

# Eurodisney – american conceit on french soil



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## EuroDisney - American Conceit on French Soil

Who has not heard of Disney? No one can deny that this company has become synonymous to fantastic imagination and entertainment in any place marked by a television or movie screen. It has even built its majestic but very successful theme parks in Florida and California based on past film hit records. Confidence of the Disney management in the global appeal of the Disney products was a key factor in the decision to enter first the Japanese and then the European theme park markets (Richards & Richards, 1998, p. 365). Tokyo Disneyland was a remarkable venture that the Asians lovingly embraced. EuroDisney, however, went way beyond everyone's expectations down hill.

It was a sickly mixture of management, cultural differences, environmental, labor and financial issues that led to a shocking business disappointment. Overconfident with their products, the Americans thought that their management style would be quickly adapted by the French. However, they failed to see that the French took pride in nationalism and that their values collided with the strict American style. In fact, the establishment of EuroDisney in Paris was horribly dubbed by French media as "cultural Chernobyl" (last name of author of your book, year of publication, p. 117). The European labor force felt that the Americans were too conceited and this resulted to poor public relations that were marked by the astonishing low ticket sales. Although the wife of the American general manager was French, his poor choices of contractors affected his relationship with the natives.

Disney failed to take into consideration the cultural differences of Americans and French even on marketing development. French people prefer to take

longer vacations and are conservative in terms of allowing mini-vacations for their families during school days. The Europeans are also big breakfast eaters who enjoy their meals while dining in large areas which the Americans failed to provide at first. Alcoholic drinks are also a main item on European menus that the Americans sought to ban because they forgot that these are considered normal in the native land. Disney also thought that they would reap great profits from their souvenir merchandise but overlooked that the French do not normally buy these compared to the Americans. The U. S. culture of using their own private cars for vacations, were also not adaptable to the French style of using buses for these kinds of trips. Therefore, parking facilities also needed to be renovated adding to the soaring costs to start rolling profits. The European preference of taking strolls instead of riding convenient automated utilities also kept the transportation vehicles underused within the park and rendered it to a waste of production cost.

Disney also overlooked environmental factors such as the fact that most of their target market lived on the other side of the city and that weather conditions only permitted visitors to enjoy their park six months in a year. This was beside the opposition it got because Disney was “creating fantasy from wheat fields” considered to be important for French agriculture and that families had to be displaced (Fawcett, 1992).

On the financial side, multi-cultural problems also propped up in the Americans’ misunderstanding that their work remuneration packages would be amendable to the French. The low sales turnout also breathed on the flaming problem because most of EuroDisney’s investors were individuals who did not thoroughly understand the risks they were getting into. Added

to these were the unforeseen European recession, failure of the real estate market and devaluation of the French Franc among its neighboring currencies. Disney ignored the fact that Western Paris also had its own tourist spots with hotels lower priced than those established for the theme park. In fact, the value of the French Franc was even better in Florida where tourists can visit more sites as well.

The failure of EuroDisney clearly comes from its overconfident premise that the American way can dominate any culture. What it should have done was analyze “ the market, and then, and only then, decide on its offer in terms of products, services, and marketing programs” (Arnold, 2003). The French admiration for Disney films, videos and items suggest that they have a private admiration for the American imaginary world...but they still find the highly drilled public organization of the heavily sold entertainment industry unattractive: the private and the public and the question of taste (Brooks, 1994, p. 132).

I believe that the only way Disney can really succeed in the European market is by adapting its culture into the whole theme park scheme. One suggestion I can think of is by making an international cartoon film on French or European history that would endear itself to the market it has sought to target and give reason for additional rides or perks that would boost the pride of these natives.

Disney, as well as other American companies, needs to learn that the American dream is not always the best for every culture and that it should respect the differences of each nation to be able to operate in its societies. Global companies must also adjust to the traditions of the

communities they have sought to affiliate themselves with to avoid business failures. Just because a product is greatly appreciated by the world does not mean that it can dominate any place on the globe.

### Bibliography

(Please do not forget to follow the above format for your own book which we referenced)

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