THE IMPACT OF MEDIA COVERAGE:

EXAMINING PARTICIPANTS' INTENTION TO TRAVEL TO

SEAWORLD PARK

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to investigate (a) the trust people have in mass media, (b) how media coverage impacts human behavior, and (c) how the media influences tourism decisions. Specifically, the dissertation examines (d) how "Blackfish," a documentary about a killer whale and three deaths at SeaWorld, a theme park in Florida, influenced travelers' attitudes towards the park and their intention to visit. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this research aims to understand what type of media exposure has the most influence on the destination selection process. The study compared the outcome of four different groups based on their pre-test and post-test scores of media credibility and behavioral intent. Group A had no treatment (watched no video) about SeaWorld Park, Group B was exposed to positive media coverage, Group C was given negative media coverage, and Group D had both positive and negative media coverage. After randomly assigning the participants into four groups, it was observed whether different types of media coverage resulted in a significant change in beliefs and/or intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. After the video was shown to the respondents, subject to the conditions given above, the study's results reveal that media reports influenced the respondents' trust in the media and their intentions to visit the park. Although the results varied according to the specific conditions, media credibility, attitude, and subjective norms play a key role in explaining the respondents' intentions and subsequent decisions. However, no substantial relationship between perceived behavioral control on behavioral intention was detected. The results of the study are discussed in light of their practical and theoretical implications.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Because people are exposed to crises via news coverage, the Internet, mobile phones, and online social media (Schultz, Utz, & Gortiz, 2011), researchers have found, not unsurprisingly, that traditional media and online social networks play an important role in their understanding of those events (Coombs, 2007; Hall, 2002; Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011).

The impact of media coverage can be seen in the case of United Airlines in 2017 when airport security dragged a male passenger off a plane due to overbooking. This incident, shared on social media, was partially responsible for a $1.4 billion loss in stock value for the airline (Shen, 2017). Also, in 2017, an active shooter killed more than 50 spectators at a music concert at Mandalay Bay Hotel in Las Vegas. Millions of people viewed the chaotic scene live on television and the incident was filmed and shared by survivors via social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. Due to this tragic event, Mandalay Bay Hotel suffered a substantial decline in bookings and casino gamblers (Prince & Raz, 2017).

As these crises suggest, media coverage can have a negative impact on travelers' intention to visit the location and cause substantial harm to the travel destination's reputation and business (Avraham, 2015; De Sausmarez, 2007). Travelers often base their travel decisions on positive reviews and reports from the media and from Internet sources (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). If the travel destination or the travel industry has been involved in a crisis situation, people are less likely to travel to that destination or, indeed, to travel at all. This is why crisis researchers have

typically emphasized the importance of effectively communicating about the situation and to handle the crisis professionally (Coombs, 2004; Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Despite considerable research on crisis situations, there have been few investigations into how potential travelers react toward a crisis and how media reports about tragic events can affect their intention to travel, in general, or to the crisis location specifically. The purpose of this study, therefore, is threefold: (a) to examine the impact of media coverage on a specific event, (b) to observe participants' perceived level of trust of mainstream media, and (c) to examine how the perceived level of trust in the media can lead to visitor intention.

The current study considered the effect that "Blackfish," a documentary film, had on SeaWorld Park. The research applied situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) (Coombs & Holladay, 2002), grounded in attribution theory, to determine how tourism and event managers can better handle crisis events. The study also applied the theory of planned behavior (TPB), to understand the determinants of potential visitors' intentions to visit SeaWorld Park.

Background of the SeaWorld Crisis

SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment, owners and operators of family-oriented theme parks, began operations in 1964 in San Diego, California. The park became one of the most popular water and amusement parks worldwide. SeaWorld gradually expanded to other cities in the United States, opening parks in Orlando and Tampa, Florida; San Antonio, Texas; Williamsburg, Virginia; and Langhorne, Pennsylvania ("Sea World Parks & Entertainment," n.d.). The parks offer a variety of activities and shows for visitors, from personal animal encounters such as penguin feeding, sea lion tours, shark encounters, and swimming with dolphins, to live orca

shows. SeaWorld also offers a variety of amusement park rides and water-park features to attract people of all age groups ("Sea World Parks & Entertainment," n.d.).

As a result, SeaWorld had a significant economic impact on the host communities and cities. According to NBC 7 San Diego News (2014), SeaWorld in San Diego hired 93,000 local employees over a period of 50 years and hosted more than 4.6 million attendees in 2013. An annual report released by SeaWorld Entertainment (2013) announced that SeaWorld Park & Entertainment across the United States generated $1,460.3 million in revenue and $50.5 million in net income, hosting 23.4 million international and domestic guests in 2013.

Despite the uniqueness and popularity of SeaWorld Park's aquatic education experiences, its business and reputation were damaged in July 2013 when activists opposed to the captivity of orcas released the "Blackfish" documentary. The film focused on an incident in 2010 in which the orca "Shamu" attacked and killed a human trainer. The documentary dealt broadly with the issue of orca captivity in SeaWorld, the levels of stress experienced by orcas, their hectic training schedule, and the treatment of the animals by their trainers. The documentary likely significantly affected potential visitors' perceptions of SeaWorld and many people participated in a boycott of the animal shows and entertainment. The average number of attendees has dropped steadily since the release of the documentary in 2013 (Zimmermann, 2014). Moreover, many sponsors, such as Hyundai, Virgin America, Southwest Airlines, and others have opted out of their partnerships with SeaWorld Park (Guarino, 2014).

Crisis Management

Crisis management has become an important topic in the fields of communication (Perry, Taylor, & Doerfel, 2003), business (Darling, 1994), tourism (Ritchie, 2004), management (Boin

& Lagadec, 2000), public relations (Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013), and many others. Over the past several decades, the term *crisis* has been defined by scholars in several ways. For instance, Pauchant and Douville (1993) define it as a "disruptive situation affecting an organization or a given system as a whole and challenging previously held basic assumptions" (p. 44). According to Mishra (1996), a crisis refers to a "major threat to system survival with little time to respond, involving an ill-structured situation" (p. 262). As asserted by Coombs (2007), a crisis is a "sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations" (p. 164).

Typically, from an organizational standpoint, a crisis is an unpredictable event that is disturbing, frustrating, dangerous, and uncertain and that makes the organization vulnerable to threats to the operation of the business. A crisis can thus cause substantial physical, emotional, and financial harm to an organization's reputation (Coombs, 2007). Therefore, to minimize damage from a crisis and to regain an organization's reputation and image, managers need to handle crisis situations quickly and appropriately (Coombs, 1998).

The importance of crisis management has been addressed over the decades (Barton, 1994; Guth, 1995; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Richardson, 1993; Smith, 1990; Sturges, 1994; Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994). In the cited literature, the central point of studying crisis situations has been to protect public safety and to maintain an organization's reputation (Coombs, 2013). In early crisis management studies, there were no guidelines for corporate managers about how to respond strategically to the various levels of crisis situations (Coombs, 1995). Coombs (1995) introduced a crisis response strategy to help organization managers to select and utilize strategies to respond to catastrophic events. Coombs and Holladay (2002) later developed situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). Based on ideas gleaned from attribution theory (Weiner, 1985),

SCCT posits that humans tend to review past events or behaviors to find clues to justify why the event succeeded or failed and to decide whether or not to engage in that activity in the future.

Inspired by attribution theory, the developers of SCCT identified three broad categories or clusters of crises: (a) victim—very low responsibility for the organization after the crisis, (b) accidental—moderate responsibility for the organization after the crisis, and (c) preventable—high responsibility for the organization after the crisis. They argued that each cluster is associated with a particular magnitude of crisis. Coombs (2004, 2006, 2007, 2013) gave examples of specific crisis circumstances.

Victim cluster:

- *Natural disaster*: disaster caused by a natural event (e.g., earthquake, tsunami)
- *Rumors*: false information and propaganda about the organization
- *Workplace violence*: internal disputes among employees on site (verbal or physical)
- *Product tampering/malevolence:* external disruption from an actor outside the company (e.g., security hacker)

Accidental cluster:

- *Challenges*: Conflicts with stakeholders or the public regarding moral or ethical issues
- *Technical error accidents*: Industrial accidents derived from the company's equipment
- *Technical error product harm*: Product or item considered to be a threat due to defects

Preventable crisis cluster:

- *Human error accident*: Industrial accidents derived from human error in the workplace
- *Human error product harm*: Product considered to be a threat due to human error

- *Organizational misdeed with no injuries*: Deceptive or misleading conduct by the organization to stakeholders with no resulting injuries
- *Organizational misdeed with injuries*: Violation of laws or regulations leading to industrial injury, placing both the organization and stakeholders in serious jeopardy
- *Organizational misdeed management misconduct*: Violation of laws, rules, or regulations by the organization

Coombs (2006, 2007) stated that, depending on the type of crisis, organizational managers should have specific crisis response strategies to aid in explaining the current situation to stakeholders, victims and/or the public. Coombs (2007) further suggested four major types of crisis response strategies that organizational managers should consider: (a) deny, (b) diminish, (c) rebuild, or (d) bolster. Examples of each follow.

Primary crisis response strategies

Deny crisis response strategies:

- *Attack the accuser*: Directly confront the individual or group that is provoking the organization
- *Deny*: Disagree about the incident and deny that it is a real crisis
- *Scapegoat*: Blame an individual or a third party for the incident

Diminish crisis response strategies:

- *Excuse*: Take minimum responsibility by claiming that the crisis was the result of an error, not the organization's intention
- *Justify*: Clarify that damage and injuries were minor

Rebuild crisis response strategies:

- *Compensate*: Offer monetary or nonmonetary incentives
- *Apologize*: Take full responsibility for the crisis and apologize to stakeholders and victims

Secondary crisis response strategies

Bolster crisis response strategies

- *Remind*: Emphasize to stakeholders the organization's past successes and accomplishments
- *Ingratiate*: Express gratitude to stakeholders for their contributions to the organization and their role in past successes and accomplishments
- *Victimize*: Claim to stakeholders that they are also victims

SCCT has been used in many case studies on this research topic (Cooley & Cooley, 2011; Ki & Nekmat, 2014; Schwarz, 2012; Sisco, Collins, & Zoch, 2010; Xu & Li, 2013). Indeed, crises continue to plague society and remain a central concern for organizational managers (Coombs, 2014). If managers are theoretically and practically well prepared in terms of SCCT and respond to a crisis proactively, they are more likely to handle the situation well and minimize its negative effects to the benefit of the organization (Coombs 2007).

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation examines the role of media exposure (e.g., televised broadcast), how negative media reports about SeaWorld Park entertainment can influence people's perceived level of trust in the media, and how media trust influences intention to visit the theme park. In particular, the study used SeaWorld Park and Entertainment as an example of a crisis situation and the effect of the media's coverage on public opinion. It studied the effect on four groups: (1)

no treatment group, (2) positive media treatment group, (3) negative media treatment group, and (4) positive/negative media treatment group. As mentioned earlier, the first group received no video treatment—that is, the participants were not assigned to watch any video about SeaWorld Park. Participants in the second group were exposed to a positive advertisement provided by SeaWorld Park. The third group reviewed negative news reports about SeaWorld Park and the fourth group was exposed to both positive and negative news reports about the company.

Objectives and Hypotheses

Part of the aim of the study is to identify the extent to which people trust mainstream media coverage (e.g., television news, documentaries) and how the level of trust can determine their intention to visit a theme park. In order to measure these factors, news credibility developed by Yale, Jensen, Carcioppolo, Sun & Liu (2015) was used to measure participants' perceived level of trust towards the media and the theory of planned behavior model by Ajzen (1985) to understand participants' intention to visit. The researcher is interested in knowing whether people generally trust mass media when they are exposed to a negative storyline about an incident.

As discussed in the next chapter, the extant literature suggests that many people regard mass media as a reliable source of knowledge and information (Biswas, 2016; Graber & Dunaway, 2017). In fact, some studies have found that mass media can significantly influence peoples' attitudes, behaviors and intentions, either negatively or positively (Tessitore, Pandelaere & Van Kerckhove, 2014). This study looks at one such instance, the effect mass media had on a theme park after a critical documentary was released in 2013. The study is guided by one research question, a related proposition, and seven hypotheses:

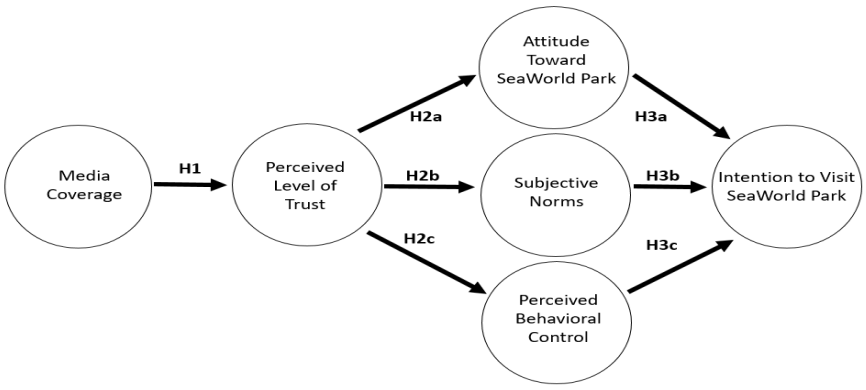
Research question: *Does media coverage influence visitors' perceived level of trust in the media and their intentions to visit SeaWorld Park?*

Proposition: Media exposure (e.g., documentaries, television news broadcasts) substantially influences intention to visit.

The model is visually presented in Figure 1. The specific hypotheses related to the model are stated in Chapter III.

FIGURE 1

The conceptual model of the structure and antecedents of traveler's behavioral intentions



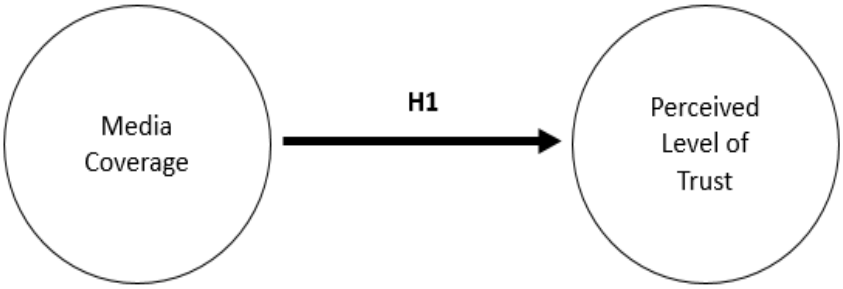
Based on the literature review discussed previously, the objectives of this study are three-fold: Objective 1 is to examine the relationship between media coverage and the perceived level of trust. Following recent literature related to trust in the media (Arceneaux, 2012; Asia, Tokuda, Fujii, Jimba & Inoguch, 2009, Jackob, 2010; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014), it is proposed that:

> Hypothesis 1: The more negative the media report about a theme park, the higher the trust in the media.

The hypothesized relationships are visualized in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Proposed model of perceived level of trust

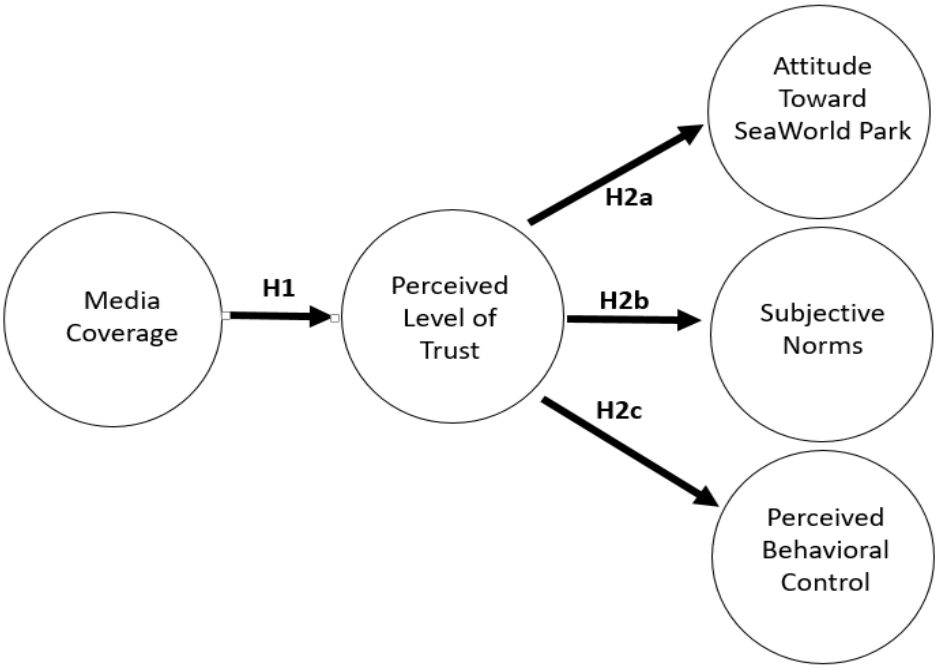


Objective 2 will identify how trust in the media affects participants' future behavioral intentions, grounded in the theory of planned behavior. The main focus of this objective is to examine how negative media reports affect travelers' attitudes toward SeaWorld Park, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and their intentions to visit it. Specifically, the hypotheses are:

> Hypothesis 2a: Higher trust in the media positively affects potential visitors' attitude toward SeaWorld Park.
>
> Hypothesis 2b: Higher trust in the media affects a potential visitor's subjective norms.
>
> Hypothesis 2c: Higher trust in the media affects a potential visitor's perceived behavioral control.
>
> The hypothesized relationships are visualized in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3

Proposed model of the structure and antecedents of theory of planned behavior

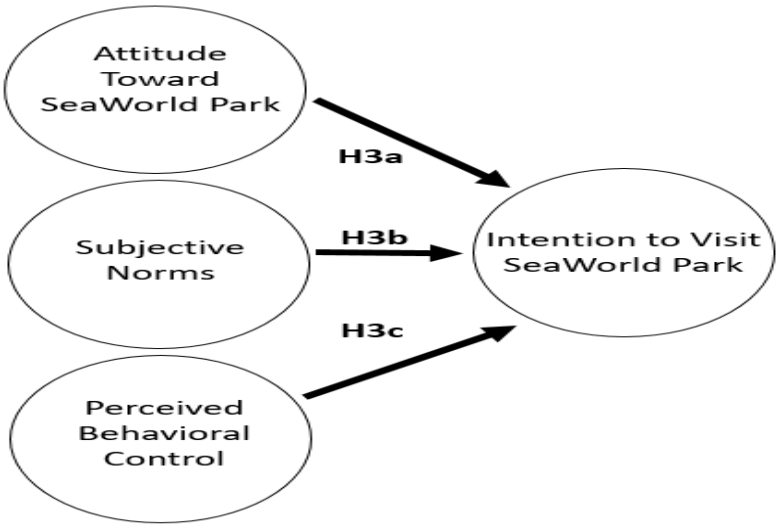


Objective 3 is to investigate the effects of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on behavioral intentions. The aim is to identify how the three factors (ATB, SN, PBC) influence a person's intention to visit the theme park. Specifically,

> Hypothesis 3a: Positive/negative attitudes toward SeaWorld Park have a substantial impact on intentions to visit SeaWorld Park.
>
> Hypothesis 3b: Subjective norms will have a direct impact on the intention to visit SeaWorld Park
>
> Hypothesis 3c: Perceived behavioral control has a substantial impact on the intention to visit SeaWorld Park.
>
> The hypothesized relationships are visualized in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4

Proposed model of structure and antecedents of behavioral intentions



Delimitations

The study is subject to the following delimitations: (a) It was delimited to residents in the United States, (b) it focused on traditional media (television news programs) rather than on social media networks; (c) it investigated participants' perceived level of trust and will not identify brand loyalty or brand image factors; and (d) it did not include the participant's destination image of a theme park but, instead, focused on the participant's intention to visit a theme park.

Limitations

The study is subject to the following limitations: (a) Since the study was conducted online, participants with limited Internet access or participants who had barriers to computer-use

were excluded; and (b) participants' moods and survey environment cannot be observed or controlled, resulting in certain limitations to the validity of responses.

Conceptual Definitions

Traditional Media- Types of media where people get information from television networks, newspapers, magazines, and radio (Shao, 2009).

Crisis- "Some breakdown in a system that creates shared stress" (Coombs, 2014, p. 2).

Organizational Crisis- "Specific, unexpected and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten, or are perceived to threaten, an organization's high priority goals" (Schultz, Utz & Goritz, 2011, p. 20).

Crisis Management- "To prevent or lessen the negative outcomes of a crisis and thereby protect the organization, stakeholders, and industry from harm" (Coombs, 2007, p. 5).

Trust- "A belief by a person in the integrity of another individual" (Larzelere & Huston, 1980, p. 595).

Attitude Towards Behavior- "The degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188).

Subjective Norm- "Perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188).

Perceived Behavioral Control- The extent to which a person believes whether that he/she can control a given behavior through personal ability (Ajzen, 1991).

Behavioral Intentions- "The degree to which a person has formulated conscious plans to perform or not perform some specified future behavior" (Warshaw & Davis, 1985, p. 214).

Organization of the dissertation

The purpose of this study is to examine the media's effect on the perceived level of trust of visitors to SeaWorld Park and how trust in the media can affect their intentions to visit the park. Drawing on the theory of planned behavior (TPB), the study considers such factors as attitude towards behavior (ATB), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC), with the aim of understanding which indicators have the greatest impact on behavioral intentions.

Chapter I introduces the research and describes the background to SeaWorld Park and the controversial issue of live orca shows. It states the study's purpose, hypotheses, conceptual definitions, limitations, and delimitations. Chapter II offers an analytical review of the relevant literature and considers the research findings on this topic. Chapter III introduces the study's conceptual model, explains how media coverage leads to media credibility (trust), and how trust affects ATB, SN, and PBC. This chapter also illustrates how these factors eventually lead to behavioral intentions. Chapter IV outlines the dissertation's methodology, describes the design of the online survey and gives an account of the process of data collection. Chapter V gives a descriptive statistic of the study's online panel and presents the results of the non-response bias check, sampling bias check, Cronbach alpha test and the validity tests of each scale. Chapter VI introduces the statistical software used to analyze the hypothesized model, explains the procedure of using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and provides the overall model fit. It also introduces structural equation modeling (SEM), the SPSS statistics software to test the hypotheses, and outlines the results of the hypotheses. Finally, Chapter VII discusses the

research findings, lists the study's practical and theoretical implications, states its limitations and suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary purpose of this chapter is to investigate (a) the trust people have in mass media, (b) how media coverage impacts human behavior, and (c) how media influences tourism decisions. Furthermore, the dissertation reviews (d) the theories related to predicting human behavior, (e) how the concept of predicting human behavior has transformed over time, (f) how these theories have been applied to the field of tourism, and (g) one possible course of action for SeaWorld Park, using these theories.

Trust

Because the concept of trust is a key aspect of this study, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by the term. The term *trust* is broadly defined as "a belief by a person in the integrity of another individual" (Larzelere & Huston, 1980, p. 595). In classical literature, theorists defined trust as "an expectancy held by an individual or group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual can be relied upon" (Rotter, 1967, p. 651). According to Deutsch (1958), trust refers to "expectations with regard to an event whose occurrence is not detrimental to the individual—i.e., in reference to benevolent or desired event" (p. 266).

Based on these perspectives, there seems to be no universal definition of trust. Although the definition may vary, it is reasonable to assume that trust plays a key role in interpersonal relationships. Even in the business world, mutual trust has consistently been suggested to be important in forming long-term relationships between providers and clients (Corritore, Kracher, & Wiedenbeck, 2003).

A major goal of most commercial organizations is to function and survive by building faith in the organization on the part of customers (Headd, 2003). Thus, corporate organizations generally seek to build a positive corporate image in order to maintain credibility with customers (Keh & Xie, 2009). Berry (2017) suggested six recommendations for marketers to earn customer trust: (a) Solve service problems before they reach the customer; (b) honor customers' "perceived contract," not the company's legal contract; (c) identify and commit to a few crucial decisions that must be made by a senior manager; (d) be generous with customers; (e) include an explanation with an apology for a service failure; and (f) use realistic slogans. As Berry (2017) suggests, it is reasonable to assume that the higher the level of credibility a person or an organization can gain from another party, the higher the possibility to survive and function in contemporary society. Thus, the concept of trust likely plays a pivotal role in almost any domain.

Although the perspective of trust varies among researchers, it has been used in a range of disciplines with a variety of measurement scales. Disciplines/fields of study that have applied various trust scales include: marketing (Swan, Bowers, & Richardson, 1999), management (Gefen, 2000), consumer behavior (Kim, Ferrin, & Rao, 2008), education (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999), psychology (Tan & Lim, 2009), social psychology (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982), health & medicine (Dugan, Trachtenberg, & Hall, 2005) and tourism and hospitality services (Sparks & Browning, 2011). For each area, researchers have customized trust scales to measure the concept specifically for their field.

For example, in management literature, Gefen (2000) applied a General Disposition to Trust scale (5 items) and a Trust in the Vendor (3 items) scale to determine whether disposition to trust affected respondents' trust in an online book vendor. He directed university student

participants to visit a well-known online website (Amazon.com) and search for a textbook for a course. Since Amazon.com is highly regarded, many students were familiar with purchasing books on the site. Gefen (2000) reported that respondents who generally trust other people (i.e., a disposition to trust) were more likely to trust the Amazon book vendor, which in turn influenced their intentions to purchase a book.

In a hotel context, Sparks and Browning (2011) introduced the Perception of Trust in the Hotel scale (9 items), which asked participants to indicate how they perceived a hotel after they had been exposed to negative or positive valence online reviews regarding the hotel. It was found that respondents who reviewed positive online hotel reviews had a higher level of trust in the hotel than those who reviewed negative comments. This higher level of trust generated higher booking intentions. It was further found that participants regarded reviewers' comments more positively when the reviews were seen as accurate and honest. Thus, the participants' belief that the comments about the hotel contained true information positively affected their perception of trust in the hotel (Sparks & Browning, 2011).

In the marketing literature, Swan, Bowers, and Richardson (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of published articles that reported the measurement of customer trust in salespersons. They reported that most of the literature on trust published during the selected time period measured *attributes* or *behaviors* of the salesperson on a multi-item trust scale. The trust measures were divided into three levels of abstraction: (a) keeps promises, (b) dependable, and (c) trustworthy. Their findings indicate that, when the customer's overall trust in the salesperson was high, the following chain was followed: trust → satisfaction → attitude → intention → purchase behavior.

If this notion is accurate, the current study can reasonably hypothesize that, when the media provide a positive storyline about a specific travel destination, people who have a high level of trust in the media will be more likely to consider a visit to that destination than counterparts who have a low level of trust in the media. To examine this argument, the study investigates the following: (a) the major impact of media coverage, (b) how people perceive mass media in general, and (c) how media influences tourism decisions.

Impact of Mass Media

Mass media is a widespread communication tool which includes spreading information via television, newspapers, magazines, film, books, direct mail, radio, and the internet (Sheng & Lan, 2018). In the United States, television networks alone offer a wide range of channels from which viewers can select their news and entertainment (Brooks, 2017). Wikipedia lists over 50 television broadcast channels and more than 100 cable and satellite television networks in the U.S. These cover a variety of broadcast formats, ranging from entertainment (family, movies, lifestyle, sports and music) to information (documentary, science, news, religion, and shopping channels).

It is worth noting that mass media such as broadcast or cable television news channels still lead in viewership in the United States (Graber & Dunaway, 2017; Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel & Shearer, 2016). For example, the presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in 2016 illustrates this point clearly. According to a CNN media news report, the live debate was by far the most watched presidential debate in U.S. history (Stelter, 2016). Approximately 84 million viewers watched the debate live on traditional television channels in the United States. NBC had the highest viewership (18 million), followed by CBS (12.1million),

Fox News (11.4 million), CNN (9.9 million), Fox broadcast network (5.5million), and MSNBC (4.9million). These numbers included only residential areas and did not include commercial sectors such as parties, bars, and restaurants.

As this case demonstrates, TV viewing is the most prevalent leisure activity among U.S. citizens (Schmid et al. 2018). In fact, it has been suggested American adults spend, on average, half of their leisure time viewing mass media (Graber & Dunaway, 2017). The media consumed generally provides relevant information to the public, which is perhaps the primary reason that many people rely heavily on mass media. Graber and Dunaway (2017) stated that "Media are the basis for much learning about current events" (p. 4). Even in schools, reports retrieved from the mass media are used for educational purposes (Graber & Dunaway, 2017; Semali, 2017).

Perceptions of the Media

It has been suggested that the majority of Americans view TV broadcast news as trustworthy (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010). Regardless of how the media delivers information, people have been found to trust it, albeit skeptically (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010; Mughal, n.d.). This must be weighed, however, against a recent Pew Research poll that found people in the US are divided about whether the news, particularly on social media, is delivered impartially (Mitchell, Simmons, Matsa & Silver, 2018). Most oppose partisanship, even when the news is true, and give news organizations a low rating for impartiality (Mitchell et al. 2018) Those working in television generally see its purpose as providing information and entertainment to the general public as truthfully as possible (Bleich, Bloemraad & de Graauw, 2015) while, at the same time, competing with rival stations and networks (Scanlon, 2011). Because of this competitive and commercial nature, some media have been known to exaggerate information or to slant stories,

which may diminish their claim to truthfulness in particular cases, but the media's reputation for probity remains high overall (Vitelli, 2014). For these reasons, television news has generally been perceived as reliable (King & Beeton, 2006).

Historically, television has tackled social problems to inform and educate American audiences (Schneider, 2014), covering such controversial topics as gun control, abortion, HIV, internet privacy, rape on college campuses, racial tensions, urban decline, fake news, and international and domestic espionage (Schneider, 2014). Certainly, the mass media has helped to inform audiences about social problems, although news programs, however impartial, can exacerbate social tensions by simply relating the facts. A domestic terrorist attack, for example, is unlikely to improve racial or religious harmony if it is decontextualized (Hoffner, Fujioka, Cohen & Atwell Seate, 2017).

There is also evidence to show that people are affected more by negative than positive reports. According to Davey (2012), viewers exposed to negative news reports are more likely to become saddened and anxious than those who see positive, neutral or uplifting news bulletins. In 2018, for example, firearms regulations were subject to intense public pressure in the United States after a 19-year-old former high-school student murdered 17 students at a high school in Parkland, Florida. The event was reported live on television, and negatively influenced many students' perceptions (and not just students) of gun control and related policies in the U.S. (Hayes, 2018).

Further, Cardona (2018) reported that many high school students expressed fear, anger, and anxiety about mass school shootings. Indeed, following this tragedy, a significant number of students in Florida refused to attend school to protest gun violence. One such student, David

Hogg, who survived the Florida school shooting, was interviewed on CNN news, where he urged viewers to boycott Florida as a spring break destination until current gun control policies in Florida changed (Levenson, 2018). CNN reported that Hogg shared the same call to action on his social media account (Twitter), which resulted in thousands of retweets. As other mass media covered similar stories of teenagers opposed to current gun laws in Florida, the state government agreed to tighten gun ownership laws (Chang, 2018): the minimum age to purchase a gun in Florida was raised from 18 to 21 and teachers are now permitted to carry concealed weapons in classrooms (Sanchez & Yan, 2018).

The influence of the media on peoples' perceptions of social issues has been documented elsewhere. As shown by Jia et al. (2016), media reports have led to increases in public attention in China, where the authors found that more than 600 negative news reports of polluting practices by Chinese companies were disseminated through mainstream Chinese television media or newspapers from 2004 to 2012. Mass media there, especially local media, expressed in aggregate a pessimistic view of corporate polluting practices and their negative effect on the local environment (Jia et al. 2016). The media blamed Chinese firms for pollution and warned local communities that the country could face severe environmental damage if it continued unchecked (Jia et al. 2016). Jia and others found that the public paid more attention to environmental issues after the reports and that there was a marked decrease in corporate pollution.

As these examples show, mass media can be effective in raising awareness about social issues. More importantly, media coverage, especially of tragedies, can affect health standards and regulatory laws and guidelines. Because people typically value their own health and safety,

they likely rely on impartial information being broadcast or published by the media. Thus, mass media has the power to influence opinions. However, the tone of presentation, whether negative or positive, can slant public perceptions substantially. For example, Saleem, Prot, Anderson, and Lemieux (2017) found that, when participants were exposed to news media portraying Muslims as a threat to the United States, describing them as "terrorists," participants were more likely to support civil restrictions and military action against Muslims and Muslim countries. Participants, who viewed negative Muslim footage expressed critical sentiments and aggressive attitudes toward Muslims in general, while those exposed to positive Muslim footage had opposite views, seeing Muslims in a positive light (Saleem et al. 2017).

Florida's SeaWorld Park is another example of the potential effects of negative media coverage. People reacted critically to the theme park after "Blackfish" was released in 2013. The film's storyline was unapologetically negative, portraying SeaWorld Entertainment as an unethical corporation that mistreated orcas and other animals at its parks (Sperb, 2016). The resulting media coverage harmed SeaWorld's business, with the number of visitors to the park dropping dramatically (Burford & Schutten, 2017). Indeed, there is significant evidence to show that media reports can influence public perceptions and that negative stories are typically more influential than positive ones (see Dean 2004; Jia et al. 2016; Jia, Tong, Viswanath, & Zhang, 2016; Pfarrer et al. 2010).

This phenomenon can be explained by "prospect theory", which was developed by Kahneman and Tversky (1979) as an alternative to utility theory. In essence, prospect theory explains attitudes and behavior when people confront uncertainty prior to decision making. According to Tversky and Kahneman (1981), there are several scenarios in which decisions are

made that involve risk and high uncertainty. For example, research has shown that even though people may have maximum monetary incentives to select an unguaranteed option, most will select a guaranteed option that carries a minimal monetary incentive. This experiment suggests that most people are risk-averse when the possibility of losing is greater than that of winning, however great the potential reward. The key to understanding prospect theory is that people will try to predict the future by calculating the probability of gaining and losing, where gains are seen as positive and losses negative. One tenet of their theory is that losses tend to loom larger than gains. This means that given an even amount of positive versus negative information, people will tend to view the totality of information received as negative.

By applying prospect theory to SeaWorld, the researcher can better understand why people decided not to visit the park after the release of "Blackfish". Many were confronted with complex ethical decisions which resulted from the negative publicity from the documentary: potential visitors weighed the rewards of going against those of staying away. The researcher used this example to investigate how the media played a role in shaping peoples' perceptions of SeaWorld.

Media Influence in Tourism

Over the past decade, extensive literature on tourism has investigated the impact of mass media on travel destination decisions (see Beeton, 2016; Busby & Klug, 2001; Chan, 2007; Edelheim & Lexow, 2004; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Iwashita, 2006; Macionis & Sparks, 2009; Singh & Best, 2004). While some researchers have suggested that mass media has a negative influence on tourism destination decisions (Beeton, 2006; Edelheim & Lexow, 2004; Hahm & Wang, 2011; Sparks & Browning, 2011), most tourism literature reports positively about its

effect and that movie and television broadcasts have generated increased visits to tourist destinations (Bolan, Crossan, & O'Connor, 2007; Lin & Huang, 2008; Rewtrakunphaiboon, 2009; Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998). For example, Lin and Huang (2008) found that Korean TV drama and entertainment produced favorable images of South Korea among Taiwanese. They revealed that many Taiwanese traveled to South Korea to visit film locations after a Korean TV miniseries was shown in Taiwan. As a result, the number of Taiwanese tourists to South Korea increased by 65% in 2004, which generated significant economic benefits for South Korea.

However, other researchers have argued that mass media can negatively influence travel destination decisions. Hahm and Wang (2011) revealed how "Lost in Translation", a 2003 drama/comedy set in the United States, had a negative influence on destination image. In their experiment, the researchers asked American participants to watch a film in which two American tourists (actors) faced language barriers and difficulties in communicating with locals during a visit to Japan. After participants watched the film, the researchers measured the general image of Japan as a tourist destination. Although the overall image was positive, perceptions of Japan partly declined.

Other studies have shown that consumers are more likely to be influenced by negative rather than positive information (Lee, Park, & Han, 2008; Papathanassis & Knolle, 2011; Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999). Negative storylines have been suggested to create greater awareness and arousal, causing people to remember images far longer than they do with positive storylines (Soroka & McAdams, 2015). Similarly, Beeton (2006) reported that visits declined when a highly recognized mass medium presented a negative storyline. Beeton argued that "certain

notions become accepted as 'truths' by the general public, regardless of their accuracy" (p. 181). Furthermore, Sparks and Browning (2011) noted that "people tend to weigh negative information more strongly, with a magnified effect for a negative frame and negative content overall" (p. 28).

Theoretical Background

To understand the impact of mass media on human attitudes and behaviors, several researchers have attempted to develop a systematic theory. Indeed, several competing explanations been published over the past 30 years, although the media effect can be broadly explained by two: cultivation theory and agenda-setting theory.

*Cultivation Theory***.** Cultivation theory, developed by Gerbner and Gross (1976), says that people who spend considerable time watching television are more likely to cultivate mass media messages and harbor exaggerated perceptions compared to viewers who spend little or no time watching television. Further research by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli (1986) finds that heavy or frequent viewing by those who are exposed to violent and crime-related media reports led to pessimistic opinions and beliefs about social reality, compared to non-viewers. Moreover, researchers have found that children's attitudes, behaviors, belief structures and daily practices are negatively influenced by excessive television viewing (Gerbner, 1998; Morgan, 1987).

The central point of cultivation theory is that people who spend considerable time watching television tend to accumulate new and different perspectives about the world in which they live compared to those who seldom watch television. Furthermore, frequent and/or heavy viewing tends to lead to an acceptance of unrealistic images and extreme messages delivered by the mass media. As a result, an unhealthy and prejudiced social outlook is entrenched in the viewer's mind.

Agenda Setting Theory. For its part, agenda-setting theory, developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), attempts to explain how the media creates public concerns and salient issues in the viewer. Since the introduction of the theory in the 1970s, considerable literature has been published about the coverage of politics and business in the mass media (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010; Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Caroll, 2004; McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 2013; Ragas & Kiousis, 2010). Agenda-setting theory, broadly defined as "the flow of the salience of the top issues of the moment from the news media to the public agenda" (McCombs, Shaw & Weaver (2014, p. 788), says that the media can determine what issues are important to viewers and which ones need to be publicized. According to the theory's supporters, agenda-setting theory explains why audiences tend to consider some issues more seriously than others when news networks emphasize them repeatedly (Carroll & McCombs, 2003).

Certainly, the primary goal of mass media is to cover incidents, issues, people, institutions, and corporate organizations—anything of interest to the general public (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). Essentially, the media sets the media agenda by selecting the most important topics that call for public discussion and provide critical and timely information in the public interest. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the media's agenda plays a vital role in shaping viewer perceptions of current events. Indeed, regardless of how the media covers an issue, its agenda will eventually impact the public agenda, whatever it may be (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). For example, a study by Wang (2000) found that the prevalence of racism increased when various types of mass media frequently mentioned race issues. There is also some evidence to suggest that corporate organizations receive greater public attention and

awareness when they are repeatedly mentioned in the media, compared to companies with less media exposure (Carroll, 2004).

Overall, evidence supports the argument that the media's agenda can indeed manipulate the public agenda (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). In fact, McCombs (2005) maintains that "the media can be not only successful in telling us *what to think about*, it can be successful in telling us *how to think about it*" (p. 546). Both theories, then, play an important role for mass communication researchers to understand how television consumption impacts viewer attitudes and behaviors, and while there are several similarities between cultivation theory and agenda-setting theory, the crucial point in reviewing both is that, regardless of how the media portrays events, the viewers' perceptions can change accordingly. In extreme cases, it has been argued that viewers may be "brainwashed", while in lesser cases misled (Polivy & Herman, 2004). Yet in either case, they tend to follow the media's stance, whether or not it is objective (Beeton, 2006).

Because it is important to understand how the media influences people, this dissertation investigates how media coverage influenced perceptions in one specific case. It examines how "Black Fish" influenced travelers' attitudes towards the park and their intentions to visit.

Travel Intention & Decision-Making Behavior

Understanding the determinants of travel intentions is important for tourism planners and managers because travelers' behaviors and their travel destination choices are keys to travel business success (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Thus, studying travel intentions and decision-making behavior has been widespread in the industry for many years.

Tourism literature indicates that people are influenced by several factors prior to traveling, including (a) past travel experiences (Floyd, Gibson, Pennington-Gray & Thapa, 2004), (b) perceived risk (Seabra, Abrantes & Kastenholz, 2014), (c) word-of-mouth (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008), (d) electronic word-of-mouth (Lee, Law & Murphy, 2011), (e) destination familiarity (Horng, Liu, Chou & Tsai, 2012), (f) professional advice from tour operators (Baloglu, 2000), (g) travel blogs (Wang, 2012), (h) television media (Tessitore, Pandelaere & Van Kerckhove, 2014), and others.

Floyd et al. (2004) found that past travel experience was a significant predictor of respondents' intentions to travel to New York City. Respondents who had previous travel experience to NYC were more likely to visit the city in the next 12 months than those who had no such experience. Considering the fact that this study was conducted in November 2001, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, many respondents were likely concerned with safety and a perceived security risk (Floyd et al. 2004). As a result, respondents who had not visited NYC said that they would likely forego travel to NYC in the next 12 months. Similarly, Seabra et al., (2014) found safety concerns to be related to future travel involvement: respondents who paid more attention to news media reports in regards to terrorism toward a tourist destination had a higher level of risk perception and safety concerns towards the destination than those who showed a lack of interest in seeking terrorism-related information.

Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) found that 'e-word-of-mouth' was a significant factor in predicting participants' intentions to purchase tourism products. They revealed that travelers generally displayed perceived uncertainty toward a destination they had not visited. For those planning to travel to a foreign country with a possible perceived risk and uncertainty, travelers

tended to hold ambiguous attitudes toward tourism products and services (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). In order to reduce uncertainty, the authors noted that people tended to explore other people's opinions online and to ask for advice before deciding to travel abroad. They further found that positive e-word-of-mouth played an important role for those having difficulty making decisions.

The review of the literature and the studies cited above reveal that people seek information from a variety of sources. Moreover, if most of the factors are positive, an individual may decide to travel. It has further been found that tourism marketers who are aware of tourist behaviors are often better placed to maximize profits and provide a more positive travel experience (Lam & Hsu, 2006). Thus, it would likely be beneficial for SeaWorld Park to investigate how the media's portrayal of "Blackfish" impacted travel intentions and behaviors of potential visitors.

Due to their extensive history of aiding our understanding of behavior, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) should be a good theoretical framework for understanding factors that affect peoples' travel behavior and their intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. Thus, the current study applied the TRA and the TPB, to understand the determinants of potential SeaWorld visitors' intentions to visit their parks post the "Blackfish" documentary.

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) with the aim of understanding why people generally decide to take a certain action when they think that it will produce a beneficial outcome. They argued that if someone is willing to perform

a behavior, their *behavioral intentions* (BI) are activated (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) proposed that people's intentions can be predicted by their: (a) *attitude toward the behavior* (ATB), and (b) *subjective norms* (SN). The following two elements are an important component for predicting peoples' behavioral intentions.

Further, according to the TRA, regardless of the decision people make—relevant, irrelevant, voluntary or non-voluntary—people make choices and ultimately carry out behavior based on those choices. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) explained that people often encounter complex decision-making situations in which they are reluctant to act, which frequently occurs because the outcome is unpredictable. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) proposed that behavioral intention is determined by a willingness to perform some behavior (ATB) or is determined after opinions are collected from others (SN). In order to better understand this concept, Hale, Householder and Greene (2002) added a simple mathematical function which explains how the two elements, ATB and SN, predict human behavioral intentions.

$$BI = (AB)\ W1 + (SN)\ W2$$

Thus, according to Hale et al., (2002), behavioral intentions (BI) can be predicted by one's attitude toward performing the behavior (AB) and their subjective norms (SN). W1 and W2 are weights. The key point is that every person behaves differently based on how much they weigh AB or SN (Hale et al. 2002). If they place greater emphasis (weight) on AB and less on SN or vice versa, their behavior will change accordingly. For example, Hale et al., (2002) suggest that if a communication campaign recommended people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, some people may have a positive view of the suggestion while others might

not. Depending on how they feel (or weigh) towards the recommended daily allowances (AB), their behavioral intentions (eating fruits and vegetables) will be performed accordingly (Hale et al. 2002). The authors furthermore say that a person's behavioral intention is influenced by other people's attitudes (SN) and their opinion towards the target behavior.

According to this equation, this study infers that the outcome of behavioral intentions may vary from circumstance to circumstance and from person to person, and thus people make decisions and act according to ATB and SN conditions. A graphic display of the Theory of Reasoned Action is given below, while further details of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory follow.

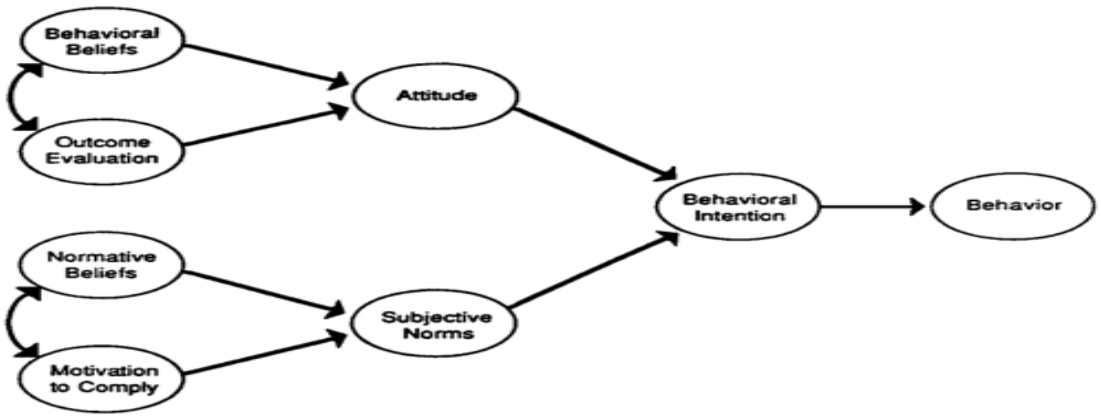


Figure 5. Theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Over the past several decades, significant research has adopted this model and investigated TRA to understand how people behave in certain situations and the psychological techniques they use to perform certain behaviors. The theory has been widely used in the fields of consumer behavior (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988), computer engineering (Mishra,

Akman & Mishra, 2014), nursing (Jemmott & Jemmott, 1991), health psychology (Sutton, McVey, & Glanz, 1999), tourism management (Kim, Kim & Goh, 2011) and social psychology (Conner, Kirk, Cade & Barrett, 2001) among many others. Additionally, the theory has been used to predict moral behavior (Enker, 1987), drinking behavior (Kilty, 1978), health behavior (Jemmot & Jemmot, 1991; Head & Noar, 2014), future general behavior (Ouellette & Wood, 1998), tourist behavior (Kim, Kim & Goh, 2011) and repeated behavior (Charng, Piliavin, & Callero, 1988).

For example, Enker (1987) conducted a cross-cultural study of American and Israeli participants to examine how their attitudes and normative beliefs of cheating behaviors differed. The primary purpose of their study was to understand whether cheating on exams or plagiarizing written material without referencing the original author might be acceptable behavior in their culture. According to Enker (1987), the findings suggest that the majority of Israeli participants reported they had more experience of cheating than American participants. In addition, Israeli participants had a lower negative attitude toward cheating and plagiarizing than American students (Enker, 1987). The author interpreted this to mean that cultural differences may have affected the results. Moreover, Enker (1987) presumed that since Israel does not strictly prohibit plagiarism and cheating, Israeli participants might consider these to be strategic skills.

As for social norms, Enker (1987) found that the family's normative beliefs significantly correlate with reported behaviors among Israeli participants, whereas American participants' reported behaviors were affected by friends and classmates. This indicates that different population groups (Israeli and American) can have different attitudes towards cheating and

plagiarism. Moreover, social norms (i.e., friends, family, and teacher) were found to play different roles in shaping cheating behavior.

Further, Morrison, Golder, Keller & Gillmore (2002) applied the TRA to explore marijuana-use behaviors among adolescent female teenagers who became pregnant at 17. Results of their study found that young women's attitudes toward marijuana-use were a stronger indicator than social norms. They further found that although attitudes toward smoking marijuana had a more positive effect on intention, norms were also positively associated with intentions, revealing that both attitudes and norms were related to marijuana-use six months later (Morrison et al., 2002). They suggest that this was due to the fact that having a baby at a young age is a big challenge for a teen mother and that teenage parenthood is considered their responsibility, which leads to a high level of stress (Morrison et al., 2002). As a result, many young women believe that marijuana relieves stress, helps build new relationships and creates a social circle (Morrison et al., 2002).

Employing TRA in a hospitality setting, Buttle and Bok (1996) found that international business travelers' intentions to stay at a hotel more than once in Seoul was strongly influenced by attitudinal factors—their expectations, experience, and quality of service—rather than normative factors such as recommendation from associates or word-of-mouth (Buttle & Bok, 1996). Their results could be used to help hospitality managers better understand how to approach international business travelers strategically and encourage them to purchase their hotel products.

These are all classic examples of TRA and its implications in various fields. Despite its popularity and established line of research, the theory does not address the question of whether behavior is affected by non-volitional control. Ajzen (1985) argued that the major drawback of TRA is that it fails to address behaviors that are caused by incomplete volitional control. He emphasized that, in some situations, the behavioral intentions may not result in behavior, regardless of volitional desire. Further explanation of his argument and the introduction of a new element are discussed below.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed as an extension of the TRA by Ajzen (1985). Based on the results of TRA studies, it was realized that some things were outside of people's control, which decreased the predictability of the model. Thus, while the traditional model (TRA) illustrates that behavior is affected by two stimuli: *Attitude Towards the Behavior* (ATB) and *Subjective Norm* (SN), TPB includes *Perceived Behavioral Control* (PBC).

Within the context of tourism, researchers have employed TPB to understand (a) travelers' perceived risk behavior regarding unfamiliar destinations and their intention to travel (Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010), (b) customers' decision-making processes regarding whether to stay in a green hotel (Han & Kim, 2010), and (c) the likelihood of conventional hotel prices for green hotels (Kim & Han, 2010), among others. For online travel websites, the TPB has been used to explain (a) how positive online interaction (e-word of mouth) impacted online visitors' travel behavior and their travel destination choices (Jalilvan & Samiei, 2012), and (b) intention to follow online community members' advice (Casalo, Flavian, & Guinaliu, 2011). Moreover, some

researchers have used TPB to understand (a) travelers' behavior regarding eco-friendly restaurants (Kim, Njite, & Hancer, 2013), and (b) travelers' intention to participate in wine tourism vacations (Sparks, 2007).

Attitude Towards Behavior (ATB)

The term ATB refers to "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question" (p.188). In other words, if a person believes that a given behavior will lead to positive outcomes, that person will likely perform that particular behavior. If, however, the person assumes that the behavior may lead to negative outcomes, the person will be less likely to act. For example, it has been shown that binge smoking and drinking while pregnant can cause significant danger to both the mother and the fetus (Godel et al., 1992). Since this is likely harmful to both, it is somewhat clear that smoking and drinking can lead to a negative result. Consequently, pregnant women would be expected to form a negative attitude toward smoking and drinking and would not present this behavior during pregnancy.

In the field of tourism, Lam and Hsu (2004) employed the TPB in hopes of better understanding travelers' intentions to visit Hong Kong as a travel destination. Their target population was mainland Chinese participants since more than 40% of foreign travelers who visited Hong Kong in 2002 were Chinese travelers. They discovered that ATB was a significant factor in determining Chinese travelers' intention to travel to Hong Kong. Specifically, participants who were willing to experience Hong Kong culture, the society, the people, shopping and sightseeing influenced their behavioral intentions to travel to Hong Kong. This

result indicates that ATB can play a major role in predicting travelers' future behavioral intentions.

Subjective Norms (SN)

While ATBs are internal factors, SN are closely related to external factors. This element explains how people are influenced by other people's reactions. Fishbein & Ajxen (1975,1980) argued that a person is likely to be concerned about how others would view a behavior of interest. Although a person may initially intend to behave in a particular way, if others have unfavorable attitudes toward that behavior, that person is less likely to perform the behavior, at least in their presence. For example, SN have been examined in a nursing setting (Jemmott & Jemmott, 1991). The researchers examined African American female participants' perceptions of unsafe sexual activity, by asking how likely the participants would be to use a condom in the face of risk behavior (AIDS and HIV). They found that SN played a key role in preventing unsafe sexual activities among those participants who were aware of the risk behavior. The results revealed that participants who were encouraged by their significant referents to use condoms were more likely to use safe-sex products in the next three months. Thus, SN were found to be a significant predictor of the likelihood of black females using condoms for a safe sexual relationship.

A study of East Asian (Chinese, Korean, and Japanese) travelers conducted by Quintal, Lee, and Soutar (2010) found that travelers generally displayed perceived risk and perceived uncertainty toward a destination they had not visited. In planning to travel to a foreign country with a possible perceived risk and perceived uncertainty, travelers tended to hold negative

attitudes toward that travel destination (Quintal et al., 2010). They argued that in this type of setting people seek other's opinion. Thus, when uncertain, people typically seek advice from their immediate group (e.g., parents, academic counselors, teachers), seeing them as reliable for helping to make a choice.

Their results revealed that Korean and Chinese travelers who had insufficient travel information about Australia relied heavily on SN. They further found that SN (post-traveler reference) played a crucial role in Korean and Chinese travelers' intention to visit Australia, while Japanese travelers' intention to visit Australia was more affected by their own attitudes and perceptions. The conclusion was that the influence of SN might by culturally dependent (Lu, Zhou & Wang, 2009).

In the context of hospitality, Han, Hsu & Sheu (2010) discovered that SN were also positively associated with hotel customers' intention to stay at an eco-friendly (green) hotel. According to Han, Hsu & Sheu (2010), the "formation of a favorable/unfavorable attitude toward staying at a green hotel is influenced by how one's important others (referents) consider the performance of eco-friendly behavior" (p.331). This statement indicates that participants' intention to stay at an environmentally friendly hotel could also be affected by their companion's positive/negative attitude toward a green hotel.

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

The third factor used to explain people's behaviors within the TPB is *perceived behavior control* (PBC). According to Ajzen (1991), PBC refers to "people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest" (p. 183). In other words, PBC is the extent to

which a person believes whether he/she can control a given behavior (skills, opportunity, resources) through personal ability. Madden, Ellen, and Ajzen (1992) noted that the critical point of PBC is that "the more resources and opportunities individuals think they possess, the greater should be their perceived behavioral control over the behavior" (p. 4).

PBC has been applied in a wide range of disciplines using the TPB, including hospitality (Chen & Tung, 2014), sport psychology (Chan et al., 2015), management (Cheng & Huang, 2013), business (Aboelmaged & Gebba, 2013), sports management (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003), and transportation (Wang et al., 2016).

Cunningham and Kwon (2003) found that PBC was a significant factor in predicting participants' intentions to attend a hockey match. In their study, time and money represented PBC. The researchers wanted to determine whether these two variables were major obstacles to attending the match. The results indicate that time was a significant predictor of attendance, whereas money was not. In other words, as available time increased, the intention to attend the event increased, and vice versa.

Results of multiple studies (see Cestac, Paran & Delhomme, 2011; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992) have revealed that PBC can aid in better understanding people's intended and actual behaviors. Based on this perspective, it can be argued that PBC can be used to predict future behaviors. Figure 6 (from Ajzen, 2012) shows the step-by-step process of intention to behavior.

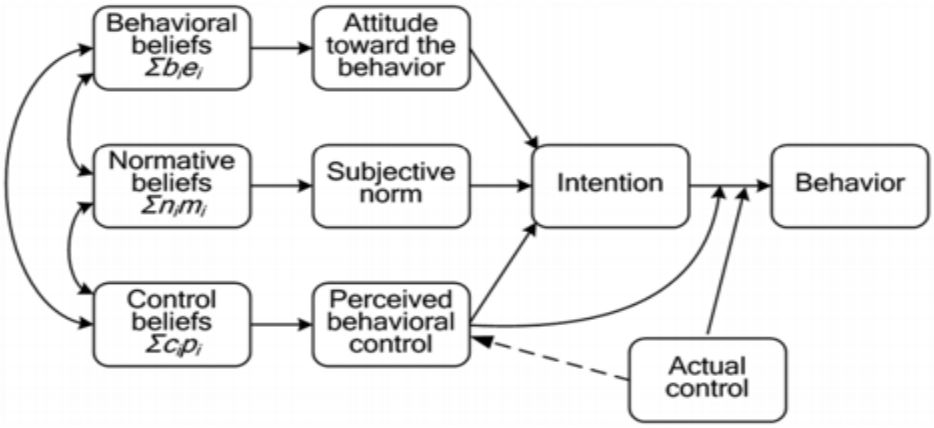


Figure 6. Theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2012).

Summary of TPB

The TPB provides a global perspective for understanding human behavior, as well as various factors that influence it. Since it is likely beneficial for tourism professionals and event managers to understand the determinants of visitors' psychological behaviors, it would appear the TPB would be a good framework for examining touristic behaviors. The employment of TPB should thus help tourism practitioners develop insights into their tourism services by giving an understanding of visitors' future behavioral intentions.

Synopsis of the Chapter

This chapter reviews the existing studies of media impact, the public's trust in the media, their perception of the media and how positive/negative media coverage affects their travel behavior. Specifically, the chapter looks at how the agenda-setting theory and cultivation theory provide insights into the role of mass media and how the media can manipulate the viewers' perception of social reality.

To better explain how media reports affect the behavioral intentions of travelers, the chapter also reviews the studies of the theory of planned behavior. The existing literature on this subject has examined how (a) attitude, (b) subjective norms, and (c) perceived behavioral control constructs influence behavioral intentions. Thus, guided by the theory of planned behavior, the following chapter uses the aforementioned constructs to propose a conceptual model for this dissertation.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter discusses the relationships between media coverage, the perceived level of trust in the media, and how that trust relates to the three predictors, ATB, SN and PBC. The chapter also reviews how the literature related to these indicators might be related to the intention of potential tourists to visit SeaWorld Park in Texas. Based on the literature review and the case studies discussed previously, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was determined to be a 'best fit' for grounding the study. The chapter concludes by providing the resultant hypotheses, establishing the validity of the research methods, and considers the potential implications of the study's findings.

Perceived Level of Trust and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Until now, it was believed that researchers have not used the TPB model to explore how negative media reports and media trust can influence travel intentions. It is also unclear to what extent travelers' trust in media reports and how their overall trust in the media relates to ATB, SN, and PBC, and how the three factors determine behavior and intent to visit.

A few studies in agricultural and food economics have applied the TPB model to how trust in the media can increase or decrease concerns over food safety (see Lobb, Mazzocchi & Traill, 2006, 2007; Mazzocchi, Lobb, Bruce & Cavicchi, 2008; Prati, Pietrantoni & Zani, 2012). There is certainly increasing public interest in this area, as shown by concerns in Europe and elsewhere about industrial food processes (Lobb, Mazzocchi & Traill, 2007), factory farming,

and genetically modified food (Prati, Pietrantoni & Zani, 2012). However, the concerns confined to human health risks, since many consumers are troubled by animal rights and ethical issues.

On the subject of food safety, though, Lobb, Mazzocchi & Traill (2007) proposed that trust in the media plays a significant role in determining intent to purchase food products. To examine their proposition, the authors applied the TPB model to a study of British participants—or rather they applied an extended version of TPB known as the SPARTA Model. (The acronym SPARTA is derived from the initials of the six global variables used to explain behavioral intentions: **S**ubjective Norm, **P**erceived Behavioral Control, **A**ttitudes, **R**isk Perception, **T**rust, **A**lia. While TPB includes three factors only (e.g., *SN, PBC, ATB*), SPARTA added *Risk* and *Trust* into the research. Figure 7 (see Lobb et al., 2007) shows the process of how trusted sources were found to lead to the intention to purchase.

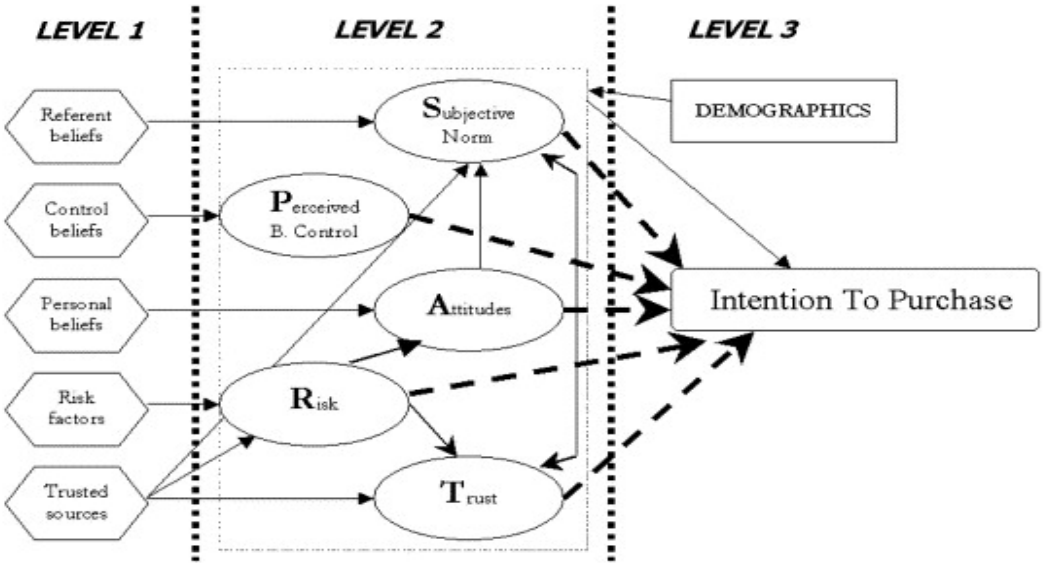
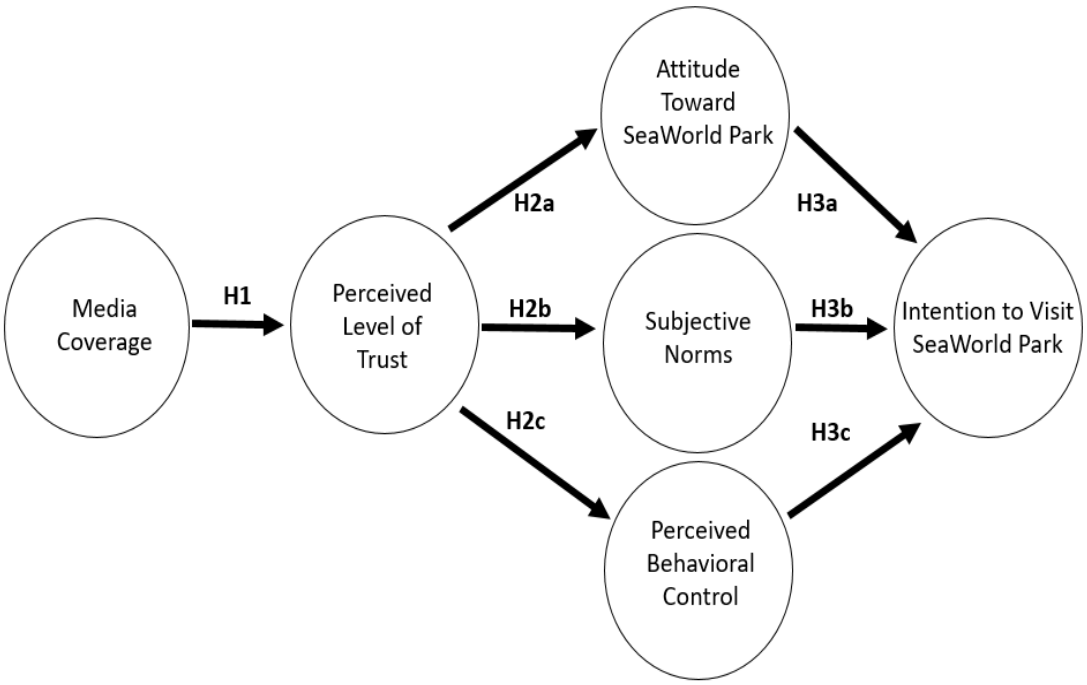


Figure 7. SPARTA Modeling Strategy (Lobb et al., 2007).

Using SPARTA, Lobb, Mazzocchi & Traill (2007) found that when food-related hazards (i.e., contamination) are an issue, people tend to trust information from the media, governments, food processors and consumer institutions (Lobb et al., 2007). Perhaps this is because they have little choice but to rely on these sources for information. Thus, when the media's coverage is negative, consumers are unlikely to purchase the relevant products in the near-term (i.e., until their concerns are eased). Although the issues are substantively different, this dissertation, using the TPB and SPARTA models, aims to explain how trust in the "Blackfish" documentary negatively affected intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. The overall proposed research model is shown below:

FIGURE 8

The overall proposed research model



Media Coverage and Perceived level of Trust

The study's central questions are (a) what effect do news media reports have on the positive/negative attitudes towards the news event covered and (b) how likely are people to trust and follow the media when the media assigns blame for social problems?

While there has been extensive research on the trustworthiness of news media (Williams, 2012), their findings differ significantly. Some studies indicate that people generally distrust mainstream media (see Arceneaux, Johnson & Murphy, 2012; Jones, 2004; Morales, 2010), but others say that, in general, they follow its reports and opinions with considerable trust (see Jackob, 2010; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014). Due to such differences, it is still

unclear how people generally react to mainstream media and to what extent they trust its coverage of social problems. Thus, the current literature suggests that the perceived level of trust towards the media varies according to circumstances. Indeed, Arceneaux et al. (2012) found that viewers' attitudes towards and perceived trustworthiness of the media vary according to how it delivers information, either optimistically or pessimistically.

Arceneaux and his colleagues conducted an experimental study in 2012 to determine whether an opinionated talk show, sampled from Fox News and MSNBC, influenced participants' perception and trust in the media. For the study, the authors instructed each participant to watch a short video (which had either a pro-attitudinal or counter-attitudinal tone) of a debate about healthcare from the United States' Congress. The researchers asked the participants to rate the trustworthiness of the video and found that opinions differed according to whether the participants had watched the video as part of a pro-attitudinal TV news program or as part of a counter-attitudinal program. Because participants who viewed the former expressed a higher trust in the media than those who viewed the latter, the researchers concluded that people's trust increased after watching the pro-attitudinal program because the viewers believed that the media (in this case, television) was "more balanced, even-handed, and more *American* than (it was for) people who viewed a counter-attitudinal show" (p.179).

Additional research by Jackob (2010) similarly revealed that people are highly influenced by and harbor a high level of trust in the media. In Jackob's study, respondents were asked if they trusted the media to deal with social issues such as environmental concerns, health risks and political scandals. Using 850 German participants aged 16 and older, Jackob found a positive association between *media dependency* and *trust in the media* and that frequent viewers had a

very high level of trust in and a high level of dependency on the media for information about social problems. Respondents identified as "media skeptics" generally distrusted the media, preferring alternative sources for information, although it is unclear what those sources might be.

In still another study, Tsfati & Ariely (2014) found that people who were highly exposed to mainstream television news had a higher level of trust in the media than those who were highly exposed to internet news. Since the data was collected across 44 countries with more than 55,000 respondents, this research garnered considerable attention due to its unique approach and large sample size. The authors found that *political interest* and *interpersonal trust* were positively associated with *trust in the media*. The authors also found that female participants tended to trust the media more than did male participants (Tsfati & Ariely, 2014).

Working with 40,000 participants from 29 different countries across Asia, Tokuda, Fujii, Jimba and Inoguchi (2009) collected a similarly large set of data to measure how likely Asians are to trust their country's mass media and healthcare systems. Their results indicated that a majority of Asians (slightly over 50%) trust both, and that "greater media trust may lead to higher use of mass media for health information." In fact, they argued that such trust "may lead to higher awareness of important health information and may result in better health-related decision-making and behavior" (p. 7).

As suggested by the above selective literature review, many scholars agree that media coverage and trust in the media influence beliefs, attitudes and decisions about current events. Moreover, trust in the media can change according to circumstances, including media tone (Arceneaux et al., 2012). For this reason, it is plausible to say that "media reports" and "media trust" have a strong relationship and that people react positively or negatively to the media

according to how much they trust its coverage. In the context of this study, then, it is reasonable to suppose that people with a high level of trust in the media and who have seen "Blackfish," a documentary that cast SeaWorld in a negative light, will have a high negative sentiment toward the park. Not surprisingly, "Blackfish" led to a substantial drop in business at SeaWorld Park following its release in 2013 (Arthur, 2016). The current study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

> *Hypothesis 1a: The more negative the media report about SeaWorld Park, the higher the trust in the media.*
>
> *Hypothesis 1b: The more negative the media report about SeaWorld Park, the more negative impact on their behavioral intentions.*

Perceived Level of Trust and Attitude Towards Behavior (ATB)

Further evidence suggests that if people are likely to trust the media, media reports can affect attitudes and behavioral intentions. Before SPARTA was developed by Lobb et al. (2007), the researchers published a 2006 study using TPB and 2725 participants from five European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and the United Kingdom), adding *Risk and Trust* into their study.

No doubt because the media has covered countless stories related to food safety (e.g., Avian flu, *Listeria*, *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella enterica*, among others), concern over food safety and public health has increased considerably (Lobb, Mazzocchi & Traill, 2006). Of the five countries listed above, the food purchasing behavior of French participants was found to be significantly influenced by a food report published in the French mass media, indicating a high level of trust in the media by the French. Lobb, Mazzocchi and Traill (2006) used "chicken" as a product since chicken presents a common health hazard to consumers (Lobb et al., 2006).

Participants were asked to read a newspaper report of several people being hospitalized for salmonella in chicken and to rate their purchasing intention. The results indicate that food safety information disseminated by the media played a significant role in decreasing supermarket chicken sales and that attitude (ATB) was a significant factor in predicting the behavioral intentions of consumers. The authors emphasized that among those participants who exhibited a high level of perceived health risk and a high level of trust in the media, these, together, negatively affected attitudes towards chicken consumption (Lobb et al., 2006).

Based on the above research, applying the method of Lobb et al. (2006) to tourism may help explain how trust in the media affects participants' ATB. It is reasonable to assume that participants' who watch "Blackfish" will, after seeing the documentary, have increased negative attitudes toward SeaWorld Park and be less likely to visit the park as a result of the documentary's censure. It is also likely that participants who are exposed to a SeaWorld Park advertisement with a positive message will be more likely to visit the park in the near future. The current study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

> *Hypothesis 2a: Higher trust in the media positively affects potential visitors' attitudes toward SeaWorld Park.*
>
> *Hypothesis 3a: Positive/negative attitudes toward SeaWorld Park have a substantial impact on intentions to visit SeaWorld Park*

Perceived Level of Trust and Subjective Norms (SN)

Empirical research has found a positive relationship between *trust* and *subjective norms* (SN) and that increased levels of trust in food information are positively associated with SNs (Mazzocchi, Lobb, Trail & Cavicchi, 2008). Since 2000, several salmonella scares have

increased public anxiety about health risks in many European countries. Mazzocchi et al. (2008) conducted in-person interviews with 2,500 participants from five European countries (UK, Italy, Germany, The Netherlands and France). The authors asked participants to rate their perceived level of trust in several food information sources (e.g., media, food chains, experts, organizations) and their intention to purchase chicken following reports of salmonella outbreaks. Twenty-three factors relating to trust in food information were included in their survey which asked participants to rate their trust in (a) the media (television documentary, radio, newspapers), (b) food chains (organic shops, supermarkets), (c) experts (university scientists, doctors/health authorities), and (d) organizations (political groups, consumer organizations). Using a 7-point Likert scale, the authors found that trust in these sources were all positively related to subjective norms (relatives, friends, and colleagues), indicating that respondents with high levels of trust in the above sources also valued advice from close associates about purchasing chicken products.

According to the theory of planned behavior (TPB), subjective norms are known to increase social pressure, which can lead to a reluctance to repeat original behaviors. This was evident in Mazzocchi et al., (2008) who found that, while people may initially trust information from the media and be willing to purchase food products, they often change their minds when subjective norms (referent groups) conflict with media reports. Rather than continuing with their original intent, many people follow their associates' opinions about buying the product. Furthermore, when the referent group or person trusts the media's report, this often bolsters the individual's confidence in performing the original behavior (purchasing chicken, in this

example). Thus, based on the referent groups' positive or negative reactions to buying chicken (the subjective norms), the person's intention to purchase can change.

In a similar study in the United States, Benz, Sterrett, Malato, Tompson & Kantor (2017) found that trust in the media has also been associated with subjective norms. In this example, 1,489 adult participants were consulted after a highly trusted person posted a news article about health-related information (diabetes) and shared the story on social media (Facebook, Instagram). The authors found that such a person had a higher impact on people's perceptions of the news source than an untrusted person who posted the same article (Benz et al., 2017).

In their online survey, Benz et al., (2017) used two versions of the same article and divided participants into two groups. While both groups were given the same content about the risk of diabetes, the articles came with different newspaper logos. In the experimental group, participants were told that an "untrusted person" shared a news article on social media that came from a highly reputable news source, Associated Press (AP). For the control group, a "trusted person" shared the article on social media from "DailyNewsReview.com", an imaginary news source. Results indicated that of those in the control group, 49 percent said they believed the article was accurately reported even though it came from a fictional news source. They trusted the source because the person who shared the article was considered trustworthy. Of the participants in the experimental group who were assigned to read a highly reputable news article (AP), which was shared on social media by an unknown person (untrusted), only 32 percent of respondents believed the article was well reported. Benz et al., (2017) thus suggested that trusted news sources can be seen as unreliable if untrustworthy people share news articles on social

media—a case of the messenger spoiling the message. Indeed, additional evidence collected during the interviews supports this belief. One of the study's participants said:

> I look who shared it. If I have a friend that's a creep, I might not believe it. If a friend is in a certain field, then I might believe what they post (Benz et al., 2017, para. 33).

This statement indicates that referent groups, especially those we trust, can influence our perceptions of news media (Benz et al., 2017). How someone shares the report and who he or she is, i.e., their trustworthiness, can thus increase or decrease trust in the media, as well as motivations and behavioral intentions.

It can be argued, then, that a strong link exists between *trust in the media* and *subjective norms.* Although it is still unclear whether *media trust* is weakened by *subjective norms*, it is likely that both constructs play a role in guiding our intentions to purchase certain products. Previous studies offer insights that we can apply to SeaWorld Park to determine whether subjective norms influenced those who watched the "Blackfish" documentary. Viewers might have decided not to visit the park because of supplementary social pressures generated by the media and/or by close associates who are critical of animal captivity. Indeed, under such circumstances, negative comments about SeaWorld Park, derived from subjective norms (friends, family and the mass media), might encourage trust in the Blackfish documentary and lessen the appeal of SeaWorld Park as a family travel destination. On the other hand, if close associates have positive views about SeaWorld Park, believing that "Blackfish" exaggerated its narrative, this might align people's beliefs more closely with those of their associates. For this reason, the current study hypothesizes that:

Hypothesis 2b: Higher trust in the media affects a potential visitor's subjective norms.

Hypothesis 3b: Subjective norms will have a direct impact on intention to visit SeaWorld Park

Perceived Level of Trust and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

Despite robust findings of a positive relationship between *perceived behavioral control* (PBC) and *behavioral intentions* (see Cestac, Paran & Delhomme, 2011; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; George, 2004; Limayem, Khalifa & Frini, 2000), there is, as far as this author knows, little evidence to support a direct relationship between *trust in the media* and *perceived behavioral control* (PBC). Nor is it known how the former might lead to *behavioral intentions*. Due to the role that PBC has consistently been found to have on both behavior (Ajzen, 1985; Fortin, 2000) and behavioral intentions (Conner, Sheeran, Morman & Armitage, 2000; Kang, Hahn, Fortin, Hyun & Eom, 2006; Madden et al., 2000), it is believed that exploring how trust in the media and PBC are related would be important.

Although George (2004) used the theory of planned behavior to determine whether trusting an internet retailer would affect participants' intention to purchase online, the study focused chiefly on internet trustworthiness rather than on media trustworthiness. The study was also limited insofar that it examined only how internet trustworthiness beliefs affected participants' attitude toward behavior (ATB), i.e., their attitudes towards internet purchasing. Thus, the findings did not explain how trust related to other constructs such as SN and PBC. Thus, a comprehensive study is still needed to identify how *trust in the media* interacts with other variables (i.e., SN and PBC) which are believed to be linked to behavioral intentions.

Unlike George (2004), Pavlou (2002), using 92 participants and all three variables (ATB, SN, PBC), measured trust and how it relates to online transaction intentions. In this study, the author defined PBC as "consumer perception of control over a potential transaction, drawn from facilitating conditions that render such control" (p. 2). In other words, the PBC variable indicated those who had the ability, knowledge and/or resources to access the webpage. Pavlou's results revealed that *trust in the Web retailer* had a direct relationship to *perceived behavioral control* (PBC), which may then lead to an online transaction (Pavlou, 2002). According to Pavlou, 2002, p.3), the association between trust in the internet and PBC is:

> Trust is the expectation that the Web retailer will perform particular activities, irrespective of the consumer's ability to control the retailer's actions. Hence, trust gives consumers some control over the transaction since the actions of the Web retailer are expectable. Therefore, trust increases the amount of control the consumer has over the situation through having confidence in the Web retailer's behavioral actions. The relationship between trust and control is justified by placing trust in the Web retailer in the nomological structure of the TPB as a control belief. Hence, trust has a positive effect on perceived behavioral control over online transactions.

Although this suggests a positive relationship between the two constructs (trust and PBC), a major weakness of Pavlou's study is that no detailed explanation is given for how the author statistically analyzed the association between trust and PBC. He does say that multiple regression was used, but statistical results are not provided or comprehensively discussed in the research findings. Thus, it is important to investigate statistically whether Pavlou's assertion is applicable to SeaWorld Park to determine whether trust in the "Blackfish" documentary relates to PBC, and, if so, how the two constructs lead to an intention to visit the park. According to Ajzen (1985), PBC variable indicates "resources" and "opportunities" to perform a behavior. If

this notion is correct, the current researcher defines “resources” as the ability to pay the entrance fee and the “opportunities” as the availability and time to visit SeaWorld Park. The current study, therefore, hypothesizes that:

> *Hypothesis 2c: Higher trust in the media affects a potential visitor’s perceived behavioral control.*
>
> *Hypothesis 3c: Perceived behavioral control has a substantial impact on intention to visit SeaWorld Park.*

CHAPTER IV

METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to propose the methods to be used in order to examine the hypotheses in earlier chapters. The chapter's first section, which outlines the design of the online survey, provides a step by step procedure of the process for data collection. A flowchart of the research procedures is presented in Figure 9 and a detailed explanation of the proposed statistical techniques are provided in the last section.

Research Design

To determine the factors that affect visitor intentions to visit SeaWorld Park, the study used a quantitative research method. Variables including news credibility (i.e., trust in the media,) attitude towards behavior, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and intentions to visit will be statistically analyzed. For this study, an online panel survey was distributed to members who have registered at Amazon, an online retailer. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a crowdsourcing internet marketplace managed by Amazon, allows researchers to design and distribute surveys online. Such surveys, now commonplace, have been used by academic researchers from multiple disciplines (Couper, 2000; Wright, 2005).

Decades ago, traditional surveys, which included face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews and paper-and-pencil surveys (Van Gelder, Bretveld & Roeleveld, 2010), were the preferred methods for collecting and analyzing marketing data. However, their principal disadvantage, according to Greenlaw and Brown-Welty (2009), is that they have a lower response rate compared to web-based surveys and are time and labor intensive. A further

disadvantage is that, once the data is collected, traditional surveys need manual coding (Greenlaw & Brown-Welty, 2009), which is also time-consuming.

Unlike their paper-based cousins, online surveys enable researchers to collect samples from geographically diverse populations relatively quickly (Wright, 2005). As long as participants have access to the internet, researchers can reach global respondents via email and invite them to the survey's website (Ilieva, Baron & Healey, 2002). Ilieva et al. (2002) emphasized that web-based surveys reduce data collection time and make possible the collection of large data samples compared to paper-based surveys. Furthermore, web-based surveys often have fewer coding errors than traditional surveys, because data is entered electronically and saved automatically (Van Gelder et al., 2010). A further benefit is that online surveys improve research validity, alerting respondents, for example, if they leave check-boxes empty or answer questions inappropriately. (A birthdate, for example, giving 1900 as birth year might be flagged as invalid.)

To conduct an online survey, researchers provide detailed information to the survey company and explain the specific demographic they are targeting. In this way, the company can find the best target population from their database since online panel members are pre-recruited (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Online surveys have been used by many social scientists and are considered a trustworthy software system for academic research (Van Gelder, Bretveld & Roeleveld, 2010).

According to Huff and Tingley (2015), MTurk has abundant survey panel members in its database which are systematically organized into different demographic categories. Since MTurk has sufficient resources to reach the targeted group, the company will initially contact its panel

members to invite them to take the survey. Once panel members accept the invitation and complete the survey, they receive a small stipend as compensation (Litman, Robinson & Rosenzweig, 2015).

Empirical evidence shows that when participants are compensated for taking surveys, such surveys have generally higher completion and response rates (Deutskens, Ruyter, Wetzels & Oosterveld, 2004), which can produce better overall data (Litman et al., 2015). It is important to note, however, that providing incentives to respondents does not guarantee data improvement. In some situations, overpaying or underpaying panel members can negatively affect data quality and response rates. According to Litman et al., (2015), minimally compensating India-based participants substantially reduced data quality, whereas US-based data quality was unchanged. Other research has found that overpaying panel members does not improve data quality (Bohannon, 2011). Bohannon (2011) suggests that an ideal compensation range is between 15 and 50 cents for a 10-minute survey.

It might be concluded, therefore, that to use an online survey for a study, the researcher should be cautious about selecting the population sample and, above all, about determining appropriate compensation. Due to the present study targeting US-based participants only, and the fact that US panel members from MTurk are known to take ownership of the survey (Litman et al., 2015), it is reasonable to target US-based panel members from MTurk to collect reliable data. To compensate its participants, the present study paid 45 cents for a 10-minute survey, within the range suggested by Bohannon (2011).

While the literature cited above confirms the advantages of using an online survey, it is important to note several disadvantages associated with their use. According to Fan and Yan

(2010), one major drawback of online surveys is that not everyone has an equal chance of participating. Potential participants in a given geographic area where network coverage is not available might lack the opportunity to participate. Furthermore, excluding non-internet users can create coverage bias.

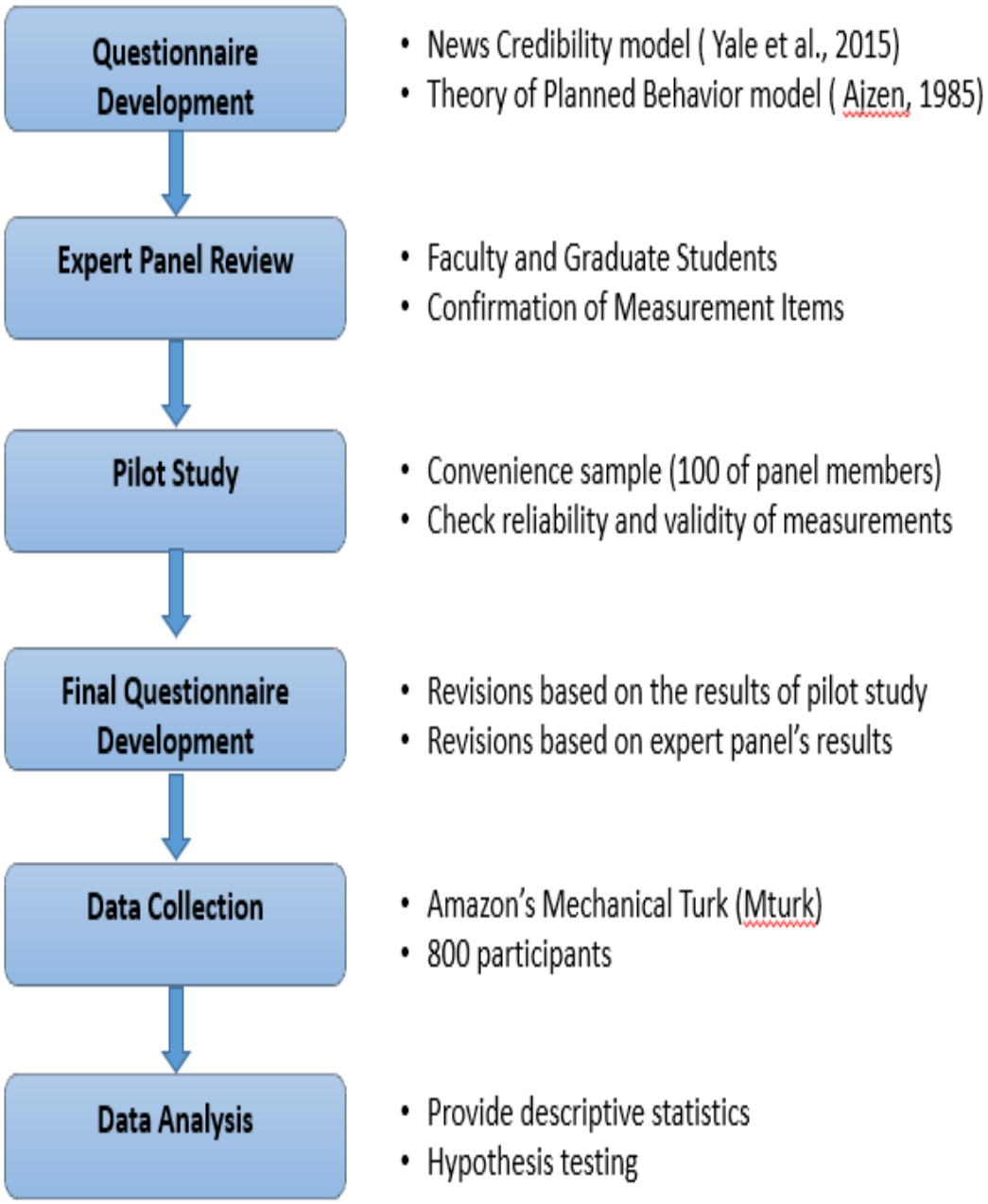
Critics also argue that web-based surveys are not always a user-friendly tool for populations based on age. According to Porter (2004), younger generations, especially college students, are more familiar with computers and the internet than older generations. Indeed, seniors who are unfamiliar with either might prefer pencil-based surveys to web-based platforms.

Still another potential problem with web-based surveys is self-reporting and self-selection bias. According to Zhou, Dai and Zhang (2007), self-reported data is subject to human psychological frailties, the "fallibility of people's memories, idiosyncratic scale use, and even deliberate alteration through social desirability biases" (p. 53). They further suggested that self-selection bias "leads to non-probability sampling errors or bias in collecting data" (p.53).

However, despite these disadvantages, it is believed that web-based surveys are a valuable research tool and appropriate for the current study due to their advantages of sufficient coverage, convenience, ease of data entry and analysis. Many tourism researchers have used similar panels to target a variety of populations to understand travel behavior (see Hung & Petrick, 2010; 2011, Li & Petrick, 2010, Xiang, Wang, O'Leary& Fesenmaier, 2015; Kim & Stepchenkova, 2015). Based on the above review of the literature and the success of past researchers using online surveys, a panel study, using MTurk was considered appropriate for the current study.

FIGURE 9

Research Procedure for the current study



Pilot Test

Before distributing the survey through MTurk, the researcher conducted a pre-test survey to better understand how perceived level of trust in the media potentially leads to visit intention to SeaWorld Park. To this end, the study initially collected data from 32 participants through Qualtrics, an online survey program. Since the university has a campus site-license for Qualtrics, the researcher was able to conduct and analyze the pilot at no expense. The expert panel consisted of university professors and Ph.D. students specializing in tourism. Based on the experts' suggestions and feedback from the pilot test, the test's reliability and validity was assessed and modified. This process was finessed to improve the survey's flow, re-organize its structure, clarify meanings, and eliminate wordiness.

For example, regarding the question of political typology, several comments recommended including options for people who do not identify with either party (i.e., liberal or conservative) or who identify as independent. The current researcher modified the original question and added an "unaffiliated" option to the question. Additionally, the survey added a question about political organization, so that panel members had more options from which to select (e.g., democrat, republican, green, libertarian, unaffiliated). Several comments similarly requested a clarification of the abbreviation SWP (SeaWorld Park) since the acronym is not generally known to the public. Some suggested removing it, a comment with which the author agreed, and the change was made accordingly.

Based on expert feedback, the initial study was revised and re-organized, and the newly designed pilot survey deployed to panel members at MTurk. Since those who work for MTurk are compensated, participants in this pilot test (100) received $0.35 per test item. The primary

reason for an additional test prior to the actual survey was to ensure the survey's reliability and validity.

To measure the reliability of the findings, Cronbach's alpha was calculated (with a cut-off score of .70.) According to Nunally and Bernstein (1994), Cronbach's coefficient alpha higher than .70 is considered acceptable. Thus, in accordance with this calculation, those items of .70 or greater were selected. The five factors (media credibility, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, behavioral intentions) were all considered reliable as their Cronbach alphas were above .90.

To assess its validity, this study used (a) face, (b) convergent, and (c) discriminant validity: face validity was measured during the pre-test. The researcher provided all measures (i.e., news credibility, ATB, SN, PBC, future behavioral intentions scale) to experts (i.e., professors and doctoral students) and ask what they thought the scale measured. With face validity, the study was able to assess whether or not experts believe that the measure is assessing what the present author believes it is assessing.

To examine convergent validity, Garver and Mentzer (1999) suggested analyzing "the overall fit of the measurement model and the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of the estimated parameters between latent variables and their indicators" (p. 45). According to Garver and Mentzer (1999), the ideal score for convergent validity is .70.

Discriminant validity was also verified to ensure that the measurement scales were not related to other measures. To measure discriminant validity, exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was used. While the majority of items were placed according to the appropriate factors, three items of subjective norms construct were found to cross-load on different factors.

Specifically, two items cross-loaded on attitude while one did so on behavioral intentions. This indicates that three items were cross loading on different factors—although this may be due to the low sample size. According to Comrey and Lee (2013), 50-100 samples are considered very poor. To be considered 'fair' for factor analysis, the authors say that the minimum sample size should be at least 200, with 300-500 considered 'very good'. Since the current study recruited only 100 participants for the pilot test, the sample size must be considered very poor. Therefore, the three cross loading items were not deleted but remained in the survey. After confirming the reliability and validity test, the final version was extracted from Qualtrics, transposed to MTurk and given to the panel.

Survey Flow

The first part of the survey asked all respondents to give their age, familiarity with the "Blackfish" documentary, past travel experience to SeaWorld Park, personal thoughts about SeaWorld Park, political typology, political identification, news network preference, news credibility (pre-test), and future behavioral intentions (pre-test).

Having completed the survey's first part, participants were randomly assigned to one of four groups. Those in the second, third and fourth groups watched either positive, negative or positive/negative media coverage about SeaWorld Park while participants in the first group watched no video at all (no treatment group).

In the second part of the survey, the researcher provided a list of items related to *news credibility* (post-test), *attitude towards behavior*, *subjective norms*, *perceived behavioral controls* and *future behavioral intentions* (post-test) to visit SeaWorld Park. Finally, participants were asked to provide demographic information. Specific details are given below.

Procedure

This study utilized an online survey approved by the IRB (Institutional Review Board). Before submitting the proposal to the IRB (Institutional Review Board), the researcher contacted SeaWorld Park for permission to research an issue that concerns their business. The researcher sent an initial email to the former president of SeaWorld Park, San Antonio, proposing the study's purpose and stating the anticipated results. A follow-up email was sent to the current Chief Operating Officer (COO), who agreed to the researcher's request. Although SeaWorld Park approved the study, the company stated that it was unable to support or be involved, directly or indirectly, in the study, particularly if it concerns, as it does, the "Blackfish" documentary. Therefore, data collection was proceeded independently of SeaWorld Park, although the research results will be provided to the company upon completion.

By conducting an online survey through MTurk, the researcher anticipates collecting a large amount of data relatively quickly. Once the software is installed, the current survey provided a link to the online panelists who are registered at MTurk, and the researcher asked participants to complete a consent form before beginning the survey. Online panels were informed that participating in this study is voluntary and will have no effect on their MTurk status if they decline. The current researcher explained the study's title, purpose, and how to contact the authorized representative for further information.

In the survey's first part, all participants were asked a screening question: (1) Are you 18 years old or over? If they answered "No", the survey was terminated. Those who were 18 and over were the main target and were asked to complete the rest of the online survey. After completing the screening process, eligible survey panel members were asked several basic

questions: (2) Have you seen the "Blackfish" documentary? (3) Have you visited SeaWorld Park in the last 12 months? These were Yes/No questions. Participants were then asked to complete the level of familiarity question: (4) How familiar are you with the "Blackfish" documentary? This single item question was placed on a 7-point rating scale from 1 (not at all familiar) to 7 (extremely familiar).

Respondents were then asked: (5) During the last three years, how many times did you travel to SeaWorld Park? (6) When was your last visit? The respondents' opinions of SeaWorld Park were measured by asking: (7) What is your opinion of SeaWorld Park? This item was placed on a 7-point scale from 1 (not at all favorable) to 7 (extremely favorable).

Political typology and political self-identification were measured by asking: (8) Where do you fit in the political typology? This was measured on a scale of liberal to conservative. Additionally, political self-identification was measured by asking: (9) Which political organization do you most identify with? This item was measured with multiple-choice: (a) Democrat, (b) Republican, (c) Green, (d) Libertarian, and (e) Unaffiliated. Finally, trust in television news networks was measured by asking: (10) Which news organization do you think is the most trustworthy? This item was also measured with a multiple-choice question: (a) ABC, (b) CNN, (c) NBC, (d) CBS, (e) MSNBC, (f) FOX, and (g) Other. Respondents were asked to complete questions regarding (11) media credibility and their (12) intention to visit SeaWorld Park.

Media credibility was measured by asking: "Thinking about the mass media (e.g., television networks) in general, please indicate whether you think they are…" This construct contained nine items which included: *honest, up-to-date, balanced, current, report the whole*

story, accurate, timely, and *objective*. These were rated on a 5-point rating scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Future behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park was measured by determining: *The likelihood that I will visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years, I intend to visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years, and the possibility for me to travel to SeaWorld Park within the next 2 years is…* Again, the study used a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely).

Once panel members had successfully completed the first section, participants were randomly assigned one of four conditions:

Group A: No Video Footage

Group B: Positive Video Footage of SeaWorld Park

Group C: Negative Video Footage of SeaWorld Park

Group D: Positive and Negative Video Footage of SeaWorld Park

Participants assigned to Group A watched no video, whereas respondents in Group B watched a positive advertising video created by SeaWorld Park. Those exposed to the third condition (Group C) watched a negative storyline about SeaWorld Park retrieved from the "Blackfish" documentary. Finally, those exposed to the fourth condition (Group D) watched both positive and negative storylines about SeaWorld Park. Each video ran for just over one and a half minutes.

After viewing their respective videos, participants in Groups B, C and D were asked to answer one manipulation check question (true or false) about the video they watched. Since respondents assigned to Group A watched no video, they received no manipulation check during

the survey. Respondents assigned to Group B (positive media coverage) watched a one-minute SeaWorld Park advertising video and one manipulation check was provided for follow-up: "Based on the video clip you just saw, SeaWorld decided to stop breeding orcas (killer whales)." The manipulation check was a true or false question.

Participants in Group C (negative media coverage) watched a one-minute "Blackfish" documentary and were then asked to answer the manipulation check: "Based on the video clip you just saw, a trainer at the SeaWorld Park died after being attacked by a killer whale." The manipulation check was a true or false question. Finally, participants in Group D watched both positive and negative videos and had two manipulation checks. The latter checks were the same as those for Group B and Group C.

After the manipulation check was completed, the questionnaire's second part measured news credibility (post-test), the respondents' attitude toward SeaWorld Park (ATB), subjective norms (SN) and perceived behavioral control (PBC). Panel members were asked about their future behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park (post-test). After completing all scales, respondents were asked to identify their demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, year of birth, education level, number of children, and zip code).

For gender, respondents checked either 'male' or 'female' and only the year of birth (not the date of birth) was recorded. Number of children was operationalized by asking "How many children under 18 years live in your household?" Education was operationalized by providing six categories: less than high school, completed high school, some college-not completed, completed college, vocational/technical training, and post-graduate (completed or not completed). Finally, zip codes determined the participants' geographic location.

Instrument Development

This study used a 7-point Likert-type and semantic differential scale for rating attitude. Both measurement scales have been applied to many studies in the tourism field (see, Chen & Tsai, 2007; Han, Lee & Lee, 2011; Park, Hsieh & Lee, 2017; Quintal, Lee & Soutar, 2010). A Likert-type scale "requires an individual to respond to a series of statements by indicating whether he or she strongly agrees (SA), agrees (A), is undecided (U), disagrees (D), or strongly disagrees (SD)" (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009, p. 150). Generally, Likert-type scales contain 5-point scales, but some researchers prefer to use 7-point scales (Croasmum & Ostrom, 2011). Semantic differential scale asks respondents to choose between two bipolar adjectives, such as "Unenjoyable-Enjoyable," "Negative-Positive," or "Boring-Fun."

Variables Measured in the Study

The questionnaire was designed to measure the following constructs: *news credibility (i.e., trust in the media)* developed by Yale, Jensen, Carcioppolo, Sun & Liu (2015), *theory of planned behavior* model (e.g., ATB, SN, PBC) developed by Ajzen (1985), behavioral intentions developed by Lam and Hsu (2006).

Media Credibility (Trust in the Media)

Media credibility (trust in the media) was measured by adapting the scale developed by Yale et al., (2015) and asking: "Thinking about the mass media (e.g., television networks) in general, please indicate whether you think they are…" The answer to the question contained 9 items: balanced, report the whole story, objective, accurate, honest, believable, up-to-date, current, and timely. These 9 items were placed on a 5-point Likert type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Attitude Towards Behavior

Ajzen's (1988, 1991) theory of planned behavior scale was used to measure participants' attitude toward SeaWorld Park. Respondents were asked: "All things considered, I think visiting SeaWorld Park would be…" The response choice included unenjoyable-enjoyable, negative-positive, boring-fun, unpleasant-pleasant, and unfavorable-favorable and were placed on a 5-point Likert type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Subjective Norms

Ajzens (1988, 1991) theory of planned behavior scale was employed to measure respondents' subjective norms. Respondents were asked: "Most people I know would choose SeaWorld Park as a travel destination", "People who are important to me would think I _____ visit SeaWorld Park", from 1 (definitely should not) to 7 (definitely should) and "People who are important to me would _____ of my visit to SeaWorld Park", from 1 (disapprove) to 7 (approve).

Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control was measured by adapting the scale developed by Casalo, Flavian and Guinaliu (2010) study. Their three items: "Participating SeaWorld Park is within my control", "I would be able to participate SeaWorld Park" and "The decision to participate SeaWorld Park is entirely mine" were placed on a 7-point Likert type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Behavioral Intentions

Participants' behavioral intentions were assessed by using Lam and Hsu's (2006) behavioral intention scale. Their three items include: "The likelihood to visit SeaWorld Park in

the next 2 years", "The possibility for me to travel to SeaWorld Park within the next 2 years is", and "Intend to visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years". These were placed on 7-point scales from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely).

Selection of the Subjects and Data Collection

Cohen (1992) argued that power analysis recommends a significance level of .05 with a minimum sample size of 194 as adequate. Other researchers such as MacCalum et al. (1996) suggest a minimum sample size of 200. For SEM studies, Iacobucci (2009) claims that to perform the SEM model well, the ideal sample size should be "$n > 200$." The current research, drawing on the extensive range of sources cited above, collected a survey population of 200 for each condition. Because the panel members in this research were randomly assigned to one of four different conditions, a total of 800 respondents were surveyed.

The online survey was conducted from August 20-21, 2018 and given to 800-panel members using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a crowdsourcing internet marketplace managed by Amazon that allows researchers to design and distribute surveys online. Qualified participants were determined before taking the survey. The criteria for participation were that panel members were US citizens aged 18 years or older. Thus, those who were non-US citizens or under 18 were rejected from the study. The current research also ensured that qualified panel members answered and saved all questions. To achieve this, a technical mechanism was installed so that panel members could not move on to the next question unless they had answered all applicable questions. The cutoff date was three days from the beginning of the survey's email invitation. Two days were needed to collect the 800 completed surveys, but once the number of

panel members reached 800, the MTurk program automatically saved the data and closed the online survey. On average, the survey took approximately 13 minutes to complete.

Preliminary Data Analysis

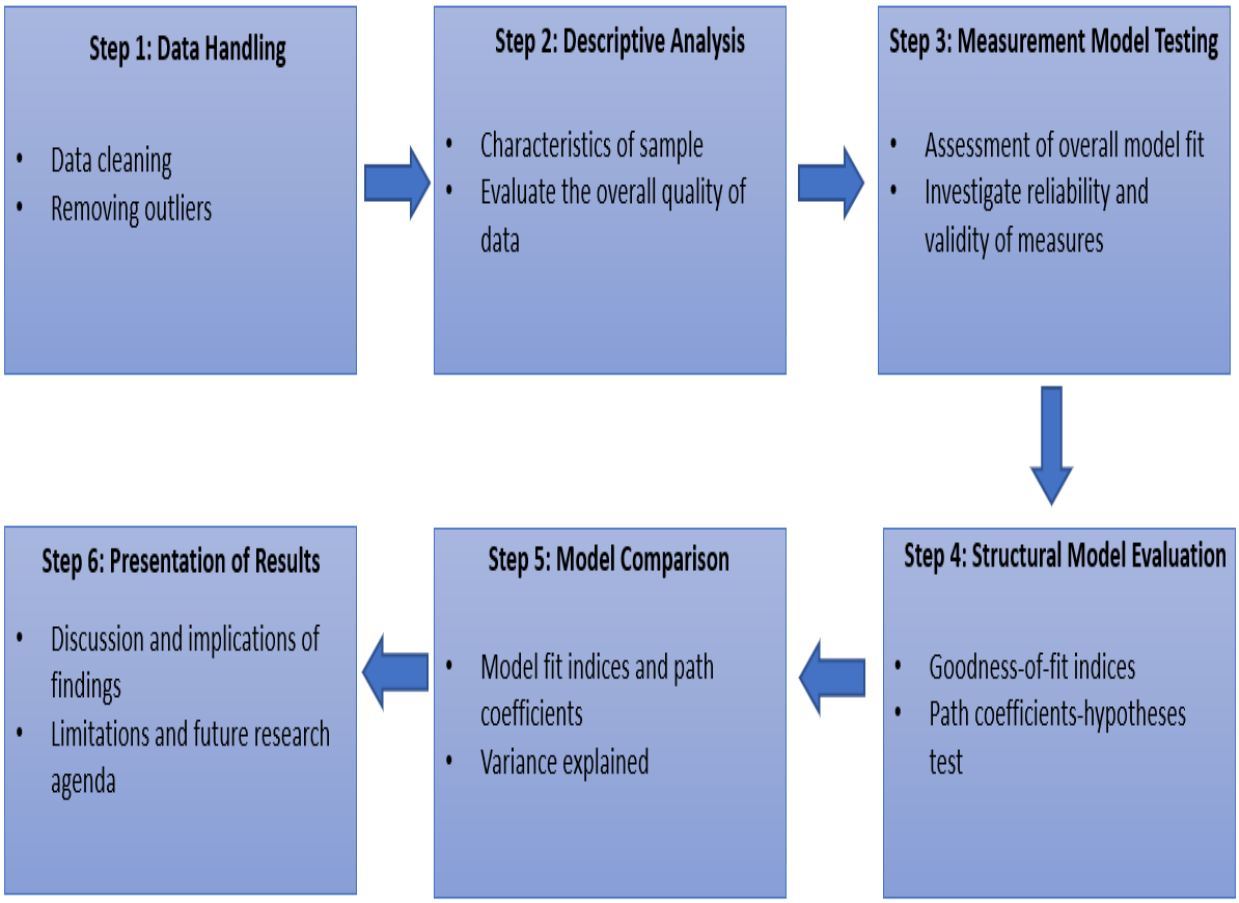
Various researchers emphasize the importance of preliminary data analysis before conducting SEM analysis (Kline, 2005; Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow & King, 2006; Ullman 2001. According to Schreiber et al. (2006), three key technical issues must be considered in SEM: (a) sample size, (b) missing data, and (c) software program and estimation methods accordingly. The sample size must have an appropriate amount of data to randomly distribute the sample. Pohlmann (2004) notes that having a large amount of data is important because it enables the researcher to compare results between different groups. Missing data also needs to be considered carefully by examining normality, outliers, linearity, and multicollinearity as suggested by Schreiber et al. (2006). Finally, the type of software used can be significant since different programs have different features. Estimation methods are influenced by the size of the sample, normality, and the dependence of errors (Ullman, 2001).

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis procedures for this research included six major steps, from data handling, descriptive analysis, measurement model testing, structural model evaluation and preliminary data analysis, model comparison to the presentation of results (Table 1). In particular, the study used SEM (Structural Equation Modeling), SPSS statistics software, and AMOS 18.0 to test the hypotheses.

TABLE 1

Major Steps Data Analysis



Data Handling

Prior to analyzing the data, the data were cleaned to remove outliers from the survey. During the data cleaning process, the study removed respondents who failed to answer the manipulation check question. Moreover, panel members who inserted non-US zip codes and people under the age of 18 were eliminated from the data. Detailed information is provided in the data analysis section.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were analyzed to understand the participants' background and for appropriate generalizing. To check non-response bias, the study compared early and late respondents across time. Demographic sample characteristics were cross-validated with the US Census (2018) to confirm no sampling bias. A detailed information is provided in the non-response bias check section

Measurement Model Testing

After completing the descriptive analysis, measurement model testing was performed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test for goodness of fit. In addition, reliability and validity of a measurement model were analyzed and presented in the measurement proprieties section.

Structural Model Evaluation

To test the majority of hypotheses, this research used structural equation modeling (SEM), which is a multivariate statistical tool that uses a confirmatory approach to analyze certain phenomena. According to Ullman (1996), SEM models are closely related to exploratory analysis and multiple regression. Typically, SEM is used by social scientists when theoretical constructs cannot be measured directly (Byrne, 2016).

There are two common variables in SEM: *observed* and *unobserved* variables. Observed variables are also known as 'measured', 'indicator', and 'manifest' and are visualized as a rectangle or square in SEM research model (Schreiber et al., 2006). Observed variables are variables that can be directly measured. Unobserved variables cannot be directly examined. In SEM research, unobserved variables are termed latent variables (Schreiber et al., 2006).

According to Schreiber and colleagues, unobserved variables are typically visualized as a circle in SEM models. Several examples of latent variables are found in many fields of study. In psychology, for example, "self-concept" and "motivation" are known as latent variables. "Powerlessness" is a latent variable in sociology just as "verbal ability" is a latent variable in education and "capitalism" in economics. None of these variables can be observed directly (Byrne, 2016). The constructs in the current research—attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions—were operationalized as latent constructs. Since they were not measured directly, SEM analysis enables users to bridge between the sets of observed variables with one that is latent.

Byrne (2016) also maintains that the best way to analyze the relationship between observed and latent variables in SEM is to conduct factor analysis. There are two basic approaches to factor analysis: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). EFA is required especially when the linkage between observed and latent variables is unknown or not established by previous research (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). CFA, on the other hand, is used when the relationship between observed and latent variables has been verified in previous research (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Because the current study adopted established scales from existing research, CFA was conducted.

CFA was conducted using the SEM model and AMOS 18.0 to observe the hypotheses and to test whether each hypothesis was supported. The primary reason for conducting CFA was to test the model's fitness. According to Schreiber, James, Nora, Stage, Barlow and King (2006). Comparative fit index (CFI) values range from 0 to 1, with higher values being the best fit for CFI. Typically, the rule of thumb for CFI is .95 or higher. Furthermore, Tucker-Lewis index

(TLI) values also range from 0 to 1, and the rule of thumb for TLI is .95 or greater for a good model fit. Like the TLI, the rule of thumb for Incremental Fit index (IFI) is also .95 or higher for a good model fit. Lastly, the rule of thumb for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is < .06 to 08 with confidence interval. Figure 10 shows the major fit indices for evaluating structural models.

Figure 10: Major fit indices

Comparative fit		Comparison to a baseline (independence) or other model	
Normed fit index	NFI	≥ .95 for acceptance	
Incremental fit index	IFI	≥ .95 for acceptance	
Tucker–Lewis index	TLI	≥ .95 can be 0 > TLI > 1 for acceptance	0.96
Comparative fit index	CFI	≥ .95 for acceptance	0.95
Relative noncentrality fit index	RNI	≥ .95, similar to CFI but can be negative, therefore CFI better choice	
Parsimonious fit			
Parsimony-adjusted NFI	PNFI	Very sensitive to model size	
Parsimony-adjusted CFI	PCFI	Sensitive to model size	
Parsimony-adjusted GFI	PGFI	Closer to 1 the better, though typically lower than other indexes and sensitive to model size	
Other			
Goodness-of-fit index	GFI	≥ .95 Not generally recommended	
Adjusted GFI	AGFI	≥ .95 Performance poor in simulation studies	
Hoelter .05 index		Critical N largest sample size for accepting that model is correct	
Hoelter .01 index		Hoelter suggestion, N = 200, better for satisfactory fit	
Root mean square residual	RMR	Smaller, the better; 0 indicates perfect fit	
Standardized RMR	SRMR	≤ .08	
Weighted root mean residual	WRMR	< .90	< .90
Root mean square error of approximation	RMSEA	< .06 to .08 with confidence interval	< .06

*adapted from Schreiber, James, Nora, Stage, Barlow and King (2006).

Model Comparison & Presentation of Results

After completing the confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis, this study compared the results of each group using standard regression coefficients (beta weights). The practical and theoretical implications of the results are discussed in Chapter VI.

Synopsis of the Chapter

In this chapter, the researcher explained the methods used in the online survey and presented a brief overview of the data collection process. Pilot test results were also provided. The last part of the section discussed the statistical techniques used to examine the hypotheses.

CHAPTER V

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. The first is to provide the demographic characteristics of current respondents, and the second discusses outliers, linearity, and normality assumptions that needed to be investigated prior to the formal analysis. Moreover, a brief overview of the reliability and validity tests of each scale is presented.

Sample Characteristics

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the online survey link was posted on the MTurk website in August 2018. A total of 1,854 panel-members visited the link and 800 respondents participated in the survey for a response rate of 43.14%. It is important to note that there is no agreed-upon minimum acceptable response rate for such surveys (Lindemann, 2018). In general, previous research has indicated that the average response rate for typical online surveys is 33% (Nulty, 2008), while a private survey company, *FluidSurveys*, revealed recently that its company's average response rate was 24.8% (FluidSurveys, 2014). These previous results reveal that responses rates vary, and suggest the current study had a good response rate. The reason for this may be that all panel members received a guaranteed monetary reward after completing the survey successfully, and this incentive might have increased the survey response rate.

Table 2 shows the respondents' demographic characteristics. The gender ratio was relatively balanced, as 53.3% of the respondents were men and 46.7% percent were women. The respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 87 and more than 70% were less than 40, which indicates that the majority of the respondents were born between 1978 and 2000.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	324	53.3%
	Female	285	46.7%
	Total	609	100%
Education	Less than High School	3	0.50%
	Completed High School	59	9.7%
	Some College, not completed	128	21.0%
	Completed College	318	52.2%
	Vocational/Technical training	25	4.1%
	Postgraduate work started or completed	76	12.5%
	Total	609	100%
Number of Children	0	293	48.1%
	1	149	24.5%
	2	103	16.9%
	3	42	6.9%
	4	15	2.5%
	5	6	1.0%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.2%
	Total	609	100%
Age	18-30	294	47.9%
	31-40	188	30.5%
	41-50	55	9.7%
	51-60	50	8.1%
	60-70	15	2.6%
	70+	7	1.2%
	Total	609	100%

The survey also asked respondents' the highest level of formal education they had completed. The options ranged from "Less than high school" to "Postgraduate work begun or completed." Only 9.7% reported they completed high school, while 21% reported only some college education. More than half of the survey respondents (52.2%) completed college, 4.1% completed vocational and technical training, and 12.5% reported they began or completed postgraduate

work. Further, nearly half of the respondents (48.1%) had no children, 24.5% had one, and 16.9% had two.

In addition to demographic questions, respondents were asked about their political typology (i.e., liberal or conservative) and identification (i.e., democrat, republican, green, libertarian or unaffiliated), trusted news sources in the US, travel history to SeaWorld Park, number of visits to SeaWorld Park in the last 3 years, and their personal opinion of the Park. The results showed that slightly more than one third (32.7%) of the respondents were Conservatives. The other third (32.3%) self-identified as Liberal. The remainder of the respondents (35.0%) were identified as neutral. When asked to clarify their political identification, 43.3% were Democrats, while 34.8% were Republicans, and the remainder were Green (3.6%), Libertarian (4.8%), or Unaffiliated (13.5%).

Respondents were also asked to select their most trusted news source in the US. Approximately one third (34.8%) selected CNN followed by FOX (15.3%), other (13.1%), ABC (11.3%), NBC (11.3%), CBS (7.7%), and MSNBC (6.4%). More than sixty percent (61.2%) of the participants responded that they had not been to SeaWorld Park during the previous 12 months. When asked to state the number of trips to SeaWorld Park in the past three years, 50.9% indicated 0 visits, while 19.2% answered only once, 14.3% twice, and 15.6% had visited SeaWorld Park more than three times during the last 3 years. Nearly one-half of participants (47.8%) had visited SeaWorld Park between 2014 and 2018. It was also found that nearly half of participants (46%) have watched the Blackfish documentary. Slightly more than one fourth (25.8%) were not familiar with Blackfish documentary while 20% of the participants responded they were very familiar. Approximately 18.9% responded they were moderately familiar with the

documentary. Finally, regarding their personal opinion of SeaWorld Park, 77.5% indicated they had a favorable view of SeaWorld Park, while 22.5% had a negative view.

Data Cleaning

Before analyzing the actual data, the data were cleaned to exclude outliers from the survey. A total of 800-panel members participated in this online survey. During the data cleaning process, 121 respondents were removed because they failed the manipulation check question. Further, 51 respondents who inserted non-US zip codes, and two who claimed to be under 18 also were eliminated from the data. In addition, the investigator had to recode some open-ended questions. For example, one of the survey questions asked, "During the last 3 years, how many times did you travel to SeaWorld Park?" This question asked respondents to answer with a number rather than text. However, some respondents typed "none," or "never" in their survey. Rather than removing these data, the researcher recoded these texts to "0" manually. Respondents also were asked to provide their birth year in four digits. However, 17 respondents inserted unrealistic years, such as "2021," "4444," "1234," etc. Thus, these participants were eliminated from the data. In the same question, it also was found that several participants had indicated their age rather than their four-digit birth year. Rather than removing these data, the researcher subtracted their current age (e.g., 34) from the current year (i.e., 2018) manually to obtain the birth year. After cleaning and revising all of the data, a total of 609 respondents remained and the data were extracted from the MTurk website and entered into SPSS software.

Non-Response Bias Check

Non-response bias has been a cause of concern for many researchers during data collection, because individuals who do not respond may bias the study outcomes (Ewings & Gunnell, 1997, Martikainen, Laaksonen, Piha & Lallukka, 2007; Studer et al., 2013). Several vulnerable populations are difficult to capture during data collection. Racial minority status, socioeconomic status, single adults, households with young children generally have been found to be less likely to participate in a survey (Groves, 2006). If these particular demographic groups are excluded from a random sample, such a study may be non-representative because of non-response bias (Berg, 2005). More importantly, results obtained from a constrained demographic sample group can lead to misinterpretation and conflict when formulating company policies (Rose, Sidle, & Griffith, 2007). Therefore, to achieve a representative study sample, it is crucial to minimize the degree of the non-response bias and encourage different types of people to participate equally in a study.

Various methods have been proposed in the social sciences to improve the response rate. Particularly in traditional face-to-face or household surveys, it has been found that mailing advance letters can increase responses (Groves, 2006). Some other traditional survey methods, such as repeated callbacks (Goyder 1985), using female interviewers (Nealon, 1983), and providing monetary incentives (Church, 1993) also have been found to be associated with higher participation rates.

Among these various tactics, one of the strategies used widely is to provide some sort of incentive (Groves, 2006). Incentives such as postage paid reply envelopes, and monetary and

non-monetary rewards have been found to be effective solutions to non-response problems (Church, 1993; Greer, Chuchinprakarn & Seshadri, 2000; Rose et al., 2007).

Rose et al. (2007) sampled more than 7,000 participants to examine whether monetary incentives might increase response rates. Their results showed that when groups received a prepaid monetary incentive prior to the survey, the response rate increased from 31.7% to 43.5%. The same researchers conducted a follow up study in which they sampled 4,925 new respondents and found that those who received a monetary incentive had a higher response rate (24.9%) than did those who were assigned to the non-incentive group (20.8%). This suggest that guaranteeing monetary rewards helps motivate disinterested respondents to participate in a research survey.

Following the empirical studies described above, this study offered a monetary incentive to help minimize nonresponse bias. Panel members who participated in the survey could redeem the money (USD .45) through the survey company's website. All participants' demographic information was obtained easily because the panel members agreed initially to participate in this study. On the other hand, the demographic information of those members who chose not to take the survey could not be captured. Because the panel members were obtained through a private survey company, its privacy policy prevented the company from releasing non-participants' specific demographic information.

In this case, when respondents and non-respondents cannot be compared, one possible way to evaluate non-response bias is to compare those who responded to the survey early and late. (De Winter, Oldehinkel, Veenstra, Brunnekreef, Verhuist & Ormel, 2005). In this study, non-response bias check was performed by comparing early and late responders' demographic characteristics. Early and late responders were divided into two groups based on the time elapsed

since completion of the survey. Those 367 respondents (ID numbers 1-367) who submitted the survey on August 20th were coded "0" and labeled early responders, while 242 panel members (ID numbers 368-609) who finished the survey on August 21st were labeled late responders (coded "1"). Chi-squared and the independent *t*-tests were performed to compare their characteristics. Chi-squared tests allows one to measure group differences when the variable is nominal (McHugh, 2013), and *t*-tests can be used to compare the means of two continuous variables (Ott & Longnecker, 2015).

This study used Chi-squared tests to examine the differences between early and late responders by comparing their gender, education, and number of children. In addition, independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to compare the means of early and late responders' ages and behavioral intentions. Table 3 presents the summary statistics for the Chi-squared test. No significant differences ($p > .05$) were found between the early and late respondent groups' gender ($\chi 2 = 0.45$, $p = 0.50$), education ($\chi 2 = 3.95$, $p = 0.56$), and number of children ($\chi 2 = 5.81$, $p = 0.45$). Thus, the Chi-squared test identified no response bias.

Table 3

Chi-Squared Comparisons of Early and Late Respondents

Variable	X^2	Df	*P*
Gender	0.45	1	0.50
Education	3.950	5	0.56
Number of Children	5.812	6	0.45

The independent *t*-tests results are summarized in Table 4. As can be seen, when early

and late responders' age and behavioral intention variables were compared, the *t*-tests identified no significant differences ($p > .05$) in the mean scores. Specifically, when the *t*-test was used to compare the two conditions (i.e., early vs. late responders) based on birth year, early responders' average birth year was 1983, and late responders' average birth year also was 1983.

The *t*-test results of the behavioral intention variable also demonstrated no difference between early (M = 11.17, SD = 6.35) and late responders (M = 11.76, SD = 6.13). It is important to remember that the behavioral intention construct includes three items measured on a Likert-type scale. Gliem and Gliem (2003) suggested that constructs measured with these scales and multiple item questions should be combined or summed prior to the data analysis. Following their suggestion, the scores for the three items of behavioral intentions were summed to create a new variable with a total score. As can be seen in the table 4, no significant differences were found ($\chi 2 = -1.12$, $p = 0.26$).

Table 4

t-tests of Early and Late Respondents

Variable	*t*-test	Df	*P*
Age	-0.39	607	0.08
Behavioral Intentions	-1.12	607	0.26

Sampling Bias Check

Conducting online survey research has become a trend in the past decade and is an increasingly popular method of many survey researchers in academia. However, in its infancy researchers were skeptical about web surveys (Andrews et al., 2003; Howard, Rainie & Jones,

2001). The most serious disadvantage of online survey methods, that various scholars have argued, is sampling bias (Fan & Yan, 2010; Porter, 2004; Wright, 2005). During the early period when the internet has used widely, Wright (2005) pointed out that online surveys were accessible only to certain populations, while the majority of the population was non-internet users and thus led to unrepresentative samples. Given that the population of internet users in the US in 2000 was only 95 million (Tech Musings, 2010), Wright's (2005) argument that samples obtained through the internet do not represent the general population was logical.

However, recent data retrieved from the Internet World Stats (2018) revealed that internet users in the US had increased to 3 billion in 2017 with a penetration rate of 95.6%. This evidence shows that the vast majority of US citizens (more than 80% of the total population) use the internet. Therefore, it seems reasonable to claim that samples collected through the internet are now more representative.

Nonetheless, to confirm that this sample was representative, a sampling bias check was conducted by comparing four demographic variables in the sample with the general US population (see Table 5). The US population overall in 2016 and 2017 was obtained from the US Census Bureau. According to the Bureau (2016a), the average percentage of males in the US population was 49%, while the average percentage of females was 51% percent in 2016. It also was found that nearly half (48.6%) of US adult females had no children, while 16.6% had one child, 19.1% had two, and 9.7% had three (US Census Bureau, 2016b). With respect to educational attainment, the US Bureau reported that an average of 20.9% of US citizens had some college, 19% held a bachelor's degree, and 12% had begun or completed post graduate work.

Compared to the US Census data provided above, this sample had a very similar gender ratio, number of children, and educational attainment. Specifically, the gender ratio for the sample was 53% males and 46% females. Similar to the US Census Bureau data (2016b), 48.1% of the respondents in this study reported they had no children, followed by 24.5% with only one child, 16.9% with two, and 6.9% with three. With respect to educational attainment, 21% of these study respondents reported they had only some college, 52.2% held a bachelor's degree, and 12.5% had begun or completed post graduate work. This shows that only the ratio of those with a bachelor's degree was discrepant, but the majority of the statistical results were very similar. Therefore, it is believed the sample is relatively representative of the US sample overall, though it is likely more educated.

Table 5

Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Current Respondents to US Population

	Variable Name	Sample	2016-17 Census Bureau
Gender	Male Female	53.3% 46.7%	49.0% 51.0%
Educational Attainment	Some college only Completed college Began or completed post graduate work	21.0% 52.2% 12.5%	29.0% 19.0% 12.0%
Number of Children	0 1 2 3	48.1% 24.5% 16.9% 6.9%	48.6% 16.6% 19.1% 9.7%
Age	18-30 31-40 41-50	47.9% 30.5% 9.7%	35.0% 22.0% 11.0%

Construct Validity

Various types of techniques have been introduced to measure construct validity. According to Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips (1991), two of the traditional methods that have been used widely in the social sciences is the Multi Trait Multi Method (MTMM) matrix, and correlation matrices. Today, many social scientists also use Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test construct validity.

Construct validity can be described as "…the extent to which an operationalization measures the concept it is supposed to measure" (Bagozzi, et al., 1991, p. 421). Thus, construct validation is a method used to assess the accuracy of the items measured. This evaluation is an important process before data analysis because construct validity helps researchers to ensure that the sub-dimensions of the focal construct do not overlap with other constructs (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011).

Three major types of construct validity were assessed in this study: 1) face validity; 2) discriminant validity, and 3) convergent validity. In the first step, a face validity check was used to ensure that experts specializing in tourism are able to identify what these constructs mean and measure. This process has been employed during the pre-test and the researcher provided all measurement scales to experts (i.e., professors and doctoral students) and asked what they think this scale was measuring. Three professors and four doctoral students were able to identify all scales (i.e., media credibility, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, behavioral intention) and thus, face validity has been confirmed. To assess discriminant validity, the study used a correlation matrix with the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) method. The purpose of discriminant validity is to confirm "…whether results confirming hypothesized structural paths

are real or whether they are a result of statistical discrepancies" (Farell, 2010, p. 2). Finally, to assess convergent validity, the study followed Garver and Mentzer's (1999) guidelines and used SEM to test statistical significance.

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

To evaluate the internal consistency of each construct, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was applied to five factors: media credibility; behavioral intentions; attitude; subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. According to DeVellis' (1991) statistical guidelines, a Cronbach's alpha between 0.65 and 0.70 is minimally acceptable and values greater than 0.70 are considered respectable. Following their suggestions, those items with values of 0.65 or greater were selected. It was found that the Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.68 to 0.97 and all five factors were deemed reliable. The results are shown in Table 6.

Media Credibility was measured based on Yale et al.'s (2015) media credibility scale. The reliability test for their scale was deemed acceptable, as the Cronbach's alpha was 0.91. Behavioral intentions were measured based on Lam and Hsu's (2004) behavioral intentions scale, and they reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 in their study. As shown in table 6, This study's Cronbach's alpha was 0.96. Therefore, the reliability test for behavioral intentions were acceptable. Attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control factors and their Cronbach alphas also were compared with those in Lam and Hsu's (2004) study. Their study found a reliable measure of 0.70 for the five items of the attitude component, 0.92 for the three items of the subjective norm, and 0.83 for the three items of perceived behavioral control. The Cronbach's alphas in this study were 0.96, 0.92, and 0.68, respectively. As the Cronbach's alpha test was calculated with a cut-off score of 0.65, all three factors were deemed acceptable.

TABLE 6
Reliability, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable Name	*A*	Mean	SD
Media Credibility (Trust)	0.90	3.34	1.09
Trust_1 Honest		3.14	1.16
Trust_2 Up-to-Date		3.83	0.92
Trust_3 Balanced		2.95	1.18
Trust_4 Believable		3.32	1.08
Trust_5 Current		3.87	0.92
Trust_6 Reports the whole story		2.91	1.27
Trust_7 Accurate		3.18	1.12
Trust_8 Timely		3.76	0.94
Trust_9 Objective		3.11	1.24
Behavioral Intentions	0.96	3.80	2.16
BI1 The likelihood that I will visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years		3.77	2.14
BI2 I intend to visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years		3.71	2.19
BI3 The possibility that I will visit SeaWorld Park within the next 2 years.		3.93	2.16
Attitude Towards Behavior	0.96	4.83	1.80
ATT1 Unenjoyable – enjoyable		4.94	1.83
ATT2 Negative - Positive		4.82	1.85
ATT3 Boring - Fun		5.10	1.65
ATT4 Unpleasant - Pleasant		4.94	1.81
ATT5 Unfavorable –Favorable		4.89	1.88
Subjective Norms	0.92	4.53	1.76
SN1 Most people I know would choose SeaWorld Park as a travel destination		4.42	1.78
		4.46	1.78
SN2 People who are important to me think I should visit SeaWorld Park		4.73	1.72
SN3 People who are important to me would approve of my visit to SeaWorld Park			
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.68	5.78	1.39
PBC1 Visiting SeaWorld Park is within my control		5.74	1.33
PBC2 In the future, I will be able to visit SeaWorld Park		5.72	1.62
PBC3 The decision to visit SeaWorld Park is entirely mine		5.90	1.22

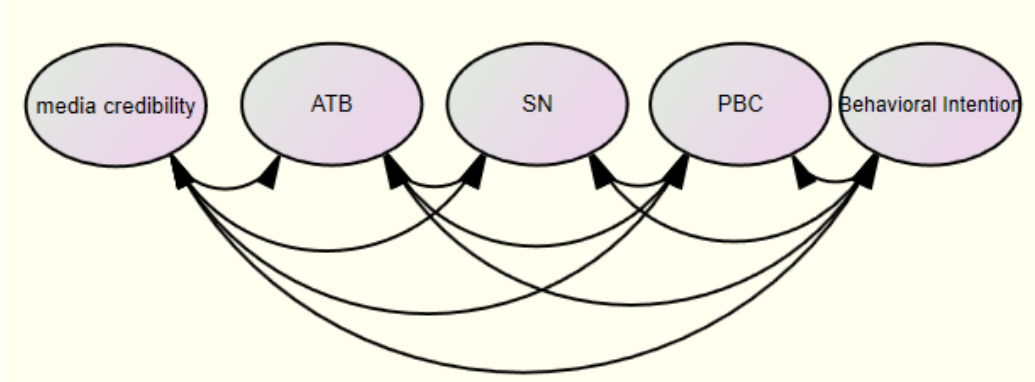
CHAPTER VI

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

This chapter discusses the statistical procedures used to analyze the hypothesized model. To examine the hypothesized factors, structural equation modeling (SEM), SPSS statistics software and AMOS 18.0 were employed. As a first step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to examine the measurement of the five factors: media credibility, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions.

Confirmatory factor analysis is a statistical method widely-used to verify how well observed variables represent their respective constructs (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow & King, 2006). Its primary purpose is to test the reliability of the measured variables and to verify unique variances, factor loadings and modification indexes (Schreiber et al., 2006). The hypothesized factors were then examined to check covariance. Figure 11 indicates the CFA measurement model including covariance between the factors.

FIGURE 11: CFA MEASUREMENT MODEL



After this, goodness-of-fit statistics and modification indexes were examined to help ensure that all measurements were acceptable. Initial results of the CFA revealed a poor model fit with x^2=1303.219 (N=609), p<.001, CFI=.911, IFI= .911, TLI= .898 and RMSEA=.090. It was detected that one item of media credibility construct (e.g., "Current") and one of perceived behavioral control construct (e.g., "In the future, I will be able to visit SeaWorld Park") had the lowest loading values of .52 and .67 respectively. Because low loading items might be a concern prior to SEM analysis, this issue was discussed with an expert in tourism SEM research (Kyle, 2018). Based on his suggestion, one item ("Current") of media credibility with a score of .52 was deleted and one item under perceived behavioral control construct (e.g., "In the future, I will be able to visit SeaWorld Park") with a score of .67 were removed. After eliminating the two items, the model fit slightly improved (x^2=911. 530 (N=609), p<.001, CFI=.937, IFI= .937, TLI= .926 and RMSEA=.082.

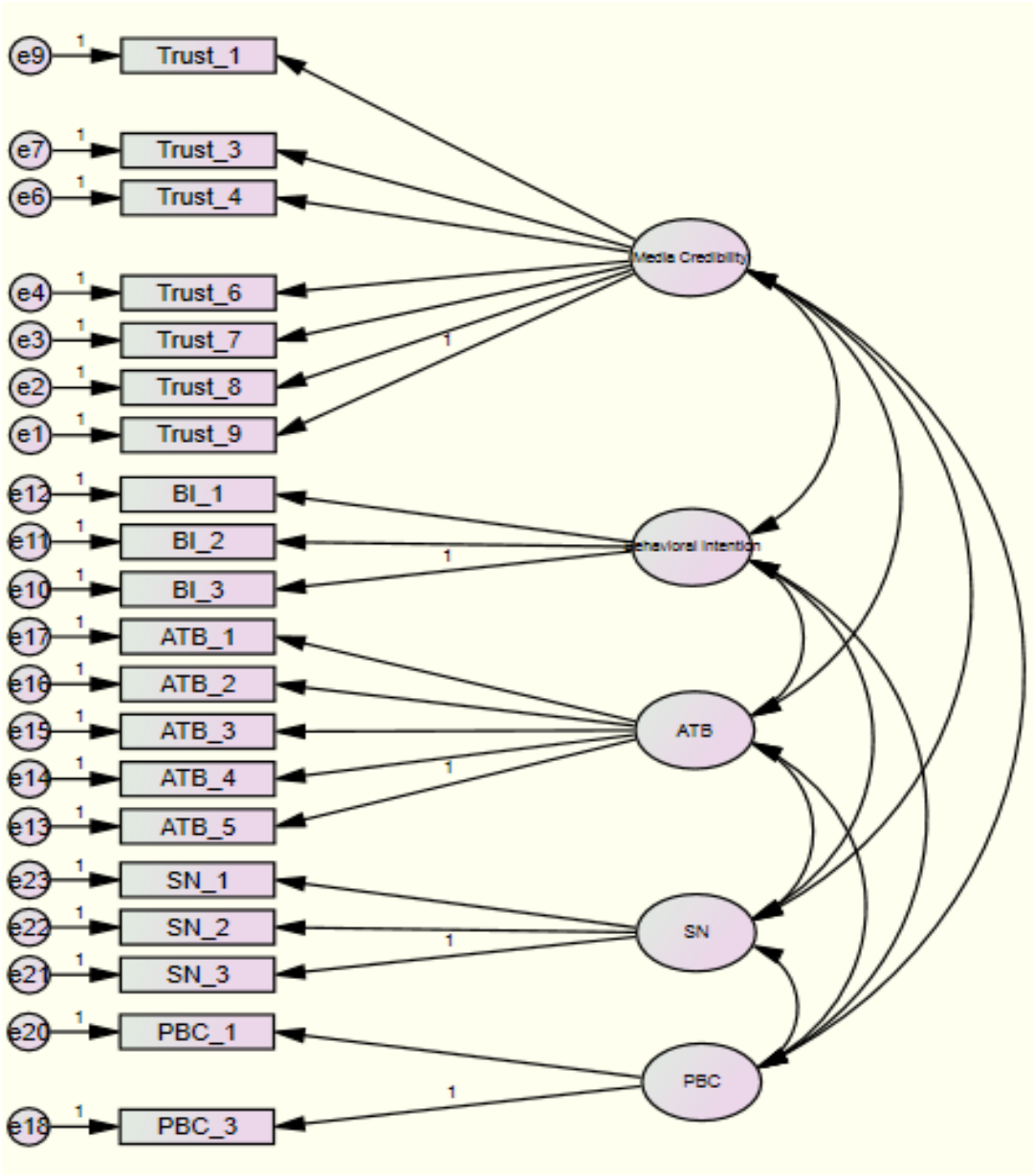
However, the model fit indices shown above were still determined to not be a good fit. Further discussion with Kyle (2018) resulted in the suggestion of examining the modification indices based on guidelines by Byrne, Shavelson & Muthen's (1989). This method is known to improve the model fit by drawing a covariance between two observed variables with the highest error terms within the same latent construct (Byrne, 2016).

Some scholars argue that any modification of a model should be supported by empirical and logical evidence (Hermida, 2015). In our case, the evidence shows that two variables from media credibility construct (e.g., "Honest" and "Up-to-Date") had high-modification indices with a value of 189.778. This indicates that the two items should be correlated since they have the highest values among the observed variables. While it would be methodologically sound to

covary the items, the meaning of the variables— “Honest” and “Up-To-Date”— do not, at face value, make logical sense to covary. The covariance did not make logical sense, as despite the variables falling under the same construct (media credibility), they have distinctly different meanings. It was hence advised by Kyle (2018) to pull out the variable (Trust_2 = “Up-To-Date”) with the lowest factor loading score of .46, instead of adding a covariance between the error terms e8 (Trust_2 = “Up-To-Date”) and e9 (Trust_1 = “Honest”).

It is important to note that the media credibility construct is still being developed, with most credibility or trust measurement models focused on the human subject rather than on the media (Yale et al., 2015). There are, as a result, still concerns about the media credibility construct. For this reason, deleting an item makes more sense than adding covariance between two variables that show no correlation. After the three items were deleted, the fit indices were considered to be a good fit with x^2=517.32 (N=609), p<.001, CFI=.968, IFI= .968, TLI= .962 and RMSEA=.061. Figure 12 shows the overall measurement model for the current study, while Table 7 displays the resultant goodness of fit indices.

FIGURE 12 Overall Measurement Model



Note: Trust_5 (Current), Trust_2 (Up-To-Date) and PBC_2 (In the future...) were deleted after CFA

TABLE 7 Goodness of Fit Indices

Statistic	Result
X^2	517.32
Degrees of Freedom	160
CFI	.968
IFI	.968
TLI	.962
RMSEA	.061

Cronbach's Coefficient and Composite Reliability

Because two items from media credibility and one from perceived behavioral control were deleted from the original measurement model, it was necessary to reanalyze the Cronbach alpha score. After doing so, it was found that media credibility and perceived behavioral control had a Cronbach score of .89 and .79 respectively. Compared to the original Cronbach alpha score presented in Chapter V, the revised alpha score improved and was considered acceptable. Table 8 presents the final scale reliability, means, and standard deviations. Moreover, the composite reliability for media credibility, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions each had a value of .90, .97, .78, .89 and .82 respectively. According to Bagozzi and Yi' (1988) statistical guidelines, values greater than 0.60 are considered desirable for composite reliability. As mentioned above, it was found that the composite reliability ranged from 0.82 to 0.97. Thus, all five factors were deemed reliable.

TABLE 8
Final Scale Reliability, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable Name	Factor Loading	*a*	Mean	SD
Media Credibility (Trust)		0.89	3.19	1.14
Trust_1 Honest	.66		3.14	1.16
Trust_3 Balanced	.79		2.95	1.18
Trust_4 Believable	.72		3.32	1.08
Trust_6 Reports the whole story	.83		2.91	1.27
Trust_7 Accurate	.84		3.18	1.12
Trust_8 Timely	.53		3.76	0.94
Trust_9 Objective	.79		3.11	1.24
Behavioral Intentions		0.96	3.80	2.16
BI1 The likelihood that I will visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years	.96		3.77	2.14
	.95		3.71	2.19
BI2 I intend to visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years	.94		3.93	2.16
BI3 The possibility that I will visit SeaWorld Park within the next 2 years.				
Attitude Towards Behavior		0.96	4.83	1.80
ATT1 Unenjoyable – enjoyable	.90		4.94	1.83
ATT2 Negative - Positive	.91		4.82	1.85
ATT3 Boring - Fun	.81		5.10	1.65
ATT4 Unpleasant - Pleasant	.93		4.94	1.81
ATT5 Unfavorable –Favorable	.93		4.89	1.88
Subjective Norms		0.92	4.53	1.76
SN1 Most people I know would choose SeaWorld Park as a travel destination	.87		4.42	1.78
			4.46	1.78
SN2 People who are important to me think I should visit SeaWorld Park	.92		4.73	1.72
SN3 People who are important to me would approve of my visit to SeaWorld Park	.86			
Perceived Behavioral Control		0.79	5.82	1.27
PBC1 Visiting SeaWorld Park is within my control	.91		5.74	1.33
PBC3 The decision to visit SeaWorld Park is entirely mine	.72		5.90	1.22

Validity Checks

Convergent validity was then assessed by examining the resultant factors': (a) standardized factor loading, (b) average variance extracted (AVE), and (c) squared multiple correlations (SMC). Convergent validity tests are statistical methods to monitor the extent to which two or more different constructs are correlated to each other (Cunningham, Preacher & Banaji, 2001). The standardized factor loading results (Table 9) shows that the p-values for all items were statistically significant (p <.001) suggesting that the resultant measured passed convergent validity.

Table 9 Factor loading, T Value and Significance Test

	R^2	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Trust_9	.632	1.000			<.001
Trust_8	.288	.559	.042	13.426	<.001
Trust_7	.711	.994	.043	23.112	<.001
Trust_6	.690	1.098	.048	22.675	<.001
Trust_4	.531	.839	.044	19.201	<.001
Trust_3	.630	.958	.045	21.377	<.001
Trust_1	.441	1.069	.062	17.156	<.001
BI_3	.890	1.000			<.001
BI_2	.901	1.017	.021	49.396	<.001
BI_1	.934	1.016	.019	53.417	<.001
ATB_5	.879	1.000			<.001
ATB_4	.866	.954	.022	44.024	<.001
ATB_3	.664	.765	.025	30.002	<.001
ATB_2	.838	.959	.023	41.503	<.001
ATB_1	.817	.936	.024	39.769	<.001

	R^2	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PBC_3	.523	1.000			<.001
PBC_1	.840	1.387	.396	3.512	<.001
SN_3	.769	1.000			<.001
SN_2	.846	1.101	.034	32.121	<.001
SN_1	.751	1.049	.036	29.385	<.001

Discriminant Validity

Examining discriminant validity has been suggested to be an essential prerequisite for SEM variables (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). The primary goal for conducting discriminant validity is to ensure that all constructs fall under their own unique category and that variables are not cross loading too highly with other constructs (Hair et al. 2010). In the previous literature, the cutoff score for discriminant validity assessment has triggered considerable debate. For example, Teo et al., (2008) suggest a value of 0.90 as a cutoff score, but Kline (2011) argues for a threshold of 0.85. In light of this, the current study set .85 as the top threshold to be acceptable. Table 10 displays the results of the correlation analysis. The squared correlation results show that attitude towards behavior and subjective norms had the highest correlation of .708, with behavioral intentions and subjective norms having the second highest squared correlation of .592. The remaining squared correlation scores ranged between .001 and .481. With all measurement constructs having squared correlations less than .85 to .90, the discriminant validity was suggested.

TABLE 10 Correlations and Squared Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
Media Credibility (Trust)	**1.000**	0.191	0.089	0.108	0.009
Behavioral Intentions (BI)	0.440	**1.000**	0.481	0.592	0.001
Attitude Towards Behavior (ATB)	0.294	0.665	**1.000**	0.708	0.009
Subjective Norms (SN)	0.319	0.718	0.791	**1.000**	0.007
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	0.105	0.010	0.037	0.077	**1.000**

Note: Correlations are below the diagonal and squared correlations are above the diagonal.

Average Variance Extracted Estimate.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is another method for analyzing the discriminant validity of multiple factors. According to Farrell (2010), an AVE estimate is the "average amount of variation that a latent construct is able to explain in the observed variables to which it is theoretically related" (p. 3). To estimate the AVE, this study assessed each latent factor and the observed variables by conducting correlation analysis. The correlation values were then squared and the AVE was obtained by calculating the mean of the squared correlation score. Table 11 shows that the AVE exceeded 0.5 for all values, and ranged from .56 to .90. According to Lee, Cheung and Chen (2005), average variance extracted greater than .05 are considered acceptable. The results below further suggest the constructs passed discriminant validity.

TABLE 11

Variance extracted for each latent construct

Media Credibility	.560
Behavioral Intentions	.907
Attitude Towards Behavior	.813
Subjective Norms	.681
Perceived Behavioral Control	.789

Square Roots of the Average Variance

As recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), this study further examined discriminant validity by comparing the correlation of the latent constructs to the square roots of the average variance. The diagonal entries in bold in Table 12 represent the square root of the average variance extracted by the construct. Below the diagonal are the correlations of each construct. Based on guidelines by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the discriminant validity was confirmed because the correlation coefficient in each vertical column did not surpass any of the square root of the average variance for any factors.

TABLE 12

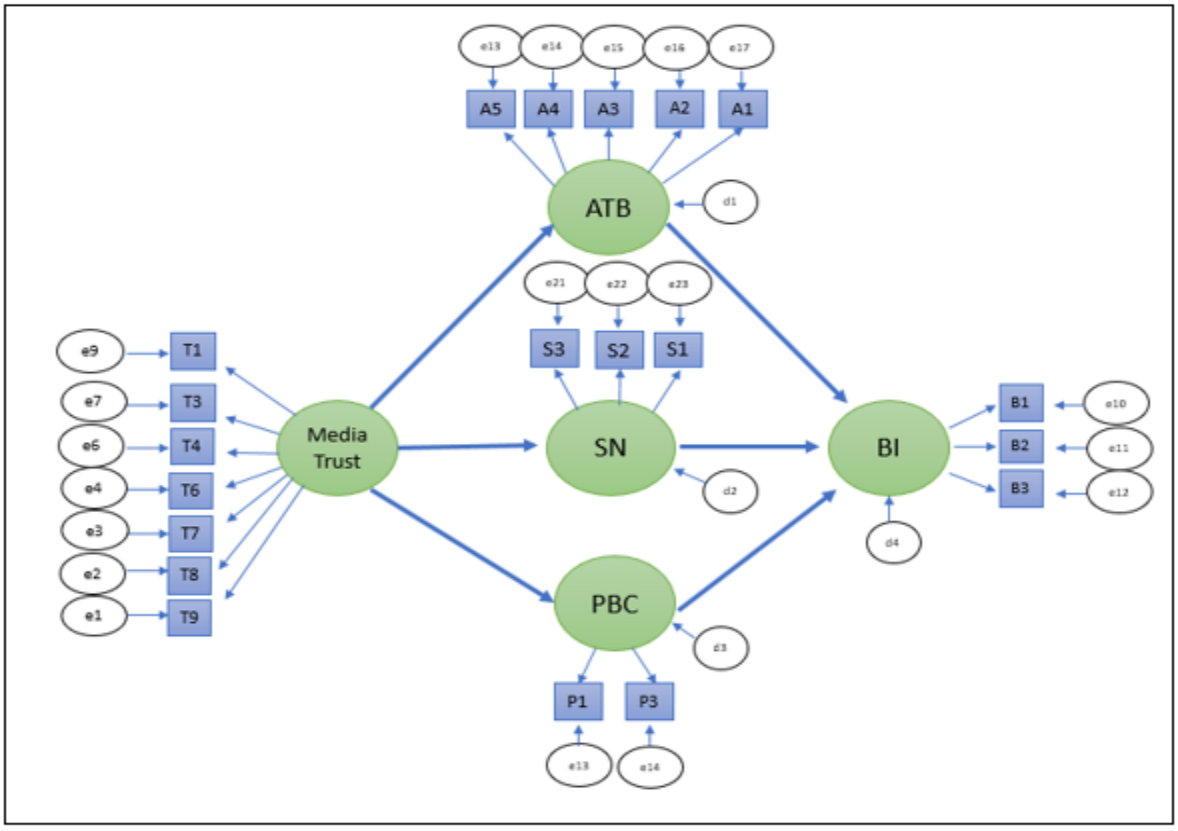
Discriminant validity of measurement scale

	1	2	3	4	5
Media Credibility (Trust)	**0.749**				
Behavioral Intentions (BI)	0.440	**0.952**			
Attitude Towards Behavior (ATB)	0.294	0.665	**0.901**		
Subjective Norms (SN)	0.319	0.718	0.791	**0.888**	
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	0.105	0.010	0.037	0.077	**0.825**

Structural Model Analysis

After completion of the confirmatory factor, the final model was selected and SEM (structural equation modeling) was performed to examine the hypotheses. The hypothesized paths include: Media credibility (trust) → ATB, SN and PBC and ATB, SN and PBC → behavioral intentions. Using AMOS statistical software, all five constructs with 20 items were examined. Figure 13 shows the structural model for the study.

FIGURE 13 SEM model



Note: Items T2 (Up-To-Date), T5 (Current) and P2 (In the future…) were deleted due to low factor loadings.

Table 13 provides the fit indices for the SEM model stated above. The goodness of fit indices were deemed to be a good fit with x^2= 563.802 (N=609), p<.001, CFI=.964, IFI= .964, TLI= .957 and RMSEA=.064

TABLE 13 Goodness of Fit Indices for SEM Model

Statistic	**Result**
X^2	563.802
Degrees of Freedom	161
CFI	.964
IFI	.964
TLI	.957
RMSEA	.064

Hypothesis H1a-H1b

Before examining the mean score differences, the study used a one-way ANOVA to determine whether media credibility and initial (pre-experiment) behavioral intentions scores for Group A (no media), Group B (positive media coverage), Group C (negative media coverage), and Group D (positive/negative media coverage) differed significantly. The ANOVA results showed that they did not differ significantly ($F_{3,605} = 0.529$, $p = 0.663$), nor were there differences in "behavioral intentions" ($F_{3,605} = 2.1$, $p = 0.099$). Therefore, these results confirmed that all four groups had similar mean scores for "media credibility" and "behavioral intentions" before the video experiment.

Hypothesis H1a predicted that the more negative the media report about SeaWorld Park, the more the respondents' trusted it. To examine this hypothesis, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to measure "media credibility" before and after the video treatment. The results showed that there was a significant difference (p <.05) in the mean media credibility scores for participants assigned to Group C before (M= 30.6, SD= 6.99) and after (M= 33.38, SD = 6.31) the negative media treatment (t_{148} = -5.546, $p < 0.001$). This result indicates that participants who watched the Blackfish trailer (negative media) tended to trust the media report in general. Therefore, H1a was supported. There also was a significant difference in the mean media credibility scores for participants assigned to Group B (t_{154} = -6.509, $p < 0.001$) and Group D (t_{128} = -3.317, $p < 0.001$).

This study also employed a general linear model to better understand of the H1a result was accurate. As shown in Table 14, Hypothesis H1a was supported for all four groups with a *p* value less than < .001. For those participants (Group C) who watched the "Blackfish" trailer (negative media coverage), their trust in mass media increased with a mean score difference of MD= -2.69 (N= 176). The mean score difference of -2.69 indicates that the mean post-trust scores were 2.69 higher than the mean pre-trust scores for Group C. Thus, respondents in the negative media coverage group tended to trust the media after the negative video was released. Post-media credibility (trust) also increased in other groups. For Group B (positive media coverage) and Group D (positive and negative media coverage), the average media credibility (trust) score increased with a mean score difference of MD = -3.74 (n= 155) and MD = -1.97 (n = 129) respectively. For Group A, where participants received no pre-post video treatment (MD = .000, n = 176), there was no change in mean score difference. To summarize, the results of

ANOVA indicated that Group B (positive storyline), Group C (negative media storyline), and Group D (positive and negative storyline) their perceptions of media credibility increased after seeing their respective videos. In other words, the initial trust of all groups towards the media increased after treatment, with Group B having the highest increase. Hypothesis H1a was, therefore, supported.

Hypothesis H1b was also significantly ($p < 001$) for all four groups. It was predicted that respondents who were exposed to negative media reports would experience a negative impact on their behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. This was also supported by the (Group C) respondents' mean score of behavioral intentions, which decreased after they watched the negative media coverage of SeaWorld Park (MD = .147, SD = 2.78, n = 149). Thus, their behavioral intentions .147 after watching the "Blackfish" trailer. This reveals that respondents were less likely to visit SeaWorld Park after seeing the video. Although the media effect was minor, the negativity did lower individual intentions to visit SeaWorld Park resulting in Hypothesis H1b being supported.

For group B, those who watched the SeaWorld Park advertisement (positive media coverage), their intentions to visit SeaWorld Park increased. As Table 14 indicates, the mean score difference of behavioral intention was -2.69 (SD = 2.22, n = 155), which shows the behavioral intentions score rising to 2.69 after participants watched the SeaWorld Park commercial.

One interesting result for Hypothesis H1b was found in Group D. They were exposed to both negative and positive media reports about SeaWorld Park, and their mean score for behavioral intention rose .558 (MD= -.558, SD= 260, n= 129). Although the "Blackfish"

message was given to Group D as a negative media treatment, it was found that the positive mass media treatment likely had a stronger impact.

TABLE 14
Mean Score Differences of Media Credibility and Behavioral Intentions

Factor	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P
Media Credibility (Post)	A (No media)	176	.0000	.00000	<.001
	B (Positive)	155	-3.7419	7.15763	<.001
	C (Negative)	149	-2.6980	5.93854	<.001
	D (Pos & Neg)	129	-1.7287	5.91839	<.001
	Total	609	-1.9787	5.56787	<.001
Behavioral Intentions (Post)	A (No media)	176	.0000	.00000	<.001
	B (Positive)	155	-.6903	2.22608	<.001
	C (Negative)	149	.1477	2.78115	<.001
	D (Pos & Neg)	129	-.5581	2.60080	<.001
	Total	609	-.2578	2.16526	<.001

For a clearer visual impression of the Table 14 results, the numbers were transformed to bar charts for pre-post comparisons of media credibility and behavioral intention within the four groups. These are shown in Figure 14, which represents the pre-post comparisons of media credibility, and in Figure 15, which indicates the pre-post comparisons of behavioral intentions among the four groups.

FIGURE 14 Pre-Post Media Credibility

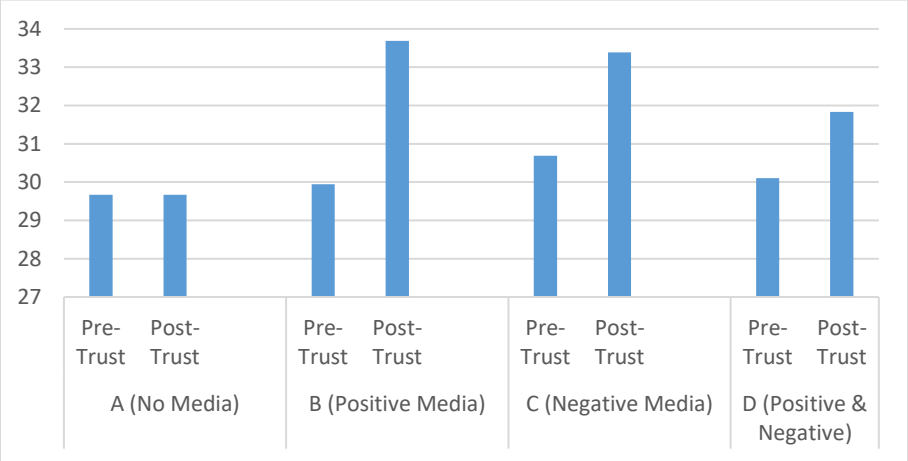
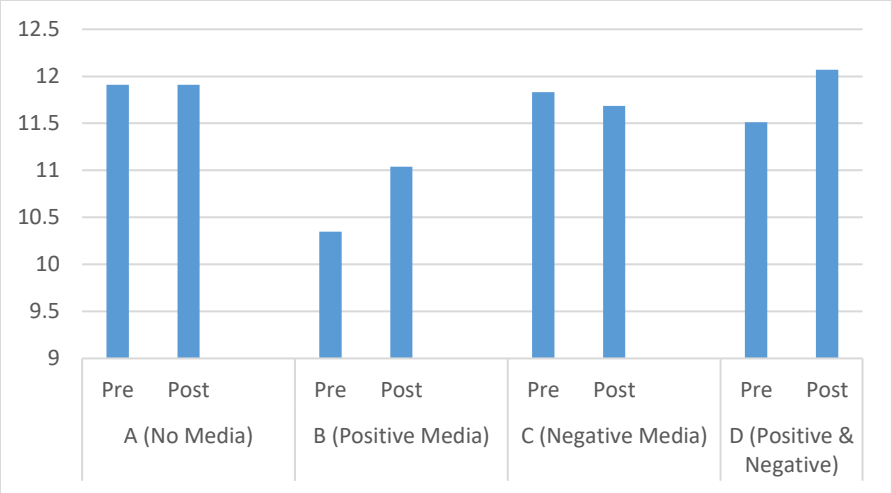


FIGURE 15 Pre-Post Behavioral Intention



Hypothesis 2a: Higher trust in the media positively affects potential visitors' attitudes toward SeaWorld Park.

Hypothesis 2a examined the relationship between media credibility and attitude with regression analysis. Specifically, it was predicted that higher trust in the media would positively affect potential visitor's attitudes toward SeaWorld Park. The model was statistically significant

(p <.001) for group A (β = .354, *SE* = .136, *p* < .001), group B (β = .669, *SE* = .244, *p* < .001) and group D (β = .313, *SE* = .176, *p* < .001). The standard regression coefficients displayed in table 15 reveal that for each increase of media credibility, participant's attitude towards SeaWorld Park increased .354 for group A, .669 for group B and .313 for group D. On the other hand, it was found that group C was not statistically significant (β = .074, *SE* = .210, *p* =.401). This means that for each increase of media credibility, participants in group C's attitude towards SeaWorld Park did not have an effect. Therefore, Hypothesis 2a was only partially supported.

Table 15 Summary of SEM Analysis for Hypothesis 2a

Group	Regression paths	β	S.E.	C.R.	P
Group A (No video)	Media Credibility → Attitude	.354	.136	4.573	P<.001
Group B (Positive media coverage)	Media Credibility → Attitude	.669	.244	7.181	P<.001
Group C (Negative media coverage)	Media Credibility → Attitude	.074	.210	.839	.401
Group D (Positive & Negative media coverage)	Media Credibility → Attitude	.313	.176	3.361	P<.001

Hypothesis 2b: Higher trust in the media affects potential visitors' subjective norms.

Hypothesis 2b examined the association between media credibility and subjective norms. It was hypothesized that higher trust in the media would positively affect potential visitor's subjective norms. The findings were statistically significant for group A, group B (*p* <.001) and group D (*p* <.005). However, it was not significant for group D as the *p* value .134.

The standard regression coefficients for the effect of media credibility on subjective norms were significant for group A (β = .424, *SE* = .125, *p* < .001), group B (β = .682, *SE* = .226,

$p < .001$) and group D (β = .279, *SE* = .134, $p = .004$) (see Table 15). However, it was not supported for group C (β = .134, *SE* = .182, $p = .134$). These values indicate that for each increase of media credibility, participant's subjective norms have increased .424 for group A, whereas group B, C and D have increased .682, .134 and .279 respectively. Thus, H2B was partially accepted.

Table 16 Summary of SEM Analysis for Hypothesis 2b

Group	Regression paths			B	S.E.	C.R.	P
Group A (No video)	Media Credibility	→	Subjective Norms	.424	.125	5.439	P<.001
Group B (Positive media coverage)	Media Credibility	→	Subjective Norms	.682	.226	6.797	P<.001
Group C (Negative media coverage)	Media Credibility	→	Subjective Norms	.134	.182	1.498	.134
Group D (Positive & Negative media coverage)	Media Credibility	→	Subjective Norms	.279	.134	2.909	.004

Hypothesis 2c: Higher trust in the media affects a potential visitor's perceived behavioral control.

Hypothesis 2c examined the relationships between media credibility and perceived behavioral control. It was predicted that higher trust in the media would positively affect potential visitor's attitudes toward SeaWorld Park. However, this was not supported for groups A, B and D. As seen in Table 17, media credibility did not interact with perceived behavioral control for group A (β = -.087, *SE* = .091, $p = .375$), group B (β = .129, *SE* = .154, $p = .307$) or

group D (β = .032, *SE* = .090, *p* = .202). The interaction term was only significant for group C (β = .343, *SE* = .139, *p* < .001).

The standard regression coefficients presented below indicate that for each increase of media credibility, participant's perceived behavioral control decreased -.087 for group A, increased .129 for group B, and .032 for group D. Further, it was found that group C increased .343. Hence, H2c was rejected.

Table 17 Summary of SEM Analysis for Hypothesis 2c

Group	Regression paths			β	S.E.	C.R.	P
Group A (No video)	Media Credibility	→	PBC	-.087	.091	-.984	.325
Group B (Positive media coverage)	Media Credibility	→	PBC	.129	.154	1.021	.307
Group C (Negative media coverage)	Media Credibility	→	PBC	.343	.139	3.280	P<.001
Group D (Positive & Negative media coverage)	Media Credibility	→	PBC	.032	.090	1.277	.202

Hypothesis 3a: Positive/negative attitudes toward SeaWorld Park have a substantial impact on intentions to visit SeaWorld Park.

Hypothesis 3a examined the relationship between attitudes toward SeaWorld Park and behavioral intentions. It was predicted that attitudes toward SeaWorld Park would have a substantial positive impact on intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. As seen in Table 18, this was supported for group B (β = .121, *SE* = .073, *p* = .049), and group D (β = .279, *SE* = .152, *p* = .036). The results did not show a substantial interaction with behavioral intention for group A (β = .199, *SE* = .133, *p* = .065) or group C (β = .245, *SE* = .177, *p* = .112). The standard regression

coefficient indicates that for each increase of attitude, participant's behavioral intention to visit SeaWorld Park increased .199 for group A, .121 for group B, .245 for group C and .279 for group D. Therefore, Hypothesis 3a was partially supported

Table 18 Summary of SEM Analysis for Hypothesis 3a

Group	Regression paths			β	S.E.	C.R.	P
Group A (No video)	Attitude	→	Behavioral Intention	.199	.133	1.848	.065
Group B (Positive media coverage)	Attitude	→	Behavioral Intention	.121	.073	1.968	.049
Group C (Negative media coverage)	Attitude	→	Behavioral Intention	.245	.177	1.588	.112
Group D (Positive & Negative media coverage)	Attitude	→	Behavioral Intention	.279	.152	2.101	.036

Hypothesis 3b: Subjective norms will have a direct impact on intention to visit SeaWorld Park

Hypothesis 3b investigated the relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. It was predicted that subjective norms would have a direct impact on intention to visit SeaWorld Park. This was statistically significant for all four groups. As seen in Table 19, Hypothesis 3b was supported for group A (β = .616, *SE* = .829, *p* <.001), group B (β = .713, *SE* = .106, *p* <.001), group C (β = .573, *SE* = .219, *p* <.001) and for group D (β = .505, *SE* = .215, *p* <.001).

The standard regression coefficient indicates that for each increase of subjective norms, participant's behavioral intentions increased .616 for group A, .579 for group C and .505 for

group D. The strength of subjective norms was strongest for group B with an increase of .713 on behavioral intentions. Thus, H3b was accepted.

Table 19 Summary of SEM Analysis for Hypothesis 3b

Group	Regression paths			β	S.E.	C.R.	P
Group A (No video)	Subjective Norms	→	Behavioral Intention	.616	.829	5.525	P<.001
Group B (Positive media coverage)	Subjective Norms	→	Behavioral Intention	.713	.106	9.530	P<.001
Group C (Negative media coverage)	Subjective Norms	→	Behavioral Intention	.579	.219	3.574	P<.001
Group D (Positive & Negative media coverage)	Subjective Norms	→	Behavioral Intention	.505	.215	3.642	P<.001

Hypothesis 3c: Perceived behavioral control has a substantial impact on intention to visit SeaWorld Park.

Finally, Hypothesis 3c investigated the relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. It was predicted that perceived behavioral control would have a direct impact on intention to visit SeaWorld Park. This was statistically not significant ($p > .05$) for all four groups. As seen in Table 20, Hypothesis 3c was not supported for group A (β = -.002, *SE* = .117, $p = .978$), group B (β = .011, *SE* = .191, $p = .979$), group C (β = -.010, *SE* = .012, $p = .869$) and for group D (β = -.002, *SE* = .012, $p = .907$). The standard regression coefficient indicates that for each increase of perceived behavioral control, participant's behavioral intention was -.002 for group A, slightly increased .011 for group B and decreased -.010 for group C and -.002 for group D. Hence, H3cwas not supported

Table 20 Summary of SEM Analysis for Hypothesis 3c

Group	Regression paths			β	S.E.	C.R.	P
Group A (No video)	PBC	→	Behavioral Intention	-.002	.117	-.027	.978
Group B (Positive media coverage)	PBC	→	Behavioral Intention	.011	.191	.027	.979
Group C (Negative media coverage)	PBC	→	Behavioral Intention	-.010	.123	-.165	.869
Group D (Positive & Negative media coverage)	PBC	→	Behavioral Intention	-.002	.012	-.117	.907

Squared Multiple Correlation (SMC)

In social science study, Kwan and Chan (2014) argued that it is important to compare the squared multiple correlation (R^2) with different model conditions because this helps social scientists "to better understand the relative importance of a given set of predictors" (p. 225). Squared multiple correlation values indicate the percentage of an endogenous variables that explains the exogenous variables. The R^2 values of the endogenous variables— attitude, subjective norms, perceive behavioral control, and behavioral intentions are provided in Table 21. The R^2 values were compared with Lam and Hsu's (2004) TPB model. In Lam and Hsu's (2004), attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control explained 43% (.43) of behavioral intention indicator. In the present study, the results of the squared multiple correlation for all four groups exceeded .43 ranging from .52 to .64.

TABLE 21

Squared multiple correlation values of endogenous variables in the competing models

Endogenous Variable	Group	R^2 Value Proposed	R^2 Value TPB
Attitude	A	.125	.23
	B	.447	
	C	.005	
	D	.098	
Subjective Norms	A	.180	.10
	B	.465	
	C	.018	
	D	.078	
Perceived Behavioral Control	A	.008	.12
	B	.017	
	C	.118	
	D	.001	
Behavioral Intention	A	.627	.43
	B	.524	
	C	.646	
	D	.569	

Synopsis of the Chapter

The present chapter examined the hypotheses and compared the outcome of four different groups using structural equation modeling analysis. Before testing the hypotheses, the reliability and validity of the measurement model by using the Cronbach alpha test, standardized factor loading, average variance extracted (AVE), and squared multiple correlations (SMC) were confirmed. The hypotheses test results were then provided. While H1a to H2c had varying results for the four conditions, Hypothesis H3b was statistically significant for all groups, and H3a and

H3c were statistically insignificant for all conditions. The overall results of the hypothesis tests are shown in Table 22.

Table 22 Summary of Statistical Findings

Hypothesis	Group	Findings
H1a: The more negative the media report about SeaWorld Park, the higher the trust in the media.	C	Supported
H1b: The more negative the media report about SeaWorld Park, the more negative impact on their behavioral intention.	C	Supported
H2a: Higher trust in the media positively affects potential visitors' attitudes toward SeaWorld Park.	A	Supported
	B	Supported
	C	Not Supported
	D	Supported
H2b: Higher trust in the media affects a potential visitor's subjective norms.	A	Supported
	B	Supported
	C	Not Supported
	D	Supported
H2c: Higher trust in the media affects a potential visitor's perceived behavioral control.	A	Not Supported
	B	Not Supported
	C	Supported
	D	Not Supported
H3a: Positive/negative attitudes toward SeaWorld Park have a substantial impact on intentions to visit SeaWorld Park.	A	Not Supported
	B	Supported
	C	Not Supported
	D	Supported
H3b: Subjective norms will have a direct impact on intention to visit SeaWorld Park.	A	Supported
	B	Supported
	C	Supported
	D	Supported
H3c: Perceived behavioral control has a substantial impact on intention to visit SeaWorld Park.	A	Not Supported
	B	Not Supported
	C	Not Supported
	D	Not Supported

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the research outcomes revealed in Chapter VI. Specifically, the findings of the hypothesized model for the four groups are explored, together with a discussion of their practical and theoretical implications. The chapter also considers the study's limitations and suggests directions for future research.

The study's primary purpose was to investigate (a) the trust people have in mass media, (b) how media coverage impacts human behavior, and (c) how the media influences tourists' decisions. More specifically, the dissertation examined how "Blackfish," a 2013 American documentary about a killer whale and the controversy surrounding three deaths at SeaWorld Park, influenced tourists' attitudes towards the park and their intentions to visit it. Drawing on Ajzen's (1985) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the research aimed to understand how different types of media exposure influence tourist's destination selection process.

The study compared the outcomes of four different groups based on their pre-test and post-test scores of media credibility and behavioral intent. Group A had no treatment (watched no video), Group B was exposed to positive media coverage, Group C was given negative media coverage, and Group D had both positive and negative media coverage. After randomly assigning the participants into four groups, the researcher observed whether the different types of media coverage resulted in significant changes in the beliefs and/or intentions to visit SeaWorld Park.

Review of Results

After the video was shown to the respondents, according to the conditions given above, it was revealed that media reports influenced the respondents' trust in the media and their intentions to visit the park. Although the results varied according to the specific conditions the respondents media credibility, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intention each played a role in explaining their intentions.

Conclusion for H1a (media coverage → media credibility)

Hypothesis H1a measured the relationship between media coverage and trust in the media. The hypothesis suggested that the more negative the media report about SeaWorld Park, the higher the respondents' trust in the media report would be. The ANOVA test (general linear model) significantly confirmed the hypothesis. It supported Jackob (2010), who found that respondents generally trust media reports when the media is focused on social issues such as environmental concerns, health risks, and political scandals. He further found that viewers had high levels of trust in the media when it conveyed information about social problems.

The current study selected the "Blackfish" documentary to examine whether the respondents' perceived level of trust increased after exposure to negative media reports about orca captivity. A one-minute trailer explained how real-life orcas were hunted and captured, and former orca trainers shared their experiences about how orcas were mistreated at SeaWorld Park. Presumably, agreeing with Jackob (2010), this negative message would directly affect the respondents' perceived level of trust in the "Blackfish" documentary. It was found that, Group C

respondents' post-trust scores on the documentary increased after they watched the negative video coverage, indicating that when respondents were exposed to a counter-attitudinal message that suggests unprincipled ethics, their trust and credibility in that media increased.

The treatment conditions for Group B (positive media coverage) and Group C (negative media coverage) also led to higher levels of media credibility after the video treatment. Respondents in Group B were assigned to watch a pro-attitudinal message while those in Group D watched both a pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal message. The results revealed that regardless of the media type to which they were exposed, overall trust in the media increased for groups B, C, and D. Because Group A was the only group with no video treatment, it was excluded from this test.

These findings align with McCombs and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory, described in the theoretical background section in Chapter II. McCombs and Shaw (1972) maintained that the media's agenda substantially influences viewer perceptions of current events. If the mass media believes that the deaths at SeaWorld Park and orca mistreatment are newsworthy, then, according to the agenda-setting theory, the media sets the agenda for public interest and increases public awareness (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Thus, agenda-setting theory claims that viewers tend to believe the media's agenda, regardless of content (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). Thus, the results supported hypothesis H1a.

Conclusion for H1b (media credibility → behavioral intention)

Hypothesis H1b was also tested using a general linear model (ANOVA) and examined the relationship between media coverage and behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park.

Hypothesis H1b predicted that those respondents (Group C) who were exposed to a negative media report about the park would experience a negative impact on their behavioral intention to visit it. This study's findings supported this hypothesis. The critical media report ("Blackfish" trailer) negatively affected the respondents' travel intentions to SeaWorld Park, which is consistent with Lobb, Mazzocchi and Trail (2007) who found that when the media reported a *salmonella* crisis, the intention of consumers to purchase chicken products fell substantially.

Group A was again excluded; it was the only group with no video treatment. For Group B, it was found that positive media coverage led to a more positive impact on behavioral intention concerning SeaWorld Park. Group B was given a one-minute commercial video (positive media coverage), in which SeaWorld Park pledged to phase out orca theatrical shows by 2019 and that the orcas would receive good care. Furthermore, the advertisement emphasized that orca treatment will be opened to guests. These results suggest that the video released by SeaWorld increased visitor intentions of those who saw it.

Group D saw both videos, and hence were given two different (and opposing) sides of the story. Surprisingly, more than half of the respondents (64%) in group D said they would visit SeaWorld Park, which indicates that they were more influenced by the positive publicity of SeaWorld Park than the negative coverage of the Blackfish trailer. Although both positive and negative video treatments played a critical role in shaping the respondents' (Group D) perceptions of SeaWorld Park, this study found that the positive rather than the negative video coverage had a greater impact on behavioral intentions.

Given that the respondents in Group D had equal exposure to positive and negative media information, it is likely, then, that they saw visiting SeaWorld Park in a more positive than

negative light. Consequently, the positive media report (SeaWorld Park advertisement) was more effective overall than the negative media report ("Blackfish" trailer). Therefore, respondents in Group D were more likely to visit SeaWorld Park after exposure to the videos.

Conclusion for hypothesis H2a (media credibility → attitude)

Hypothesis H2a tested the relationship between media credibility (trust) and attitude towards SeaWorld Park using structural equation modeling (SEM). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first used to confirm the measurement model and to determine if SEM analysis would be acceptable. Hypothesis H2a predicted that higher trust in the media positively affects potential visitors' attitudes toward SeaWorld Park. This was supported by groups A, B and D, but not by Group C. Within the four groups, Group B (positive media coverage) had the strongest interaction between media credibility (trust) and attitude towards SeaWorld Park. This means that media trust had a direct impact on the respondents' attitudes toward visiting SeaWorld Park. Similar results were found for respondents in Group A (no video) and Group D (positive and negative media coverage), indicating a direct influence on attitude toward SeaWorld Park. Unsurprisingly, the attitudes of respondents in Group C who watched the negative media coverage ("Blackfish" trailer) had their intentions to visit SeaWorld Park negatively impacted.

This supports Lobb et al., (2007) who found that respondents who trusted the media report about the avian influenza virus had negative attitudes toward chicken consumption (Lobb et al., 2007). Limbu, Wolf and Lunsford (2012) similarly report that online shoppers who had a higher level of trust toward the website had a more positive attitude toward the site than those with a lower level of trust. Thus, the current results suggest that trust directly effects attitudes.

Conclusion for hypothesis H2b (media credibility → subjective norms)

Hypothesis H2b predicted that higher trust in the media would positively affect potential visitor's subjective norms. This study's findings revealed that the interaction between media credibility and subjective norms were supported for Group A (no video), Group B (positive media coverage) and Group D (positive and negative media coverage). Although Group C (negative media coverage) showed a moderate relationship between media credibility (trust) and subjective norms, this was not supported because the *p*-value was greater than .05. Similar to Mazzocchi et al. (2008), who found that those who had perceived high media credibility related to food information also valued feedback from close associates about purchasing chicken products (Mazzocchi et al., 2008), this study found that individuals holding high levels of trust towards the mass media were more likely to follow the opinions of close associates (subjective norms). This is also similar to Benz et al. (2007) who found a high correlation between media credibility and subjective norms. In their study, when a highly influential person posted a news article about health concerns via their social media account, readers trusted it, even when the article came from an unidentified source.

Conclusion for hypothesis H2c (media credibility → PBC)

The current study also set out to understand the relationship between media credibility (trust) and respondents' perceived behavioral control (PBC). Only one study was found in the business literature (Pavlou, 2002) related to this hypothesis. According to Pavlou (2002), *trust in a web retailer* had a direct relationship with *perceived behavioral control*, which may lead to an

online transaction. Pavlou (2002) revealed that online users who trust a web retailer were able to gain high levels of control (i.e., ability, knowledge and/or resources) to access the webpage.

Unlike Pavlou's research, however, the present study did not find a link between media trust and perceived behavioral control. Although Pavlou (2002) found a high correlation between trust in a website and an online user's perceived behavioral control, this result has not been duplicated elsewhere and, thus, further investigation is called for.

Conclusion for hypothesis H3a (attitude → behavioral intention)

Hypothesis H3a was designed to test the relationship between respondents' attitude toward SeaWorld Park and their future behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. Based on past studies (Lobb et al., 2006; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Quintal, Lee & Soutar, 2010), this study hypothesized that attitude towards SeaWorld Park would have a substantial impact on the participants' intentions to visit it. As expected, a significant association between attitude toward behavior (ATB) and behavioral intention within Group B (positive media coverage) and Group D (positive and negative media coverage) was found. The results for Group A (no media) and Group C (negative media coverage) were not statistically significant (p >.001)

This indicates that respondents who watched the SeaWorld Park commercial (Group B) had a favorable attitude towards the park (i.e., media credibility → attitude) and that this positively affected their intention to choose the park as their next travel destination (i.e., attitude → behavioral intention). This supports the findings of Lam and Hsu (2004) who found that Chinese participants with a positive attitude toward Hong Kong were more likely to select Hong Kong as their next travel destination.

Respondents who were exposed to both positive and negative media coverage (Group D) were also more likely to visit SeaWorld Park in the future. Although this group watched two different and opposing videos of SeaWorld Park, respondents favored the negative over the positive media coverage. It might, therefore, be argued that Group D respondents viewed visiting SeaWorld Park as a gain rather than a loss. Hence, Group D respondents likely believed that the park's advertisement was more convincing than the "Blackfish" trailer and for this reason saw the park as a future travel destination.

Conclusion for hypothesis H3b (subjective norms → behavioral intention)

Hypothesis H3b explored the relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intentions. Since empirical research has found that subjective norms can influence intentions to visit future destinations (Lam and Hsu, 2006; Quintal et al., 2010), the present study predicted that subjective norms would directly impact intention to visit SeaWorld Park. As with past studies, a significant ($p < .05$) positive linkage between subjective norms and behavioral intentions to visit the destination was found.

The most surprising result to emerge from the data, though, was that subjective norms, in this case, were the most important indicator of intention to visit SeaWorld Park. Under all four conditions, the results suggest that intentions to visit the park were most affected by their reference groups, such as friends and family. In other words, the positive comments and opinions of close associates (subjective norms) about SeaWorld Park had the most significant influence on the travel decisions of respondents. However, due to increasing media reports about animal welfare (Weisskircher, 2016), SeaWorld Park has become an ethical issue for many potential

visitors. It may be, then, that respondents rely heavily on the opinions of their reference groups to determine their opinions and behaviors related to SeaWorld Park.

Conclusion for hypothesis H3c (PBC → behavioral intention)

Hypothesis H3c investigated the influence of perceived behavioral control (PBC) on behavioral intentions. It has previously been suggested that PBC can aid in understanding people's behavioral intentions (Cestac, Paran & Delhomme, 2011; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Park et al., 2017; Sparks & Pan, 2009). For example, Park et al. (2017) concluded that time and money play a critical role in shaping intentions to travel to Japan. They found that both (time and money) were strong indicators of perceived behavioral control. Similarly, Cunningham and Kwon (2003) found that "time availability" was a significant factor for attending a future hockey match. Unlike Cunningham and Kwon (2003), no substantial relationship between perceived behavioral control on behavioral intention was detected in this study, where the PBC factors were identified as "availability" and "opportunity." Under all four conditions, PBC did not influence peoples' behavioral intentions. This suggests that whether the respondents believed they had the availability or opportunity to visit SeaWorld Park, it did not affect their intentions to visit.

Briefly, then, this study concludes that perceived behavioral control did not influence travel decisions. While many travelers might have believed they did not have the availability or opportunity to visit SeaWorld Park, it was their attitude and norms that affected their intentions to visit. Yet, to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intentions, further studies are recommended.

Theoretical Implications of H1a and H1b

The results of this study have a number of theoretical implications for the field of tourism. Few studies, if any, have examined the relationship between media trust and travel intention. Although the literature has investigated film-induced tourism (see, Busby & Klug, 2001; Gjorgievski & Melles Trpkova, 2012; Im & Chon, 2008), it has not measured the perceived level of *trust towards the film*. The literature's primary focus has arguably been on examining how films *per se* might positively affect the potential traveler's destination image (Busby & Klug, 2001).

What is more, although some literature has examined the relationship between *media trust* and *behavioral intentions* in agriculture and food economics (see, Lobb, Mazzocchi & Traill, 2006, 2007; Mazzocchi, Lobb, Bruce & Cavicchi, 2008; Prati, Pietrantoni & Zani, 2012), examination of this relationship has been seemingly neglected in tourism. It is therefore believed the present study contributes to the literature by adding a *media trust* construct, in hopes of better understanding how trust in the media reflects tourists' intentions to visit travel destinations.

To recap briefly, the present study randomly assigned participants into four groups and asked them to watch a short video about SeaWorld Park. Respondents who were assigned to Group A were the only participants given no media treatment (watched no video). Respondents in Group B were asked to watch a positive media coverage (SeaWorld Park advertisement), and those in Group C were exposed to negative media coverage (the "Blackfish" trailer). Respondents in Group D watched both the positive and negative video. Results revealed that media trust was a significant predictor of behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. It was

further found that regardless of media type to which they were exposed, the respondents' *media trust* and *behavioral intentions* were influenced by the mass media.

As was mentioned previously in the results section, Group C participants' mean score for behavioral intention to visit SeaWorld Park decreased slightly after they watched the negative media coverage about SeaWorld. Although the coverage reduced respondents' intentions to visit the Park, it had only a minor effect. This was somewhat inconsistent with previous studies, as many researchers have claimed that negative media coverage has a more negative effect on behavioral intentions than do positive media reports (Dean 2004; Jia et al. 2016; Jia, Tong, Viswanath, & Zhang, 2016; Pfarrer et al. 2010; Saleem et al. 2017). Thus, the current study speculated that other factors, such as respondents' familiarity with the Blackfish documentary and political party might have played key roles in their behavioral intentions.

In fact, the results of a Pearson correlation test indicated that there was a significant positive association between familiarity with Blackfish and behavioral intentions ($r = 0.245$, $n = 609$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that the more familiar respondents were with the Blackfish documentary, the more likely they were to visit SeaWorld Park. Furthermore, additional examination found that political affiliation had a significant effect on behavioral intentions [$F_{4,604} = 14.26$, $p < 0.001$]. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Democrats (M = 11.02, SD = 6.27) was less than that for Republicans (M = 13.94, SD = 5.82), Greens (M = 11.18, SD = 6.52), Libertarians (M = 10.31, SD = 6.95), and Unaffiliated (M = 8.45, SD = 5.66) respondents. Taken together, these results suggest that respondents who self-identified as Republicans are more likely to visit SeaWorld Park than any other group, while

those who were Unaffiliated were least likely to go to visit. This suggests that persons with more conservative values are less likely to be affected by negative media coverage.

Arguably the most surprising result was for Group D. Even though this group was exposed to both the "Blackfish" and "SeaWorld Park" messages, the respondents' mean score of behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park increased. This means that the SeaWorld advertisement (positive media coverage) had a stronger impact than the "Blackfish" video (negative media coverage). In other words, although respondents were exposed to both positive and negative information about SeaWorld Park, they appraised the totality of information received as positive, weighing the SeaWorld advertisement more positively than they did the "Blackfish" documentary negatively. This finding is contrary to prospect theory, which suggests that losses loom larger than gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). While prospect theory has received considerable support, this was not applicable to the case of SeaWorld Park. Hence, future research is recommended, in order to better understand when perceived losses and/or gains differently affect the behavioral intentions of potential visitors.

Theoretical Implications of H2a, H2b and H2c (media credibility→ TPB)

The current study applied the constructs of media credibility (Yale et al., 2015) and three global variables of the theory of planned behavior (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control) developed by Ajzen (1985) to determine which factors most influenced people's behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. The three variables (1) attitude, (2) subjective norms, and (3) perceived behavioral control served as mediators between media credibility and intentions. Results revealed that media trust played a key role in predicting respondents' attitude toward SeaWorld Park. Media trust was also positively associated with

subjective norms, indicating that respondents with high levels of trust in the media valued advice from close associates. This result is in line with previous research which has shown that individuals who trusted a media source also followed advice from referent groups about purchasing products (Mazzocchi et al., 2008). Because media trust is likely an increasingly important area to be studied in relation to tourism studies, it is believed its addition to models predicting the effect of media messages on customers behaviors is warranted.

The current study did not find any significant relationships between media trust and perceived behavioral control. This broadly supports the work of Lobb et al. (2007), whose research in food economics demonstrated that perceived behavioral control posed several measurement issues. Since perceived behavioral control was not a strong indicator under all four conditions, this study, therefore, suggests that the perceived behavioral control indicator might need to be re-operationalized when studying tourism related behaviors. In future investigations, it is also suggested that other variables (i.e., constraints) might be more explanatory than PBC.

This finding further suggests that the theory of reasoned action (Fihbein & Ajzen, 1975) more succintly explains this type of phenomena as it does not include the perceived behavioral control factor. A more detailed explanation of the theory of reasoned of action and a newly developed model is provided in the next section.

Theoretical Implications of H3a, H3b and H3c (TPB → behavioral intention)

The present study found that under all four conditions behavioral intentions to visit SeaWorld Park was best predicted by subjective norms. There was also a significant positive correlation between attitude and behavioral intentions for Group B (positive media coverage) and

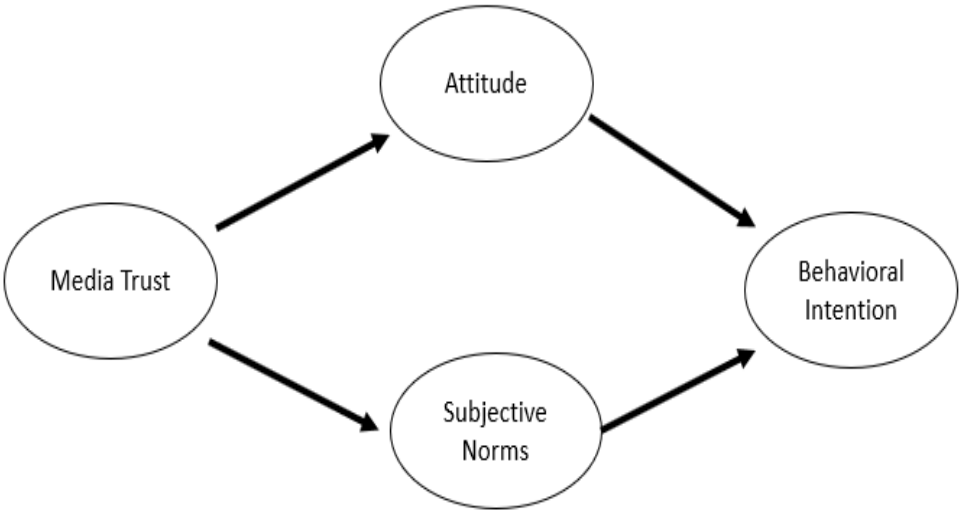
Group D (positive and negative media coverage). However, there was no evidence that perceived behavioral control had an influence on behavioral intentions under all four groups. This finding is contrary to previous studies (see Cestac, Paran & Delhomme, 2011; Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; George, 2004; Limayem, Khalifa & Frini, 2000), who suggested that perceived behavioral control predicts behavioral intentions. The theory of planned behavior has been a widely accepted model in social sciences because perceived behavior control has typically been found to plays a role in explaining behavioral intentions (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006).

As discussed in the previous section, perceived behavioral control factor was not influential in explaining their behavioral intentions. It was found that respondent's attitude and subjective norms affected their intentions to visit the most. This study, therefore, suggests that the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) might be a better model than the theory of planned behavior model (Ajzen, 1985) for explaining similar phenomena.

Consistent with Fihbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action model, the present study's empirical findings support the claim that the two components of theory of reasoned action (attitude and subjective norms*)* with media credibility indicator might be a better model for predicting behavioral intentions. Therefore, this study suggests a modified model, which is an extended version of the theory of reasoned action, and is presented below.

FIGURE 16.

Revised Model of the Structure and Antecedents of Extended Theory of Reasoned Action



Another suggestion is that perceived behavioral control factors might be improved by adding constraint items. Ajzen (2002) stated that "Ambiguities surrounding the concept of PBC have tended to create uncertainties and to impede progress" (p. 679). Therefore, this study suggests that it might be possible to attract more potential visitors if researchers and managers understand fully why certain individuals decide not to travel to SeaWorld Park. Presumably, money, geographic distance, and time constraints might have played key roles in certain people's decision not to visit the Park, such that excluding these items from the perceived behavioral control factor might have affected the path leading to behavioral intentions. Accordingly, this study suggests that adding constraint items (see Lam & Hsu, 2004) in future research might be a better indicator with which to evaluate future behavioral intentions.

Practical Implications of H1a (media coverage → media credibility)

According to this study's results, respondents tended to trust and follow the media's agenda regardless of the media-type to which they were exposed. Whether a person viewed a positive or negative media report, or both, his or her perceived level of trust in the media increased. This finding is consistent with the agenda-setting theory of McCombs and Shaw (1972), who maintained that the media's agenda plays a key role in shaping viewers' perceptions of current events. According to agenda-setting theory, when issues or concerns about an organization or a political candidate are covered by the media, viewers have higher-levels of concern about the organization or the candidate (Kiousis et al., 2006). They concluded that there is evidence to show that corporate reputations are determined by whether the media praises or criticizes the corporation (Deephouse, 2000).

Hence, the results of this study, consistent with agenda-setting theory, indicate that mass media exposure has the potential to build an organization's image, reputation, and/or trust, whether the message is negative or positive. This finding suggests that to safeguard their interests, companies faced with a public-relations crisis should attempt to counter negative publicity to help reassure potential tourists that the business is ethical. It is further believed they should use the media (television, newspapers, magazines, internet channels (e.g., YouTube) and social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) to provide educational information, recent news, advertisements, and documentaries favoring their industry. It is believed they should do this, as the current study suggests, the more viewers are exposed to positive news, the more they will trust the media's agenda and likely also trust the service provider.

Although SeaWorld Park promoted positive stories through their official YouTube channel, many of the videos about rescuing, rehabilitating and returning wildlife to the ocean were dated. Thus, to increase positive media/public attention, SeaWorld Park should remain active in television and with online communities, by hiring advertisers, television program producers, and YouTube creators to produce and upload recent positive content, including behind-the-scenes coverage of SeaWorld Park. It is believed this would provide opportunities not only for viewers to learn about SeaWorld Park, but also help those who watched the "Blackfish" documentary to avoid misinterpreting the company's practices and policies. The present study, therefore, stresses that running media campaigns is important for boosting and/or recovering corporate reputations and trust.

Practical Implications of H1b (media credibility → behavioral intention)

As mentioned previously, popular movies (film-induced tourism) often motivate travelers to visit the filmed location, which can economically benefit the area (Busby & Klug, 2001; Gjorgievski & Melles Trpkova, 2012; Im & Chon, 2008). For example, Busby and Klug (2001) found that "Notting Hill", a romantic comedy, played a pivotal role in increasing awareness of the Notting Hill area in West London. Following the film's release in 1999, the city experienced an increase in international tourists because the film presented a favorable destination image of the UK (Busby & Klug, 2001).

Consistent with Busby and Klug (2001), this study found that the media played a significant role in influencing behavior and attitudes towards SeaWorld Park. More generally, while pro- and counter-attitudinal media reports positively and negatively affected behavioral intentions to visit the park, respondents (e.g., groups B and C) relied heavily on media reports

and trusted the media's agenda-setting, regardless of how it covered the story. This indicates that positive and negative media coverage respectfully positively or negatively affect behavioral intentions.

For this reason, it would be prudent for the tourism industry to use the media to advertise its strengths, as many tourist companies already do. For example, the tourism industry should use the media as a promotional tool to re-attract previous visitors. If viewers believe that SeaWorld Park is trustworthy and cares for its animals, the theme park will likely attract new visitors. However, because of an increasing number of animal rights campaigners and negative reports of live animal shows, consumers are likely to be concerned about animal welfare (McKendree, Croney & Widmar, 2014; Schroder & McEachern, 2004). To its credit, SeaWorld Park has pledged no further captive orca breeding and will eliminate its orca shows by 2019. It is expected that phasing these out and providing greater educational experiences will attract new visitors.

As suggested in the previous section, SeaWorld Park might also offer educational programs to be distributed on educational channels, broadcast and cable networks, and documentaries on YouTube. If SeaWorld Park continues to use the media wisely, it will likely not only continue as a viable business, but also be perceived as being better attuned to modern values and attract new visitors.

Also, based on the above, SeaWorld Park should do all that it can to receive publicity from as many outlets as possible, when these changes are made. These should include press releases discussing the positive changes they are making to media including, but not limited to: all major television networks, news magazines (i.e., Time, People, etc.) and via social mobile media sources.

Practical Implications of H2a, H2b and H2c (media credibility → tpb)

After the release of "Blackfish" in 2013, SeaWorld Park suffered considerable financial and reputational damage (Arthur, 2016). In fact, the park faced several crises due to negative media reports (Arthur, 2016). Campaigns by animal rights groups had a multiplier effect, with SeaWorld Park being seen, fairly or not, as having lax occupational safety standards and of causing animal cruelty (PETA, n.d.). Further, it could be argued, the company failed to move quickly to allay criticisms. Thus, potential visitors may have been exposed to the "Blackfish" documentary and learned about the park through negative news reports. Based on the study's findings, they likely trusted the "Blackfish" documentary causing them to reduce their intentions to visit.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether positive coverage of SeaWorld Park would affect the respondents' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions. Under all conditions, except for Group C (negative media coverage), trust in the media positively predicted the respondents' attitudes. It was also found that media trust was a significant predictor of subjective norms under all conditions, except for those in Group C. In practical terms, this means that SeaWorld Park advertisements have great potential for increasing the viewers' perceived level of trust in not only the media broadcasting the ads, but also could lead to an increase in subjective norms, and a more positive attitude toward the company. These changes should hence have an affect on the intentions of these viewers to visit SeaWorld Park.

Since attitude and subjective norms were found to be the main determinants of potential visitation, media coverage should focus on positively changing the attitudes of potential visitors,

and referent groups. Thus, messages should include the mission/vision statement, as well as powerful visual advertisement with supporting text to positively change the attitudes of individuals. They should also create effective testimonial pages to gain positive word of mouth from potential visitors' referent groups.

Practical Implications of H3a, H3b and H3c (TPB → Behavioral Intention)

Because the media has recently been broadcasting many reports about inhumane practices and the mistreatment of livestock (Weisskircher, 2016), it's quite possible these messages have affected viewers' attitudes toward SeaWorld Park and led to a decrease in their intentions to visit the park. Over the past several years, SeaWorld Park has come under much scrutiny due to circumstances that have occurred in their parks (e.g., the death of trainers and the treatment of orcas), and the resultant media coverage. In fact, nearly half of the respondents (46 %) to the current study had seen "Blackfish" prior to the study and another 20% had heard of or were familiar with the documentary. This means that a majority of respondents in all groups would have known about the negative information about SeaWorld Park.

Even so, the main finding of this study revealed that the respondents' attitudes and the attitudes of their referent groups (subjective norms) in Group A (no video treatment) and Group C (negative media coverage) were not related to intentions to visit SeaWorld Park. Yet, those who watched positive media coverage (Group B) or both positive and negative media reports (Group D) were likely to have their attitudes and subjective norms have a positive effect on their behavioral intentions.

Combined, these findings suggest managers at SeaWorld Park to create more educational channels, commercials, and documentaries and encourage viewers to respond and survey the

viewers to determine what media are being most successful. Managers should hence analyze the effects of advertisement and monitor any positive effects on potential visitors' attitude and behavioral intentions. Due to the large effect subjective norms was found to have on respondents' intentions, SeaWorld Park managers should also identify 'good' candidates (i.e., loyal customers) and offer rewards when they successfully refer friends and family. The company might also encourage members to share their personal testimony on websites, blogs, and online channels. Asking loyal customers to participate in marketing and promotional media interviews might also enhance the prospective visitor's intention to visit the park. Finally, tourism industries and staff should practice monitoring electronic-word-of-mouth (eWOM) in online communities, such as consumer review websites and social network services, where users share personal experiences online (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Past research has shown that many prospective hotel guests and restaurant patrons rely on internet reviews exclusively (Jeong & Jang, 2011; Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008; Volo, 2010). Given that many scholars have emphasized the impact of e-word-of-mouth, the present study suggests that managers at SeaWorld Park should develop a website where bloggers can share their comments and provide feedback for the benefit of online users. Furthermore, building a positive relationship with popular internet bloggers might be a key to regaining the company's reputation and corporate image.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Because its respondents were exclusively from the United States, the findings might not be able to be generalized to other countries and/or cultures. Although many international tourists visit SeaWorld Park, it is very possible that the results

would not be similar if the study were conducted elsewhere. For example, respondents with different cultural norms might have different perceived levels of trust towards the media, have different behaviors, and report different attitudes and intentions about the park.

Another limitation is that the survey was distributed only to online panel members who had registered at MTurk. Because non-internet or non-Mturk users were excluded from participating in the study, this might have resulted in media coverage bias. Also, because the data was collected entirely online, it was not possible to monitor or control the online panel members. Furthermore, the respondent's identity was self-reported and the survey environment unconfirmed, which might have undermined the integrity of the responses.

Another limitation was the short-term treatment of the video experiment. Respondents were exposed to only a one-minute video, which likely is not enough stimulus to cause a substantial change in behavior. Although it was shown that the video footage influenced the respondents' behavioral intentions, it is very possible that the use of only a one-minute video would yield only short-lived results and that long-term effects cannot be presumed. This objection is plausible, so further research should examine the effectiveness of a long-term video experiment and examine how long short-term interventions last.

Another limitation is the discrepant video quality between group B (positive media coverage) and group C (negative media coverage). During the experiment, participants assigned to group B watched the positive video coverage about SeaWorld Park in high-definition (HD). Conversely, participants assigned to group C watched the negative video coverage about SeaWorld Park in a lower resolution (standard TV). Because there is a clear difference between HDTV and standard TV's sharpness and clarity, this technical difference might have had

differential effects on viewers' perceptions of SeaWorld Park. One might argue that television advertisements shown in HD are more attractive and convincing than are those in standard-definition television. Therefore, future studies should use videos presented in the same format.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Although some people may intend to visit SeaWorld Park, geographic distance can discourage them from doing so. SeaWorld Park venues are currently located in California, Texas, and Florida. However, those individuals who live farther from one of those locations, and/or those who live outside the United States might be reluctant to bring their family members to SeaWorld Park. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine whether geographic location influenced respondents' behavioral intentions. If this was a major factor, SeaWorld Park managers should offer family discounts to attract long-distance customers, and/or provide family package products to reduce the Park's admission cost.

While the TPB model has often been used to aid in understanding behavioral intentions (Bonne et al., 2007; Shah Alam & Mohamed Sayuti, 2011), it is likely that additional indicators would have aided the study's interpretation. It has been found that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control explain 43% of respondent's behavioral intentions in past studies (Lam & Hsu, 2004), and in the current study they explained 58%. This suggests that substantial variance in understanding behavioral intentions likely could be explained by other variables which could be added to the TPB.

For example, Lobb, Mazzocchi and Traill (2007) introduced an extended version of the theory of planned behavior called SPARTA. As mentioned in Chapter III, SPARTA was derived from the initials of the six variables they used to explain behavioral intention: **S**ubjective Norms,

Perceived Behavioral Control, **A**ttitudes, **R**isk, and **A**lia). Lobb et al. (2007) suggested "risk perception" as a fourth mediating variable into the original TPB model. Other variables which might be considered include, but are not limited to: constraints, motivations, and lifecycle, as well as the following discussed below.

Because the majority of respondents in the current study were familiar with the SeaWorld Park crisis before the study began, the author acknowledges that the "risk perception" of respondents may have influenced the findings. Nearly half of the respondents had heard of "Blackfish" prior to the survey and were likely aware that SeaWorld Park was controversial due to the deaths of the trainers and orca captivity. Under such circumstances, it is possible that, regardless of which videos the respondents watched, they might have had a high-risk perception of SeaWorld Park from the outset.

From the respondents' perspective, SeaWorld Park might be a high-risk destination because the media and animal rights activists allege unethical business practices. For this reason, a further study that includes risk perception is suggested. Although the TPB model has been widely used and applied in the social sciences for predicting travel intentions (Mazzocchi et al., 2008), the SPARTA model might provide an altenative effective conceptual framework for future study.

Another suggestion for future studies is to explore the determinants of "novelty seeking" and "variety seeking" among participants. Assaker et al. (2011) found that some customers switch products and seek new products or services for reasons of novelty, even when they were satisfied with their original purchase. This means that novelty and variety seekers may want to try a different product or travel experience, even though the new choice may come with

substantial risks and negative outcomes. Regardless of the media treatment, then, either positive or negative, novelty/variety seekers might not be influenced by it. It would be interesting if future studies conducted a negative media experiment for novelty seekers, to observe how this affects their trust in the media, their attitudes, and their behavioral intentions.

Another recommendation for future research would be to add "past experience" as an indicator to explain how previous experience of a travel destination effects trust in the media, attitudes and revisit intentions. According to Huang and Hsu (2009), visitors who had a positive travel experience in Hong Kong not only retained a favorable attitude toward the city, but they also were more likely to revisit Hong Kong in the future. A similar result was found in a study by Sonmez and Graefe (1998), who revealed that past travel experiences to specific destinations increased the traveler's willingness to travel again to the same destination. Even if past visitors were exposed to negative media reports about SeaWorld Park, it is possible that those who had a positive experience there would be likely to revisit the park. Thus, it is recommended for future studies to examine the influence that past experiences and the resultant loyalty perceptions have on future visits.

Future research might also consider adding "involvement" as an element to predict behavioral intentions. Several scholars in the Leisure Recreation and Tourism field have used this concept to understand the fundamental reasons for persistence in leisure, recreation, and social events (Gunter & Gunter, 1980; Havitz & Mannell, 2005; Wiley, Shaw, & Havitz, 2000). Kim, Scott, and Crompton (1997), which aimed to investigate the relationships among behavioral involvement, social-psychological involvement, and commitment in the context of a birdwatching event, to determine what specific involvement factors motivated people to attend a

birding festival. They found that, among three types of involvement (behavioral, social-psychological, and commitment), behavioral involvement was the best predictor of a desire to participate in the festival. It is likely, therefore, that such connections exist between involvement and intention to participate in other leisure events, including visiting theme parks. Thus it is possible that the inclusion of involvement in future models will generate a better understanding of the phenomena.

Finally, a systematic approach might identify how intentions link to behavior. Over the past several decades, a number of social science researchers have emulated Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action and Ajzen's (1985) planned behavior model to show, empirically, that intention can determine behavior (see, Ajzen, 1991; Floyd et al., 2000; Hausenblas et al, 1997; Lam & Hsu, 2004; Van den Putte, 1991). A meta-analysis study conducted by Sutton (1998) argued that the theory of reasoned action and the TPB model "explains on average between 40 and 50 % of the variance in intention, and between 19% and 38% of the variance in behavior" (p. 1317). Another meta-analysis study by Webb and Sheeran (2006) argued that the vast majority of studies that have been guided by TPB "do not afford clear conclusions about whether intentions have a causal impact on behavior" (p. 249). Although the theories of reasoned action and of planned behavior have received substantial attention to explain the determinants of intentions and behaviors, a more detailed instrument and theoretical model should be developed to better understand the relationship between intentions and behaviors.

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APPENDIX

Final Survey

Consent Form

Project Title: The Impact of Media Coverage: Examining Participants' Intention to Travel to SeaWorld Park.

IRB Number: IRB2018-0604M

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Sungeun Kang, a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to examine participants' perceived level of trust, mainstream media, and how perceived level of trust in the media can lead to travel decisions.

Who may I Contact for More Information?

Please feel free to ask questions regarding this study. You may contact Sungeun Kang, at 1-979-422-7693 or skang7693@tamu.edu if you have additional questions or concerns. You may also contact Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office at 1-979- 458-4067, toll-free at 1-855-795-8636 or by email at irb@tamu.edu for questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns or complaints about the research, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff.

If you wish to participate, please click the **"I Agree"** button and you will be taken to the survey.

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please select **"I Disagree"** or select X in the corner of your browser.

- ○ I Agree
- ○ I Disagree

18+ Are you 18 years old or over?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Thinking about the mass media (e.g., television networks) in general, please indicate whether you think they are:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Honest	○	○	○	○	○
Up-to-Date	○	○	○	○	○
Balanced	○	○	○	○	○
Believable	○	○	○	○	○
Current	○	○	○	○	○
Report the whole story	○	○	○	○	○
Accurate	○	○	○	○	○
Timely	○	○	○	○	○
Objective	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Where do you fit in the political typology? If you do not identify with either party, please skip this question.

Liberal ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Conservative

Which political organization do you most identify with?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Green
- Libertarian
- Unaffiliated

Which news organization do you think is the most trusted?

- ABC
- CNN
- NBC
- CBS
- MSNBC
- FOX
- Other

Have you visited SeaWorld Park (San Diego, San Antonio, or Orlando) in the last 12 months?

- Yes
- No

During the last 3 years, how many times did you travel to SeaWorld Park? (Please fill in numbers)

When was your last visit? (Please fill in 4-digit year)

What is your opinion of SeaWorld Park?

	Not at all favorable	Very unfavorable	Slightly unfavorable	Moderately favorable	Slightly favorable	Very favorable	Extremely favorable
'	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please rate each item on a scale from 1= Extremely Unlikely to 7= Extremely Likely. Click the most appropriate circle

	Extremely Unlikely	Moderately unlikely	Slightly unlikely	Neither Likely nor unlikely	Slightly Likely	Moderately Likely	Extremely Likely
The likelihood that I will visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I intend to visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The possibility for me to travel to SeaWorld Park within the next 2 years is	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Have you seen the "Blackfish" documentary?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

How familiar are you with "Blackfish" documentary?

- ○ Extremely familiar
- ○ Very familiar
- ○ Slightly familiar
- ○ Moderately familiar
- ○ Slightly unfamiliar
- ○ Very unfamiliar
- ○ Not at all familiar

Please watch a one-minute Blackfish trailer and answer the following questions on the next page. Click the play button to begin.

Based on the video clip you just saw, a trainer at the SeaWorld Park has died after being attacked by a killer whale.

- TRUE
- FALSE

Thinking about the video clip you just saw, please indicate whether you think the media is:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Honest	○	○	○	○	○
Up-to-Date	○	○	○	○	○
Balanced	○	○	○	○	○
Believable	○	○	○	○	○
Current	○	○	○	○	○
Report the whole story	○	○	○	○	○
Accurate	○	○	○	○	○
Timely	○	○	○	○	○
Objective	○	○	○	○	○

Please watch a one-minute advertisement and answer the following questions on the next page. Click the play button to begin.

Based on the video clip you just saw, SeaWorld decided to stop breeding orcas (killer whales).

- TRUE
- FALSE

Thinking about the video clip you just saw, please indicate whether you think the media is:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Honest	○	○	○	○	○
Up-to-Date	○	○	○	○	○
Balanced	○	○	○	○	○
Believable	○	○	○	○	○
Current	○	○	○	○	○
Report the whole story	○	○	○	○	○
Accurate	○	○	○	○	○
Timely	○	○	○	○	○
Objective	○	○	○	○	○

Below is a list of items that can be used to describe your **feelings toward SeaWorld Park**. Please evaluate Sea World Park as a vacation destination on each word set by clicking the appropriate circle.

All things considered, I think visiting SeaWorld Park would be....

Unenjoyable	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Enjoyable
Negative	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Positive
Boring	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Fun
Unpleasant	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Pleasant
Unfavorable	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Favorable

The following statements are related to **how people you know think about whether you should/should not travel to SeaWorld Park**. Please rate each item on a scale from 1 (Definitely Should Not) to 7 (Definitely Should). Click the most appropriate circle.

	Definitely Should Not						Definitely Should
Most people I know would choose SeaWorld Park as a travel destination.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who are important to me would think I _____ visit SeaWorld Park.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

,

	Disapprove						Approve
People who are important to me would _____ of my visit to SeaWorld Park	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please rate each item on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) 7 (Strongly Agree). Click the most appropriate circle.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Visiting SeaWorld Park is within my control	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
In the future, I will be able to visit SeaWorld Park	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The decision to visit SeaWorld Park is entirely mine	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please rate each item on a scale from 1 (Extremely Unlikely) to 7 (Extremely Likely). Click the most appropriate circle.

	Extremely Unlikely	Moderately unlikely	Slightly unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Slightly likely	Moderately likely	Extremely likely
The likelihood that I will visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I Intend to visit SeaWorld Park in the next 2 years	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The possibility of me traveling to SeaWorld Park within the next 2 years is	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Demographic Information

Are you?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Prefer not to say
- ○ Other

What year were you born? (Please fill in 4-digit year)

How many years of education have you completed?

- ○ Less than High School
- ○ Completed High School
- ○ Some College, not completed
- ○ Completed College
- ○ Vocational/Technical training
- ○ Post graduate work started or completed

How many children under 18 years old live in your household? (Please fill in numbers)

What is the zip code for your primary residence?