

2015 SOAR Summer Research Proposal

Title of Proposal:

Story: An exploration of the use of immersive media and story structure to create brand loyalty for entrepreneurs.

Faculty Mentor Information:

Gary Kaskowitz
Associate Professor of Management
Economics & Business Department

Student Information:

Clint Doyle, Management major (Marketing track)
Morgan LaPointe, Management major (Org. Leadership track)

Start Date and Length of Project:

06/01/15 - 8/7/15 (10 weeks)

Description of Project:

The Walt Disney Corporation has a market capitalization of over \$140B and is ranked as #14 of the world's most valuable brands (2014 data). The theme parks operated under the Disney brand account for over \$40B of sales with Walt Disney World (WDW) in Florida being the largest and most profitable of the parks and resorts complexes. WDW experienced a 10% growth in profitability from 2012 to 2014 due largely in part to the introduction of the MyMagic+ and the Disney FastPass experiences.

The MyMagic+ and FastPass enhancements are merely the latest integration of immersive media being utilized by the Disney Corporation. The Disney Corporation has been built on the foundation of storytelling, with the parks being an applied example of immersive story and media. Guests at the WDW resort and parks are fully integrated in and part of the story Disney tells, leading to increased loyalty of these patrons as expressed by return visits to the parks, sales at the parks, and increased sales in Disney's other properties (e.g., movies and souvenirs). The power of the Disney brand is so strong that on any given day, over 70% of the guests at WDW are repeat visitors. WDW creates strong and responsive brand loyalty through the effective use of immersive media and story involvement. This research project will explore the creation and use of immersive story techniques to create awareness of and brand loyalty to a new product or service. We will use WDW as an applied case study to develop our models and hypotheses, which will then be tested through an interactive model.

This project will pick up where last year's SOAR project left off. From last year we learned how WDW utilizes sensory experience and consumerspace to craft a stronger relationship with its guests. This year we will explore how story elements are selected and used for full immersion of the guests, as well as develop and test a working model

based on these discoveries. There are three parts to this research project: (1) determine which elements of story and immersion are the most effective for creating collusion with your client; (2) develop a model describing the optimal way to tell an immersive story; and (3) design an experiment to test this model. For this project, we intend to go to WDW in early June to gather data and evidence from which we will build and test our models.

The specific outcomes of this project include

- The creation of an immersive media model that can be utilized by other business ventures, with a focus on entrepreneurial ventures.
- An iBook guide describing this research that can be used in future classes
- A case study that can be published or used in my classes
- A conference paper
- Material for a book I am writing on WDW and customer experiences
- Presentation material for special projects at Moravian College

Roles and Responsibilities:

Student Responsibilities:

Clint and Morgan will work with me throughout the summer to develop appropriate models for testing. We are proposing an ambitious project that will involve primary data collection and analysis in the form of exploratory and confirmatory research. Both Morgan and Clint will bring unique perspectives to this project, which when combined, will form a great deal of synergy. Morgan's primary interests are in the selection and creation of story and immersive media/experiences for business and management success. Clint's primary interests are in the creation of models and the development of marketing collateral (both physical and digital) for increased brand awareness and loyalty. My research interests span both of these domains, as does this project. We all share a passion for learning how WDW and the Disney Corporation use these techniques as an applied case study. We believe that the three of us collaborating will allow us to cover much more ground and produce multiple work-products.

Specifically, Clint and Morgan will:

- Research appropriate immersive media theories to help ascertain appropriateness for inclusion in study
- Write an annotated bibliography on the use of immersive media for use in future teaching and research
- Help collect primary data while at WDW
- Help build a model that:
 - describes the optimal selection of story elements for entrepreneurial ventures
 - describes the elements and ratio of elements for effective story for entrepreneurial ventures
- Help design an experiment to test this model

- Help develop an interactive website/iBook that will allow future students to better understand the WDW experience class
- Help write a field guide for future classes
- Help write a case study about this project
- Help present findings to interested parties on campus
- Attend weekly SOAR meetings while in town
- Help develop material for MBA course on immersive media techniques

Faculty Responsibilities

I will work very closely with Morgan and Clint throughout this entire project. Specifically I will be responsible for:

- Gathering secondary data for immersive media and storytelling theories
- Working with Clint and Morgan to develop appropriate models
- Working with Clint and Morgan to create a codebook for use at WDW
- Collecting primary data at WDW for model building
- Implementing and testing experimental model
- Writing an interactive book to use in future classes I teach at WDW
- Writing a paper for submission to DMEF and PCA conferences

Timetable of Expected Milestones

This project can be roughly divided into thirds; (1) data collection at WDW and other sources, (2) immersive media model building, (3) development of experiment. Some specific milestones are as follows:

Weeks 1 – 4

- Selection/creation of appropriate model(s) to use for observations at WDW
- Collect primary data at WDW for hypothesis testing

Week 5-8

- Development of immersive media models

Weeks 9-10

- Creation of experimental design
- Writing of case studies and iBook

Student Engagement in scholarly research:

Clint and Morgan will have many opportunities to participate in scholarly research throughout this project. The Marketing Sciences Institute notes that Customer Experiences research is at the very top of desired research objectives. Immersive media and storytelling are at the forefront of experience research. The study of these important topics and how they are used for customer experience creation are crucial to entrepreneurs, existing businesses and professionals. Because these topics are relatively new, they have not been thoroughly tested in applied settings. Morgan and Clint will have the opportunity to create testable theory as well as collect and analyze data to help further refine theory. Morgan and Clint will be involved in all aspects of scholarly research including thesis development, primary data collection, testing, and reporting.

Opportunities for sharing:

Clint and Morgan will have multiple opportunities for sharing our research with a wider audience. The following are the publication/presentation venues they will seek:

- Moravian College's Scholarship Day - committed
- ODE presentation – committed
- NCUR – apply to present
- Classroom presentations – committed

In addition, I will work with Morgan and Clint to present at the following:

- Direct and Interactive Marketing Educator Foundation conference - abstract
- 2016 Popular Culture Association conference

Expense Proposal:

We are requesting \$500 for expenses for Morgan and \$500 for Clint. Due to the nature of this research, there will be many associated expenses (some anticipated, many more which will assuredly arise). In general terms, I expect that we will have to purchase several books on the topics of immersive media as well as some inexpensive video analysis software for use on the iPad. These books will need to be purchased for the following reasons:

1. A majority of these books are not held by Reeves Library and are generally unavailable through ILL.
2. These books will become “working documents” to allow us to build our theory during the first third of the project. We will most likely need to markup our books, which we cannot do with borrowed ones.

In addition to the books and material we will need to purchase, there are going to be several hard costs involved when we travel to WDW to observe for a week. These costs include:

1. Travel to/from WDW
2. Hotel accommodations
3. Food
4. Admissions tickets in order to observe the parks and meet with WDW leaders.

We will be collecting primary research data at WDW from June 11th to June 16th. I will be attending WDW at this same time in order to facilitate this research and prepare for my Winter Term Course. The costs Morgan and Clint can expect to incur will exceed \$500 apiece and I request that the SOAR committee grant funding to them to help defray these costs.