

Challenging Conventional Wisdom: Positive Waiting¹

Abstract

This paper calls for a re-examination of the conventional wisdom that making consumers wait for service is necessarily negative. This is important because after three decades of research on waiting, consumers still spend a considerable amount of time waiting, in an ever-widening range of contexts. And although there is a continuous and steady stream of waiting studies, there have been few significant advances in our understanding in recent years. We forward a set of challenging propositions that consider the positive effects of waiting. In contrast to established thinking, we propose that waiting attracts more consumers; increases perceived value; provides information to facilitate consumer decision-making; improves customer evaluations; and encourages positive anticipation. The propositions are supported theoretically and empirically by drawing on related disciplines. With this paper, we aim to stimulate new and innovative discussion around the topic of waiting, with particular emphasis on waiting in tourism services, and to question accepted knowledge in order to begin laying the basis for the next phase of research on consumer waiting.

Keywords: waiting, positive, tourism, hospitality, services marketing

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Challenging Conventional Wisdom: Positive Waiting?

1. Introduction

In order to advance our understanding of the challenges facing management, every so often researchers are called upon to question conventional wisdom, to re-examine the evidence and to re-evaluate the obvious solutions (Sandberg and Alvesson 2011). Waiting in services has been studied extensively and consistently across a range of disciplines including operations research, services marketing and consumer behavior (Hornik 1984; Maister 1985; Jones and Peppiatt 1996; Pàmies, Ryan and Valverde (B) 2016). The fundamental premise of waiting research is that the longer consumers wait, the less favorable they will evaluate services (Taylor 1995). Therefore, the almost singular end-goal of waiting research is to reduce waiting times. Yet, despite a considerable and sustained research effort over three decades and an extensive literature on waiting, consumers are still devoting a considerable portion of their time to waiting for service (Giebelhausen, Robinson and Cronin 2011). This includes waiting in an increasing range of situations, with more recent incorporations including waiting on the telephone (Munichor and Rafaeli 2007; Mehrotra, Ross, Ryder and Zhou 2012) waiting on the Internet (Ryan and Valverde, 2005, 2006; Lee, Chen and Llie 2012) and waiting in virtual environments (Hwang, Yoon and Bendle 2012).

Indeed, it is our contention that research on consumer waiting over the previous decade has become entrenched in the existing paradigm, with little scope for new or innovative thinking on the issues. We suggest that notwithstanding the continual flow of new waiting studies, we are consistently revisiting the same research questions we have considered since the early 1990s. Though we are examining waiting in new and innovative service environments, such

as waiting on the Internet (Ryan, Pamies and Valverde 2015), in self-service technologies (Kokkinou & Cranage, 2015) and virtual queues (Hwang, Yoon and Bendle 2012; Brown, Kappes and Marks 2013), we are dealing with the same issues; such as, tolerance for waiting and how it is affected by personal characteristics, the service environment (Borges, Herter and Chebat 2015), situational factors (Demoulin and Djelassi, 2013), multistage waiting (Kim, Miao and Magnini 2013), and filling the wait (Hong, Hess and Hardin 2013). All of this is based on the fundamental premise that the longer consumers are forced to wait, the more negative their corresponding reaction. We propose that it is time to reconsider our approach to waiting, to reevaluate the fundamental tenets of our research, in order to begin opening up new approaches to the study of the waiting consumer.

Despite the emphasis on the negative aspects of waiting in research and the pervasiveness of waiting in contemporary society, there are grounds to support a positive interpretation of waiting. However, the literature that has identified positive aspects of waiting is unconnected and scattered across a range of disciplines. The aim of this paper is to bring together the empirical evidence and theoretical support on this topic in order to propose a positive interpretation of waiting that challenges the dominant view that waiting should be eliminated or reduced. In this paper we do not deny the “waiting is negative” paradigm, or the common-sense approach that waiting can be frustrating. However, we do indeed challenge the widely held view that the only solution to the problems associated with waiting is to reduce the wait. We also note that although common sense suggests that consumers would prefer not to wait, research demonstrates that even faced with a choice between queues, consumers will often join the longer queue.

The tourism experience is especially prone to long and repeated delays and waiting (Dickson, Ford and Laval 2005; Moore 2007; Pearce 1989). Consequently, there is considerable academic research on waiting in the context of airports (Dawes and Rowley 1996; Rendeiro 2006; Minton 2008; De Lange, Samoilovich and van de Rhee 2013), restaurants (Davis and Heineke 1998; Sulek and Hensley 2004; Dickson, Ford and Laval 2005; Hensley and Sulek 2007) theme parks (Ahmadi 1997) and cultural attractions (Rowley 1999; Gnoth, Bigne and Andreu 2006; Riganti and Nijkamp 2008). As tourists we wait in line at airports to check-in, to board the airplane, to get off the plane, to collect luggage, to go through emigration or passport control and to find a taxi to take us to our hotel, where we often wait again to check in. During our vacations, we wait at restaurants, theatres, museums and theme parks. Indeed, a typical visit to a popular theme park may involve more time waiting than time experiencing the rides and attractions (Heger, Offermans and Frens 2009). Tourism and hospitality operations make decisions on capacity and demand management, striving to balance guest satisfaction and comfort with operational efficiency (Pullman and Thompson 2002). Therefore, waiting is an ubiquitous part of the contemporary tourist experience (Dawes and Rowley 1996; Gilbert and Wong 2003; Gnoth, Bigne and Andreu 2006) and a major concern for management as research suggests that waiting may have a considerable negative effect on tourist satisfaction (Dickson, Ford and Laval 2005).

The aim of this paper is to advance our understanding of waiting behavior by reconsidering the conventional wisdom that the only solution to waiting is to minimize it. By highlighting some of the positive interpretations that waiting evokes, new perspectives and more appropriate solutions to this enduring issue may emerge. We do this by forwarding a series of propositions that contemplate the potentially positive effects of waiting for companies. We do not contest the widely held view that consumers do not like to wait, but we argue that under

certain conditions consumers may willingly wait and may even choose a longer wait over a shorter wait. In contrast to conventional thinking, we propose that waiting may attract *more* consumers, increase perceived value, provide information to facilitate consumer decision-making, improve customer evaluations and encourage positive anticipation. We base these propositions on theories and concepts drawn from a range of disciplines and we support them with empirical evidence drawn from existing studies. We conceptualize these propositions as ‘positive waiting’.

The structure of the paper is as follows: Firstly, we review the literature on waiting in services in order to consider the pervasive emphasis on the negative aspects of waiting. We examine the strategies designed to reduce both real and perceived waiting times. We then consider the grounds for questioning the conventional wisdom on waiting and we set forth a series of propositions based on a positive conceptualization of waiting. Finally, the implications and suggestions for future research are outlined.

2. Waiting in services

Studies show that waiting can reduce customer satisfaction (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault 1990; Chang and Yang, 2008; Davis and Heineke 1994; Lee and Lambert, 2006; Hensley and Sulek 2007; Li 2010). Therefore, research in marketing almost always interprets waiting as a problem. Indeed, it is generally accepted that waiting is universally disliked by consumers, regardless of culture (Rose, Evaristo and Straub 2003, Pàmies, Ryan and Valverde 2016A; Pàmies, Ryan and Valverde 2016B). Time spent waiting is considered wasted time (Fung 2006) because it is a scarce resource that could be used for something more productive (Leclerc, Schmitt and Dube 1995). Waiting makes consumers feel bored, annoyed, agitated and irritated (Rafaeli, Barron and Haber 2002; Taylor 1994; Pruyn and Smidts 1998; Larson 1987). As the wait often occurs at the beginning of a service encounter, it is frequently the first experience customers have with companies (McGuire, Kimes, Lynn, Pullman and Lloyd 2010; Davis and Heineke 1998). Therefore, initial delays may have a considerable and enduring negative effect on the overall evaluation of a service (Dickson, Ford and Laval 2005; Lee and Lambert 2000; Pruyn and Smidts 1998; Taylor 1994; Hui and Tse 1996). Sometimes consumers will simply abandon a service rather than wait (Zhou and Soman 2003; Carmon, Shanthikumar and Carmon 1995; Friedman and Friedman 1997), and even if they decide to endure a wait, they may avoid that service on future occasions (Carmon, Shanthikumar and Carmon 1995; Bielen and Demoulin 2007; Davis and Vollmann 1990; McDougall and Levesque 1999). Therefore, researchers and practitioners endeavor to design services that reduce or eliminate waiting times (Kostecki 1996; Yan and Lotz 2006; Hui and Tse 1996).

However, consumers often do not accurately calculate how long they wait. In this sense, we can differentiate between the time a consumer *perceives* they wait and the actual, objective or *real* time they wait (Jones and Peppiatt 1996). Real or objective waiting times are reduced by extending opening hours, operating at maximum capacity level, opening more checkouts or employing more service staff (Yan and Lotz 2006; Davis and Heineke 1994; Ahmadi 1997; Davis and Vollmann 1990). Yet, despite the efficiency and advances in operations management, there are important practical limitations in terms of managing real waiting times. For example, during peak tourist seasons many companies struggle to align demand and capacity (Heger, Offermans and Frens 2009; Bielen and Demoulin 2007). Theme park attendance regularly exceeds the optimal capacity so that queues are almost inevitable (Heger, Offermans and Frens 2009; Heo and Lee 2009; Alexander, MacLaren, O’Gorman and White 2012; Pearce 1989). Specific events such as the opening of new tourist attractions may lead to inescapably long queues (Cornelis 2010). Additionally, management initiatives designed to reduce real waiting times in tourism services, such as special queue-avoiding express passes or virtual queuing systems (Cope III, Cope and Davis 2008; Cope, Cope III, Bass and Syrdal 2011) are not entirely successful (Alexander, McLaren, O’Gorman and White, 2012). Ironically, the introduction of express passes sometimes results in even longer on average waits for the most popular attractions (Independent Guide 2012) and may significantly increase the cost for consumers. In the case of airlines such as Ryanair, their priority boarding initiative receives much criticism in passenger forums, due to the difficulties involved in properly implementing the system and the perception that the system is unfair to other passengers (Barry and Torres 2007; Biege 2012).

Because of the operational complexity and the habitually prohibitive cost of eliminating real waiting times, much of the research focuses on understanding and managing the *perceived*

waiting time (Dube-Rioux, Schmitt and Leclerc 1989; Maister 1985; Davis and Heineke 1998). In this sense, management may manipulate a range of contextual factors in order to make the wait *seem* less unpleasant and *feel* as short as possible (Pruyn and Smidts 1998; Davis and Heineke 1994). The perceived waiting time is reduced by filling the time with constructive, attractive and stimulating activities (Katz, Larson and Larson 1991; Maister 1985; Taylor 1994; Larson 1987; Kellaris and Kent 1992), by promoting social interaction and by providing a pleasant and fair (orderly) waiting environment (Baker and Cameron 1996). In addition, customers tend to feel better about waiting when companies provide timely and accurate information on the duration and causes of the delay (Larson 1987; Maister 1985; Davis and Heineke 1994; Antonides, Verhoef and van Aalst 2002). Also, many companies strive to begin a service process as quickly as possible even if the customer has to subsequently wait during the service. This is because research suggests that waiting once a service has begun (in-process waiting) is less unpleasant than waiting before the transaction begins (pre-process waiting) (Friman 2010; Taylor 1994; Dube-Rioux, Schmitt and Leclerc 1989). These strategies are based on the premise that people prioritize getting a service process started (Maister 1985; Friman 2010; Kostecki 1996). For example, restaurants may offer guests an appetizer in their lounge before they are seated in the dining room in order to reduce the perceived waiting time (Dubé, Renaghan and Miller 1994). Similarly, at theme parks, pre-shows take place while the audience is being seated to give the impression that the show has already begun (Dickson, Ford and Laval 2005; Lutz 2008). In other words, these strategies aim to reduce the perceived waiting time by making consumers feel as if they are not really waiting.

Despite the predominant focus on eliminating real and perceived waiting time, there is evidence that the fundamental assumption that waiting is negative may not necessarily be true

in all situations and in all service industries (Gavilán-Bouzas and García de Madariaga-Miranda 2009; Koo and Fishbach 2010; Gudergan 1997; Debo and Veeraraghavan 2009). For instance, Sundström, Christine and Stavroula (2011) suggest that waiting may not necessarily be negative for the tourist experience. Dickson, Ford and Laval (2005) propose that tourists come to expect and even accept a certain amount of waiting and that they are not really bothered by queues and waiting. Indeed, Ahmadi (1997) found that a certain amount of waiting may actually *enhance* the tourist experience in certain contexts. In a similar vein, Heger, Offermans and Frens (2009) found that by filling the waiting time in theme parks with fun activities, waiting may actually *increase* the fun factor and *improve* the overall tourist experience. Likewise, in certain contexts, such as queuing for sporting events (Mann 1969) or queuing to see a new movie, consumers may actually enjoy the wait because of the social atmosphere created in the queue (Brady 2002; Rafaeli, Barron and Haber 2002).

There is also much anecdotal evidence to suggest that waiting is not always unwelcome. For instance, dedicated fans of popular music sometimes spend days on end waiting outdoors just to be among the first to enter a concert (Argudo and Cano 2012; Naoreen 2010; Metro 2012). Similarly, the famous Catalan restaurant El Bulli had a waiting list of over 3,000 customers (Alexander 2010) willing to wait for many months to enjoy a singular gastronomic experience. Likewise, in retailing, gadget fans worldwide regularly queue up for considerable time periods outside Apple stores in anticipation of their latest release (Emery 2010; Truta 2012). In marked contrast to the image of waiting lines full of bored, frustrated and agitated customers, as suggested by much of the academic research on the topic (Taylor 1994; Rafaeli, Barron and Haber 2002), the opening of the doors at new Apple stores are typified by ‘high-fives’ from ecstatic salespeople and euphoric customers. Therefore, it seems that in certain

contexts, rather than being considered a problem, waiting may be associated with positive effects (Friman 2010).

Hence, there is growing empirical and anecdotal evidence of a positive side to waiting in services, although little effort has been made to integrate this or to recognize it as a relevant phenomenon. It is with this in mind that the following section outlines a series of five propositions that put forward a positive conceptualization of waiting in services. We label this ‘positive waiting’. Overall, the purpose of these propositions is to reexamine and reconsider the dominant logic that making consumers wait for service is necessarily negative. It is important to note that we are not naively discounting thirty years of research on waiting. We are not proposing that waiting is always positive. Instead, we propose that under certain circumstances, making consumers wait will be beneficial for businesses. By forwarding these propositions we hope to encourage debate on the direction of future research on waiting. The propositions on ‘positive waiting’ are as follows; (1) Queues and waiting lists attract more consumers; (2) Waiting increases perceived value; (3) Queues provide information that facilitates decision-making; (4) Slowing down the service improves customer evaluations; (5) Waiting encourages positive anticipation. Each of the propositions is outlined and discussed separately in the following section. Propositions 1 to 4 deal with situations where management has traditionally tried to reduce or disguise real or perceived waiting times. More specifically, propositions 1 to 3 deal with queues, while proposition 4 deals with waiting throughout the service provision. Proposition 5 deals with situations in which management deliberately creates and highlights a perceived waiting situation (where one does not necessarily exist) in order to initiate a process of positive anticipation.

3. Positive Waiting: Propositions

3.1. Proposition 1 - Queues and waiting lists attract more consumers.

Queues and waiting lists may be viewed in a positive light, as a promotional tool and a marketing asset to attract more customers (Fung 2006; Kostecki 1996). Various theoretical approaches support this proposition. Herd behavior (Banerjee, 1992; Debo and Veeraraghavan 2009), informational cascades (Bikhchandani, Hirshleifer and Welch 1992) and social impact theories (Latané 1981) argue that individuals look to what others are doing, search for clues on what is appropriate behavior, and subsequently imitate their behavior (Solomon 2008). In this sense, there is considerable empirical evidence that queues are a source of social influence on consumer behavior by attracting other consumers to join in (Kostecki 1996; Veeraraghavan and Debo 2009; Fung 2006). In tourism, there is substantial evidence that queues attract more consumers in restaurants (Raz and Ert 2008; Banerjee 1992; Veeraraghavan and Debo 2009) and theme parks (Debo, Parlour and Rajan 2012). Indeed, tourists are especially prone to social influences in their purchase decisions (Swarbrooke and Horner 2007; Moutinho 1993). Therefore, tourists are attracted to restaurants, theme parks and other attractions simply because of the presence of a queue.

Moreover, in contrast to the widely held view that consumers prefer shorter queues, research suggests that the longer the queue, the greater the number of people that wish to join the wait (Milgram, Bickman and Berkowitz 1969; Mann 1977; Raz and Ert 2008; Veeraraghavan and Debo 2009). In addition, the influence of queues is not limited to those who actually decide to join the wait. The queue also influences passers-by who are drawn by curiosity to know what

people are waiting for (Milgram, Bickman and Berkowitz 1969). In this way, the queue also acts as a kind of advertisement that something interesting is happening (Mann 1977). Therefore, contrary to the generally accepted view that waiting is bad for business, we propose that the formation of queues and waiting lists can actually attract more consumers to the service. In this sense, we propose that in the tourism context, with limited or no prior information; faced with a choice between service providers, tourists will choose the service that has a queue; where both services have queues, tourists will choose the longer queue; and that service providers with a queue will attract more passersby than service providers that do not have a queue.

3.2. Proposition 2 - Waiting increases perceived value.

Contrary to conventional wisdom that suggests that waiting diminishes the value of services, we propose that making consumers wait may actually increase the perceived value of a service in certain situations. This proposition may be approached from three conceptual perspectives. Firstly, based on signaling theory, queues can provide positive signals regarding the quality of services (Debo, Parlour and Rajan 2012). Hence, the presence and length of a queue may increase perceived value (Fung 2006) in the sense that services which require consumers to wait often seem more attractive and more desirable (Kostecki 1996; Gavilán-Bouzas and García de Madariaga-Miranda 2009). In contrast, services that involve no waiting time may send a negative signal to consumers regarding the quality and popularity of their service (Dickson, Ford and Laval 2005). Indeed, Giebelhausen, Robinson and Cronin (2011) clearly demonstrate that queues, acting as signals of quality, can increase the perception of service quality in unfamiliar and ambiguous service contexts, so much so that sometimes it is better to make customers wait. In the same way, Gavilán-Bouzas and García de Madariaga-

Miranda (2009) found that when they asked tourists what might be causing a longer wait for a restaurant, most replied that the restaurant must be fashionable, serve better food or offer a better price-quality relation. Just over 6 per cent of respondents attributed the wait to operational slowness or poor organization on the part of the restaurant. Therefore, tourists prefer restaurants with longer waiting times when they interpret the wait length as a signal of the value of the service (Raz and Ert 2008; Veeraghavan and Debo 2009).

Secondly, waiting can also act as an indirect signal of value mediated by its association with scarcity (Lynn, 1992). Indeed, according to commodity theory (Brock, 1968), scarcity increases the value and desirability of products and services. In a meta-analysis of 41 studies testing commodity theory, Lynn (1991) brought this economics concept to the marketing terrain by showing a small but very reliable effect of scarcity on perceived value. Similarly, Ditto and Jemmott (1989) studied how scarcity acts as a heuristic cue that can infer quality and other desirable attributes. Indeed, many successful brands restrict availability of their products and services with the express desire of increasing perceived value. This is often the case of concert promoters who while planning a series of concerts by an artist only announce a single performance in order to encourage rapid ticket sales. As each successive performance sells out they add a further date (often with the promotional tag ‘by popular demand’).

Finally, a third perspective that supports this proposition is based on the concept of accomplished actions, i.e. that the perceived value of a service increases as more people line up behind a person in a queue (Koo and Fishbach 2010). In this way, while waiting, customers focus their attention on those who are joining the queue behind them. As more people join, social comparison occurs and customers may feel they are in a better situation than those behind (Zhou and Soman 2003). Consumers realize the progress they have

achieved and this accomplishment increases the value of the final goal. In this way, Koo and Fishbach (2010) found that the perceived value of a theme park ride increases as more people join the wait. Hence, in contrast to conventional wisdom, we propose that in certain contexts, waiting may increase a service's perceived value by making it appear more attractive.

3.3. Proposition 3 - Queues provide information that facilitates decision-making.

We propose that queues and waiting lists are a reliable and credible source of information that is used by consumers in their decision-making. In this sense, queues may act as a shortcut or a heuristic cue for consumers to simplify certain purchase decisions (Yeung and Soman 2007). The information that queues provide reduces uncertainty and helps consumers make purchase decisions with confidence (Giebelhausen, Robinson and Cronin 2011; Debo, Parlour and Rajan 2012; Gavilán-Bouzas and García de Madariaga-Miranda 2009; Veeraraghavan and Debo 2010; Debo and Veeraraghavan 2009). Queues may highlight information about a range of factors such as popularity, value or exceptional situations such as the presence of a scarce or unusual product or service. This is especially so when consumers have incomplete information and are faced with an uncertain service outcome, which is often the case in tourism. However, it is also so in the opposite situation, where there is information overload, when consumers face complex decisions, queues may also facilitate the decision-making process by providing information as to the appropriate purchase decision (Herbig and Kramer 1994) (Eppler and Mengis 2004; Malhotra 1984; Jacoby 1984; Solomon 2008). For instance, in the former situation, a tourist may arrive in a city unsure of which musical production to go and see. She may make inferences on the popularity of each show according to the waiting time for tickets or the length of the queue at the box-office (Veeraghavan and Debo 2009). In this way, on encountering a queue, she will reason that those in the queue have privileged

information and that whatever they are waiting for must be worth the wait (Kirmani and Rao 2000). In the latter situation, faced with a complex decision, waiting times in theme parks provide information to visitors to help them decide which rides to prioritize (Dickson, Ford and Laval 2005; Vukadinovic, Dreier and Mangold 2011). In this sense, in a study that asked which theme park ride tourists would spend their last ticket on, the overwhelming majority of respondents said they would prefer the ride with the longer queue (Gavilán-Bouzas and García de Madariaga-Miranda 2009). Similarly, when these authors asked respondents to choose between two restaurants, one of which had a queue and one of which did not, almost 75 percent felt that the restaurant with a queue was a safer bet because of the information the queue conveyed about this restaurant. Consequently, proposition 3 suggests that queues facilitate decision-making by providing consumers with information and that longer waiting times are not necessarily interpreted in a negative manner.

3.4. Proposition 4 - Slowing down the service improves customer evaluations

Contrary to the accepted view, we propose that consumers sometimes will wait longer for services when the service has operational transparency. Such transparency is present when the consumer can see the service being performed and the reasons for the duration of the wait (Buell and Norton 2011). Indeed, research indicates that consumers reward service providers with higher evaluations when they can see the efforts being made by the company (Morales 2005). In a series of experiments on the purchase of airline tickets, Buell and Norton (2011) found that faced with identical service outcomes, consumers more positively evaluated services that involved a wait, as long as they could see the effort that the company was making on their behalf. In this sense, the labor illusion concept (Buell and Norton 2011) suggests that making customers wait for service while showing them how the service is being

prepared creates the appearance of effort, which in turn improves services evaluations. Similarly, a diner will more positively evaluate a restaurant when she can see the time and effort being employed to prepare her meal. The client may be made aware of this effort by designing the restaurant so that diners have visual access to the food preparation or the waiter may explain the details of how the food will be cooked and presented.

This same principle is also supported by the duration heuristic approach (Yeung and Soman 2007), which proposes that consumers use the duration of a service as a heuristic cue to evaluate the service. In this sense, slowing down a service, thus increasing its duration, leads to improved customer evaluations. Tellingly, Yeung and Soman (2007) found that although increases in service efficiency lead to reduced waiting times, it also results in a decrease in service evaluations because consumers focus on the shorter service duration rather than the shorter wait.

Therefore, consumers do not necessarily associate shorter waiting times with a better service. If a service is performed too fast (to reduce waiting), consumers may feel like they are being rushed (Noone, Kimes, Mattila and Wirtz 2007). This is the case in many tourism and hospitality services such as restaurants, museums and golf courses, in which the duration of the visit is not determined in advance (Noone, Wirtz and Kimes 2012). For example, if the duration of dining in a restaurant is reduced, although this may lead to shorter waiting times and increased revenue, it may negatively affect customer satisfaction (Noone, Kimes, Mattila and Wirtz 2007). Similarly, the treatments experienced by a client at a spa would not be well appreciated if they felt the service was rushed or shorter than they expected. Therefore, though much research in operations focuses on improving service design and processes with the intention of speeding up service in order to reduce waiting time, faster services may

negatively affect consumer evaluations. Accordingly, we propose that slowing down services even if this implies that consumers must wait, while ensuring that the service process is visible, may result in improved customer evaluations.

3.5. Proposition 5 - Waiting encourages positive anticipation

The final proposition is different from the other four for a number of reasons. It deals with the concept of positive anticipation, which has not been widely considered in the waiting literature. Positive anticipation often involves long-term waiting that may last many months in advance of a consumption experience. It may not involve waiting in line or waiting your turn. This proposition refers to deliberate attempts by companies to promote a sense of waiting and to actively encourage positive anticipation and longing among its consumers. In this way, the purpose of these actions is to make consumers look forward to and count down the time until a consumption experience, thus creating a perception of positive waiting. In the following paragraph we outline the conceptual basis of this proposition. We then provide some practical examples of how tourist service providers can create this positive waiting experience.

In this sense, we suggest that in certain situations, waiting provides consumers with a time period to contemplate and anticipate future consumption events, which evokes positive sensations conceptualized as savoring. Savoring involves the ability to manage, intensify and prolong pleasure (Bryant 2003, Bryant and Veroff 2007; Hurley and Kwon 2012) of past, present or future events (Chun 2009). In this way, consumers can produce positive and pleasurable feelings while waiting for a future consumption event (Bryant 2003). Indeed, this anticipation is a significant source of utility and pleasure in the same manner as consumption and has a positive effect on current well-being (Loewenstein 1987). In fact, future events may

arouse even more intense pleasure and positive emotions for consumers than past events (Van Boven and Ashworth 2007). In this way, while waiting for their next vacation, consumers may anticipate future holidays in a more positive, intense and exciting manner when compared to their recollections of past trips. The more an individual expects to enjoy a future event, the greater the positive anticipation (Jevons 1905). In this way, delayed consumption facilitated by waiting may provoke increased savoring of future experiences (Loewenstein 1987).

In tourism and hospitality, waiting times can be used to provoke positive anticipation of future consumption (Chun 2009) on both long and short-term horizons. For instance, tourists may savor (telling friends, deciding what to wear on the night, planning the menu choices, imagining the atmosphere, etc.) over many months while waiting for a reservation at a highly sought-after restaurant. Kids may savor the excitement of a visit to a theme park many weeks in advance of the trip promoted by exciting reminders from the company about what they can expect during their visit. Skiers will long for the beginning of the upcoming ski season many months in advance as resorts begin to publish photos of snow covered mountains on their Facebook feeds, begin advance sales of season tickets and remind consumers that the end of the summer season marks the beginning of preparations for the snow. Moreover, on a more immediate horizon, visitors to a theme park may savor the highly charged emotions of anticipation, excitement and fear as they wait in line to board a particularly thrilling ride (Heger, Offermans and Frens 2009), while listening to the screams of exhilaration from those already on the ride or other cues provided by the company to enhance these feelings. Furthermore, savoring may take place at an individual consumer level or may be shared with others, such as friends or family, while waiting for a future event. Therefore, we propose that waiting provides consumers with time to enjoy the positive anticipation associated with a

future consumption experience, which in turn enables them to prolong and even increase the pleasure associated with consumption. Nevertheless, companies should also keep in mind that the enhanced (or even inflated) expectations created by savoring must correspond with the eventual consumption experience in order to avoid disappointment on the part of the consumer.

4. Implications and Future Research Directions

The purpose of this paper is to encourage new thinking and new perspectives on consumer waiting behavior by challenging the long-held assumption that making consumers wait is bad for business. This section examines the implications of the five positive waiting propositions outlined in the previous section, it outlines the management takeaways from this discussion and it makes a number of recommendations for further research.

4.1. Waiting is not necessarily negative.

Although it would be foolhardy to suggest that waiting is always positive, the propositions outlined in this paper suggest that waiting is not necessarily negative either. This is an important conclusion because the conventional wisdom that has determined the focus of research on waiting for the past three decades is that waiting is negative. Consequently, most research centers on ways to reduce waiting time or to make consumers feel that they are not really waiting. Yet, there is evidence that tourists expect and even accept a certain amount of waiting. For instance, Pullman and Thompson (2002) found that skiers accepted a 10-minute service station wait as entirely reasonable. Dickson, Ford and Laval (2005) found that a certain proportion of guests at Disneyland do not avail of their virtual queuing system because they simply do not mind waiting. Reisinger and Turner (1997) found that in certain non-western cultures consumers are not really bothered if services are delayed. Hence, the propositions outlined in this paper suggest that rather than struggling to eliminate, hide or camouflage waiting times, waiting can sometimes be beneficial for companies.

4.2. It is vital to find the right equilibrium between too much and too little waiting.

Although we know that making consumers wait for service leads to many negative outcomes, the complete absence of a wait may suggest that a service is not in demand. In this way, the service may be perceived as a low quality option compared to other more popular choices. Also, in certain cases, by making services immediately available, consumers may feel that a service that arrives too quickly cannot have taken the necessary time to be properly prepared. Therefore, companies should concentrate on optimizing rather than eliminating waiting time. As Gavilán-Bouzas and Garcia de Madariaga-Miranda (2009) argue, we should distinguish between the experience of waiting and the meanings associated with waiting. In this sense, we should do whatever we can to make the waiting experience more comfortable as suggested in the seminal article by Maister (1985). However, we should not necessarily try to reduce the wait, because to do so would be to eliminate the positive meanings and associations we relate to services that make us wait. Further research should consider the inverted u shaped relationship between perceived quality and waiting time. In this sense, there may be a point in a wait, a tipping point, when the positive associations associated with waiting become neutralized by the negative feelings typically associated with waiting. Practitioners should also consider where this tipping point is in relation to their specific service. In other words, at what stage in the wait do the positive aspects of waiting become overshadowed by the negative?

4.3. Consumers will not mind waiting if they see you are taking the time to provide a quality service.

As outlined earlier, work on labor illusion and operational transparency suggests that rather than trying to continually reduce waiting times, companies should make sure customers know why a service is taking so long. This may lead to improved evaluations of services for which consumers have to wait (Buell and Norton 2011). In specific situations, such as in restaurants, it may be sensible to speed up the pre-process and post-process stages (of seating diners and later settling the bill) but to avoid making them feel rushed during the meal. Even slowing down the service in specific stages of the service may make sense. Indeed, if employees are forced to work faster in order to improve operational efficacy, consumers may detect deterioration in service quality (which may simply be due to a shorter service encounter). Therefore, it is important to balance increased operational efficiency and the improved customer satisfaction brought about by reduced waiting times, with the danger of reduced satisfaction caused by shorter service duration. Indeed, we need to further understand how changes in the pace and duration of services affect customer evaluations of the service encounter.

4.4. Rather than dissimulate queues, sometimes companies should encourage them.

In contrast to conventional wisdom, we saw that the length of a queue may increase consumers' evaluations of a service. This suggests that we should emphasize the length of queues and design single line rather than multiple line queues. And yet in practice much effort is aimed at reducing the visibility of queues by designing them in a way that disguises their length. The evidence on how consumers perceive and join queues is especially applicable in many tourism and hospitality services. When tourists have a clear choice between two competing services and where they have limited information on the quality of each offering, it makes more business sense to stimulate the formation of a queue. In fact, the evidence

suggests that the competition between restaurants in tourist zones begins afresh each morning as each competes to be first to create a queue outside their premises in order to have a greater chance of winning the daily contest for tourists (Raz and Ert 2008).

4.5. Priority queues and charging consumers to avoid waiting.

The use of priority passes in tourism presents mixed results. Although they may provide a substantial and beneficial source of revenue and they reduce waiting for consumers who are able and willing to pay extra, we know very little about how priority queues impact upon consumers. There is a significant literature on the social psychology of queuing from which we know that equity is vital in any queuing system (Ahmadi 1997). Future research should examine the effect of priority queues, in particular, on social justice and the evaluations of consumers who are unwilling or unable to pay.

Finally, future research on waiting should contemplate the fundamental proposition of this paper, that making consumers wait is not necessarily negative. This would represent a radical change in the nature, character and direction of research on waiting. This central proposal should be kept in mind when formulating research questions and designing fieldwork. More specifically, further research should attempt to advance our understanding of the factors and conditions that determine whether waiting is interpreted as positive or negative. In this sense, research should take on a renewed exploratory role in order to determine precisely the services, situations and conditions that are susceptible to positive waiting. In addition, researchers should examine the waiting tipping point, that is, the point in a service encounter at which beneficial, positive waiting turns negative and the wait becomes annoying, frustrating and irritating for consumers. Each of the individual propositions outlined in this

paper should be examined in a range of industries and service situations with the aim of furthering our understanding of the contextual factors that shape consumers' perception of waiting times, as well as the factors that determine when waiting may be seen in a positive light.

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