aforementioned analysis, two items were eliminated due to dubious character and not being enough clear to the respondents – one referring to the idea of reliability and another one related to visit patterns. Also, an item related to the relationship between the company and the society/environment was split in two, allowing the measurement of each factor separately. Consequently, after all modifications, the application version of Disney Parks CRS included 29 items, 10 of them were withdrawn from the CRS assembled by Rozzett and Demo (2010), and the 19 others from the interviews. Regarding the content, 11 items were related to loyalty aspects and 18 items were related to observed satisfaction perception, as seen on Table 2. The utilized scale was a 5-point Likert.

Table 2 – Disney Parks CRS – Application Version – Quantity and Items Nature

Number of items (source)		**Total**
Rozzett and Demo (2010)	*Interviews*	
10	19	29

Items Nature		
Relationship	*Satisfaction*	
11	18	29

Fonte: Assembled by the authors

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

Regarding the psychometric validation, it was utilized the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Concerning the factorability, it was analyzed the correlation matrix, the grade of correlations were inspected as well, and then the matrix determinant and the results gathered from the KaiserMeyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy test were observed. The KMO value was 0,88, a meritorious level, assuring the sample factorability.

For the factor extraction, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was utilized. Being the matrix factorable, were, then, examined the eigenvalues, the percentage of explained variance of each factor, the scree plot graph and the parallel analysis, in order to determine the quantity of factors to be extracted. The scree plot graph pointed the existence of two factors. The rotation method utilized in this case was the oblique, once it was presupposed the correlation between the factors.

According to Pasquali (2008), if the correlation between the extracted factors is significant (above 0,3), it is possible to identify the presence of second order factors. By inspecting the Main Axis Analysis and oblique rotation to the items from the Disney Parks CRS, considering two factors, it was found a significant correlation between them (0,498). Therefore, it can be inferred that the Disney Parks CRS is an unifactorial scale, possessing items that measure customer loyalty and other ones measuring their satisfaction.

Indeed, some authors (BOLTON, 1998; VAVRA, 1993; LEVITT, 1990) indicate the possibility of correlation between satisfaction, loyalty and relationship constructs, being satisfaction and loyalty possible assumptions belonging to a broader concept, customer relationship.

The final version of Disney Parks CRS, after factorial analysis, obtained 25 items, explaining 31.2% of the construct variance. As for the psychometric indexes, the validity, the reliability and the total variance explained percentage were analyzed, obtaining satisfactory results, as shown in Table 3.

Tabela 3: Disney Parks CRS – Psychometric Indexes

Question	Factor Loading
Question 1 – The experiences with Disney Parks exceed my expectations.	0,395
Question 2 – I identify with Disney Parks.	0,536
Question 3 – Disney Parks treat me as na important customer.	0,5
Question 4 – Disney Parks stimulates the interaction between its customers.	0,503
Question 6 – I recommend Disney Parks to friends and family.	0,427
Question 8 – Disney Parks deserve my confidence.	0,508
Question 9 – Disney Parks are concerned about the environment.	0,461
Question 10 – Disney Parks are concerned about the society.	0,587
Question 12 – Satisfaction with the quality of service.	0,556
Question 13 - Satisfaction with employee's courtesy and helpfulness.	0,57
Question 14 – Satisfaction with tidiness.	0,49

Question 15 – Satisfaction with the richness of details of the attractions.	0,359
Question 16 – Satisfaction with decoration and ornamentation.	0,362
Question 18 – Satisfaction with attractions (shows/parades).	0,397
Question 19 – Satisfaction with the support structure for the visitor (medical services, comfort station, maps, restrooms, rest places)	0,587
Question 20 – Satisfaction with attraction variety.	0,37
Question 21 – Satisfaction with attraction security.	0,519
Question 22 –Satisfaction with stores.	0,53
Question 23 –Satisfaction with restaurants.	0,463
Question 24 –Satisfaction with parking.	0,501
Question 25 – Satisfaction with park access.	0,589
Question 26 – Satisfaction with speed in solving problems.	0,59
Question 27 – Satisfaction with conveniences (food carts/ meals)	0,601
Question 28 – Satisfaction with differentiated services (fast pass/ single rider/celebration pins/character meals)	0,58
Question 29 – Satisfaction with the location (Orlando, Florida, USA)	0,39

Structure	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Explained Variance	Items quality
Unifactorial	25	0.894	31%	73% good or fair

Fonte: Assembled by the authors

Regarding the scale validity, Pasquali (2008) says that a valid item represents a factor in a satisfactory way, which means, with a significant factor loading. Comrey (1973) classifies the items with loading over or equal to 0.71 as excellent; over or equal to 0.63 as really good; over or equal to 0.55 as good; over or equal to 0.45 as reasonable and over or equal to 0.32 as poor. The Disney Parks CRS had obtained 8 items classified as "good", 10 items classified as "reasonable" and 7 items classified as "poor". Hence, the Disney Parks CRS had obtained 72% of the items classified as "good" or "reasonable".

Concerning the factors reliability, Pasquali (2008) affirms that alphas over 0.7 are considered reliable and, over 0.8, very reliable. As for Neiva, Abbad and Tróccoli (2008), only indexes over or equal to 0.75 must be considered. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) say that "in the early stages of predictive or construct validation research," it may be "satisfactory" to "have only modest reliability, e.g., .70" (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994, pp. 264–265). For other scenarios, Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) go on to state that .80 or even .90 may be required. Peterson's (1994) meta-analytical study on alpha showed that reliable alphas have a .77 mean and .79 median. Iacobucci and Duhachek (2003) go further and suggest that every alpha should be reported with its confidence interval to allow the researchers to use their reliable scales with greater confidence in their results. Therefore, the obtained alpha for the Disney Parks CRS, .894, is considered very reliable. Moreover, the Disney Parks CRS also possesses theoretical consistence once all its items found support from the background presented over the theoretical framework.

As for the identification of visitor relationship aspects with Disney Parks, it was possible to notice that in all questions the mode was the maximum allowed to the scale 5, since it was used the Likert 5-point scale, representing a high level of satisfaction and a solid relationship between the company and its Brazilian clients.

Concerning satisfaction, the parks ornamentation item was the one that presented the highest mean among all questions. Regarding loyalty aspects, the positive attitude of experience recommendation to others presented a mean close to 5.0, the maximum allowed, explaining the recommendation of the visitors. These organizational policies were the most noticed by Brazilian customers, this corroborates what Hansen (2008) affirms, that the theme park management team must maximize any marketing

strategy that may create devoted customers from first-time visitors who will return on and on expecting the same predictable experience, also adding new attractions to motivate them to return in subsequent visits to enjoy new park experiences. On the same line, Griffin (2002) affirms that loyal customers not only repeat the acquisition countless times, but defend and recommend it to new clients as well.

It was also noticed that the only perceptions that do not surpass 4.0 level on the scale were the ones referring to concerns from the company with the environment and society. Policies such as Disney's Wildlife Preservation Fund, Disney Wilderness Preservation Disney VoluntEARS, among others, must be more widespread in order to ameliorate the customers' perceptions concerning the social actions made by the company.

In other words, the studies made over the perceptions of tourists regarding Disney Parks in Florida show a positive recommendation attitude about the parks to their relationship circle. On the other hand, perception concerning the relationship between the company and the environment and the society, comparatively, did not obtain high levels of perception. Among other satisfaction factors, the Disney policies for details and ornamentation are the most noticed. Tidiness, attraction security and variety, shows and parades also obtained high percentage of satisfaction.

The analysis of variance showed a behavior difference from the public in two particular moments. When analyzed the demographic variable "age group", the item which evaluates satisfaction with conveniences throughout the parks, verified that the younger the customer, the better perception one have concerning facilities related to conveniences. The age groups showed significant differences on the means. This subject is brought as well by Hansen (2008), the authoress treats about the readjustment on Disney Parks sales strategies in order to avoid the risk of what she calls a product cannibalism and consumer fatigue.

It is recommended more investments on healthier food, assuming that this is the main reason of means decrease in the course of age progress. It is interesting, also, offering menus in other languages, to ease the ingredient comprehension, nutritional values among other important health information.

When performed the analysis of variance regarding the demographic variable "gender", it was observed that female tourists are more likely to notice the interaction between customers. Then, policies in order to bring the male public to the group activities, engaging and allowing a greater interaction among the tourists, e.g. competitions, are recommended.

The creation of communication channels as websites, forums, blogs, social network, which allow visitors to share tips and experiences, is always welcome. In this regard there are many initiatives just as the "Disney Moms" forum, a specific mother-oriented forum where they share experiences and tips. Such channels could be translated and replicated to the Portuguese language, considering that Brazilian people are one of the most common visitors at Disney Parks.

Finally, the demographic variable "number of visits" did not indicate any significant changes of behavior.

5 Final Remarks

The contribution of this essay is worth for both academic and business environments since it studies the relationship between an enterprise known for its expertise on customer loyalty, Disney, and its Brazilian customers. It can be extended and adapted to other theme parks. Walt Disney Co. itself can use it to diagnose behavior changes in the market and update its policies to keep up with the emerging trends.

In the academic level, this research adds to the CRM studies by producing a scientifically validated scale which allows realizing diagnostics and relational studies on entertainment area, specifically theme parks, filling a gap glimpsed on scientific literature.

Regarding limitations, source for the following recommendations to future studies in the desire of proposing a research agenda, it is suggested a greater range of parks aspects in the scale that might have been generalized in this research, in order to allow the glimpse of management details and how the

customer evaluate them, refining the scale broadness. In addition, it is interesting the development of a scale to measure the relationship between customers and theme parks in general, allowing a highlight over this ascending market. The Disney Parks SCR here validated was an initiative towards this sense, to support managers in their evaluations, diagnostics and decision taking. And therein lies the main contribution of this study. Another suggestion is to apply the scale in other samples, for example Brazilian regions or Latin America and, based on that, gather information for the construction of an accurate diagnostic regarding the particular needs of tourists from a region that traditionally sends thousands of people to Florida parks and even, in the future, a facility on Brazilian soil.

Finally, considering the importance of building solid strategies to CRM, the Disney Parks CRS constitutes a relevant diagnostic instrument, both for Walt Disney Co., as for other entertainment-based companies that pretend to implement and/or evaluate customer loyalty strategies.

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