

## **WE'RE GOING TO DISNEY WORLD: CONSUMER CREDIT AND THE CONSUMPTION OF SOCIAL EXPERIENCE**

**Lloyd Klein, Queensborough Community College**

### **ABSTRACT**

Consumer credit is an important facet of everyday social life. Public interest in material items, services, and social experience is facilitated by the instantaneous availability of the various commodities. Social experience is a unique product available through credit cards. Cultural wants and desires are marketed and made accessible to consumers through extended consumer credit lines. DisneyWorld, and its Disneyland forerunner, are prototypical models for escapist entertainment made financially available to average consumers through credit cards. This paper offers an analysis of consumer credit and how credit cards facilitate tourism and the consumption of cultural experience. A theoretical analysis of tourism, and the influence of culture, accompanies a discussion of how consumer credit (in the form of credit cards) enhances the marketing of DisneyWorld as a renowned cultural experience.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The development of consumer credit (as facilitating the purchase of products, services and experiences with the promise to provide future reimbursement) is symptomatic of social-economic changes occurring in post-industrial society. Post-industrial society is transformed through expanded demand for different goods and services. The resulting post-Fordist period, where evolving consumer demand is fulfilled, encourages manufacture and distribution of various consumer goods and invites expansion of the marketplace.

Sociologists or economists generally emphasize the mechanistic market manipulations and relationships between producer and consumer. However, the analysis offered in the discussion of leisure and tourism assumes that a social relationship exists between consumer culture and the consumption of tangible goods and intangible experiences. The credit card facilitates leisure and the acquisition of cultural capital through arranging expensive airline travel; car rental; the attainment of food, lodging, souvenirs, and specialized tours; and provides cash for unexpected emergencies. Further, the images and experiences offered in the travel experience encompass a staged authenticity transferring sightseeing into a cultural pursuit. Workers can only achieve the cultural experience through utilizing the credit card throughout the vacation or leisure activity.

The everyday conception of consumer credit eventually extends credit card ownership beyond the everyday use as a financial device enabling the purchase of tangible consumer goods. Consumer credit promotes and facilitates the acquisition of recreation activities, tourism and the search for alternative social experiences. Credit cards form the gateway for

accessing experiences previously unaffordable for the average consumer.

The normal sociological conception of consumer culture assumes that manufactured goods (or the products stemming from the concept of the production of consumption as advanced by Featherstone (1991 14) carry a specific exchange value justifying their pricing in the marketplace. Marx (1850) and members of the subsequent Neo-Marxist Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno 1972; Lefebvre 1971; Marcuse 1964) reiterate the establishment of culture value inherent in the creation of markets for new commodities.

Featherstone (1991 14) reiterates the tendency toward product diversification, promotion of new consumer goods and services, and consumption of the specific commodities (otherwise known as post-Fordism). The relationship between the creation and consumption of new products, leisure time and cultural value is rather interesting. As Schor (1991) observes in a recent book on the decline of leisure time, leisure was commoditized into a diversified product incorporating many different goods and services. Productivity increased while leisure was transformed into a scarce commodity. Schor refers to increased productivity:

Since 1948, productivity has failed to rise in only five years. The level of productivity of the U.S. worker has more than doubled. In other words, we could now produce our 1948 standard of living (measured in terms of marketed goods and services) in less than half the time it took in that year. We actually could have chosen the four-hour day. Or a working year of six months. Or, every worker in the United States could now be taking every other year off from work—with pay. Incredible as it may sound, this is just the simple arithmetic of productivity growth in

operation. (Schor 1991 2)

Schor continues by noting that the narrowing of time for leisure time pursuits has a significant impact on the marketing of specific alternatives:

But between 1948 and the present we did not use any of the productivity dividend to reduce hours. In the first two decades after 1948, productivity grew rapidly, at about 3 percent a year. During that period, work time did not fall appreciably. Annual hours per labor force participant fell only slightly. And on a per-capita (rather than a labor force) basis, they even rose a bit. Since then, productivity growth has been lower but still positive, averaging just over 1 percent a year. Yet hours have risen steadily for two decades. In 1990, the average American owns and consumes more than twice as much as he or she did in 1948, but also has less free time. How did this happen? Why has leisure been such a conspicuous casualty of prosperity? In part, the answer lies in the difference between the markets for consumer products and free time. Consider the former, the legendary American market. It is a veritable consumer's paradise, offering a dazzling array of products varying in style, design, quality, price, and country of origin. The consumer is treated to GM versus Toyota, Kenmore versus GE, Sony, or Magnavox, the Apple versus the IBM. We've got Calvin Klein, Anne Klein, Liz Claiborne, and Levi-Strauss; McDonald's, Burger King, and Colonel Sanders. Marketing experts and advertisers spend vast sums of money to make these choices appealing—even irresistible. And they have been successful. In cross-country comparisons, Americans have been found to spend more time shopping than anyone else. They also spend a higher fraction of the money they earn. And with the explosion of consumer debt, many are now spending what they haven't earned. (Schor 1991 2)

Schor (1991 3) then points out that the American standard of living is the highest in the world. Schor also observes that increased work hours result when manufacturers seek even more productivity and workers need additional income for satisfying consumer debt and increased spending. Leisure (or the consumption of free time) is sharply curtailed and therefore becomes a more valuable commodity.

Schor (1991) staunchly believes that the

decline in leisure time places greater premium on the limited time that American workers can enjoy. Workers utilize alternatives provided by the consumer culture in enjoying their limited leisure time. Consumption is commoditized in terms of its cultural value. Featherstone offers an interesting Marxist interpretation of the relationship between leisure and exchange value:

Leisure time pursuits, the arts and culture in general become filtered through the culture industry; reception becomes dictated by exchange value as the higher purposes and values of culture succumb to the logic of the production process and the market. Traditional forms of association in the family and private life as well as the promise of happiness and fulfillment, the 'yearning for a totally different other' which the best products of high culture strive for, are presented as yielding to an atomized, manipulated mass who participate in an ersatz mass-produced commodity culture targeted at the lowest common denominator. (1991 14)

As Featherstone claims, the post-modern interpretation of leisure and culture emphasized the view that

emphasis shifts from production to reproduction, to the endless reduplication of signs, images and simulations through the media which effaces the distinction between the image and reality. (1991 15)

Consumer society becomes cultural as social life becomes deregulated and social relationships become more variable.

The postmodern view of consumer credit and consumer culture views credit cards as variable symbols useful in extending cultural capital (or credit cards as quantifiable financial instruments). The credit card extends the acquisition of cultural experience by making the unaffordable "affordable." Few people will express surprise with the notion that credit cards act as symbols enabling us to consume other symbols of consumer and popular culture.

Experiences made accessible through consumer credit dictate a new realm of social reality. Consumer culture bridges the cultural bound elements of our sensual society with economic propriety. Each tourist or lifestyle device examined in this section embodies cultural experiences that are facilitated or made

accessible through consumer credit. In some cases, experiences are marketed as tangible products. Some examples of cultural products intended for consumer consumption include the proliferation of economically profitable theme parks. Zukin's (1991) examination of Disneyland as a cultural manifestation planned for economic gain is one such example. One could also apply these ideas as a rationale for why Jim and Tammy Fae Bakker's Heritage USA was the second most attended theme park in the United States.

The economic facilitation of consumer credit promotes the accessibility of these niche marketed cultural alternatives. The link between actual tourist sites and para-social services rests with a consumer desire for real or figurative escape within an ever changing social world. DisneyWorld met consumer desires through marketing promotion and emphasis upon intangible consumer desires (e.g., the fulfillment of cultural fantasies or the immediate consumption of heavily marketed cultural images, such as the opportunity to attend world renowned stage spectacles or actually meet legendary Disney characters).

These artifacts, as derived from a post-modern society, are meaningless unless we reflect on the social historical process leading to current cultural expression. The original relationship between marketing and consumer purchasing decisions consisted of advertising goods for sale. Greatly expanded manufacturing capacity and consumer desires lead to more choices within the marketplace. The post-Fordist period ushered in an era of diversified products and choices available for consumer acquisition. The cultural desires prompting acquisition of the produced goods and services was facilitated through the introduction of installment credit and eventually the distribution of credit cards. Consumers can utilize credit cards in lieu of available cash. Theme parks are immediately affordable for the average consumer.

Instantaneous consumer choices fit right into the postmodern conception of American society. Contemporary society is a place noted for ever-changing cultural patterns. Advertised products are the result of predetermined marketing efforts designed for pin pointing what consumers will purchase. One example of this is a device known as "The Club." It fits on the automobile steering wheel to prevent auto theft. "The Club" was phenomenally successful upon introduction into the

marketplace. Since then, there have been numerous imitations produced by competing companies. The original manufacturer countered with the marketing of the same product in various colors. The last step was successful in redefining the product according to appearance instead of original utility.

Human experience works according to the same principle. The introduction of the original Disneyland brought forth cultural alternatives enabling the formation of redefined consumer cultural experiences. Consumer credit as an economic resource facilitates the immediate acquisition of knowledge, para-social experience, or a temporary escape from the realities of everyday life. The imagery associated with interactional cues from actual surroundings in theme parks or malls encourages exposure to the product of human experience and encouraged consumption. The inevitable outcome of niche marketing is a myriad number of personal choices reflecting products gaining cultural acceptance at any given time.

#### **"TOURISM" AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSUMER CULTURE**

Acceptance of the postmodern condition wherein cultural choices and consumer purchasing choices shift over time characterizes the transitory nature of American society. Economic power in the form of credit cards and installment credit provides a means for consuming the latest products, trends or experiences. The formation of cultural capital results in consumable social alternatives immediately unaffordable without various credit instruments.

In a sense, we are all "strangers in a strange land" (a cliché derived from a popular science fiction novel written by Robert Heinlein 1959). The cultural objects or environments that we consume give meaning to our lives. In effect, we are reminded of the philosophy espoused in *Field of Dreams*. "You build it and they will come" is an appropriate corollary to the development of the tourist industry. Cultural events provide a context of references shared or sought by numerous people. Americans define their lives in terms of a special experience enjoyed while on vacation, a meaningful dinner with friends, mutual activities enjoyed in a unique place or shared interaction in the company of other people or through the auspices of a telephone.

Veblen (1967) was correct in positing the assumption that the consumption of particular

goods or things was conducive to building status formations. MacCannell (1989) takes the analysis one step further in referring to people as fellow travelers seeking everything that life offers. MacCannell (1989) suggests that the "tourist" is "one of the best models available for modern-man-in-general." In effect, the tourist represents how an average person makes his or her way through everyday life. MacCannell (1989) imposes an anthropological view of social existence based upon structural analysis. Tourist attractions represent "an unplanned topology of structure that provides direct access to the modern consciousness or 'world view.'" In other words, tourism serves to structure the creation of social meaning. MacCannell (1989) utilizes formulations of Goffman, Garfinkel, Veblen, Marx, Simmel and other social theorists in demonstrating how experience, rather than Veblen's reliance upon social class, dictates the social reality of everyday life.

Further, MacCannell (1989) compares tourist attractions with the "religious symbolism of primitive peoples." He is basically viewing modernity as "disorganized fragments, alienating, wasteful, violent, superficial, unplanned, unstable and unauthentic." The worldwide shift in national governments incorporate nostalgia and a search for authenticity. MacCannell sees

the empirical and ideological expansion of modern society to be intimately linked in diverse ways to modern mass leisure, especially to international tourism and sightseeing. (in Featherstone 1991 3)

MacCannell (1989) places particular significance in Goffman's model of everyday activity. MacCannell repeatedly refers to Goffman's (1959) conception of front stage and back stage as the basis of understanding everyday social reality. MacCannell is interested in the structure of social space. Tourist activities are centered around relating with "the natives" in a quest for "authentic experiences, perceptions and insights." The tourist is trapped within an endless process wherein the truth about native populations is illusive. Economic instruments (in the form of consumer credit) aid and abet in the perpetual search for social meaning through the acquisition of actual or para-social experience in the form of cultural capital.

Economic formation and the implicit shifts

emphasizing the consumption and experience as a tangible product incorporates the development of consumer culture. Tourism, as facilitated by available consumer credit, enables the consumption of hitherto unaffordable experiences. The consumer culture transforms places or experiences into symbols for intrinsic cultural capital. Peer value or self fulfillment is associated with visiting places like DisneyWorld.

### CULTURAL IMPACT OF DISNEYMANIA

Perhaps the ultimate postmodern experience is found in an examination of Disneyland and DisneyWorld. The Disney organization constructed idyllic theme park settings offering the prototypical tourist setting. Tourism and the purchase of souvenirs, lodging or food is facilitated through the use of consumer credit. A family of four cannot easily afford \$49 admission per person, overnight hotel lodgings, food and other items without the use of credit cards.

Cultural capital and nostalgia are two important factors explaining the appeal of the Disney theme parks. The tourist attraction must offer a special appeal before travelers will spend their hard earned money. Cultural capital is built right into the appeal and image making efforts of Disney Productions and subsequent by-products. Featherstone (1991) explains that cultural capital is derived from economic and social values placed upon experiences and intangible elements linked with social prestige.

Disneyland and DisneyWorld operate according to a similar principle. Cultural capital in the case of Disneyland and DisneyWorld means that the environment transcends the economic value attached to admission, souvenirs and other tourist expenditures. The frequent utilization of consumer credit enables the physical and emotional purchase of experience. The tourists are actively consuming and buying the ideal experience offered by the theme park. Image makers at the Disney theme parks work towards establishing a product with appeal for the average tourist. The product in question is a spotlessly clean, well managed utopia wherein the problems of outside society are eradicated. The clockwork nature of the theme park environment and the staged authenticity of past, present or future motifs comprise a prototypical postmodern setting. Disneyland and DisneyWorld are transformed into ersatz cities. A suspension of

disbelief turns the idealized vision of society into a real experience in the mind of numerous tourists.

On a more universal level, Zukin views the architectural restructuring of inner city areas (and, by extension, the idealization of theme parks as realms of power) as a postmodern reconstruction of

socio-spatial relations by new patterns of investment which lead to counter-tendencies to urban decentralization through the redevelopment of inner city areas and docklands, which become gentrified by members of the new middle class and developed as sites of tourism and cultural consumption. (in Featherstone 1991 107)

In effect, the environment becomes museumified and equivalent to a theme park atmosphere.

Interpersonal escape is one of the commodities purchased by consumers through utilization of credit devices. Featherstone underscores the point with a deliberate comparison between fairs and the experiences offered by department stores or other exhibitions:

The excitement and fears the fair can arouse is still captured today in films which highlight the way in which these liminal spaces are sites in which excitement, danger, and the shock of the grotesque merge with dreams and fantasies which threaten to overwhelm and engulf the spectators. Today fun fairs and theme parks such as Disneyland still retain this aspect, albeit in a more controlled de-control of the emotions, where adults are given permission to behave like children again. (1991 80)

The problem does not end with the idealization of experience permitting an exchange of economic transaction for cultural transaction. The task remains for the efficient construction of the staged authenticity. Popular appeal leads to a modernization of travel devices moving crowds from one area into another at Disneyland and DisneyWorld. Ritzer analyzes how efficient theme parks are equated with McDonald's as organizations establishing rational procedures for controlling the flow of people:

New Heights in people-moving have been reached by modern amusement parks, particularly Disneyland and DisneyWorld. At DisneyWorld and Epcot Center in Florida, for

example, a vast highway and road system funnels many thousands of cars each day into the appropriate parking lots. Once the driver has been led to a parking spot (often with the help of information broadcast over the car radio), jitneys are waiting, or soon will arrive, to whisk family members to the gates of the park. Once in the park, visitors find themselves on what is, in effect, a vast (albeit not self-propelled) conveyor belt which leads them from one ride or attraction to another. One may get off the larger "conveyor system" to enter one of the local systems that move people to a particular attraction. Once the attractions themselves are reached, the visitors find themselves on one conveyance or another (cars, boats, submarines, planes, rocket ships, or moving walkways) that moves them through and out of the attractions as rapidly as possible. The speed with which one moves through each attraction enhances the experience and reduces the likelihood that one will question the "reality" of what one sees. (1993 51-52)

Rationalization, efficiency and a staged authenticity capable of enhancing the cultural capital of the Disney theme parks are only one aspect of their appeal. Nostalgia and a look toward the future are another major reason for the success of these two major theme parks and their later spin-offs into resort areas, movie studios and Epcot Center. A tourist can visit Tom Sawyer's Island, the Main Street Cinema, or explore projected advances in nuclear physics, space travel and electronic devices. Featherstone most appropriately summed up the postmodern appeal of DisneyWorld:

If postmodern cities have become centres of consumption, play and entertainment, saturated with signs and images to the extent that anything can become represented, thematized and made and object of interest, an object of the 'tourist gaze', then it is to be expected that leisure activities such as visiting theme parks, shopping centres, malls, museums and galleries should show some convergence here. To take some examples, DisneyWorld is often taken as the prototype for postmodern simulational experiences and it is interesting to see that the format of moving between spectacular experiences (white-knuckle rides, hologram illusions etc.) and the simulation of historical national-founder or childhood worlds (the Magic Kingdom) or wandering through simulations of building, which

are chosen to symbolize selected national cultures (such as the Merry England Pub) or futuristic scenarios (EPCOT) in sanitized, highly controlled surroundings, has not only been imitated by theme parks around the world, but has also been merged with other formats such as museums. (Featherstone 1991 101-102)

The relationship between the postmodern aspects of Disneyland and DisneyWorld is further explained by Featherstone's (1991 103) reference to the relationship between consumption and leisure (a reflection of cultural capital). Featherstone begins the section with a discussion of The West Edmonton Mall in Canada and the Metrocentre in England. He would no doubt add the recently opened Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota. Featherstone comments that the people become audiences moving through imagery designed to represent "sumptuousness and luxury", or to "summon up connotations of desirable exotic far-away places, and nostalgia for past emotional harmonies."

Each of the sections is meant to invoke youthful feelings among adults bringing their children. Both Disneyland and DisneyWorld are divided into distinct sectors. The various sub-themes incorporated as separate sections include Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, Adventureland, Liberty Square and Main Street. The attractions combine many theme rides (rocket ships, submarines, automobiles) and thrill rides (space mountain). In addition, Michael Jackson's 3-D attraction *Captain EO* is offered at Disneyland and DisneyWorld. Disneyland recently added Toonland, a section containing cartoon characters starring in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

The Disney organization encapsulates a history of the Disney empire with extensive background detailed in their training manual. (The material was obtained in February 1992 after contacting Disney representatives.) Disneyland opened in 1955. The original Disneyland offered a connection between the past and hopes for the future. A regular Disney series on the television networks drew people to the theme park. Walt Disney expanded the reach of his theme park with several attractions at the 1964 World's Fair in New York. "Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln" (a truly postmodern spectacle where an electronic robot replicated Abraham Lincoln's notable speeches) and "It's a Small World After All" were a few of the famous attractions offered at

the fair. Both attractions are staples at Disneyland and DisneyWorld.

Major planning for DisneyWorld started in the mid-1960s. DisneyWorld was a portion of an extensive Walt Disney World Resort. The facility opened on October 1, 1971. Some early features of the development included the Magic Kingdom, the Contemporary Resort Hotel, and the Polynesian Resort. Space-Mountain, the Disney Inn, Walt Disney World Village, Typhoon Lagoon, Pleasure Island, Disney Village Marketplace, and numerous resort areas followed.

Epcot Center opened in 1982. The theme park is a showcase for new technologies and cultures of man. Epcot Center emphasized the relationship between humans and the environment. The Epcot resort area included a Yacht and Beach resort, the Walt Disney World Dolphin, the Walt Disney World Swan and Disney's Caribbean Beach Resort.

More recently, the Disney organization built theme parks in Japan (Tokyo Disneyland) and Paris, France (Euro-Disney). Both theme parks charge higher admission charges than their American counterparts but are immensely successful.

The Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park was added several years ago. The area includes an active movie studio modeled after the long standing Universal Studio attraction in Southern California. Many television shows are also produced in the theme park. The theme park features many movie and television related rides (e.g., Indiana Jones Stunt Show, Beauty and the Beast, a StarWars Thrill Ride, and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles). The theme park also features a Superstar Television exhibit. In a real postmodern twist, visitors are electronically juxtaposed with videotape from "The Today Show", "Golden Girls", "General Hospital", "Howdy Doody" and even Johnny Carson on "The Tonight Show."

How do we explain the postmodern appeal of a Disney theme park and related economic implications? Aside from the previously discussed concept of experience drawing upon and creating cultural capital, the theme parks continually play upon childhood nostalgia and the "little boy or girl in all of us." Zukin (1991) and other urban sociologists emphasize the development of theme parks into idyllic micro-cosmic cities. The afore discussed Disney organization training manual amplifies DisneyWorld's considerable symbolic (or cultural) success in stating that Walt Disney

World Resort is more than a theme park. According to the text, "It is a worldwide legend." The manual then continues in a summation of all the postmodern attractions contributing to popular tourist acceptance and economic success.

The DisneyWorld marketing plan reflects the tradition of postmodern segmentation. Niche marketing is operative in the process. Each individual group has its own predispositions which must be analyzed and defined according to Disney's own marketing calculations. Discrete consumer categories are created and defined according to individual groups of different types of people, "each of which must be talked to in a different way." The specific groups are national, in-state, family, non-family, new markets and international. The consumer groups, all of which are categorizable according to discernible characteristics, are approached according to family size, travel distance, and monetary cost managed through credit card expenditures.

The message itself is a product of astute promotional efforts. A "campaign" recognizable throughout the marketplace is constructed for the general media campaign. The marketing section within the training manual specifically mentions the 1981 campaign celebrating the World Disney World Tencennial; the 1982 opening of Epcot Center; the 1986 15th anniversary party featuring a prize given to a guest every 15 seconds and a new car given away every day, all year long; and the 1988 theme highlighting the 60th birthday of Mickey Mouse.

The so-called "marketing mosaic" is based upon publicity derived from anything seen or heard in the news media (newspapers, magazines, television and radio). The marketing, in a version of the gatekeeper process, involves news releases and photographs packed into press kits and sent to newspapers around the country. Video press kits incorporating completed video stories are distributed to TV reporters. Press tours feature local meetings with Walt Disney World representatives in cities throughout the country. Satellite hook-ups make press events available to media throughout the country.

Advertising is specifically directed into television, print advertising and on-sight advertising. The various segments discussed previously are isolated, targeted and approached on the basis of the following strategy:

Television is the most powerful means of

advertising to many market segments because the visual nature of TV allows us to show our very visual product. A picture is worth ten thousand words when we show the smile on a youngster's face, or the bright blue water and snow-white sand of a beach scene. We often buy television on a regional network (only parts of the country) and a spot-buy (selected cities) basis. Because research can tell us the average age of viewers watching a particular program, we can choose whether to talk to young or old, family or non-family groups.

We can also use television advertising to tie in to timely events, such as the Olympics or World Series, and generate special interest in the commercials themselves. You may have seen our commercials asking top sports figures who've just won the Super Bowl, etc., what they're going to do next, to which they reply "I'm going to Walt Disney World!" These are good examples of this type of timely, or "topical" advertising.

Co-Operative Advertising is an art nearly perfected by our company. In this form of print advertising, we offer other companies the chance to buy space in multi-page advertising sections which we design and produce. These ad sections appear in such publications as People, National Geographic, and Reader's Digest. Companies which take part in these cooperative efforts include other tourism-oriented Florida businesses, such as cruise lines and rental car companies. They benefit from being in our advertisements, because they are perceived as being part of an ideal Disney vacation. Co-operative advertisers, in paying us for ad space, help offset the cost of our ads in these same sections, and greatly reduce the overall cost of the section to us.

On-Site Advertising is another important part of our advertising effort. It consists of materials displayed to guests already on our property, informing them of the many things there are to see and do here. Everything from lobby posters to the sophisticated information channel on guests' in-room TVs falls into this category. Extending guests' length-of-stay or increasing the number of activities they participate in while they're here is a very real and cost-effective way of increasing revenues. (*Disney Training Manual* 1992 6-8.)

The DisneyWorld marketing scheme stemmed from the original vision for Disneyland as posed by the Disney Corporation. According to Zukin, Disneyland's original critics "failed

to understand that Disneyland was an ideal object for visual consumption, a landscape of social power." In effect, Disneyland projected

a 'Disneyland realism,' sort of Utopian in nature, where we (Disneyland's planners) carefully program out all the negative, unwanted elements and program in the positive elements. (Zukin 1991 222)

## CONCLUSIONS

Disneyland and DisneyWorld were designated as unique tourist attractions. The theme parks comprise "fantasy architecture for mass entertainment" (Zukin 1991 232). The collective desires of the mass society were incorporated into the planning for specific themes appealing to tourist interests. Mass consumption, in a manner not unlike the previous forms of cultural capital discussed in this chapter, was facilitated through the symbolic settings (or liminality-otherwise known as barriers-set by the physical background and nostalgia or yearning for utopian society).

The Disney theme parks were also important in the impact of market, place, and landscape. Zukin (1991 7) forcefully argues that market culture was determined by place. Settings dictated existing culture. Place subsequently becomes less important with the homogenization of American society. Experiences lack individual creativity with the imposition of global cultures. Landscape is the symbolic representation of cultural values.

The landscaped setting is trivialized as an archetype consumable just like physical objects purchased by zealous shoppers.

In effect, the cultural values marketed in the theme park perspective are indicative of a longing to escape. We are told what to see and programmed into reacting in particular fashion while consuming incessant fantasy images. Perhaps credit cards are the 'ticket' permitting a sampling of utopian experiences at Epcot Center and the staged authenticity of utopian worlds.

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