



Post-COVID Opportunities and Challenges of American Theme Parks in Japan

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Abstract

I visited Tokyo Disney Resort and Universal Studios Japan in early January 2023 to observe trends in theme parks, hotels, restaurants, and gift shops. The COVID-19 pandemic created an opportunity for both Disney and Universal to embrace change; both used price discrimination, while Disney used it as a catalyst to lower attendee volume in response to government stimulus. In order to maximize financial returns and visitor satisfaction, Disney and Universal increasingly will need to sort the customer market among several variables: proximity, pricing, volume of attendees per day, intellectual properties, crowds, wait times, especially for E-ticket attractions, and additions of new attractions and experiences. It appears that Universal and Disney will need to be ready to embrace change to increase customer satisfaction to grow their businesses. Based on my observations, Disney seems to be effective at tying into dreams, magic, and fantasy, and embraces the fusion of American and Japanese imagery. Universal, on the other hand, seems to shy away from blatant American iconology, and is expanding its park with Japanese intellectual properties. Both parks have mastered the use of spatial layout to create the right amount of wonder and awe to build up aesthetic appeal. In addition, Disney seems to implement its characters in rides, restaurants, merchandise, and throughout the parks in ways that are highly appealing to a Japanese consumer base.

Keywords: Asia, capacity, Disney, Tokyo, Universal