**Disneyland Psychology Script**

OK. Good morning everybody. Today, I want to talk to you about Disneyland. Or, more precisely, I want to talk to you about the psychology involved in Disneyland.

I live in Japan. Last January, I went to Tokyo Disneyland with my wife and my daughter. We had a great time. It was absolutely wonderful. It was a little bit cold, but we still had a good time. While we were there, walking around, we were standing in line, as you do, you spend a large percentage of all your time at Disneyland standing in line, and I started to think about the psychology behind the line. We were standing there, but we didn’t seem to mind. And that got me thinking. And I realized there are quite a lot of psychological factors involved in your trip to a Disneyland park.

Right, a bit of background. Across the world, there are many different Disneylands. Of course, the first one was the Magic Kingdom built in Florida. And I think that was built in the 1950s. And, right now, there are many of these across the world. Altogether, throughout the year, all of the Disneylands combined, attract approximately a hundred and sixteen million people. (116,000,000) A hundred and sixteen million people. Out of that, the most popular park is still the original, the Florida Disneyland. That attracts about nineteen million people. (19,000,000) However, number two, quite surprisingly, is Tokyo Disneyland, which attracts about seventeen million people. (17,000,000) Although, I suppose that’s not really that surprising. The population of Japan is about a hundred and twenty million people. (120,000,000) And Tokyo Disneyland is the easiest of these places to get to. So, the majority of Japanese people will go there.

Anyway, so these parks attract a hundred and sixteen million people. (116,000,000) And, the majority of these people, come away satisfied with the park. Why is that? Well, I’ve thought of four different areas where psychology is employed. The Disney corporation employs psychologists who work in each of these parks. They analyze different areas of the park and they work out improvements and ways things can be changed.

Now, the first thing, and how my research began, is the line. You stand in line waiting for a ride. Unless you go on a very cold, very rainy day, you are going to stand in line for almost everything, even food. So, how does Disney make this waiting experience easier for you?

Well, the first thing they do is they display the wait time. Think about when you’re waiting at a supermarket or a gasoline station, you get very annoyed. You don’t know how long you’re going to have to wait and that makes you angry and irritated. When you go to a line at a Disneyland park you can see, displayed, the wait time. It says, “twenty minutes”, “fifty minutes”, or, in the worst case, “two hundred minutes”. I have actually done that. I’ve waited three hours for a ride. But, when you go in, the wait time is displayed so you are mentally prepared for that wait. You know you’re going to have to wait for one hour. Then, the second thing they do is, the wait time is actually shorter than the time displayed. So, if it says, “sixty minutes”, the wait time is actually shorter than the time displayed. So, if it says, “sixty minutes”, the wait time might be fifty minutes. So, as you’re going through, you’re looking at your watch, you’re thinking, “Wow! This is faster than I thought!” And that makes you happier.

The third thing they do is you can see how far you have come, but you can never see how far you have to go. If you think about the lines, they’re usually snake style. They zig zag in and out of different rooms, different buildings, different areas, and you can occasionally look out and see, “Oh! Look how far I’ve come!”, but you can never see how far you have to go. What does that do? It gives you a sense of achievement. It makes you realize how far you have come and you think, psychologically, “Oh! I must be getting closer to my goal!”, but you cannot see how far you have to go because then you would realize that you are not getting closer to your goal. Very clever.

The fourth thing they do is distractions. Whenever you are waiting for a Disney ride, there are things to read, games to play, things to look at, movies to watch, there is always something to occupy your mind. And the last, and the most important thing is, it is impossible to push in to a line. You cannot enter the line other than at the back. And there are Disney staff all the way along the line who stop people pushing in. Why? Because if someone pushes in, it makes you angry. If you’re angry, you’re not having a good time. So, the psychology behind the line is very extensive and actually very very well thought out.

Now, another thing they do at the park is something called “forced perspective”. Perspective means things that are close to you appear bigger than things that are far away from you. Because of that, we can judge distances. However, in the Disney park, things can never be that far away from you because the park is just not that big. So, what they do is, they use forced perspective. If you look at a regular building in a Disney park, the taller the building is, the smaller the bricks become and the smaller the windows become. If you go there and stand outside a three-story shop, for example, the first story is as normal, but, as you look up, the bricks become smaller and smaller and smaller and the windows become smaller and smaller and smaller. And what that does is it gives you a sense that the building is much taller, much bigger than it actually is. Another good example is the Cinderella Castle in the middle of the park. If you look at it close up, the turrets on top of the towers are not actually that big. You think they’re big, because you know how big a turret should be, and because of that you think the building is bigger than it actually is. Forced perspective.

Another thing they do is they make the park an idealistic, an optimistic place to be. Imagine you’re walking through your regular city. Is it clean? Not really. Is it safe? It might be, it might not be. Is it bright? Is it happy? Hmmm. Depends on the day. When you walk through a Disney park, is it clean? Yes, there is no trash. There are two reasons for this. The first one is the Disney staff move around and they clean everything up. And the second thing is there are trash cans all over the place. There is a rumor that, when Walt Disney was alive, he used to go to his park, buy a drink, walk around the park. When he finished the drink he’d look around, if there was no trash can, he’d say, “put one here.” I don’t know if that’s true or not, but there certainly are a lot of trash cans. Is Disneyland safe? Yeah. There are very few crimes there. Is it bright? Oh yeah. Look at all the colors, look at all the lights. Is it happy? Oh, yes, it’s happy. All of the Disney staff, do you ever see them not smiling? Do you ever see them not happy? Of course not. And the smells. Imagine the smells walking round the park. There are actually vents, built in all around the park, that leak out different smells. These smells can be smells of food, smells of flowers, smells for an individual ride. And all of these smells affect the way you think. So, when you walk around a Disneyland park, it seems to you like an ideal city should be. It’s clean, it’s safe, it’s bright, it’s happy and it smells good. And that makes us happy.

Now, the last thing, and this is the most interesting thing, is Disney takes advantage of a psychological thing where we want to be a part of something that is bigger than ourselves. We all fight for individualism, but, actually, we like to belong to things. We like to be a part of something. And when you go into a Disney park, you are part of something. If you buy Disney ears … if you buy Mickey Mouse ears, you are becoming part of a larger group. So, because of this desire to be part of a group, we’re more eager to buy things, we’re more eager to take part in things, we’re more eager to part with our money. And, in the end, Disney works very hard to make us happy. Disney works extremely hard to make us happy. Why? Because the happier we are, the more we spend. And, in the end, Disneyland is giving us a dream, but why are they in business? They are a business. They are in business to make money. And the way they take the money from you is absolutely beautiful.

Anyway, even though I know all these things, I still enjoy Disneyland, because my wife and my daughter are so happy there. Seeing the smiles on their faces make it all worthwhile. And I hope to take them there again one day. Anyway, thank you for listening. Goodbye.

**Disneyland Psychology Questions**

1. How many people visit the most popular Disney park every year?

A: 17,000,000

B: 19,000,000

C: 116,000,000

D: 120,000,000

2. Why does Disney employ psychologists at their parks?

A: They can keep the park extremely clean by adding more trash cans.

B: They can improve the parks by seeing how people think.

C: They can help you to wait in line when it is cold.

D: They can attract many people to Disney’s parks.

3. Why does displaying the wait time for a ride reduce irritation?

A: You can wait for much longer than you expect to.

B: It helps you to find the rides with fewer people waiting.

C: They work out improvements for the parks.

D: It allows you to mentally prepare.

4. How does zig zagging in and out of rooms affect your ability to wait?

A: You have a sense of achievement because you can see how far you have come.

B: You can tell exactly how much farther you have to go, which relaxes you.

C: You can see many different parts of the ride.

D: You can never push in to the lines because the Disney staff will stop you.

5. What is “forced perspective”?

A: Finding a way to make the Disney park much bigger than it really is.

B: Making you use all of your money to buy Mickey Mouse ears.

C: Tricking your mind into thinking a building is bigger than it is.

D: Making things farther away from you smaller.

6. What does the rumor of Walk Disney walking around his park with a drink show?

A: He was very interested in how his parks made money.

B: He spent too long at his parks.

C: He liked to look for trash cans.

D: He was very involved with the running of the parks.

7. How does someone wearing Mickey Mouse ears at a Disney park feel?

A: Part of something bigger than themselves

B: Extremely individualistic

C: Very happy

D: Eager to go out and buy more Mickey Mouse ears

8. Why does Disney want to make us happier?

A: Because the happier people are, the cleaner they keep the park

B: Because happier people don’t mind waiting in line as much

C: Because the happier people are, the more they spend

D: Because happier people don’t commit crime

9. Why is Tokyo Disneyland the second most popular park?

10. Why does the Cinderella Castle seem bigger than it actually is?

11. Why do you think Disneyland uses smells.

12. Steven says that Disney is in business to make money. Is this view of Disney too cynical? State your reasons.

13. Is it better to be an individual or a part of a group? State your reasons.

14. Write about a theme park you have visited.

**Disneyland Psychology Answers**

1. B 2. B 3. D 4. A 5. C 6. D 7. A 8. C

9. Why is Tokyo Disneyland the second most popular park?

According to the talk, it is the second most popular because the population of Japan is very large and the people there don’t have many alternative places to go to. There are other theme parks, but they have never quite equaled the success of Disneyland.

Two things the talk didn’t consider would be the size of the country and the cultural propensity for cuteness. Japan is nowhere near as large as the USA. To get from anywhere in Japan to Tokyo Disneyland wouldn’t take more than about two hours (three if you throw in the bus time). The same couldn’t be said about America or China. As well as this, Japan has a notoriety for loving anything cute. Disneyland is probably the epitome of this cuteness. It must be like Mecca to the Japanese people. I am slightly surprised that it isn’t the most popular park in the world. I can only think that a lot of Japanese people are actually taking the time and money to go and visit the original park, pushing up those numbers.

10. Why does the Cinderella Castle seem bigger than it actually is?

Forced perspective. Disney is basically using an optical illusion to trick our brains. He cannot make the castle as big as he wanted because of limitations on space. To get around this he plays with our brains knowledge of perspective. We know that an apple in our hand appears larger than an apple on the table on the other side of the room. We also know that the apple in our hand isn’t actually larger. We know how big an apple is. This knowledge allows us to roughly judge how far away the small apple is from the big apple. The same works for height. If we look up, we know that the bricks high up will be smaller than the bricks in front of our faces. We also know that they are not actually smaller, they are just farther away. This allows us to judge how something is. Disney knew this, or rather, his psychologists and designers knew this. If you look up at a Disney building, the bricks are actually smaller. Our brains can’t conceive of this and assumes the building is really tall. The turrets and upper windows of the Cinderella Castle are smaller than they should be. That tricks us into thinking it is very high and very large. Pure genius.

11. Why do you think Disneyland uses smells.

For two reasons. Firstly, smells evoke emotions and memories in a subconscious way that visual stimulation doesn’t always do. The smell of cut grass wafting through the window suddenly takes you back to your childhood. The smell of cherry pie suddenly whisks you back to your grandmother’s kitchen. Disney uses these smells to play with our minds.

Secondly, authenticity. We are going to become much more involved with a ride, a show or a situation if it smells right.

12. Steven says that Disney is in business to make money. Is this view of Disney too cynical? State your reasons.

I don’t think it is too cynical, but that is purely based on my opinion. What Steven says is true. Disney is a corporation with many different arms of business, and each part of that business is answerable to the shareholders. If the business doesn’t make a profit, the shareholders are going to want to know why. And that responsibility makes Disney work even harder to make sure that we are happy. A happy customer spends more money. And so, this is definitely a win win situation. We pay to be made happy, and the more we pay the happier Disney tries to make us. Far from being cynical that sounds to me like the embodiment of good business.

13. Is it better to be an individual or a part of a group? State your reasons.

I don’t think you can have one or the other. I think you need a balance. I think humans, by nature, are group animals. We evolved to follow and live amongst other humans. To not do what everyone else is doing would seem to be going against evolution. We appear to be happiest when we are copying the crowd. If we didn’t belong to a group, industries would collapse. People would stop working for something bigger than themselves.

However, being part of a group can stifle creativity. If you consider all of the inventions that have furthered our society, they have almost always come from people who were individuals. They followed their own path. If everyone was simply part of a group, scientific advancements, inventions, art, music could cease to exist.

Being part of a group can also cause some of the horrors that blacken our histories. If you think about the Holocaust in the Second World War, that was made possible because of group mentality. If everyone else is doing it, it must be ok.

As I said, it is a difficult choice. I think you need to have a balance. It’s possible to be an individual who is also a part of a group.

14. Write about a theme park you have visited.

I went to Tokyo Disneyland with my wife and daughter in January of this year. We flew down from where we live in North Japan. My daughter was excited from the very second we left the house, and my wife, who tried to hide it, was as well. We made our way through the airport, found the bus and headed in. We were staying at the Miracosta, which is attached to Tokyo DisneySea. A wonderful hotel. Disney spares no expense on the rooms and Mickey was everywhere. My daughter kept finding different things with Mickey on and yelling out,” here’s another one!” We couldn’t afford one of the rooms higher up, so, the view out of our window was a staff walkway, and you could see feet going past at odd times.

We bought our park tickets (they are stomach clenchingly expensive) and headed in. We planned on three days at the parks and when I say “planned”, my wife had an itemized and laminated plan of action. You get something called a “fast pass”. This allows you to skip the line to a ride. The pass has a time stamped on it and this is the time you are allowed to enter that ride. You can only get one of these passes every two hours and the popular rides sell out of fast passes very quickly. So, my wife had routes, times, short cuts, everything marked. I ran across that park like Jack Bauer running after terrorists in “24”. And we managed to go on everything we planned. Our daughter is only four, so we were a little limited.

The parks open at 9 (I think) but if you stay at a park hotel (which we did) you could enter a little earlier. And the park closed at 10. You wouldn’t think you would be able to spend over 13 hours going round a Disney park, but you’d be wrong. You can. The three days passed in a blur of exhaustion. All too soon we were on the plane home, laden down with Disney ~~junk~~ toys and souvenirs. And planning the next trip. I can’t wait to take them again. I just need to save up. It’s not cheap.