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## A Comparison of the Tourist Destinations of Las Vegas and Orlando: A Cultural and Psychographic Approach

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**A COMPARISON OF THE TOURIST DESTINATIONS OF LAS VEGAS AND  
ORLANDO: A CULTURAL AND PSYCHOGRAPHIC APPROACH**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There is a different of opinion about models for the development of tourism destinations. There are not any standard models. It must be recognized that the individual community must examine its historical background to identify the causal elements that influence events. What usually occurs in tourist development is that a successful model is found and it is transferred to another community without considering how the model has to be adapted and/or adjusted based upon the characteristics of the new community. In some cases, this transfer is successful and in other cases it is a complete failure. The purpose of this manuscript is to examine history of Las Vegas and Orlando to isolate the cultural and psychological factors that have and will influenced tourism development.

**Key Words:** hotel evaluation, culture, TripAdvisor, triangulation, word cloud, content analysis

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the development of destinations, there is quite a controversy about what type of models that work best for a specific locality. Two of the most prevalent models in United States are Las Vegas and Orlando. There are other models such as Williamsburg, Smoky Mountains, and Branson. Las Vegas and Orlando will be used, in this study, because they represent two different styles of development at opposite ends of the continuum. Las Vegas is more of an adult destination and Orlando is more of a family destination.

Model development, in this instance, is understanding the nature and cause of how these destinations were developed and how each relates to their audiences to sustain their viability (Manrai *et al.*, 2016; Murphy and Boyle, 2006) It is recognized there are many different types of paradigms for destination development, but it is important to understand how these frameworks can be individualized for a specific destination. What often happens is that a successful model is adopted with little thought toward individualization and why that paradigm worked in a particular location. The model is often transferred to new destinations and not adapted or adjusted, and the result is failure. (McCamley and Gilmore, 2018 Parvazi and Goudarzi, 2013) Then, the model is questioned and abandoned when, in fact, the model should be understood in terms of what made it successful in a particular destination.

The key to the adaptation or adjustment of a model is the audience and how they relate to the underlying nature of the model. (Foroudi *et al.*, 2016; Ramkissoon, 2015) The diversity in a particular region must be understood so that the model can be adapted or adjusted on an individual basis to a location. If there is not a consistent fit between the model, the location, and the audience, it is predestined to failure. (Chancellor *et al.*, 2011; Ramos and Da Costa, 2017) The first element to adaptation or adjusting the model is to understand the factors that have made it successful in a particular location.

The purpose of this manuscript is not to discuss the economic development of these communities. This information is already well-documented. Most of the information emphasizes demographic processes to understanding these communities. A cultural and psychographic approach may be able to bring a new or different perspective to understanding the nature of these paradigms for change in these communities.

## **DATA PERSPECTIVE**

This is a companion manuscript to a previous study about community comparisons. The same Triangulation methodology was employed as in the previous study. Critical Incident Historical Method, Word Cloud (R Method), and Thematic Content Analysis were the methods used. (Lee *et al.*, 2014) These processes were revised from the first study. In the Critical Historical Incident, only modern events were chronicled. (Teeth and Burn, 2001) The primary emphasis of the review was on factors that influence tourism. The purpose was to provide macro information for improvement of perspective. The Word Cloud was used to identify significant word patterns. These word patterns helped focus on areas for further analysis. (Joseph *et al.*, 2017) The Thematic Content Analysis was employed to isolate the relationships among the words and to develop themes, based upon the two previous analyses. (Myong *et al.*, 2005) A Thurstone Scaling system (Method of paired comparisons) of judgment was used. The Thematic Analysis was modified from the previous study by having the judges agreeing 100% on issues, instead of using a consensus. In the previous study, there was some disagreement which caused minority reports to be filed. This new approach helped eliminate any confusion, and only those issues that have the strongest positions were identified. The emphasis of the analysis was to help understand the decision processes and the how's and why's of what attracts the individual to these areas. (Donada and Nogatchewsky, 2009; Van Laer and Izberk-Bilgin, 2019) It is difficult to obtain a

cultural and/or a psychographic perspective from current data sources. Data is extremely difficult to obtain about individuals' decision-making processes. In terms of tourism, one of the approaches is to understand the nature of a common decision. The most common decisions, in either of these communities, are food, lodging, attractions, etc. The most basic of these is lodging.

This study used the qualitative approaches outlined above. The reason this approach was used is that it provides a depth of understanding that surpasses quantitative numbers. (Lee *et al.*, 2014, Liang *et al.*, 2019) The use of a narrative qualitative approach allows for the understanding of reasons why certain decisions are made and helps complete the stages and cycles of an individual's thought. (Liu *et al.*, 2017) The combination of these methods will give a different perspective. This will help acquire absolutes in regard to different position statements.

It is recognized that the primary data in hotel tourism is the best source, but many of these are contaminated because of the way the information is collected using incentives. Since the common decision involves hotels, secondary data that allows for comparisons is the preeminent source. Of the secondary data sources, TripAdvisor has the best reputation. (Law, 2006; Vásquez, 2011) It also provides a wide geographic information base and also has the ability to be segmented by audience types, based upon demographic characteristics. (Ayeh *et al.*, 2013) The system is more comprehensive than any of the other secondary data sources. Hotel information from TripAdvisor gives the best data in regard to reflective influences in terms of decisions from a diversity of respondents. This type of data has limitations. It represents a diversity of data and does not characterize the destination populations. Another concern is that there is a difference between respondents and no respondents. It is thought that respondents have a motive for providing information. (Vásquez, 2011) This data source only provides for a diversity of respondents, both positive and negative. There are comments provided by individuals marketing a certain property. These types of comments have to be removed. Another way to improve the quality of data is with a large data source because any aberrations in the data will move toward a centroid position. The data is skewed and large numbers also help make the distribution even in terms of the diversity of positions in the population. Additional protection against bias is removing statements that are highly defamatory in terms of having a motive to affect business. These types of responses, if evident, must be removed.

## HOTELS

Hotels were chosen to analyze because they are the most reliable in regard to decisions made within a destination. Some of the elements that define a property are the price, amenities and services. These are elements that often explain why people make decisions. (Choo and Tan, 2017; Xie *et al.*, 2016) Popularity, satisfaction, and success are outcomes influenced by these factors. These elements also give an indication about what is important to different audience types. Decisions about hotels reflect personal choice, and show how and why individuals make decisions. (Lee *et al.*, 2011; Wilson, 2012) Guests can be segmented, based upon their choices, which gives an indication about the cultural and psychological nature of a particular destination. (Oriade and Robinson, 2019; Vásquez, 2011) The primary element of stratification used in the

study was Satisfaction. This is the factor that gives the best indication about choices as a final outcome. (Jeacle and Carter, 2011)

## METHODS

Triangulation was used in this study to provide depth of understanding and data from different perspectives. (Analysis included Historical Critical Incident, Word Cloud (R), and Thematic Content Analysis)(Lee et al, 2014)

The following data bases were reviewed to try to determine the best source of information: Booking.com, Kayak, Priceline, Hotels.com, Hotels Combined, Expedia, Agoda, TripAdvisor, Trivago, and Google. (Hsu et al., 2012; Mayzlin, 2014) TripAdvisor was the secondary database that was chosen for this study.

The Critical Incident method was to identify significant or important elements that have influenced the development of recent tourism events in Las Vegas and Orlando. (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954; Mahrt and Scharkow, 2013) Basic sources were reviewed and critical Incidents were identified, based upon three content experts review. The reviews were modern era events and elements that influenced tourism development in Las Vegas for adults and factors in Orlando that influenced family entertainment. The events identified were common to more than two sources.

In terms of the Word Cloud, it was used to identify the frequency of important words in regard to hotels in the Las Vegas and Orlando area. (Berson and Berson, 2009; Joseph et al., 2017) The database was comprised of hotel comments and general comments about the destination. Data was reviewed from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018. The hotel comments provided insight into the individuals and their choices in the destination because this is the one common decision that all visitors make that allows for comparisons. Therefore, it helps to understand the cultural and psychological decision process and what conditional factors influence these choices. (Banerjee and Chua, 2016) The hotel information can be subdivided by audience type, visitor location of origin, etc. The general comments provided a macro perspective and the hotel comments provided a micro perspective. Work cloud does not identify the relationships among words. The first Word Cloud matrix was used, even if the primary words were in the mix. This provided more pure data bases for interpretation because once words are eliminated different understandings are possible through manipulation.

The Thematic Content Analysis was used to identify word relations and themes. (Donada and Nogatchewsky, 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2011; Myong et al., 2005; Kim and Jeong, 2015; Tetteh and Burn, 2001) There were three content experts used in the review process. This was a system of judgment based upon 100% agreement among the judges. Once these elements had been established, the content experts recommended a framework to help better understand the information isolated.

## **Las Vegas Perspective/ Critical Incident**

The modern history of Las Vegas began with the development of the Boulder Dam (Hoover Dam). The infrastructures began to develop during this period to provide food, lodging, and services to the employees at the dam. With development of the water and electric resources, this allowed for expansion and really began the era of tourism. Tourism was first stimulated by criminal investment. Private investment eventually rooted out the criminal element and allowed for mega-resort expansion. Las Vegas has struggled and adversity has been part of the landscape. Leadership has led to a diversity of attractions, entertainment, and special events to compete with other destinations. Professional sports are becoming an important part of its ever-changing landscape and will give it the status of a major Metropolitan area.

### **Event**

Construction of the Boulder Dam (Hoover Dam)

### **Impact**

Large work force/development of infrastructure to accommodate new population  
Necessary infrastructure elements for growth (electricity, water, hotels, political structure, etc.)  
Involve of criminal investment/development of back door operation/corruption  
Tourism Started

### **Event**

U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force developed facilities in Las Vegas during World War II

### **Impact**

Modernization began with the development of the pleasure resorts  
Prostitution was a problem  
Struggle between the criminal element and the local business community/conflict over control  
Criminal investors saw the potential of the postwar era

### **Event**

Urbanization  
Atomic bomb testing near Las Vegas

### **Impact**

Criminal and Mormon investment  
Many employees in the area from the US Atomic Energy Commission  
Redevelopment of mega resorts

### **Event**

Criminal investment came to a halt  
Government took control with legislation

**Impact**

Annexation began/money and control  
Entertainment became big attraction  
Integration began  
Conflict over who controlled money and influence

**Event**

Urbanization

**Impact**

Rapid infrastructure development  
Diversification such as conventions and entertainment  
Era of rapid resort redevelopment

**Event**

Political entities were focused upon tourism and developing quality products for diverse audiences  
Intense marketing

**Impact**

Eras of intense mega-resorts redevelopment with a variety of special attractions, shopping, entertainment, and gambling/new structures  
Growth exponential  
Development of professional sports  
Constantly exploring new ventures

**Orlando Perspective/Critical Incident**

The modern history of Orlando began with the development Walt Disney investments. There was infrastructure which was established around Disney to support tourism. Additional tourist attractions begin to develop and growth was the result. At the same time tourism was developing, there was significant industrialization. The growth of Orlando has resulted in the development of a major Metropolitan area with universities, industry, professional sports, and tourism attractions with supporting infrastructure.

**Event**

Orlando was site of the Disney Corporation development/central location/ half way between east and west coast  
Development of Disney Parks

**Impact**

Urbanization of Orlando



Infrastructure tourist destination developed secondary and tertiary suppliers/ includes secondary infrastructural elements such as hotels and restaurants and tertiary suppliers such as food and transportation

Primary development occurred, that is, other tourists' attractions

Disney's evolution includes extensive special events that generate business/ developed facilities to accommodate special events

### **Event**

Industrialization/ Companies like Lockheed Martin during the military days developed manufacturing facilities

### **Impact**

Became high tech center

Industries include digital media, agricultural technology, aviation, aerospace, and software design

Military training facilities that include simulation

Many computer engineering firms because of its location in relation to Cape Canaveral

Infrastructure tourist company head quarts

Film, television, and gaming industry center

### **Event**

Development of convention center, performing arts center, and associated facilities

### **Impact**

Excellent facilities attract patrons because of the resort area and because of the quality of the facility and the infrastructure to support these facilities.

Extensive performing arts and entertainment companies are resident in Orlando because of the proximity to quality studios and performing arts centers. This includes some very important movie and recording studios.

## **PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT**

The primary difference between these two models is the nature of the events and attractions in the brand. Las Vegas, at one time, had almost a monopoly on destinations that had a gambling base. In the recent past, there are many destinations that have adopted this theme, yet, Las Vegas has remained very successful. Again, at one time, Orlando had a monopoly on destinations with a diversity of family entertainment. Yet, in the recent past, there have been a number of destinations that have developed this theme. Orlando still remains very successful. The primary question being raised is why these models in these locations have sustained their success. Leadership is the common dimension.

A common thread through each of these communities is that of location. Each of these sites has a unique position in relation to their geographic regions. Las Vegas is in a central or a crossroads location with water access which is a desperate needed resource for development. Orlando is in

Central Florida and a crossroads North, South, East, and West. The transportation hub provides an excellent location for access and it is in land which protects it from severe weather. The weather is a definite positive and it is located near the borders and not a long driving distance like Miami to the south.

A secondary element is the perspective of the communities where these destinations have progressed. The communities have been very receptive of their themes and provided the necessary resources to aid in their development. This includes such elements as financing, political structures, and cooperation. This is a business environment that is consistent with the population and regions perspectives.

Another dimension is that the government and/or the military have had a significant role in the development of these areas. They provided a stimulus as well as an organizational element that helped the development of these areas move forward. There has to be some organizational element that stimulates and guides the development. An example beyond these locations is the Rockefeller Foundation which was a basic stimulus to the development of Williamsburg. The military and government provide structure and the necessary resources to bring perspective to the development. They have the innate planning perspective that helps to unify and bring resources together.

## **RESULTS**

The Word Cloud data sets were compared on a theoretical basis, and once the comparisons were complete, the data sets were reviewed for thematic content. This Thematic Content Analysis was completed by using the significant themes identified by the content experts from the Critical Analysis and the Word Clouds. The primary focus was trying to develop the relationships among the words to discern themes and relate them to the Critical Analysis for interpretation. The Thematic Content Analysis was performed with three different judges, and after reviewing the Critical Analysis and Word Clouds, a discussion ensued to establish 100% agreement. Word relationships were also reviewed to help establish the themes. The reviews were completed independently so as to not contaminate the data. After the independent reviews, the consensus meeting was held to determine a basic theme among the words.

The data from the hotels were divided into three groups based upon satisfaction rankings. The satisfaction rating was the one used by TripAdvisor to evaluate the hotels. This was a one through five rating based upon the level of satisfaction. The ratings were: Excellent, Good, Average, Poor and Terrible. The ratings were ranked from high to low based upon satisfaction levels. They were divided into three categories based upon 15% differences in satisfaction rankings. These represent low, medium, and high positions. These positions represent different decision styles based upon price, amenities, services, etc. Three representative hotels were selected to typify each category. Hotels were selected based upon the number of comments to get the most popular hotels and to provide a good base for analysis. Those individual hotels that had the greatest number of comments were selected because this provided the best opportunity to

obtain quality data. The names of the hotels will not be provided as to not single out the hotels. Anonymity is the key to maintaining privacy.

The demographics are very clear in terms of the populations that each of these communities serve. Las Vegas serves more of a US and Western adult populations, and Orlando serves families from the Midwest and East coast. Both Las Vegas and Orlando have a large international population. Orlando has the largest.

## **THEMES**

### **Las Vegas**

Self/Group--inward directed---Gratification

### **Orlando**

Self/Group--Outward Directed----Other Directed

The themes through the low, medium, and high scores for Las Vegas were inward directed. This means that the primary outcomes were associated with self/group gratification. The theme for the Orlando for self/group was outward oriented. This means that the self/group in relation to outcomes was “other directed.”

## **LOW SCORES**

The primary element that characterizes this Word Cloud was value for Las Vegas, that is, basic elements that meets the individual/group needs. (Figures 1) The primary concern of Las Vegas was standard expectations such as cleanliness and cost. The primary concern of Orlando data was the experience in the park and not necessarily the infrastructural elements. (Figure 4) The difference between these two communities was one of atmosphere. The important elements of those in Las Vegas were fun and diversionary entertainment. The primary focus of those in Orlando was the bonding of the family and the creation of new adventures of the group. A Las Vegas approach in this context is more of a freewheeling and lighthearted way of making decisions. The primary motivation is not necessarily on expectations, but on the fun associated with this location. The attention of Orlando experience is living the reality of the fantasy/illusions.

When a Thematic Content was performed the bases of the decisions were the seeking of value in the setting of entertainment outcomes for Las Vegas. The individual/group is seeking a new experience and adventure. The experience is one that is associated with the image of Las Vegas. When the Thematic Content analysis was performed the operative element was completion of the experience in relation to family expectations. It was the fulfillment of the group bonding and the ability to relate to one another. The fantasy is important, but it is the relationships that are

developed and the memories that are created. The memories are the elements that have a lasting value. It is the individual and how they perceive the experience and how the group relates to each other based upon their experience.

## **MEDIUM SCORES**

The primary elements of Las Vegas that characterize the Work Cloud were amenities. (Figure 2) The primary concern was the attributes and the way they are viewed. This population is seeking flexibility and normative experiences that are perceived by the larger group as a quality experience related to status within the group. The primary elements of the Orlando experience were the theme and the reality of the experience in terms of each individual's perception. (Figure 5) The infrastructure was part of the experience in terms of perceived quality and what the individuals need to develop an experience that relates to the normative values of the middle class. Las Vegas in this context is one of lifestyle. It is being seen participating in the right experiences as defined by their social group. The Orlando approach is self-fulfillment within the context of the group experience. The group experiences are important, but it is the living an individual's dream vicariously, especially parents.

When the Thematic Content Analysis was performed for Las Vegas, the basis of the decisions was the position of the attributes selected. The attributes selected were the ones that were inclined to be trendy. The depths of the experiences were quite superficial. The importance is the image of them participating and being able to relate their experiences to their social group or their significant others when they return home.

When the Thematic Content Analysis was performed for Orlando, the basic element was normative processes. It is the congruency between the expectations of the individual and the group. If there was congruence, there is a positive experience with conclusive outcomes. If they were incongruence, the experience was dysfunctional. The importance is the depth of the experience as it relates to achievement of outcomes that have personal influences.

## **HIGH SCORES**

The primary element that characterized the Work Cloud for Las Vegas was status and thematic quality. (Figure 3) The focus of Las Vegas was upon reputation and the importance of image in relation to the physical resources. Price and exclusiveness were also part of the Las Vegas experience. Condition and atmosphere were important elements. The difference between the two communities again is one of an adult fantasy versus childhood illusions. The emphasis of Orlando was on the quality of the experience. (Figure 6) For Orlando, it is the conditions that are provided and their associated images. It is how these fantasy illusions are provided in terms of quality of the experience. Individualization is also important. Individualization is based upon the

status of the experience. It is how the individual is treated in terms of how these fantasy /illusions are fulfilled based upon quality.

When the Thematic Content Analysis for Las Vegas was completed the basic decisions were determined by the privileges that were provided. These privileges had to be one-of-a-kind. The more unique the privilege the more important is the individual's position. Price is a factor but not the overriding element. Decisions hinge upon the image of the privileges provided. The Thematic Analysis of Orlando indicated the completion of the fantasy/illusion and fulfillment of the experience. The experience must exceed the expectations that have been built through movies and television. Quality in this arena is providing or exceeding the expectations. Expectations are the development of a bonding experience with the family. The parents in seeing their children fulfill their desires are the element that influences the basic decision. Decisions center on the completeness of the fantasy/illusion. These are often fulfilled in the hotels, food services, and parks. It is the integration of the experience that makes it complete.

## **SUMMARY**

This Analysis has provided through three different perspectives and insight into the important elements of adaption and adjustment to the Las Vegas and Orlando models. Sustainability is directly related to understanding different satisfaction levels and the elements that influence decisions in these categories. In the Low satisfaction category, Las Vegas' behaviors were related to exploration and adventure. In the Low category, Orlando decisions were directly related to bonding and the group expectations. Experiences are the elements that are most influential. The primary influence of the Medium Las Vegas group was the image of being able to participate and relate these experiences to the social group or significant others. The primary influences of decisions related to the Orlando group was the depth of the experience and how the individual related their experiences to the group. The elements that influence decisions of the High Satisfaction group in Las Vegas were the uniqueness of the experience and its importance to prestige and reputation. Elements that influence decision with a High Satisfaction group in Orlando were the parents vicariously fulfilling their expectations through their children. The children's experience was the most important and their fulfillment of their illusions.

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### **Las Vegas Resources**

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FIGURE 4

Orlando Low Satisfaction Category



FIGURE 5

Orlando Middle Satisfaction Category



