Modeling brand color emotions, perceived brand creativity, perceived value, and brand loyalty in the context of theme parks

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this study is to identify the influence of perceived brand color emotions on perceived brand creativity, assess the influence of perceived brand creativity on utilitarian and hedonic values, measure the impact of hedonic and utilitarian values on brand loyalty and evaluate the role of different theme park color schemes in influencing these relationships.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The study modeled the proposed relationships by analyzing data from an online survey using partial least squares structural equation modeling. Respondents were presented with different color schemes to induce certain emotions before answering questions.*

Findings – *The results showed that the valence and arousal of emotions incited by various colors lead to a perception of creativity for theme park products, which then influence both utilitarian and hedonic values and thus brand loyalty. When the model was compared for seven different color schemes for a theme park brand, differences seem sporadic rather than systematic.*

Research limitations/implications – *The online nature and timing of the study may have prohibited authentic reactions from consumers as the US theme park industry is currently in its recovery mode.*

Practical implications – *While the results did not identify a specific preferred color scheme, theme park executives should continue using a variety of color combinations to generate visitor perceptions of novelty and creativity that would impact their perceived hedonistic and utilitarian values.*

Originality/value – *The study empirically tests color influences on a brand's perceived creativity and its consequences on a brand's utilitarian and hedonic values and brand loyalty.*

Keywords *Theme park, Brand color, Perceived brand creativity, Utilitarian and hedonic value, Loyalty*

Paper type *Research paper*

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1. Introduction

Color is considered one of the elements of the sensory capital of a brand (Tasci *et al.*, 2018) and the *experienscape* of a product (Pizam and Tasci, 2019). Past research suggests that the concept of color, often associated with the visual arts, can influence consumer behavior. Color not only describes the apparent content of an object but also leads to emotional and behavioral responses. Color has been investigated in the field of psychology (Ikeda, 2020; Minami *et al.*, 2018), and other contributions addressed the role of color in product packaging, the retail environment, online marketing and consumers' purchase behavior (Huang and Lu, 2016).

The relationships between color and creativity have been studied in different settings such as textile design (Bhagat, 2006), the effect of light and darkness on employee creative performance (Steidle and Werth, 2013), the effects of illumination and color temperature on mood and creativity (Lan *et al.*, 2020), the role of the physical environment's color on student performance and creativity (Chang, 2013; Jain, 2020) and the impact of color on

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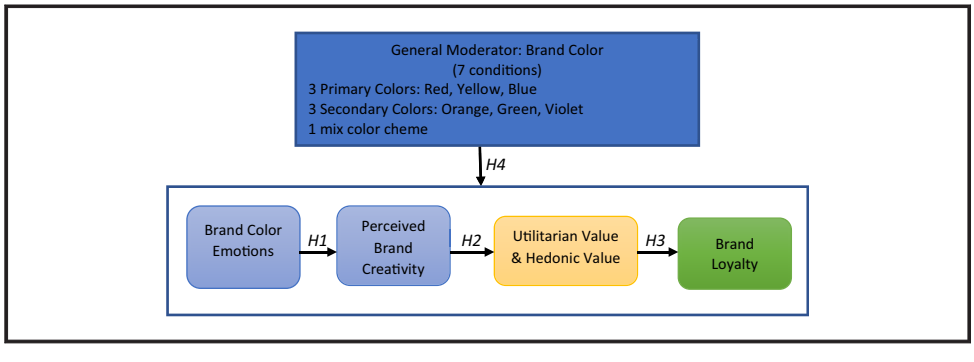
creativity through the disfluency of moderately disharmonious color combinations (Youn *et al.*, 2015). Yet, the impact of color on consumers' perceived creativity has not been studied, especially with references to the theme park experiential consumption process. Creativity is a multilayered term that varies according to the context of its application. It is manifested in a brand's process or strategy to resolve problems and improve products, processes, services or experiences (George and Zhou, 2001; Gruys *et al.*, 2011). Creativity has been applied to the tourism and hospitality industry in many different ways like products and experiences, the renewal of existing products or enhancing the value of touristic attractions (Carvalho *et al.*, 2019; Richards, 2012).

In the hospitality and tourism industry, few studies addressed the role of color in the formation of destination-related perceptions and images, such as perceived aesthetics, enjoyment, usefulness, eCommerce websites or behavioral intentions (Lee, 2020; Oyibo and Vassileva, 2020; Yu *et al.*, 2020). However, these studies evaluated the role of color in photography, social media or web design but did not assess the role of color in creating emotions and generating experience values in specific destinations or tourist attraction settings, especially in hedonic and stimulating experience contexts like theme parks.

Contemporary theme parks are destinations that offer multidimensional landscapes of popular culture expressed by colorful storytelling landscaping, architecture, attractions, costumed employees, food services and merchandise, among others (Milman, 2010). These geographically-defined entertaining attractions attempt to create a fantasy atmosphere of another place and time, concentrate on a dominant theme with likely subthemes and have closed geographical boundaries with admission prices at the gate (Milman, 2010). While recent studies addressed the impact of several aspects of theme park products on visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Cabanas, 2020; Godovykh *et al.*, 2019; Milman and Tasci, 2018; Milman *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b; Min *et al.*, 2017; Yoon, 2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2017), none of the contributions addressed specifically the emotional impact of color on the theme park brands' perceived creativity and its impact on perceived value and, consequently, consumer loyalty.

The objectives of this study are to identify the influence of perceived brand color emotions on perceived brand creativity; assess the influence of perceived brand creativity on utilitarian and hedonic values; measure the impact of utilitarian and hedonic values' on brand loyalty; and evaluate the role of different theme park color schemes in influencing the relationships among brand color emotions, perceived brand creativity, utilitarian and hedonic values and brand loyalty. These relationships (Figure 1) have not been investigated in past research thus far even though the constructs and some of their bivariate relationships have received some attention. As Tasci (2019) suggests integrative models, as in this study, help develop a more robust theory by connecting concepts into a coherent

Figure 1 Conceptual model of the study



complex system of social phenomena. Hence, the current study will add to the theory on color, creativity, perceived value and brand loyalty by connecting these concepts.

2. Literature review

2.1 The significant role of color in the tourism and hospitality industry

The role of color in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry has been studied from different perspectives in different sectors of the industry. Color is a complex construct of meanings with various dimensions (Yu *et al.*, 2020) and plays a significant role in influencing tourist experiences and their emotions (Yu and Egger, 2021), as well as their destination-related perceptions (Tasci *et al.*, 2014; Yu *et al.*, 2020). The relationships between color identity, brand association, its psychological and communication functions, consumer satisfaction and loyalty have been addressed in recent studies such as the role of color on guests' perceptions of their hotel room (Siamionava *et al.*, 2018), consumers' evaluations and purchase intention of restaurant food (Cai and Chi, 2020), restaurant servers' clothing color effects on tipping (Lynn *et al.*, 2016), the impact of color in airlines' logo, airplane exteriors and cabin attendants' uniforms on consumer loyalty (Jin *et al.*, 2019), the impact of color as a sensory experience in airlines' lounges (Kim *et al.*, 2016), consumers' engagement in touristic Instagram pictures (Yu and Egger, 2021; Yu *et al.*, 2020) and the role of color in tourist photographs that represent the tourist experiences and destination consumption (Lee, 2020). However, studies about color in the context of theme parks are limited to contributions associated with design and engineering (Min, 2017; Yoon, 2019; Younger *et al.*, 2016).

2.2 Brand color emotions' influence on perceived brand creativity

A color is a form of creativity that influences consumers' emotions, satisfaction and loyalty (Minami *et al.*, 2018). Research on the impact of color on consumer behavior addressed a variety of settings such as the retail industry (Varga *et al.*, 2014), eCommerce (Nitse *et al.*, 2004), public transportation (Swan, 2014) and destinations (Tasci *et al.*, 2014), among others. Theme parks offer colorful hedonistic experiences that stimulate multiple sensory experiences and generate emotions and thus a positive perception of the brand's creativity. Visitors perceive theme parks primarily in visual terms, and, therefore, the creative design of theme parks is a crucial feature in developing their identities. Theme parks also offer imaginary enclosed environments for applying creative design to architecture, objects and landscaping without the need to get approval from government authorities (Yoon, 2019).

Colors are known to influence certain emotions in consumers; nonetheless, studies on the emotional reactions to color and their impact on creativity are limited and are primarily addressed in the field of neurology (Safran and Sanda, 2015), but also consumer behavior research (Cachero-Martínez and Vázquez-Casielles, 2021; Chitturi and Henriquez, 2021; Gilbert *et al.*, 2016; Ketkaew *et al.*, 2021; Man *et al.*, 2013). These emotions, in return, incite certain cognitive and behavioral reactions in consumers. Empirical research indicates that the use of specific colors can enhance creativity and motivation (Yu, 2020), though the use of color in different situations and settings may convey different messages (Kombeiz and Steidle, 2018). For example, red may signal a variety of messages like avoidance behavior, achievement, walking speed or romance (Meier *et al.*, 2012). The color green has often been associated with positive meanings, such as advance/proceed (in traffic lights), success, growth, openness and calmness (Lichtenfeld *et al.*, 2018).

The association between emotions and creativity has been studied primarily in the field of psychology (Copeland, 2016). Research confirmed that the happier side of creativity is supported by associations of positive mood with creative tendencies such as cognitive flexibility (Isen, 2008) and openness to experience (Strong *et al.*, 2007). Consequently, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1. Brand color emotions (positive valence and arousal) have a positive effect on perceived brand creativity.

2.3 Perceived brand creativity's influence on utilitarian and hedonic values

Utilitarian and hedonic values are the benefits consumers expect in utilitarian and hedonic consumption settings, which are highlighted in the experiential consumption literature. Hedonic values emerge from the emotive, sensory and fantasy aspects of consumption, while utilitarian values come from efficiency, effectiveness, functionality and practicality aspects of consumption (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Consumers not only expect product quality, practical features and benefits and a favorable brand image but also creative features and marketing communications that will astonish their senses, touch their hearts and arouse their minds (Schmitt, 1999).

The notion of creativity was conceptualized in the literature (Amabile and Pratt, 2016) and was conceived from the development and production of novel, original and potentially useful products or ideas (Sternberg, 2006). While creativity and imagination have been subjectively evaluated in the visual arts, literature, music, dance or drama, a few empirical contributions also addressed the role of creativity on consumers' evaluations of products and services and the impact on their satisfaction and loyalty (Horn and Salvendy, 2009; Lee, 2020). Creativity can add value to a product and enhance the service or experience delivery and, consequently, can influence consumer satisfaction, engagement and acceptance (Hart *et al.*, 2003). However, research on consumers' perspectives of product creativity is limited, especially on consumers' assessment of creativity and its influence on their perceived value or behavioral intentions (Im *et al.*, 2015).

From a theoretical perspective, creativity has been defined as the creation of novel and valuable ideas, products or processes by an individual or group (George and Zhou, 2001; Gruys *et al.*, 2011). Conceptual research addressed the antecedents of creativity and its two prime components, novelty and value (Gruys *et al.*, 2011). Tan (2020) suggested that Confucian creativity is manifested in novelty through original interpretations of the objective world and appropriateness through flexible responses to concrete circumstances. Cropley (2015) also suggested that novelty is one of four fundamental criteria for product creativity.

Several studies evaluated creativity from the marketing perspective, primarily in the context of new product development. Horn and Salvendy (2006) addressed this issue by identifying a few research questions such as what criteria should be involved in product creativity assessment, how much does creativity enhance the product or how do creativity influence consumer purchase intentions? Other studies measured the creativity dimensions of novelty and meaningfulness (Im and Workman, 2004) or key product creativity factors: affect, importance and novelty (Horn and Salvendy, 2009). These studies also investigated the relationship between creativity and consumer attitudes toward products (Im *et al.*, 2015), including the impact of creative versus efficient advertising (Modig *et al.*, 2014), advertising videos (Feng and Xie, 2019) or online adverting (Kim and Yu, 2015; Moraru, 2017).

A small group of theoretical contributions addressed creativity in the context of tourism, such as the conceptual development of creative spaces, creative spectacles and creative tourism as an alternative to conventional cultural tourism (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Garcês *et al.* (2018) suggested that creativity in tourism is mainly explored as a background for tourism development through organizational, structural and product innovation development.

Empirical research in a variety of settings also addressed the relations between consumers' perceived creativity, novelty and value (Benoit and Miller, 2019). Im *et al.* (2015) confirmed that novelty influences coolness which affects hedonic value, which, in turn, impacts consumers' attitudes. In the tourism industry, Cheng and Lu (2013) confirmed that destination image leads to a greater perception of novelty, promotes hedonics and

perceived value and generates revisiting intention in tourists. Barber *et al.* (2021) found that both authenticity and novelty simultaneously influenced perceived wine consumption quality and value. In the Airbnb context, Stollery and Jun (2017) confirmed the positive influence of monetary saving, hedonic benefits and novelty on guests' perceived value. Sparks *et al.* (2008) confirmed that timeshare owners attained value from novelty demonstrated by new experiences. Based on the confirmed relationships between perceived creativity, novelty and perceived value, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Perceived brand creativity has a positive effect on utilitarian and hedonic value.

2.4 Utilitarian and hedonic values' influence on brand loyalty

Perceived value has been empirically documented to play a critical role on consumer behavior, in particular, purchasing intentions (Shapiro *et al.*, 2019). Researchers attempted to understand the impact of hedonic and utilitarian values on consumer loyalty. Several studies evaluated these relationships in different settings and consequences of these three constructs. For example, Susanti *et al.* (2021) measured the effect of hedonic value on customer loyalty. Alam *et al.* (2020) concluded that millennials in the developing economies prefer hedonic consumption value to utilitarian value, which was related to their loyalty. In the emerging electronic commerce context, Gan and Wang (2017) showed that utilitarian, hedonic and social values had significant and positive impacts on purchase intention. Finally, in the education field, Arizzi *et al.* (2020) measured the impact of utilitarian and hedonic values on loyalty and recommendations to others. In the tourism and hospitality industry, Lee and Kim (2018) identified the relationship between customer values and loyalty in the context of Airbnb. Their findings indicated that Airbnb users' hedonic value had a positive impact on satisfaction and loyalty, while utilitarian value influenced only satisfaction. Based on the findings of past research the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Utilitarian and hedonic values have a positive effect on brand loyalty.

2.5 Color differences in the tested relationships

Research on the effect of color on consumer behavior was conducted in a variety of settings such as advertising (Kareklas *et al.*, 2019), atmosphere (Cho and Lee, 2017), product or its packaging (Labrecque *et al.*, 2020) and brand logo (Hess and Melnyk, 2016). For example, Ettis (2017) found that online store color is important in creating the flow experience and concluded that a blue color induces more flow experience than yellow. The two dimensions of flow (perceived enjoyment and concentration) had direct and mediating effects on purchase revisit intention. In addition to studies about the association between color and emotions, several studies found that specific colors (red vs green) can also change consumers' hedonic/utilitarian perceptions. Wang and Li (2019) addressed the impact of color on consumers' values and concluded that products featuring red were perceived to be more hedonic and less utilitarian than the same products featured in green.

In the hospitality and tourism industry, the role of color was confirmed to be critical in influencing customer loyalty. Limited studies were conducted in a variety of settings like the sand color at destinations (Pranzini *et al.*, 2010), the introduction of color into pyro-technology (Kalba, 2012), destination marketing organizations' websites (Schneider *et al.*, 2020), hotels (Siamionava *et al.*, 2018), restaurants (Tantanatewin and Inkarojrit, 2018) or destination brand color preferences (Tasci *et al.*, 2014). Colors were also found to be important sensory signals that set consumer expectations regarding food and drink (Spence, 2016). Empirical research confirmed that color significantly impacts sensory and hedonic judgments, in particular, during food consumption with different color coffee cups (Carvalho and Spence, 2019) or the color of dessert plates (Piqueras-Fiszman *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. Tested effects are contingent upon the type of color.

3. Methods

The data were collected during the second quarter of 2021 using a randomized online experiment with a structured survey. The questionnaire was designed on Qualtrics with the following steps. First, respondents were screened for a theme park visit within the past three years to make sure that they have the necessary product experiences to be able to answer questions. Even though the recency of the theme park experience was desired, the three-year time frame was deemed appropriate due to the lack of usual travel during the COVID-19 pandemic in the past year and a half. Those respondents who visited a theme park within the past three years were then randomly assigned to different theme park brand color schemes. Color conveys different levels of meaning, symbolism and significance, and its role as a measurable element in research, and the choice of primary and secondary colors have been documented in the literature (Jacobsen, 2007; Kumar, 2017; Lee, 2020).

For this purpose, seven color stimuli were included as pictures of various shades of three primary (red, yellow and blue) and three secondary (orange, green and violet) colors, as well as a mixed color scheme composed of different combinations of the three primary colors and three secondary colors (see Figure 2 for the stimuli used in different groups). Respondents were randomly assigned to these color pictures and asked to imagine this color as the dominant color scheme of a theme park brand before rating the scales measuring the study constructs related to this theme park with this color scheme scenario. In other words, respondents were primed with a color scheme to induce certain emotions toward a theme park based on the proposed color scheme before rating their responses on their perception of this theme park's creativity, their perceived value in hedonic and utilitarian dimensions, followed by their potential attitudinal loyalty in the form of their willingness to disseminate word-of-mouth, pay premium prices and visit this theme park.

Previously tested scales are detailed in Table 1 and were modified to measure the study constructs in the theme park brand context. First, brand color emotions were measured by using the valence and arousal dimensions validated by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), Cheetham *et al.* (2015) and Toet *et al.* (2020): valence (1 = Unhappy-Happy = 7; 1 = Annoyed-Pleased = 7; 1 = Unsatisfied-Satisfied = 7) and arousal (1 = Relaxed-Stimulated = 7; 1 = Calm-Excited = 7; 1 = Sleepy-Wide-awake = 7); only three items for each dimension were included to keep the respondent fatigue in check. Second, perceived brand creativity was

Figure 2 Color stimuli used in different groups

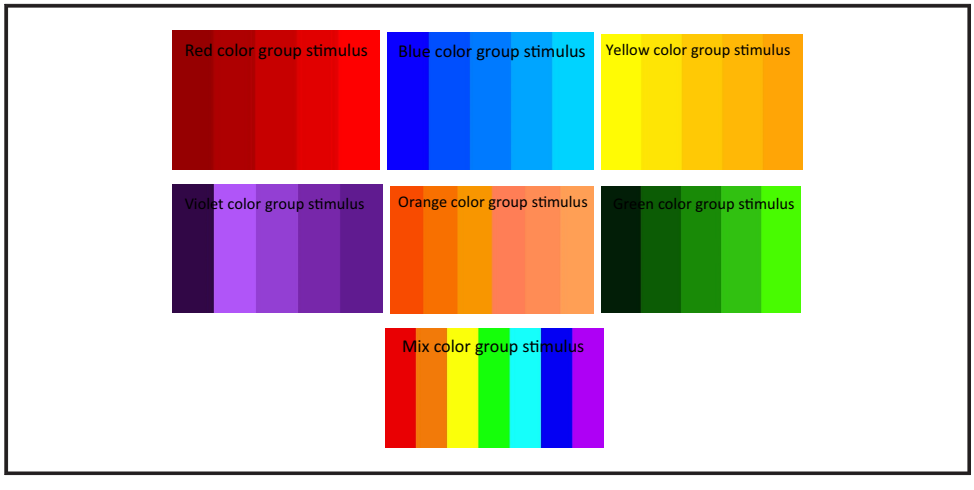


Table 1 Measurement items (the items are modified for the current study purpose and context)

Construct	*Dimensions*	*Items*	*Source*
Brand Color Emotions *Question*: Based on this color scheme of this theme park brand, please state your feelings about this theme park brand by choosing the appropriate spot between the emotional states on the scale below	Valence	1 = Unhappy-Happy = 7 1 = Annoyed-Pleased = 7 1 = Unsatisfied-Satisfied = 7	Mehrabian and Russell (1974)
	Arousal	1 = Relaxed-Stimulated = 7 1 = Calm-Excited = 7 1 = Sleepy-Wide-awake = 7	
Perceived Brand Creativity *Question*: Please rate your agreement level with the following statements about this theme park brand. This theme park brand is likely to. . . (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree)		to be creative (newly added item in the current study) to be unique to be more interesting than other theme parks I know to be different from other theme parks I visited to offer once in a lifetime experience to provide something new	Kim *et al.* (2012), Luo *et al.* (2020)
Utilitarian Value *Question*: Please rate your agreement level with the following statements about this theme park brand. This theme park brand is likely to. . .(1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree)		deliver a learning experience offer an exploration of ideas provide new knowledge serve refreshing experiences	Kim *et al.* (2012), Luo *et al.* (2020)
Hedonic Value *Question*: Please rate your agreement level with the following statements about this theme park brand. This theme park brand is likely. . . (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree)	Social Vigor	to be spontaneous to be energizing to make me feel social	Tasci and Ko (2016)
	Psychological Zest	to make me happy to be enjoyable to give me excitement to make me feel alive	
	Emotional Spark	to provide me emotional peaks to make me feel emotionally involved to make me emotionally charged	
	Flow	to help me forget about my daily routine to help me forget about time and place to help me forget about my obligations	
Brand Loyalty *Question*: Please rate your agreement level with the following statements about this theme park brand on the scale below (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree)	Word-of-Mouth	I would say positive things about this theme park to other people I would share with my friends and relatives my experience of this theme park I would recommend this theme park to others	Milman *et al.* (2020a), Milman *et al.* (2020b), Hutchinson *et al.* (2009)
	Willingness to Pay Price Premium	I would be willing to pay a higher price for this theme park than for other theme parks I would be willing to pay premium prices to visit this theme park again I would be willing to pay a lot more to be able to visit this theme park than other theme parks	Milman *et al.* (2020a), Kiatkawsin and Han (2019)
	Willingness to Visit	I would visit this theme park I would like to visit this theme park frequently I would visit this theme park in the future	Milman *et al.* (2020a), Milman *et al.* (2020b), Hutchinson *et al.* (2009)

measured with a six-item agreement scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) using the five novelty keywords from the scales of Kim *et al.* (2012) and Luo *et al.* (2020), in addition to a specific newly added item of "creative." Third, the utilitarian value was measured with a four-item agreement scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) by modifying the

scales of Kim *et al.* (2012) and Luo *et al.* (2020). Fourth, the hedonic value was measured by using Tasci and Ko's (2016) four-dimensional Funscale with 13 items measuring social vigor ("energy and excitement within a social context" [p. 174]), psychological zest ("happiness, enjoyment, feeling alive, excitement, and pleasure" [p. 174]), emotional spark ("high levels of emotional states" [p.174]) and flow ("distortion of sense of time and place, and avoiding routine" [p. 174]), all reflecting sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of experiential consumption. A seven-point agreement scale was also used for this Funscale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Fifth, three dimensions of attitudinal loyalty, namely, word-of-mouth, willingness to pay a price premium and intention to visit were measured by using seven-point agreement scales (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Milman *et al.* (2020a) and Milman *et al.* (2020b) modified Hutchinson *et al.*'s (2009) three-item word-of-mouth scale and the three-item intention to visit scale into the theme park context; these theme park-specific scales were adopted for this study. Milman *et al.* (2020a, 2020b) also modified Kiatkawsin and Han's (2019) three-item willingness to pay price premium in the theme park context which was also adopted for this study. Additionally, sociodemographic questions included gender, age, level of education, marital status, the number of children under 18 in the household, state of residence, annual household income and race/ethnicity. Finally, respondents were asked to report on their number of theme park visits within the past three years, the usual time of the year to visit theme parks, their favorite colors and the best fitting color for their preferred theme park.

The survey was conducted on registered survey-takers of Amazon's Mechanical Turk. To ensure a high response rate, low missing values and reliable data, various measures were taken:

- respondents were offered one US$ incentive;
- a forced response option was used on all scales measuring the study's constructs;
- only participants with 80% or more reliability rate in completing surveys were allowed to take the survey; and
- attention check questions were placed within the scales.

A total of 633 participants attempted to take the survey; only 566 participants passed the screening of a theme-park visit within the past three years. Another 19 respondents were deleted for failing the attention checks. Thus, 547 cases were included in the final analyses. SPSS 24 was used to analyze the data using several procedures. First, descriptive statistics and frequencies were produced to see the distributions in sociodemographic, theme-park visiting behavior and color preferences. The sample represented the pre-COVID-19 demographic characteristics of the typical US theme park visitors who are millennials, parents, have children in the household and have a higher income (Piacenza, 2018; Roen, 2017). Second, one-way analysis of variance and chi-square tests were used to compare groups on sociodemographic, visit experience and color preference characteristics to check potential bias from nonhomogeneous groups for different scenarios.

Then, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the reliability and validity of the scales measuring the study's constructs and the structure of their relationships. PLS-SEM was preferred because it can tolerate the model's test with nonnormal data and with small sample sizes (Hair *et al.*, 2013), and it is effective in building and testing relationships among a set of variables in the absence of well-established theories (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2014). Smart PLS 3.0 was used to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model with the outer model indices, followed by assessing the structure of the relationships with the inner model indices (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Common method variance was checked by the multicollinearity assessment approach (Kock, 2015) by computing variance inflation factor (VIF) scores with a moderate cutoff value of 5.0 as suggested by Ringle *et al.* (2015). All VIF values were

below the cutoff value of 5, ranging between 1.178 and 3.039. Common method bias was checked by conducting Harman's (1976) single-factor method; all scale items were forced to load to one factor without rotation using principal component analysis on SPSS. Variance extracted by one factor is 39%, and it is less than the recommended threshold of 50%. Construct reliability and convergent validity were evaluated by checking factor loadings (above the cutoff score of 0.7) and cross-loadings, Cronbach's alphas, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, discriminant validity was checked by comparing the square root of the factors' AVE to the intercorrelations (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Finally, the structural model was evaluated by inspecting the path coefficients (β) reflecting the strength of the relationships among the constructs, and R^2 values reflecting the explanatory power of the model overall (Shmueli *et al.*, 2016; Shmueli *et al.*, 2019).

4. Results

4.1 Sample characteristics

As can be seen in Tables 2 and 3, respondents in different color groups were very similar in their sociodemographic and trip characteristics, as well as their color preferences. They were between 29 and 39 years old on average, dominated by males (between 55% and 71%), mostly college or university graduates (between 44% and 63%), mostly married

Table 2 Sociodemographics of respondents in different color groups (N = 547)

Variables	*RED (n = 76)*	*BLUE (n = 79)*	*YELLOW (n = 80)*	*ORANGE (n = 81)*	*GREEN (n = 78)*	*VIOLET (n = 77)*	*MIX (n = 76)*	*ANOVA and chi-square significance*
Age (Years, mean)	36.71	36.23	38.15	39.54	37.53	38.87	36.67	0.373
Gender (%)								0.518
Male	55.3	68.4	62.5	63.0	62.8	66.2	71.1	
Female	44.7	31.6	37.5	37.0	35.9	33.8	28.9	
Other	0	0	0	0	1.3	0	0	
Level of Education (%)								0.399
High School	3.9	1.3	3.8	8.6	5.1	6.5	9.2	
Vocational School/Associate	7.9	7.6	7.5	4.9	6.4	13.0	7.9	
College/University	55.3	58.2	63.7	48.1	61.5	44.2	56.6	
Master's or PhD	32.9	32.9	25.0	38.3	26.9	36.4	26.3	
Marital Status (%)								0.478
Single	17.1	20.3	18.8	14.8	12.8	11.7	23.7	
Married	78.9	70.9	77.5	76.5	74.4	83.1	72.4	
Other	3.9	8.8	3.8	8.6	12.8	5.2	3.9	
Have children under the age of 18 living in the household (Yes %)	60.5	62.0	70.0	61.7	60.3	68.8	67.1	0.741
The number of children under 18 in the household (Mean)	3.10	1.66	2.38	1.75	1.60	1.69	1.66	0.216
Family's annual income (%)								0.646
Under $35,000	10.5	13.9	20.1	11.1	14.1	9.1	13.2	
$35,000–$49,999	15.8	11.4	12.5	18.5	17.9	16.9	11.8	
$50,000–$74,999	38.2	36.7	27.5	27.2	28.2	37.7	26.3	
$75,000–or above	35.5	38.0	41.1	43.2	39.7	36.4	48.7	
Race/Ethnicity (%)								0.194
White/Caucasian	73.7	83.5	83.8	77.8	67.9	84.4	76.3	
African American	11.8	7.6	10.0	7.4	16.7	10.4	13.2	
Hispanic	3.9	1.3	0	3.7	1.3	1.3	0	
Asian	7.9	7.6	6.3	4.9	10.3	3.9	5.3	
Others	2.6	0	0	6.2	3.8	0	5.2	

Note: ANOVA = analysis of variance

Table 3 Theme park visit and color preferences of respondents in different color groups (N = 547)

Variables	*RED* (n = 76)	*BLUE* (n = 79)	*YELLOW* (n = 80)	*ORANGE* (n = 81)	*GREEN* (n = 78)	*VIOLET* (n = 77)	*MIX* (n = 76)	*ANOVA and chi-square significance*
Number of theme park visits within the past three years (Mean)	2.82	2.82	2.81	3.01	3.12	3.67	2.85	0.413
Usual time to visit theme parks and attractions (%)								0.222
Summer	40.8	44.3	46.3	42.0	51.3	50.6	38.2	
Year-round (all seasons)	19.7	19.0	16.3	17.3	16.7	16.9	10.5	
Fall	2.6	11.4	3.8	11.1	12.8	3.9	11.8	
Winter	15.8	7.6	7.5	7.4	3.8	6.5	10.5	
Spring	21.1	17.7	26.3	22.2	15.4	22.1	28.9	
Favorite color								
Red	22.4	20.3	6.3	14.8	12.8	7.8	10.5	0.015
Orange	7.9	2.5	7.5	7.4	7.7	1.3	5.3	
Blue	34.2	44.3	46.3	35.8	33.3	48.1	43.4	
Yellow	3.9	6.3	18.8	11.1	3.8	6.5	9.2	
Green	17.1	12.7	10.0	9.9	28.2	13.0	13.2	
Violet	6.6	7.6	5.0	11.1	3.8	15.6	6.6	
Mix of colors	3.9	2.5	5.0	6.2	3.9	6.5	6.6	
Other	3.9	3.8	1.3	3.7	6.4	1.3	5.3	
Black	2.6	1.3			2.6		1.3	
Pink		1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3	3.9	
Purple				1.2	1.3			
Silver				1.2	1.3			
Maroon		1.3						
White	1.3							
The best-fitting color for the preferred theme park								
Red	31.6	6.3	5.0	8.6	5.1	2.6	6.6	0.000
Orange	6.6	3.8	8.8	21.0	2.6	3.9	3.9	
Blue	14.5	49.4	20.0	18.5	15.4	22.1	23.7	
Yellow	5.3	3.8	32.5	4.9	2.6	2.6	5.3	
Green	10.5	8.9	8.8	8.6	35.9	3.9	10.5	
Violet	2.6	1.3	1.3	3.7	3.8	23.4	2.6	
Mix of colors	29.0	26.6	23.8	34.6	34.6	41.6	37.4	

(between 71% and 83%) and reported having about 2 or 3 children under the age of 18 living in the household, with an income skewed toward above US$50,000 and mostly represented white or Caucasian background.

Even though there seem to be slight differences among the groups, they are not statistically significant; thus, the groups are sociodemographically homogenous. The same applies to their theme park visits; all groups had about three trips to theme parks within the past three years, typically during summer. Since different color scenario groups were homogenous, confounding influences of these characteristics are not likely; thus, potential bias from group differences is deemed unlikely. In other words, the differences among groups can be attributed to the different color stimuli rather than their inherent characteristics. Nonetheless, color groups had some statistically significant differences in their color preferences. Even though the plurality's favorite color in all groups is blue (between 33% and 48%), they have differences in other colors. Interestingly, the second most favorite color was red in the red, blue and orange groups, while it was yellow in the yellow group, green in the green and mixed color groups and violet in the violet group. Similarly, when asked for the best fitting color for their preferred theme park, the plurality in the red, blue, yellow, green and mixed color groups chose the color of their stimuli, while the plurality in the orange and violet groups chose mixed colors. This may be a natural occurrence or an influence of the color stimulus on the respondents.

4.2 Measurement model assessment

Table 4 shows the mean ratings and factor loadings of the scale items and Cronbach's Alpha, CR and AVE values of the constructs that the items are measuring. All scale items were rated above 5 on the seven-point scale, on average, except for the willingness to pay a price premium, which was rated just below 5 on average. All VIF values were below the cutoff value of 5, ranging between 1.178 and 3.039; thus, multicollinearity was not an issue. All items loaded higher than the cutoff 0.7 value (Hair *et al.*, 2019) on their respective factor, and no item was cross-loaded. Thus, no item was deleted and the measurement model remained intact. The Cronbach's alphas and CR of all factors were above the threshold of 0.70. These values confirmed the scale's convergent validity for measuring these constructs. Additionally, all AVEs were above 0.5, indicating the convergent validity of the constructs in the model. As displayed in Table 5, the square roots of the AVE, shown on the diagonals, were greater than the correlations between the factors, shown as the off-diagonal elements, confirming the constructs' discriminant validity.

4.3 Structural model assessment

The structural model was assessed using 5,000 bootstrap resamples and the confidence intervals at 95%. Table 6 presents the structural estimations and Figure 3 shows the path coefficients and R^2 values. The significance of the path coefficients and R^2 values were examined to evaluate the model's fit. Of all paths tested, 17 were supported at $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$. *H1* was fully supported since both the valence and arousal of brand color emotions had a significant effect on the perceived brand creativity. However, the valence of brand color emotions had a stronger effect ($\beta = 0.498$, $t = 10.362$, $p < 0.01$) than that of arousal of brand color emotions ($\beta = 0.231$, $t = 4.636$, $p < 0.01$).

H2 was also fully supported since perceived brand creativity showed significant strong effects on both utilitarian and hedonic values, with path coefficients ranging between 0.574 and 0.777. Its effect on the utilitarian value ($\beta = 0.777$, $t = 28.785$, $p < 0.01$) was stronger than its effects on the four dimensions of hedonic values with path coefficients ranging between 0.574 and 0.765. However, *H3* was only partially supported, with weak to medium effects of utilitarian and hedonic values on brand loyalty. The utilitarian value showed a medium effect on willingness to pay price premium ($\beta = 0.388$, $t = 6.146$, $p < 0.01$), while its effects on word of mouth (WoM) and willingness to visit were weaker but still significant. Similarly, the social vigor dimension of hedonic value had a medium effect on WoM ($\beta = 0.362$, $t = 5.835$, $p < 0.01$), while its effects on willingness to pay price premium and visit were weaker but still significant. Psychological zest had a medium effect on both WoM ($\beta = 0.310$, $t = 4.548$, $p < 0.01$) and willingness to visit ($\beta = 0.366$, $t = 5.988$, $p < 0.01$) but no effect on willingness to pay a price premium. On the other hand, the emotional spark had a weak effect only on willingness to pay the price premium ($\beta = 0.175$, $t = 2.759$, $p < 0.01$), and flow had a weak effect only on WoM ($\beta = 0.136$, $t = 2.502$, $p < 0.05$).

Besides these direct effects, perceived brand creativity also had strong indirect effects on all brand loyalty dimensions, with path coefficients ranging between 0.563 and 0.636 at $p < 0.01$. The valence of brand color emotions also had medium effects on utilitarian value and all dimensions of hedonic value and brand loyalty, path coefficients ranging between 0.286 (on flow) and 0.387 (on utilitarian value). Arousal of brand color emotions had weak effects on utilitarian value and all dimensions of hedonic value and brand loyalty, path coefficients ranging between 0.130 (on willingness to pay price premium) and 0.179 (on utilitarian value). Clearly, brand color emotions, both in valence and arousal showed a stronger effect on utilitarian value than on hedonic value, both directly and indirectly.

An examination of the R^2 values indicated that brand color emotions explained almost half (44%) of the variance in perceived brand creativity, both of which explained 60% of the variance in utilitarian value and 33% to 59% of the hedonic value dimensions. Collectively,

Table 4 Reliability and convergent validity of the measurement model (N = 547)

Items and factors	*Mean*	*Valence of brand color emotions*	*Arousal of brand color emotions*	*Perceived brand creativity*	*Utilitarian value*	*Social vigor*	*Psychological zest*	*Emotional spark*	*Flow*	*Word-of-Mouth*	*Willingness to Pay Price Premium*	*Willingness to Visit*	*Cronbach's Alpha*	*CR*	*AVE*
Band color emotions							Factor loadings and crossloadings								
Valence													0.874	0.922	0.798
Unhappy-Happy	5.75	*0.904*	0.559	0.587	0.534	0.559	0.522	0.458	0.390	0.535	0.500	0.558			
Annoyed-Pleased	5.65	*0.873*	0.541	0.543	0.513	0.551	0.495	0.435	0.424	0.547	0.471	0.530			
Unsatisfied-Satisfied	5.82	*0.902*	0.518	0.577	0.533	0.511	0.516	0.415	0.376	0.504	0.460	0.566			
Arousal													0.776	0.869	0.690
Relaxed-Stimulated	5.60	0.414	*0.790*	0.373	0.262	0.362	0.296	0.285	0.255	0.319	0.287	0.269			
Calm-Excited	5.79	0.525	*0.845*	0.456	0.384	0.420	0.336	0.320	0.287	0.370	0.369	0.382			
Sleepy-Wide-awake	5.89	0.550	*0.855*	0.483	0.381	0.460	0.402	0.390	0.338	0.379	0.368	0.403			
Perceived brand creativity													0.893	0.918	0.651
to be creative	5.18	0.587	0.406	*0.797*	0.572	0.684	0.557	0.482	0.417	0.618	0.455	0.537			
to be unique	5.20	0.514	0.429	*0.812*	0.592	0.656	0.572	0.509	0.493	0.562	0.466	0.539			
to be more interesting than other theme parks I know	5.03	0.568	0.482	*0.837*	0.639	0.627	0.570	0.544	0.463	0.562	0.582	0.601			
to be different from other theme parks I visited	5.19	0.442	0.398	*0.768*	0.627	0.530	0.555	0.465	0.410	0.461	0.429	0.498			
to offer once in a lifetime experience	5.11	0.502	0.454	*0.799*	0.673	0.591	0.544	0.551	0.523	0.529	0.623	0.572			
to provide something new	5.32	0.467	0.398	*0.826*	0.662	0.612	0.559	0.523	0.466	0.511	0.494	0.533			
Utilitarian value													0.862	0.906	0.707
deliver a learning experience	5.10	0.539	0.334	0.635	*0.822*	0.534	0.476	0.521	0.414	0.501	0.557	0.552			
offer an exploration of ideas	5.23	0.494	0.356	0.680	*0.860*	0.611	0.573	0.532	0.474	0.531	0.519	0.569			
provide new knowledge	5.17	0.481	0.348	0.635	*0.865*	0.502	0.478	0.534	0.425	0.454	0.557	0.515			
serve refreshing experiences	5.44	0.468	0.367	0.662	*0.815*	0.537	0.622	0.544	0.553	0.541	0.475	0.558			
Hedonic value															
Social vigor													0.784	0.874	0.698
to be spontaneous	5.18	0.467	0.412	0.646	0.509	*0.829*	0.566	0.503	0.514	0.581	0.422	0.467			
to be energizing	5.29	0.470	0.426	0.640	0.510	*0.854*	0.683	0.573	0.566	0.658	0.435	0.581			
to make me feel social	5.19	0.572	0.421	0.633	0.606	*0.823*	0.690	0.605	0.594	0.617	0.552	0.621			
Psychological zest													0.850	0.899	0.690
to make me happy	5.34	0.516	0.322	0.612	0.573	0.661	*0.843*	0.610	0.583	0.644	0.449	0.625			
to be enjoyable	5.41	0.509	0.358	0.598	0.563	0.646	*0.854*	0.561	0.557	0.646	0.434	0.620			
to give me excitement	5.34	0.437	0.368	0.544	0.481	0.663	*0.832*	0.563	0.548	0.582	0.455	0.566			
to make me feel alive	5.28	0.432	0.346	0.545	0.504	0.613	*0.791*	0.640	0.617	0.547	0.422	0.559			
Emotional spark													0.833	0.900	0.749
to provide me emotional peaks	5.18	0.447	0.373	0.572	0.576	0.615	0.615	*0.885*	0.640	0.539	0.524	0.547			
to make me feel emotionally involved	5.12	0.427	0.336	0.542	0.533	0.567	0.615	*0.868*	0.590	0.496	0.467	0.528			
to make me emotionally charged	5.16	0.390	0.337	0.535	0.536	0.565	0.624	*0.843*	0.619	0.498	0.439	0.486			
Flow													0.846	0.907	0.765
to help me forget about my daily routine	5.25	0.384	0.319	0.471	0.486	0.575	0.623	0.607	*0.857*	0.589	0.381	0.498			
to help me forget about time and place	5.20	0.408	0.302	0.509	0.486	0.614	0.613	0.635	*0.896*	0.540	0.402	0.510			
to help me forget about my obligations	5.17	0.371	0.313	0.525	0.486	0.569	0.582	0.627	*0.870*	0.516	0.442	0.497			
Word-of-Mouth													0.813	0.889	0.728
I would say positive things about this theme park to other people	5.23	0.526	0.344	0.569	0.514	0.635	0.594	0.504	0.517	*0.850*	0.464	0.629			

(*continued*)

Table 4

Items and factors	*Mean*	*Valence of brand color emotions*	*Arousal of brand color emotions*	*Perceived brand creativity*	*Utilitarian value*	*Social vigor*	*Psychological zest*	*Emotional spark*	*Flow*	*Word-of-Mouth*	*Willingness to Pay Price Premium*	*Willingness to Visit*	*Cronbach's Alpha*	*CR*	*AVE*
I would share with my friends and relatives my experience of this theme park	5.33	0.464	0.362	0.551	0.507	0.633	0.620	0.469	0.553	*0.845*	0.423	0.649			
I would recommend this theme park to others	5.22	0.523	0.396	0.597	0.524	0.631	0.653	0.539	0.534	*0.864*	0.543	0.743			
Willingness to pay price premium													0.907	0.942	0.844
I would be willing to pay a higher price for this theme park than for other theme parks	4.81	0.510	0.408	0.588	0.566	0.531	0.502	0.510	0.443	0.541	*0.920*	0.645			
I would be willing to pay premium prices to visit this theme park again	4.81	0.484	0.393	0.588	0.585	0.519	0.500	0.503	0.441	0.516	*0.917*	0.612			
I would be willing to pay a lot more to be able to visit this theme park than other theme parks	4.76	0.478	0.340	0.565	0.576	0.507	0.457	0.509	0.403	0.484	*0.918*	0.600			
Willingness to visit													0.836	0.902	0.754
I would visit this theme park	5.28	0.544	0.394	0.574	0.551	0.577	0.633	0.535	0.507	0.705	0.559	*0.865*			
I would like to visit this theme park frequently	5.09	0.525	0.377	0.599	0.583	0.569	0.598	0.523	0.502	0.667	0.688	*0.861*			
I would visit this theme park in the future	5.20	0.539	0.347	0.594	0.567	0.598	0.630	0.511	0.486	0.686	0.510	*0.878*			

Note: All VIF values were below the cutoff value of 5, ranging between 1.178 and 3.039

Table 5 Discriminant validity of the measurement model (N = 547)

Constructs	*Arousal of brand color emotions*	*Emotional spark*	*Flow*	*Perceived brand creativity*	*Psychological zest*	*Social vigor*	*Utilitarian value*	*Valence of brand color emotions*	*Willingness to pay price premium*	*Willingness to visit*	*Word-of-mouth*
Arousal of Brand Color Emotions	*0.830*										
Emotional Spark	0.403	*0.866*									
Flow	0.356	0.712	*0.875*								
Perceived Brand Creativity	0.531	0.636	0.574	*0.807*							
Psychological Zest	0.419	0.713	0.693	0.693	*0.831*						
Social Vigor	0.502	0.674	0.670	0.765	0.778	*0.835*					
Utilitarian Value	0.418	0.634	0.555	0.777	0.640	0.651	*0.841*				
Valence of Brand Color Emotions	0.603	0.488	0.443	0.637	0.572	0.604	0.590	*0.893*			
Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.414	0.552	0.467	0.632	0.530	0.565	0.627	0.534	*0.918*		
Willingness to Visit	0.429	0.602	0.574	0.678	0.715	0.670	0.653	0.618	0.674	*0.868*	
Word-of-Mouth	0.431	0.591	0.627	0.671	0.730	0.742	0.604	0.591	0.559	0.790	*0.853*

Notes: Italicized figures are the square root of average variance extracted (AVE); Figures below the AVE line are the correlations between the constructs; Following Hair *et al.*'s (2019) guidelines, the square root of each AVE (shown on the diagonal) is greater than the related interconstruct correlations in the construct correlation matrix, indicating adequate discriminant validity

Table 6 Estimations of the structural model (hypotheses testing) (N = 547)

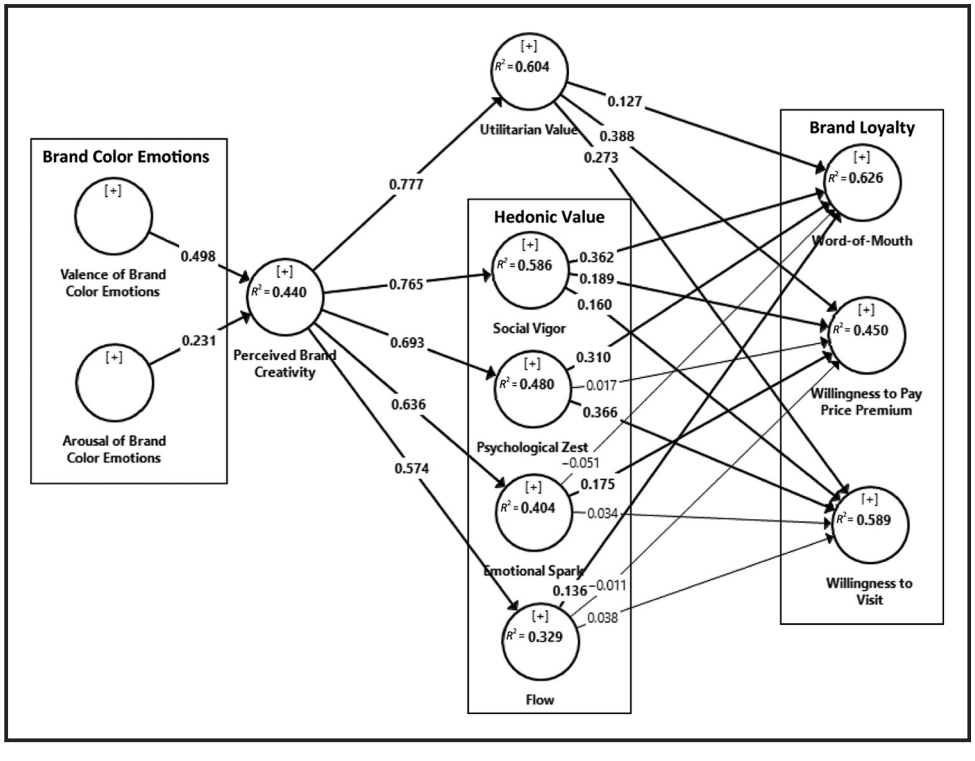
Hypotheses	*Hypothesized relationships*	*Original sample (O)*	*Sample mean (M)*	*SD (STDEV)*	T-*statistics (|O/STDEV|)*	P-*values*
	Direct effects					
H1 supported	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Perceived Brand Creativity	0.498	0.497	0.048	10.362	0.000
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Perceived Brand Creativity	0.231	0.232	0.050	4.636	0.000
H2 supported	Perceived Brand Creativity → Utilitarian Value	0.777	0.777	0.027	28.785	0.000
	Perceived Brand Creativity → Social Vigor	0.765	0.765	0.024	31.607	0.000
	Perceived Brand Creativity → Psychological Zest	0.693	0.693	0.031	22.219	0.000
	Perceived Brand Creativity → Emotional Spark	0.636	0.636	0.043	14.727	0.000
	Perceived Brand Creativity → Flow	0.574	0.574	0.048	11.992	0.000
H3 partially supported	Utilitarian Value → Word-of-Mouth	0.127	0.123	0.047	2.713	0.007
	Utilitarian Value → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.388	0.390	0.063	6.146	0.000
	Utilitarian Value → Willingness to Visit	0.273	0.272	0.048	5.681	0.000
	Social Vigor → Word-of-Mouth	0.362	0.362	0.062	5.835	0.000
	Social Vigor → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.189	0.183	0.077	2.446	0.014
	Social Vigor → Willingness to Visit	0.160	0.157	0.060	2.665	0.008
	Psychological Zest → Word-of-Mouth	0.310	0.309	0.068	4.548	0.000
	Psychological Zest → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.017	0.018	0.073	0.238	0.812
	Psychological Zest → Willingness to Visit	0.366	0.363	0.061	5.988	0.000
	Emotional Spark → Word-of-Mouth	−0.051	−0.049	0.052	0.978	0.328
	Emotional Spark → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.175	0.176	0.063	2.759	0.006
	Emotional Spark → Willingness to Visit	0.034	0.038	0.052	0.655	0.512
	Flow → Word-of-Mouth	0.136	0.137	0.054	2.502	0.012
	Flow → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	−0.011	−0.009	0.069	0.165	0.869
	Flow → Willingness to Visit	0.038	0.040	0.055	0.690	0.490
	Indirect Effects					
	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Utilitarian Value	0.387	0.387	0.045	8.621	0.000
	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Social Vigor	0.381	0.381	0.041	9.192	0.000
	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Psychological Zest	0.345	0.345	0.041	8.452	0.000
	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Emotional Spark	0.317	0.317	0.041	7.689	0.000
	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Flow	0.286	0.286	0.040	7.150	0.000
	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Word-of-Mouth	0.316	0.316	0.037	8.440	0.000
	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.280	0.281	0.036	7.778	0.000
	Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Willingness to Visit	0.314	0.314	0.038	8.215	0.000
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Utilitarian Value	0.179	0.180	0.037	4.828	0.000

(*continued*)

Table 6

Hypotheses	*Hypothesized relationships*	*Original sample (O)*	*Sample mean (M)*	*SD (STDEV)*	*T-statistics (|O/STDEV|)*	*P-values*
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Social Vigor	0.177	0.177	0.038	4.639	0.000
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Psychological Zest	0.160	0.160	0.034	4.683	0.000
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Emotional Spark	0.147	0.147	0.032	4.570	0.000
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Flow	0.132	0.133	0.030	4.427	0.000
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Word-of-Mouth	0.147	0.147	0.032	4.552	0.000
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.130	0.131	0.028	4.570	0.000
	Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Willingness to Visit	0.146	0.146	0.032	4.616	0.000
	Perceived Brand Creativity → Word-of-Mouth	0.636	0.636	0.032	19.889	0.000
	Perceived Brand Creativity → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.563	0.565	0.034	16.366	0.000
	Perceived Brand Creativity → Willingness to Visit	0.631	0.631	0.032	20.009	0.000

Figure 3 PLS regression paths and R^2 values (bold paths are statistically significant)



brand color emotions, perceived brand creativity, utilitarian value and hedonic value explained 60% of WoM, 45% of willingness to pay a price premium and 59% of willingness to visit.

4.4 Multigroup analysis for color differences

Table 7 displays the model comparison for different color groups. The effect of valence of brand color emotions on perceived brand creativity was medium in blue, red and violet groups but strong in green, mixed colors, orange and yellow groups. The effect of arousal of brand color emotions on perceived brand creativity was weak for the blue, red, violet and yellow groups. On the other hand, perceived brand creativity's effects on utilitarian value and hedonic value dimensions were strong for all color groups but stronger on utilitarian value in orange, red, yellow and mixed colors groups. Even though some were strong and some were medium, the effects of utilitarian value and hedonic value dimensions on the brand loyalty dimensions seemed sporadic rather than consistent for the different color groups. Comparisons revealed no differences for the blue group when compared to red, violet and mixed colors groups and there were no differences between the orange and yellow groups, and no differences between the mixed colors and red groups.

The effects of social vigor → willingness to visit, psychological zest → willingness to pay a price premium, emotional spark → word-of-mouth, emotional spark → willingness to visit and flow → willingness to pay price premium were not significant in any color group. Some medium and strong effects were observed for different relationships in different color groups; however, these effects did not seem to reflect a meaningful pattern for any color group. Similarly, differences were observed among different color groups for utilitarian and hedonic values' effects on brand loyalty; however, these differences did not reflect a meaningful pattern either. The effects of utilitarian and hedonic values on brand loyalty for different brand colors seemed haphazard rather than conclusive.

5. Discussion and implications

This study attempted to test and compare the relationships among brand color emotions, perceived brand creativity, utilitarian value, hedonic value and brand loyalty under seven different color conditions using a randomized online sample. PLS-SEM results revealed a strong direct effect of valence of the brand's color emotions and a weak direct effect of arousal of brand color emotions on perceived brand creativity. The valence of brand color emotions also showed a medium effect on the utilitarian value, hedonic value and brand loyalty, while the effect of arousal of brand color emotions was weak. Perceived brand creativity, on the other hand, showed the strongest effects in the model, both directly on utilitarian and hedonic values and indirectly on brand loyalty. Utilitarian value had medium direct effects on brand loyalty, while hedonic value's effect on brand loyalty was medium to weak or nonexistent.

Comparisons among different groups showed that valence of brand color emotions was medium to strong for different color groups, but arousal of brand color emotions does not have as much effect, in fact, no effect in green, orange and mixed color groups. Perceived brand creativity had a strong effect on both utilitarian and hedonic values for all color groups, the effect on the utilitarian value being larger than that on the hedonic value for orange, red, yellow and mixed color groups. However, utilitarian and hedonic values' effects on brand loyalty were not as robust.

Past research concluded that consumers prefer specific colors in different settings. For example, Ozkul *et al.* (2020) study of the influence of the color of light on the customers' perception of service quality and satisfaction in actual restaurant environments concluded that service quality perceptions were higher in red and yellow-lighted ambient than those in blue and green-lighted ambient. This study did not identify a specific color scheme for

Table 7 Multigroup analysis (*H4*: Tested influences are contingent upon the brand color)

Hypothesized relationships	*Path coefficients original (BLUE)*	*Path coefficients original (GREEN)*	*Path coefficients original (MIX)*	*Path coefficients original (ORANGE)*	*Path coefficients original (RED)*	*Path coefficients original (VIOLET)*	*Path coefficients original (YELLOW)*
Valence of Brand Color Emotions → Perceived Brand Creativity	0.365*	0.585*	0.559*	0.524*	0.393*	0.427*	0.518*
Arousal of Brand Color Emotions → Perceived Brand Creativity	0.306*	0.234	0.144	0.172	0.336*	0.329*	0.265*
Perceived Brand Creativity → Utilitarian Value (the effect is stronger for yellow than it is for green)	0.784*	0.683yel*	0.804*	0.848*	0.864*	0.554*	0.878*
Perceived Brand Creativity → Social Vigor (the effect is stronger for violet than it is for orange)	0.794*	0.726*	0.798*	0.754vio*	0.715*	0.780*	0.847*
Perceived Brand Creativity → Psychological Zest	0.685*	0.610*	0.738*	0.729*	0.673*	0.628*	0.831*
Perceived Brand Creativity → Emotional Spark	0.643*	0.508*	0.694*	0.755*	0.738*	0.637*	0.608*
Perceived Brand Creativity → Flow	0.456*	0.522*	0.686*	0.703*	0.632*	0.602*	0.501*
Utilitarian Value → Word-of-Mouth	0.028	0.247*	0.177*	0.064	0.074	0.191*	−0.166
Utilitarian Value → Willingness to Pay Price Premium (the effect is stronger for orange than it is for green)	0.226	0.406*or	0.477*	0.797*	0.446*	0.116	0.640*
Utilitarian Value → Willingness to Visit	0.082	0.400*	0.102	0.308*	0.211	0.367*	0.396*
Social Vigor → Word-of-Mouth	0.359	0.280	0.531*	0.538*	0.293	0.112	0.623*
Social Vigor → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.384*	−0.148	0.175	−0.061	0.288	0.493*	0.174
Social Vigor → Willingness to Visit	0.191	0.020	0.209	0.290	0.080	0.182	0.186
Psychological Zest → Word-of-Mouth	0.178	0.618*	0.049	0.318*	0.024	0.505*	0.397*
Psychological Zest → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	0.289	0.393	−0.319	0.099	−0.100	0.005	−0.258
Psychological Zest → Willingness to Visit	0.402*	0.577*	0.111	0.563*	0.185	0.571*	0.208
Emotional Spark → Word-of-Mouth	−0.076	−0.336	0.072	0.057	−0.028	0.026	0.086
Emotional Spark → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	−0.010	−0.013	0.169	0.010	0.141	0.365*	0.122
Emotional Spark → Willingness to Visit	0.030	−0.212	0.217	−0.097	0.104	0.120	0.165
Flow → Word-of-Mouth	0.322*	−0.008	0.181*	−0.095	0.505*	0.168	−0.159
Flow → Willingness to Pay Price Premium	−0.101	0.166	0.133	−0.002	−0.075	−0.172	0.026
Flow → Willingness to Visit	0.064	0.046	0.330*	−0.301red	0.338*	−0.267	−0.097

Note: *Significant path coefficient at $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$

theme park settings. There may be several plausible explanations. The current study used an experimental design, asking respondents to provide their responses for different colors through an online survey rather than in actual settings. This may have created a lack of respondent attachment to a specific color, which has been addressed in previous clinical studies that measured eye-tracking to understand consumer gaze behavior in response to visual marketing communication (Wedel and Pieters, 2014), and as an important indicator of visual attention (Rumpf *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, it could be due to perceptual limitations. Cohen *et al.*'s (2020) study found that observers were often unaware of extreme alterations to their visual world, and in some cases, almost a third of observers failed to notice when less than 5% of the visual display was presented in color. Therefore, the lack of systematic identification with a specific color scheme may be explained by the lack of sufficient visual attention to the colors displayed on the data collection tools.

The results could also be explained by the personal nature of a theme park visit. The marketing literature suggests that consumers place a greater value on customized rather than standard products because these unique products better fit and communicate their tastes, preferences and identity (Moreau *et al.*, 2020). Since theme parks typically feature an entire spectrum of colors rather than a single brand color across the different aspects of their visitors' experience, this may have prohibited respondents from attributing one color and pertinent emotions to a theme park brand and, consequently, could not identify the best fitting color for their preferred theme park.

Perhaps just the colorful aspect of a typical theme park visit incites a perception of novelty. Thus, the influence of colors on novelty perception may be studied further in tourism and hospitality brands with a uniform color, like airlines, cruise lines, hotels and restaurants. The results could also reflect the vanishing memories of theme park visitors due to the extended period without travel due to the pandemic. Finally, respondents may have also not expressed natural reactions to neither the stimuli nor the scales used in the study due to extended phases of social distancing during the pandemic.

The results also indicate that brand color emotions have significant influences, but any color that makes visitors happy, pleased and satisfied can generate the perceptions of novelty and lead to utilitarian and hedonic values. The findings that perceived brand creativity had a positive effect on utilitarian and hedonic value are consistent with previous research that confirmed that novelty influences coolness which affects hedonic value, which, in turn, impacts consumers' attitudes (Im *et al.*, 2015).

Perceived utilitarian and hedonic values lead to some loyalty tendencies but not consistently. The result runs against the findings of previous studies on the influence of utilitarian and hedonic values on brand loyalty (Shapiro *et al.*, 2019; Susanti *et al.*, 2021). Perhaps, consumer value, namely, the perception of a tradeoff between benefits and costs of consuming a brand, may have more significance on brand loyalty than utilitarian or hedonic values.

Some effects were not significant in any color group. Group comparisons did not reveal any robust differences among different color groups. Some medium and strong effects are observed for different relationships in different color groups; however, these differences seem sporadic rather than consistent, and these effects do not seem to reflect a meaningful pattern for any color. This result may be due to the small number of respondents in each group and requires further investigation.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This paper makes several key theoretical contributions. First, this study is one of the first to empirically examine the impact of primary, secondary and mixed colors in the context of theme parks on consumers' emotions and its impact on their perception of creativity, utilitarian and hedonic value and, consequently, their loyalty measured by WoM, willingness

to pay a price premium and willingness to revisit the theme parks. The model confirmed statistically the relationships between the measured constructs, although not as powerful in certain instances. Second, the study identified the respondents' preferred colors and presented different color schemes to seven groups of respondents and asked them to report their perceived best fitting color for their preferred theme park. The preference for vivid colors in various aspects of design has been documented in the marketing and advertising literature (Kovač *et al.*, 2019; Labrecque and Milne, 2012), but not in hedonic experiential consumption like theme park visits. Red, blue, yellow and green may become the preferred colors for theme park design as they represent excitement, optimism and attention-grabbing and have been persevered across time and cultures.

Third, while previous studies examined the impact of colors on brand perception, personality, memorability, judgments and purchase intentions (Labrecque and Milne, 2012; You *et al.*, 2019); this study added a new dimension for measuring consumers' brand perception by confirming empirically the combined power of brand color emotions on perceived brand novelty. Fourth, while prior research confirmed that specific colors can enhance creativity and motivation (Yu, 2020), the use of color in different settings like theme parks may convey different messages to different consumers representing an array of demographic and visiting characteristics (Kombeiz and Steidle, 2018).

Fifth, although a significant amount of studies evaluated the effect of perceived value on consumer behavior (Chiu *et al.*, 2005), very limited studies addressed these relationships in the context of theme parks (Godovykh *et al.*, 2019; Milman *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b). This study substantiates the fact that hedonic and utilitarian values are instrumental to developing loyalty among theme park patrons. It is important to note that while previous studies confirmed the impact of hedonic and utilitarian values in determining their long-term relationship and their loyalty to the company (Chiu *et al.*, 2005), this may not always be the case in the context of theme parks. The independent dimensions of perceived value like psychological zest, emotional spark and flow did not predict some of the consumer loyalty dimensions like willingness to pay a price premium, WoM and willingness to visit. Other variables may be more powerful to predict consumer loyalty in the context of theme parks like functional, emotional, social and epistemic (knowledge) values (Shin *et al.*, 2019) or financial, social and reputation values that may exhibit a more significant influence on visitors' willingness to pay a price premium, WoM or intention to revisit.

5.2 Managerial implications

A few managerial implications could be drawn from the study findings. First, the results indicate that valence and arousal of brand color emotions impact perceived brand creativity and novelty, which could be an important component of the overall theme park experience. These perceptions of creativity influence both utilitarian and hedonic values and, consequently, brand loyalty and intention to revisit. While the results did not identify a specific preferred color scheme for theme park settings, designers, operators and marketing executives should continue using a variety of creative color combinations to generate visitor perception of novelty and creativity that would impact their perceived hedonistic and utilitarian values.

The introduction of color to stimulate emotions has been adopted historically by many tourist attractions and was amplified with increasingly advanced technology. For example, for decades, the Eiffel Tower featured illuminating colors to evoke emotions that were associated with certain occasions, events or cultures. In 2008, the monument was illuminated in blue to commemorate the occasion of the French Presidency of Europe, and in 2014, it was illuminated in pink to raise awareness about the risks of breast cancer (Wonders of the World, 2021). Theme park decision-makers should continue incorporating tangible evidence into their product and experience portfolios by introducing different colors to enhance the customer's experience. Attractions can provide added value by presenting colorful physical or technical markers like symbols, signs, products and

infrastructure (Bitner, 1992). For example, in 1996, Disney's Cinderella's castle was painted in pink that looked like cake icing, candy-cane spires and 26 decorative birthday candles to celebrate the park's 25th anniversary. Between November and December 2019, the castle was lit nightly with icicle-like white color as part of *A Frozen Holiday Wish*, and in April 2020, the theme park shined blue lights on Cinderella Castle in honor of healthcare workers (Krause, 2021).

Second, since the original development of Disneyland in 1955, modern theme parks have revised and extended their original theme park product and now offer a variety of experiences beyond the original family entertainment park including concerts, festivals and events, themed resort hotels, water parks, vacation clubs, sports complexes, golf courses and more (Walt Disney World, 2021). Color could be a major catalyzer to evoke emotions and, consequently, impact the perception of novelty, leading to perceived value and loyalty. In 2010, Disneyland in California introduced a nightly show titled *World of Color* featuring 1,200 imaginative musical water fountains with colorful lights, fire, lasers and fog, using high-definition projections on mist screens (Disneyland Resort, 2021).

Third, theme parks have unique characteristics compared to other hospitality and tourism operations like hotels, restaurants or airlines. Therefore, decision-makers should be cautious of the overall guest experience when developing emotions, not only by color but also by other experiences linked to the brand and, consequently, may have different impacts on their guests' perceived value and, consequently, loyalty. In addition to perceived brand creativity, other dimensions of value like play, aesthetics, ethics and escapism (Sánchez-Fernández *et al.*, 2020) could influence guests' satisfaction and loyalty.

Fourth, this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some scholars cautioned about the shifting role of perceived value and satisfaction during the loyalty development process. Many theme parks closed during certain months of the pandemic, and when they were opened, attendance was limited, thus, consumers' perceptions of creativity, value and loyalty may have shifted. Empirical studies suggested that perceived value and satisfaction may have decreasing effects on loyalty in the advanced stages of a relationship's life cycle (Lin and Kuo, 2013). Bradley and Sparks (2012) also empirically confirmed that as perceived consumer value changes over time, similar to consumer satisfaction and repurchase intention. Finally, since theme park designers and operators may deploy the introduction of specific color schemes into their parks' overall experience design, managers need to consider the impact of color on emotions and the role of different schemes during different times of the year, the geographical location of the park, visitors characteristics, in particular, demographic characteristics and cultural background.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The online nature and timing of the study, conducted during the 2020–2022 COVID-19 pandemic, may have prohibited authentic reactions from consumers, as the US theme park industry was in the preliminary phases of its recovery (PRNewswire, 2022). Since the study was conducted online by asking respondents to evaluate color schemes on a computer screen or mobile phone, future studies should be replicated in real-time where visitors are surveyed on-site or right after visiting a theme park brand, once the theme park industry is fully recovered from the impact of the pandemic. Additionally, the conglomerate theme park product and experience may have prohibited attribution of a single color to a theme park brand, and therefore, the model needs to be tested in different product contexts to further investigate color influences on the tested relationships. Also, since the respondents were asked to reflect on a hypothetical theme park brand rather than an actual theme park brand visited, future studies may reveal different results in a setting where visitors are surveyed on-site or online referring specifically to a theme park brand.

Besides, the number of respondents in each color group might be too small to reveal meaningful differences; thus, future studies should be conducted with a larger number of respondents in each group that may reveal different results. Furthermore, the seven color scenarios should be revisited by adding other color combinations that call attention to specific experiences during the theme park visit like signage, architecture, employees' uniforms, rides and attractions, shows and parades, food services, souvenir outlets, seasonal events and more. Finally, color influences may be dependent on respondents' characteristics; for example, females may have stronger tendencies to be influenced by colors than males; thus, future research can delve into various sociodemographic variables' influences on colors and how they influence the modeled relationships.

The model shows the impact of brand color emotions on the relationships between perceived brand creativity, utilitarian and hedonic values and brand loyalty. Future research is needed to explore other determinants of loyalty intentions, and test the model in different settings by introducing other intervening variables such as economic, political and social climate, demographic changes, competitive entertainment alternatives and the role of technology or the natural environment where the theme park is located.

While the specific theme park characteristics, including their brand equity, were not taken into consideration in this study, additional studies to examine the impact of brand color emotions in different theme park categories may reveal different findings. Future research should also address smaller theme parks and attractions at the regional level, as well as international theme parks, where the impact of culture may influence consumers' perceptions of color, creativity, utilitarian and hedonic values and brand loyalty. Also, the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions lists different types of parks, including amusement/theme parks, water parks, family entertainment centers, arcades, zoos and aquariums, museums and miniature golf venues. The level of theming may vary from one attraction to another, but traditional theme parks typically present the most extensive theming. Thus, the impact of color or creativity in these different types of theme parks may be different and should be investigated in future studies. Additionally, the effects of red, blue, yellow and green as preferred colors for theme park design need further and more rigorous testing in future research. Furthermore, the study targeted experienced theme park visitors, who are continually exposed to changes and additions in their favorite theme parks including rides, attractions, landscaping, street furniture, food services, merchandise stores and souvenirs, etc. These changes typically introduce different color schemes, and therefore, experienced visitors were considered a better source of information. However, since the study focuses on exploring the effects of color schemes for theme park brands, consumers who are not frequent theme park visitors may provide different insights, and thus needs to be included in future research. Finally, qualitative research addressing the concepts of brand color emotions, creativity, value and loyalty would help shed light on the variables leading to consumer theme park loyalty. Despite its limitations, the study set the path for an understudied area of research and identified new areas to focus on in future research.

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