

BUSINESS *of* THEMED ENTERTAINMENT

03 *Theme parks are no Mickey Mouse industry*

The multi-billion-dollar industry is celebrating its 60th anniversary at a time of accelerating change



10 *Feel the emotion of storytelling*

A successful attraction will tell a story which makes the audience feel part of the action

16 *Designs changed the game*

From the first loop-the-loop to interactive rides, innovative attractions thrill and excite

22 *Taking a trip to hotel fantasyland*

Attention to detail in a themed hotel takes guests to a make-believe place





VISIT THE HEINEKEN EXPERIENCE

— HOME OF HEINEKEN, NO.1 ATTRACTION OF AMSTERDAM —

"BEST INTERACTIVE BEER EXPERIENCE"

QUOTE VISITOR - TRIPADVISOR





Disneyland's 60th anniversary celebrations

Theme parks are no Mickey Mouse industry

The multi-billion-dollar theme park industry is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, at a time of continued innovation and accelerating change

- ◆ OVERVIEW
- CHRISTIAN SYLT

When legendary animator Walt Disney opened his first Disneyland park in 1955, he laid the foundations in California of an industry which was to grow into a worldwide phenomenon of competing attractions.

Behind the fun and thrilling rides, there is an army of skilled professionals striving to be the best in a competitive world of entertainment, facing the challenge of increasing customer expectations in a high-tech era of innovation.

Blockbuster parks cost more than \$1 billion to build in a global leisure market where theme park revenues rise above \$30 billion a year. According to consultancy firm PwC, theme park revenues worldwide grew 50 per cent from \$20.5 billion in 2003 to around \$30.7 billion in 2012, with the United States comprising the bulk with \$14.5 billion of spending. The US is followed by \$8.4 billion in Asia and \$6.8 billion in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

New openings fuel this growth as they lure guests through the turnstiles. Although the objective isn't to just get visitors on the rides, but into the gift shops which

are usually cunningly located at ride exits so guests have to pass through them.

The costs of running a theme park are huge. The operating expenses of Disney's parks and resorts alone came to \$9.7 billion last year, according to company accounts. Park entry tickets only cover part of the costs, while the margins on food, beverage and merchandise bring in the big money.

Profits are used to invest in new rides which draw in more guests and promote the movie characters they are based on. At the same time, the DVDs and merchandise on sale outside the parks attract guests to them and the marketing cycle begins again.

"We see that the sooner you can get intellectual property to move from screen to a physical environment, the sooner you reap the rewards and the larger those rewards may be," says Brian Sands, economics and planning vice president in the Americas for global infrastructure firm AECOM.

Attendance at the top ten theme park groups worldwide rose 5.1 per cent last year to 392 million, according to the Themed Entertainment Association/AECOM 2014 Theme Index. Growth in Asia outpaced that in the US, rising 4.9 per cent compared with 2.2 per cent in North America.

This is partly due to saturation in the US, which already boasts major parks in every corner of the country. You can ride Pirates of the Caribbean in Disney World, battle with robots in Transformers at Universal Studios and get creative at LEGOLAND, all without leaving Orlando.

We see that the sooner you can get intellectual property to move from screen to a physical environment, the sooner you reap the rewards and the larger those rewards may be

It explains why park operators make sure many of their new attractions can be exported internationally. A great deal of the growth in Asia last year came from Universal Studios Japan which got a lift from the opening of a new land themed on the Harry Potter movies. The attrac-

tions made their debut at Universal Studios Florida and will also open at the company's Hollywood site next year.

Harry Potter boosted attendance at Universal Studios Japan by 16.8 per cent to 11.8 million in 2014, making it the world's fifth most-visited theme park. However, it is still dwarfed by Disney, operator of all the other nine parks in the top ten attendance ranking, which is crowned by the Magic Kingdom, the fairy tale-themed flagship of Disney World in Orlando.

"Driving this were the renovation and significant expansion of the Magic Kingdom's Fantasyland," says AECOM's Mr Sands. "This investment built strongly on Disney's traditional focus on families with young children, leveraging recent movie and DVD releases."

A similar trend has been seen at Disneyland Paris which is Europe's most-visited theme park. Attendance there has grown by two million from 2004 to 2014 when its results showed visitor numbers hit 14.9 million, following the launch of a new ride themed on the Oscar-winning movie *Ratatouille*.

Cementing Disney's status as the world's most-attended theme park operator, Magic Kingdom in Disney World pulled in 4 per cent

more visitors last year giving a total of 19.3 million. Its visitor numbers increased 1.3 per cent in 2014 to 134.3 million. This is more than double Disney's closest rival, Merlin Entertainments at 62.8million, followed by Universal at 40.2 million.

However, a new challenger may be on the horizon. Recent research from PwC forecasts that theme park revenues in the United Arab Emirates will rise 78 per cent to \$837 million by 2019 with the region becoming a serious competitor to Orlando by 2021. PwC predicts the growth will come from the Dubai Parks & Resorts project which is due to open next year, and includes LEGOLAND Dubai, the movie-themed Motiongate Dubai and Bollywood Parks Dubai. They are expected to generate \$653 million in revenue in their first year and create 5,000 new jobs.

According to AECOM, none of the top 25 best-attended parks are in the UAE so there is a lot of ground to make up. "Globally, theme parks in Europe, the Far East and the US, Orlando in particular, dominate the market," says Philip Shepherd, Middle East hospitality and leisure leader at PwC. "However, theme parks in the UAE have the potential to see over 18 million visits by 2021." Time will tell whether this fairy tale comes true.

Distributed in

Part sponsored by

Published in association with

Raconteur

Publishing Manager
Richard Hadler

Production Editor
Benjamin Chiou

Managing Editor
Peter Archer

Head of Production
Natalia Rosek

Digital and Social
Rebecca McCormick
Sarah Allidina

Design
Grant Chapman
Samuele Motta
Kellie Jerrard

JONATHAN AMES
Legal affairs reporter for *The Times*, he is editor of the newspaper's daily law bulletin *The Brief*.

CHARLES ORTON-JONES
Award-winning journalist, he was editor-at-large of *LondonlovesBusiness.com* and editor of *EuroBusiness*.

BENJAMIN CHIOU
Former business and economic writer, his specialisms include a range of topics including financial markets, commodities and lifestyle trends.

CHARLES READ
Managing director of *blooloop.com*, he writes and is a conference speaker on the visitor attractions industry.

HAZEL DAVIS
Freelance business writer, she contributes to *The Times*, *Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian*.

CAROLINE REID
Leisure and sports writer, she contributes to *The Guardian* and *The Spectator* magazine, among other publications.

JULIANA GILLING
Business and consumer journalist specialising in attractions, she is a contributing editor at IAAPA's *Funworld* magazine and a regular writer for *National Geographic Traveler*.

CHRISTIAN SYLT
Writer and broadcaster, he covers the theme park industry for *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*.

Raconteur.net

BUSINESS / CULTURE / FINANCE / HEALTHCARE / LIFESTYLE / SUSTAINABILITY / TECHNOLOGY / INFOGRAPHICS

raconteur.net/business-of-themed-entertainment

Although this publication is funded through advertising and sponsorship, all editorial is without bias and sponsored features are clearly labelled. For an upcoming schedule, partnership inquiries or feedback, please call +44 (0)20 3428 5230 or e-mail info@raconteur.net

Raconteur is a leading publisher of special-interest content and research. Its publications and articles cover a wide range of topics, including business, finance, sustainability, healthcare, lifestyle and technology. Raconteur special reports are published exclusively in *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* as well as online at raconteur.net

The information contained in this publication has been obtained from sources the Proprietors believe to be correct. However, no legal liability can be accepted for any errors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior consent of the Publisher. © Raconteur Media

◆ MOVIE REALITY

● CHARLES ORTON-JONES

The obvious way to cash in on Harry Potter would be open a theme park with big-dippers and simulators. That's what you get at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Orlando. Yet when the eighth Harry Potter film finished shooting at Leavesden Aerodrome in 2010, Warner Bros. took a rather different view. The moviemakers took the decision to preserve the sets and open a studio tour. Green screens and animatronics are the main events. It was a big call. Would kids really want to see this stuff?

Warner Bros. Studio Tour: The Making of Harry Potter opened in 2012 and this year welcomed its five-millionth visitor. Popular? The place is a sensation. But why is it such a hit? And how does Warner Bros. keep the punters rolling up?

“It's just like stepping into the movie – the only things missing are the floating candles

“We've been open for nearly four years now and our reviews have remained unmatched on TripAdvisor,” says Warner Bros. Worldwide Tours senior vice president Sarah Roots. “We're the highest rated visitor attraction in the UK.”

In essence the tour is a behind-the-scenes look at the sets. And boy, what sets. You can walk through Great Hall where Dumbledore addressed the young wizards. It's just like stepping into the movie – the only things missing are the floating candles. There's Hagrid's hut, Diagon Alley, the Weasley Kitchen, the Ministry of Magic and umpteen other locations to explore.

During the tour there's an opportunity to learn about the film techniques. The props are explained. Cinematographic techniques are demonstrated. It's a vast and pleasingly highbrow enterprise. An adult with zero interest in the franchise can enjoy it as much as a ten-year-old Potterhead.

The key, Ms Roots says, is the detail. “For instance, there were 1,000 jars created for the Potions Classroom and each one has a handwritten label. The portraits in Dumbledore's office were all commissioned specifically for the films and feature members of the production crew. And hundreds of wands were individually handmade by the prop makers,” she says.

When the ancient Greeks built the Par-

thenon they carved marble on the roof only the gods could see. The same ethos is here. Ollivander's Wand Shop is more than a shooting location for the cameras – it really is a wand shop.

Erudition and entertainment sit side by side. The green screen used for filming Quidditch teaches visitors about filming techniques. It is also possible to leap on a broom and ride it.

The tour keeps expanding. “Last year we redesigned a section to celebrate the “dark arts” which features the scene from the imposing Malfoy Manor drawing room,” says Ms Roots. “We also put on special features during the holidays which showcase different elements of ‘behind the scenes’. These have included Sweets and Treats comparing real and prop food, Wand Week where visitors learnt to duel with Death Eaters and Hogwarts in the Snow where elements of the attraction are dressed for Christmas as they were in the films.”

The Hogwarts Express train is a recent addition. The carriage is open for visitors to walk down and see the compartments filled with props. It is telling that construction was managed by Paul Hayes and the special effects by John Richardson, who were the experts on the films. Warner Bros. want to stay true to the films.

Marketing a tour like this isn't easy. The customer base is huge and global. “Internationally we work with PR agencies in France and Germany to raise awareness,” says Ms Roots. “And we have a dedicated travel trade team who work with markets

around the world attending sales missions and trade shows.”

Trade partners bring international visitors throughout the year. The key markets are France, Germany, Australia and the United States.

5m+

people have visited Warner Bros. Studio Tour: The Making of Harry Potter since it opened in 2012

Piggy-backing on Harry Potter broadcasts and news items works well. Ms Roots says: “We are always looking at ways to engage with our audience through opportunities to showcase the studio tour, including PR around our special features and the behind-the-scenes talent we're lucky enough to work with, social media linking with topical



*1. Diagon Alley 2. Great Hall 3. Broomstick green screen experience 4. Hogwarts Express



Gasps of wonder as films come to life

Harry Potter fans have rewarded Warner Bros.' decision to open a UK studio tour which turns the blockbuster movies into reality

hooks, and TV advertising, which we ran for the first time last year. The results are evident with significant peaks in website usage and ticket sales.”

Seasonality is low. “Most of our off-peak business comes from schools and groups,” says Ms Roots. “We have an incredible education programme developed by an award-winning teacher, and offer free lessons based on film-making that are linked to the national curriculum and exam board specifications. The lessons are booked months in advance and we have lots of repeat visits.”

Feedback shapes the tour. Ms Roots uses post-visit surveys, both online and at the studio. “Probably one of the most useful channels is TripAdvisor as visitors give unprompted feedback,” she says. The Hogwarts Express was introduced after numerous customer requests.

A big discovery is that visitors really love interacting with staff. Ms Roots says: “We invest heavily in staff training and find that visitor enjoyment scores have a direct positive impact the more visitors interact with our staff.”

The studio tour is a unique proposition in the industry. So much so, there is no connection with Wizarding World of Harry Potter in Orlando. “We work independently and offer two very different experiences,” she says.

The tour looks like it can run and run. Theme parks worry about virtual reality headsets and video games trumping what they can offer. But the studio tour has no obvious rival.

“It's still a pleasure to walk through the tour and see the reaction of visitors when the doors to the Great Hall open and they step on to the set,” says Ms Roots. “You really do hear gasps of wonder.”



COMMERCIAL FEATURE

HOW DISNEYLAND DECKS THE HALLS

If you've ever felt stressed when putting up the Christmas decorations, spare a thought for Disneyland Paris. It has to dress up two theme parks, seven hotels and the Disney Village entertainment district. But it has it down to a fine art



Most of us start planning for Christmas a month or two before the big day. Not Disneyland Paris. It decides on its decorations by March at the latest and that's not a day too early.

An eight-storey Christmas tree sets the scene in the flagship fairy tale-inspired Disneyland park. The tree sits at the foot of the park's Main Street which is themed to early-1900s America and leads to the centrepiece Sleeping Beauty Castle. Tinsel and candy canes hang from the ornate shop fronts lining the street and snow scenes, with models of Disney characters, fill the windows.

A brass band, wrapped in bright-red winter woollies, plays classic Disney tunes from the bandstand and the smell of popcorn wafts through the air. Just when it couldn't get any more Christmassy, snow begins to fall.

A few swipes at the white stuff reveals that it is actually soap suds which are sprinkled down from hidden jets on the shop roofs. It stops everyone in their tracks and waves of "oohs" and "aahs" ripple down the packed street.

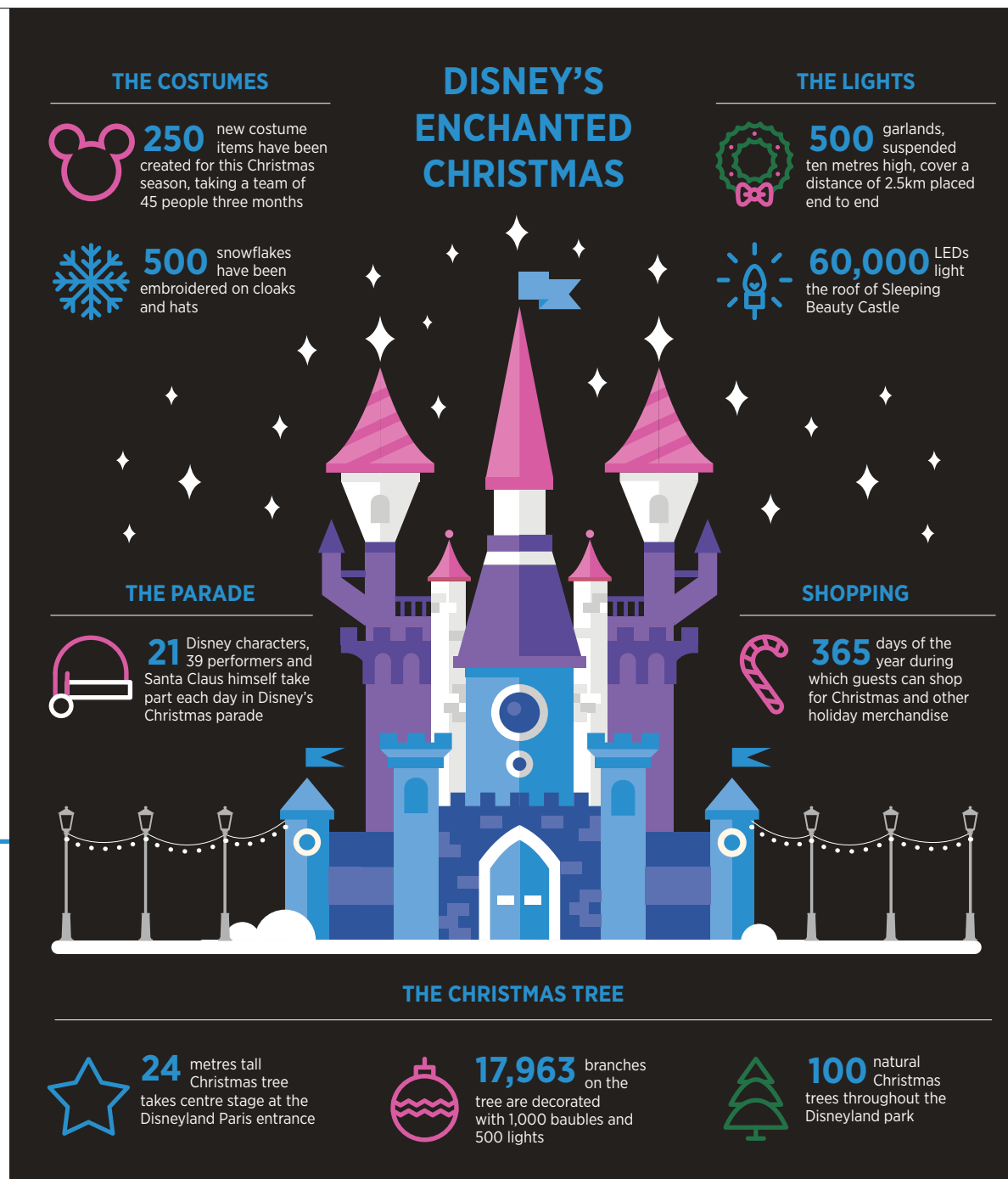
It's a mesmerising and heart-warming experience, but the real magic is that

guests don't see the months of hard work which went into creating it.

"As soon as the Christmas season starts at Disneyland Paris, we are already working on next year's seasonal elements," says Hugh Wood, vice president of marketing development. "We make all production decisions by March at the latest to allow us eight months to build and produce." Crunch time comes at the start of November.

"The biggest challenge to our creation and installation process is the small window of time we have to transform the park from Halloween to Christmas. In total, there are only four to five days to do this and the majority of work is done overnight to minimise disruption to guests' time at the park," he says. With such sprawling facilities, a huge team is needed to give the resort its festive sparkle.

It takes 54 people and external suppliers to transform Disneyland Park and its neighbouring movie-themed Walt Disney Studios Park. Many of the staff are needed just to put up the tree which is 24 metres tall, weighs more than 24 tons and has 17,963 branches dripping with tinsel illuminated by more than 500 light bulbs.



Staff are known as "cast members" due to the role they play on a themed set and this is perhaps more apparent at Christmas than any other time of the year as the entire resort is draped with decorations. "All our divisions, including merchandise, food and drink, hospitality, entertainment, costuming and even landscaping, are involved in Christmas at Disneyland Paris," says Mr Wood.

"Decorations are installed in each of our themed hotels and restaurants to ensure an all-round festive experience for guests. For example, we install a gingerbread house in the lobby of Disneyland Hotel. Select restaurants will put on special Christmas menus on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, including an exclusive Disney character four-course lunch experience at Disney's Hotel New York and a redesigned Christmas menu at The Steakhouse in the Disney Village."

Each year 250 new costumes are created for the Christmas season by 45 cast members. The overlay and decor are developed by ten people with a further 39 performing in the daily Christmas parade along with Santa himself. "Mickey and Minnie play a huge role at Christmas, and appear in specially designed Christmas costumes during the parade," says Mr Wood.

Disney's famous duo reappears at dusk in a show which sees them turn on the tree lights with Santa as their guest. "This lights display kicks off the Christmas festivities in the park and the guests are invited to sing along with traditional carols," Mr Wood adds.

“

A brass band, wrapped in bright-red winter woollies, plays classic Disney tunes from the bandstand and the smell of popcorn wafts through the air

It culminates in a son-et-lumière show unlike any other, entitled *Disney Dreams of Christmas*. This is an emotional tour de force involving fireworks, lasers and flame-throwers timed to scenes from Disney blockbusters which are projected on to the castle. Through technical wizardry, the projections appear to be flat despite being beamed on to protrusions, balustrades and turrets. Movie scenes are even beamed on to mist screens formed from fine fountains which fan out from the foot of the castle.

Characters from *Toy Story* appear in a scene performing their own version of *The Nutcracker* and there is good reason for this. "Toys make a natural association with Christmas," says Mr Wood. "A lot of Disney characters and their stories are family orientated and celebrate Christmas, so we naturally bring them into our celebrations."

Disney's characters are renowned the world over and this is crucial at Disneyland Paris due to its international mix of guests. In

2014, 48 per cent of them were from France, 17 per cent from the UK, 9 per cent from Spain, 6 per cent from Belgium and Luxembourg, 6 per cent from the Netherlands, 3 per cent from Italy, 4 per cent from Germany and 7 per cent from the rest of the world.

"To ensure that all our guests, from all corners of the globe, enjoy the magical Christmas atmosphere at Disneyland Paris, we install decorations which are universally associated with Christmas," says Mr Wood. "For example, we use snow, Christmas trees and traditional festive colours, such as green and red, for our all-encompassing Christmas decor. We also use universally recognised Christmas-related music throughout the park."

Even though the Christmas theme is timeless, Disneyland Paris is still updating its celebrations. "In 2014, we introduced a new special festive engagement experience, *Royal Christmas Wishes*, where guests can watch performances with all their favourite royal character couples, including Aurora and Phillip from *Sleeping Beauty*, and Cinderella and Prince Charming from *Cinderella*."

Mr Wood adds: "This year has also seen the addition of the *Frozen Sing-Along*, with sisters Elsa and Anna back to sing the family favourites." It is wowing the crowds, but the Disney executive has only a moment to stop and take it in - his eye is already on next year.

www.disneylandparis.co.uk

How to protect brain waves

Building a brand and protecting intellectual property by registering trademarks may be a legal rollercoaster ride

◆ INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
● JONATHAN AMES

It is difficult to conjure up a more frightening intellectual property nightmare for the straight-laced executives at the Disney Company's headquarters in Los Angeles than a recent phenomenon 6,000 miles away in Weston-super-Mare. The purveyors of family-friendly themed entertainment par excellence will have been unlikely to have heard of the Somerset seaside town before last August, but they'll have the name emblazoned on their "risk list" now.

Dismaland, the brainchild of global street art guru Banksy, had a five-week run last summer. And even those who have never been to any of the American grand-daddy of theme parks would have been able to clock the obvious – and intentional – similarities between Banksy's "be-musement park" and the home that Walt built. A passing glance at the Cinderella's castle-style logo and the point is made.

Lawyers speculate on just how annoyed Disney's senior executives were with Banksy. But it's a safe bet that Dismaland's Punch and Judy show, featuring a Jimmy Savile look-a-like character, would not have had them rolling around in fits of giggles.

Regardless of how fuming they were, Banksy might have had the last laugh had Disney attacked on intellectual property (IP) grounds. Lawyers point out that the elusive artist could potentially have relied on recent reforms to UK copyright law to send any aggressive legal emissaries packing. About a year ago, UK legislation was amended to allow the defence of parody to allegations of copyright infringement.

Under the revised legislation, if it can be demonstrated that an exhibit – or an entire theme park, for that matter – is a clear parody of an established brand, then the lampooner is likely to be off the hook.

Issues around fair dealing, where an upstart allegedly competes unfairly with the financial interests of a copyright holder, would also be potentially difficult for Disney if its lawyers took on Banksy. "Nobody really knows how that copyright principle applies in cases of parody," says Matthew Dick, a partner at D Young & Co, a London-based IP law firm of solicitors and patent attorneys,



Sculpture at Banksy's Dismaland Bemusement Park in Weston-super-Mare

in a candid moment acknowledging legal uncertainty. "It's a grey area."

What is known is that Banksy filed a trademark in August for Dismaland that covers the entire European Union. The three-month opposition period is on the brink of expiring, with experts suggesting that Disney's best course of action will be a challenge based on the grounds of trademark protection.

"Trademark issues are far more relevant to themed entertainment busi-

nesses than patents," argues Mark Engelman, an IP specialist barrister at Hardwicke Chambers in London. "That's because theme parks are branded up to the hilt."

Peter Brownlow, a partner at London IP specialist law firm Bird & Bird, agrees: "It is crucial to all themed entertainment business plans that the right to use the theme is protected. That is after all the main draw for the audience."

The lawyers point out that almost

every element of a themed entertainment enterprise, from thrilling, stomach-churning rides, to cartoon characters, to T-shirts and stationery, has IP embedded in it.

But patents, which protect innovation in the mechanics of an invention, in other words, the way it is built, are far more difficult to obtain than trademarks, which protect branding. To bag patent protection, explains Mr Dick, "there must be some novelty as to how the machine or ride is constructed".

He cites the Tower of Terror, versions of which are at four Disney theme parks in the United States, France and Japan. The ride takes punters up high before dropping them suddenly. "When that was first developed with a special means of achieving the experience, it couldn't be achieved any other way," says Mr Dick. "Then you could try to get a patent that would block others from using the same technique."

Nonetheless, competitors could try to work round the patent by, say, not using a specific type of air piston.

Lawyers maintain the best method of protecting IP in themed entertainment is through iron-clad trademarks. For example, the Der Stuka ride at the Wet 'n Wild theme park in Florida has created a special reputation among aficionados of the genre. Competitors could copy it, but they couldn't call it Der Stuka, which is a highly distinctive name, in which, arguably most of the commercial value lies.

Indeed, anyone looking for the manual on how successfully to exploit IP from an existing character in a themed entertainment context should cast an eye over the story of a 12-year-old bespectacled orphan, who just happens to have other-worldly powers.

Love him, loath him or feign ambivalence towards him, you can't ignore the boy wizard of Hogwarts. Harry Potter is a global brand of almost unparalleled proportions. And no greater manifestation of that brand can be seen than in its themed entertainment portfolio.

The Wizarding World of Harry Potter is a theme park within a theme park, or more accurately, within three theme parks. It launched at Universal's Islands of Adventure in Orlando in Florida about five years ago. Versions then cropped up at two more Universal Studios parks last year within days of each other, another in Orlando and one in Japan. And a fourth branch of the Wizarding World will finally make its Hollywood debut when Universal rolls it out in the land of the dream factory itself next spring.

But the incredible IP foresight – some would suggest genius – dates back to 1999. Just two years after the first novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* hit bookshops, J.K. Rowling's lawyers obtained trademarks for entertainment and theme park services. That was more than a decade before the ribbon was cut on a sultry June day in Orlando on the first Wizarding World.

"Harry Potter is a prime example of a clear strategic intention to extend a brand from what started as a simple character in a book to everything beyond," says Mr Dick. "It was very impressive to have that kind of foresight," he says with more than a hint of admiration. "To have on their radar so early an idea of how the brand could be monetised through amusement and theme parks – they really got their ducks in a row early."

It is not just character-branded or rollercoaster-rich amusement parks that are aiming to protect IP in themed environments. Recently Apple, the style trendsetter of the technology world, registered a trademark for the design not of one of its new products, but for the layout of its shops.

In the world of entertainment, whether it is video games or the shops in which the computers they are played on are sold, protecting brain waves is perhaps the most important move innovators can make.

“
Lawyers maintain the best method of protecting intellectual property in themed entertainment is through iron-clad trademarks

GUIDE TO INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP)

TYPES OF IP

- Names of products or brands
- Inventions, design or look of products
- Things written, made or produced

YOU OWN IP IF YOU

- Created it
- Bought IP rights from creator or previous owner
- Have a brand that could be a trademark, for example a well-known product name

PROTECTING YOUR IP

AUTOMATIC PROTECTION

- Copyright (writing/literary works, art, photography, films, TV, music, web content, sound recordings)
- Design rights (shapes of objects)

PROTECTION YOU HAVE TO APPLY FOR

- Trademarks – four months for application
- Registered designs – one month for application
- Patents – around five years for application

Source: Intellectual Property Office



Planning, Designing and Realizing Memorable Theme Parks and Attractions Around The World

JRA
www.lackrouse.com

OPINION

COLUMN



Themed entertainment ... take us away

Themed entertainment is tied to economic growth and impacts all sectors, including tourism, entertainment, media, real estate, intellectual property, technology, corporate sponsorship and international business collaboration

JUDITH RUBIN

Themed Entertainment Association

“The themed entertainment industry showed resiliency in the Great Recession, then rebounded with vigour. ‘It’s simple,’ says Steve Birket, president of Birket Engineering and international board president of the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA). ‘People want to be taken away.’



of continuous large flows of guests.”

Craig Hanna, another TEA past president and chief creative officer of Thinkwell Group, which designed the Warner Bros. Studio Tour: The Making of Harry Potter, says: “World-class intellectual properties, often based on

blockbuster motion pictures, books, toys or video games, can connect emotionally with guests and utilise the marketing and recognition of that intellectual property.”

Nick Farmer of UK-based Farmer Attraction Development, also a TEA past president, comments: “IP-driven facilities such as LEGOLAND Discovery Centres, operated by Merlin Entertainment Group, are hot,” adding that several IP owners are currently planning their own centres within large shopping malls around the world.

“Every time a project is named for a TEA Thea Award, it creates a ripple of awareness through the region,” says David Willrich of DJW, immediate past president of TEA Europe and Middle-East division. Recent Thea recipients in Europe include Titanic Belfast and Puy du Fou, and in Asia, Chimelong Ocean Kingdom. “The highest recognition of this industry is to receive a Thea Award,” he says.

TEA members bring their magic to museums, science centres, retail, visitor centers, casinos and even military training. “Immersive storytelling is not specific to a market,” says Mr Lunde. “What immerses soldiers in a believable battle environment can also transport park guests to outer space.”

The mantra of the industry is to re-invest; its lifeblood repeat visitation. “Out-of-home entertainment has to be more compelling than what can be seen or done in living rooms,” says Mr Hanna. “We are social creatures – we want to laugh and cry together.”

“What TEA and its members do has cultural, social, artistic and economic impact,” TEA chief operating officer Jennie Nevin concludes. “They are the creatives, the artisans, the tech wizards, who make something unique yet robust enough to work year-round in a challenging environment, and then go on to top it because the industry can’t ever stand still.”

Due in large part to the efforts of TEA, themed entertainment is a recognised branch of the out-of-home entertainment industry, reaching many divergent market sectors.

TEA’s boutique size of 1,100 member companies in 34 countries belies its influence and leadership. Its annual conference on experience design, summit and awards shape international dialogue. Its NextGen initiative influences curriculum in colleges and universities, and helps young people build dream careers. The annual TEA/AECOM Theme Index is the definitive industry report of the world’s top-attended theme parks, water parks and museums.

The world and the industry are watching as Disney Shanghai and Universal Beijing take shape – and local operators gear up to compete. John Robinett, a senior vice president of AECOM and former TEA International Board member, says: “History shows that as Disney and Universal move into international markets, quality goes up and then pricing ceilings, enabling local competition to rise to the new standards.”

Monty Lunde, chief executive of Technifex, who founded TEA in 1991 in Burbank, California, adds: “With continued Chinese government support, the growth of theme parks, water parks and cultural attractions will continue there for many years.”

These are major land deals. Today’s model is the integrated resort, blending entertainment, hospitality, retail and more. “We see tremendous value added to the developer’s assets when a quality entertainment product is included,” says Roberta Perry of ETI, a past president of TEA.

Mr Birket adds: “The scale of a project makes possible the integration of so many elements. Theme park development benefits from the economies

COMMERCIAL FEATURE



Chimelong Ocean Kingdom's Glamorous Sky Over Hengqin Lagoon Spectacular

NOW AVAILABLE IN EUROPE: THE WORLD’S MOST EXCITING NEW ATTRACTION DEVELOPER

The Producers Group is credited with some of the world’s most stunning attractions and is now turning its attention to the UK



As audiences across the UK and elsewhere in Europe look for evermore exciting theme park experiences with greater use of their favourite movie and cartoon characters, theme park operators, property developers and casino owners are taking a growing interest in a US-based company called The Producers Group.

Founded in 2011 and based in California near a number of movie studios and Walt Disney Imagineering, the company has unique expertise in intellectual property collaborations as well as cutting-edge technology. It’s already well established in the United States, and the Middle and Far East, where it has an enviable reputation for spectacular creations – and now it’s increasingly in demand in the UK and Europe.

“We work with theme park, real estate and casino partners, who are looking for exceptional creativity and sophisticated design, and who want something tailored to exactly their needs,” says The Producers Group co-chief executive and founder Edward Marks. “Now we’re seeing a small but growing number of organisations in the UK and across Europe approaching us because they’re also interested in creating something truly special.”

In the US, the company was recently recruited by SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment to work closely with its in-house creatives to help develop two new themed rollercoaster experiences in Florida.

Cobra’s Curse will lift visitors 70 feet into the air vertically where they’ll be confronted by a cobra statue of equal height. Its fangs bared, it will deliver a curse that will set them swirling and sweeping along a track above the park’s Serengeti Plain.

“We work with theme park, real estate and casino partners, who are looking for exceptional creativity and sophisticated design, and who want something tailored to exactly their needs

This stunning attraction is typical of the work of The Producers Group, which supplies one of the widest ranges of services from master planning of theme parks to attractions, such as 5D live theatres, interactive dark rides, lake shows, water rides, night-time spectacles and flame effects shows, among others.

The company, which describes its unique approach as “a little Olympics ceremonies, a little Cirque du Soleil and a little The Producers Group” is currently

working on what promises to be a stunning development in Dubai, but which is under wraps until 2017.

Casino owners have also been impressed by the company’s portfolio, which includes the Crane Dance at RWS, Singapore. Combining groundbreaking audio and visual technologies, plus astounding light and water effects, it tells the magical story of two mechanical cranes whose love transforms them into real birds. Audiences are captivated by the size of the steel cranes, the largest of their kind in the world, moving deftly in the midst of a water illusion and a play of light.

The Fortune Diamond, a wow feature at the \$1.9-billion Galaxy Resort in Macau, uses multiple lighting effects including LED panels embedded inside the lower part of the fountain, so it materialises from within a vast curtain of water against a triumphant musical score.

“For us creative programming is sacred,” says co-chief executive and founder Bob Chambers. “Our clients in the UK and Europe have been telling us that their customers are experiencing stunning attractions as they travel around the world and they now want to enjoy them closer to home. It’s a great new opportunity for them – and for us.”

www.producers-group.com

COMMERCIAL FEATURE

WORLD’S LARGEST INDOOR THEME PARK IS SET TO OPEN...

IMG Worlds of Adventure is about to launch in Dubai, heralding a new era in entertainment for the Emirates



Entrepreneurs love a gap in the market, and successful businessmen Mr Ilyas and Mr Mustafa Galadari saw an opportunity to develop an untapped sector in the Emirates region – entertainment.

Dubai has pretty much everything, from seven-star hotels and the world’s most expensive horse race, to man-made islands visible from space and some of the best retail shopping in the world. But large-scale theme parks with rollercoasters and stomach-churning thrill rides? It’s too hot for that stuff, ran the logic.

The visionary brothers dreamt up a solution. They would build a huge theme park, the sort to attract visitors from around the world. And the heat? Easy. They’d put a roof on top.

Their colossal creation, IMG Worlds of Adventure, owned by IMG Theme Park LLC, is set to open early next year. It spans 1.5 million square feet. And yes, that roof makes it the world’s largest indoor theme park, enjoyable 365 days a year.

Chief executive officer Lennard Otto says he’s just about ready to open the doors. The main structure and civil works have been completed, and the rides, food and beverage, and retail are currently in the testing, commissioning and fit-out phase.

And what will visitors discover when they flood through the doors of IMG Worlds of Adventure? A massive, themed and immersive environment, ten storeys high and the equivalent of 28 football pitches.

“
The theme park has the capacity to welcome up to 20,000 visitors a day



COMMERCIAL FEATURE



Galadari Group

Made up of four zones, including two global brands - MARVEL and Cartoon Network - and two proprietary brands - Lost Valley-Dinosaur Adventure and IMG Boulevard - each will comprise kiddie rides, thrill rides, restaurants and retail outlets.

The MARVEL zone features rides and attractions based on Spider-Man and The Avengers, including the Hulk, Iron Man, Captain America and Thor, and boasts the signature ride Avengers: Battle of Ultron, a stereoscopic 3D multimedia experience.

The Cartoon Network zone offers a similar appeal. It is the top-rated children's network in the region, with shows such as *Ben 10*, *LazyTown*, *Adventure Time*, *The Powerpuff Girls* and *The Amazing World of Gumball* all featured in the park. There will also be a 5D Ben 10 cinema and the world's largest Ben 10 retail store. Everything in the zone, from rides

to retail and restaurants, have been co-developed and branded with Cartoon Network.

The Lost Valley-Dinosaur Adventure zone will feature 70 life-sized animatronic dinosaurs. Mr Otto highlights one of the main attractions. "The Velociraptor launch-coaster goes from 0 to 100kph in 2.5 seconds, and will be the tallest and fastest rollercoaster in Dubai," he says. The ride is so big, it literally bursts out of the building - the only time visitors need to leave.

For relaxation there is IMG Boulevard, the welcome zone of the park which offers a vast array of shops, interactive attractions and restaurants. For movie buffs, there is a 12-screen Novo cinema adjacent to the park, which includes two VIP theatres and a cutting-edge IMAX.

Entertainment spills out everywhere. As Mr Otto says: "Whether you are in a queue



or at a restaurant or shop, there is always something to experience.

"The breadth of dining options illustrates the sheer variety of what's on offer. There are 28 food and beverage outlets, all original concepts with 13 different types of cuisine from casual to fine dining. Not to mention 25 themed retail outlets where more than 60 per cent of the items for sale have been developed exclusively for the park."

The theme park has the capacity to welcome up to 20,000 visitors a day. "We expect half our visitors to be tourists and the other half to be from the residential market," says Mr Otto. "We have a captive audience here, so we expect strong local interest."

The international market is significant. One third of the world's population lives within a four-hour flight and within that radius lies very little in the way of direct competition.

It might seem like a stretch to lure in visitors from that far away, but Dubai is already globally renowned as a "must-see" holiday destination, and it continues to evolve and diversify its tourist appeal. As the Emirate's first international theme park, IMG Worlds

“
One third of the world's population lives within a four-hour flight and within that radius lies very little in the way of direct competition

of Adventure aims to support the initiative and lead the way in this new sector.

The project was first conceptualised in 2012, breaking ground that same year. All the rides are being built in compliance with European safety standard EN13814, which governs the design, operation and maintenance of amusement park machinery, structures and safety. In addition, training of operators and maintenance staff meets the highest international safety standards. TÜV SÜD Germany is providing independent inspection and audit.

It's clear this park will be one of Dubai's hallmark venues. Mr Otto regards the project as a key contributor to Dubai as a fami-

ly-friendly tourist destination, supporting the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, to welcome 20 million visitors to Dubai by 2020.

The value of the epic project is over \$1 billion. And there are plans for further growth. "The park is built to be future proof," says Mr Otto. "There is room to expand, and we will continue to add new rides, attractions and other facilities to keep our guests returning time and time again."

Right now the focus is on launching IMG Worlds of Adventure to the public. People in Europe looking for an exciting family getaway will find there's much to love about a trip to Dubai. And now there are even more reasons to visit.

There's no doubt the launch of IMG Worlds of Adventure is going to get a lot of attention at home and abroad.

www.IMGworlds.com
Facebook: IMGworlds
Twitter: IMGworlds
Instagram: IMGworlds

Feel the emotion of a story

A successful attraction will draw on artistic inspiration and technical expertise to tell a story which makes the audience feel emotionally part of the story and the action

◆ STORYTELLING
● JULIANA GILLING

When it comes to the art of storytelling, Nicolas de Villiers, president of Puy du Fou, the French theme park famous for staging epic historical shows, believes in “emotion more than physical sensation”.

According to Mr de Villiers, story-driven shows which visitors can enjoy with their families are the best way to inspire emotion. “A live show speaks to people’s souls,” he says.

This year Puy du Fou introduced *Les Amoureux de Verdun* at a cost of almost £3 million. The evocative walk-through experience combines live performance, theatrical sets as well as video, animatronic and special effects to recreate life in the trenches of the Great War.

Visitors listen to touching exchanges between a French soldier and his wife. The soldier’s comforting words belie the reality of trench life – ground-shuddering explosions, gunfire, flames and men resorting to rats for food. “You really are in the middle of the war,” says Mr de Villiers. The experience culminates in hope, with the calm of the Christmas truce, when opposing forces united in song.

The “poetic vision of history” presented in attractions such as *Les Amoureux de Verdun* continues to draw new visitors to Puy du Fou. Its team maintains a distinctive vision by developing everything internally. “We never follow the market. We follow our artistic mood,” says Mr de Villiers. “Everything comes from the story that we want to tell. We just find the right way to tell it.”

A signature Puy du Fou show starts with universal themes. “We all have love, suffering, death and hope in common, wherever we come from – a story that uses these ingredients will work with everybody,” says Mr de Villiers.

Storylines are rooted in history and scenery is built to scale. Productions can involve mixed media, special effects, live acting and even animals. “It’s like a movie, but in real life. Everything is authentic,” he says.

If the technology doesn’t exist to create the desired effect, Puy du Fou will invent it. The team recently collaborated with Koert Vermeulen at ACT Lighting Design to create 50 Neopter drones to illuminate the night sky during this summer’s *Cinécénie* show.

For 2016, Mr de Villiers and team are perfecting a motion-based system for a new indoor show called *Le Dernier Panache*. Guests will watch the adventures of an 18th-century French naval officer inside a huge theatre featuring 13 stages. The motion technology will allow audiences to follow the character, as if by magic, without realising they are moving.

Puy du Fou’s experts are bringing their brand of historical entertainment to the UK next year through a collaboration with the Eleven Arches charity.

From July 2, 2016 they will present *Kynren*, an epic tale of England, in a £31-million open-air theatre event, against the backdrop of Auckland Castle in County Durham. The 90-minute evening spectacular will transport visitors through 2,000 years of English history, from Roman times to the Second World War.

Kynren, which echoes the Anglo-Saxon word for generation, takes place across a 7.5-acre stage, involves more than 1,000 volunteers and will host audiences of up to 8,000. It will run for 14 performances in the first season. “Our ambition is to be there for generations to come,” says Anne-Isabelle Daulon, chief executive at Eleven Arches.

Another major attraction putting guests in the heart of the action is *Justice League: Battle for Metropolis*. Created in partnership with Six Flags, Warner Bros. Consumer Products and DC Entertainment,



1. Chariot race at Puy du Fou historical theme park

2. Justice League: Battle for Metropolis dark ride at Six Flags over Texas

3. Les Amoureux de Verdun at Puy du Fou



the ride debuted in May at Six Flags Over Texas and Six Flags St. Louis in America. Guests join Batman and Cyborg on a three-and-a-half-minute dash to save Superman, Wonder Woman and the Green Lantern from Lex Luthor and The Joker.

The superhero-themed dark ride is a technical tour de force. Guests board custom-designed, six-seat vehicles armed with laser blasters. With multiple degrees of freedom, the vehicle movements match the on-screen action. The ride features 3D animation, including the world’s first virtual loop on a dark ride, real-time interactive gaming, themed sets, animatronics, holograms and special effects. The 2,000-square-meter attraction accommodates close to 800 people an hour.

Six Flags entrusted the project to dark ride and animatronics specialist Sally Corporation, which had successfully completed a Justice League-themed attraction for Warner Bros. Movie World in Australia.

Sally Corporation chief executive John Wood, along with senior designer Rich Hill, handpicked a team of seasoned industry superheroes to bring the attraction to life.

Oceaneering provided the ride vehicles, Pure Imagination developed the computer-generated 3D content, while

Alterface added cutting-edge interactive gaming. Lexington and Wyatt Design Group helped with set design and scenic work. Other players included RealD, Bose and Techni-Lux.

Their combined efforts allowed Justice League: Battle for Metropolis to offer “a more dynamic game, a more dynamic ride conveyance system and a more dynamic storyline”, says Mr Wood.


“A dark ride is one of the world’s most complicated attractions,” he explains. “You could put the same ingredients in the same space and it could be a flop. It comes down to experience, choreography, the combination of effects and timing. We rode the ride weeks before it opened and we would have all given it a

‘C’. By developing better audio, pacing and programming on the ride vehicle, we came out with an ‘A+.’”

The dark ride was a game-changer for Six Flags, a regional theme park chain best known for its thrill rides. “It changed Six Flags in the public mind’s eye. Six Flags had a record year,” says Mr Wood.

“Walt Disney understood the economic impact of storytelling,” according to Michael Collins, senior partner at Leisure Development Partners. Immersing guests in story-driven attractions and richly themed environments “increases the perceived value of the experience, allowing for higher prices”, he says. Guests tend to stay longer, and spend more on refreshments and retail.

Mr de Villiers concludes that attractions should give people an opportunity to be part of the story. “You could have the best home cinema, but it’s not the same as standing with 13,000 people in our *Cinécénie* show,” he says. “You have to come here to feel that emotion and you’ll keep it in your hearts for a long time.”



1.2m

people visit Puy du Fou every year

Source: Puy du Fou

COMMERCIAL FEATURE



THE BIG PICTURE: HOW IMAX IS OFFERING CINEMA AUDIENCES EVEN GREATER THRILLS THAN EVER

IMAX has revolutionised cinema over nearly five decades, but with audiences demanding evermore exciting experiences, it's driving the very latest cinematic technology and remains at the cutting edge

IMAX

It was almost 50 years ago that a group of Canadian experimental film-makers got together at EXPO 67 to create what was the first large screen cinema by syncing together nine cinema projectors. It was such a success that, over the next three years, it prompted the development of IMAX technology.

Ever since, IMAX has gripped and thrilled audiences around the world with its cutting-edge projection and sound systems. However, with cinema-goers demanding evermore exciting experiences, the market leader in cinema technology,

which has developed proprietary technology, software and unique architecture, is not resting on its laurels.

"Film fans are always looking for something new and even more exciting with each blockbuster movie release, and we enjoy trying to exceed the challenge that it sets us," says Andrew Cripps, president of IMAX in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. "Technological innovation, combined with artistic creativity, lies at the heart of what IMAX is all about."

In the last few months, the company has unveiled its next-generation projection and sound system called IMAX with laser. The

result of the largest research and development investment in its history, IMAX describes it as "the re-imagining of the movie theatre experience". Designed from the ground up for its largest screens, 75 feet or greater in width, the dual 4K laser projection system is equipped with a new optical engine and a suite of proprietary IMAX technologies.

A laser light source provides substantially more brightness than a xenon bulb, and allows IMAX to fill its largest screens with even sharper and more lifelike images. This is particularly important for 3D movies as 3D glasses have a dimming effect.

As well as improved contrast, IMAX with laser allows film-makers to explore and expand their use of colours by providing a wider palate and more vivid, lifelike images. The technology also includes a next-generation sound system that features 12 discrete channels plus sub-bass. Whether they're hearing a pin drop or a volcano explode, IMAX with laser gives audiences a whole new visceral sound experience.

IMAX has already signed more than 71 laser deals around the world at some of the most prestigious commercial theatres, museums and science centres such as Empire, Leicester Square in London.

The company also works closely with many of today's leading directors, such as Christopher Nolan, James Cameron, J.J. Abrams, Zack Snyder and Michael Bay, to create enhanced IMAX versions of their films.

For starters, every Hollywood film that is presented in the IMAX format goes through a proprietary remastering process called IMAX DMR. In this process, IMAX's team of image and sound specialists work with the film-makers to enhance the saturation, contrast, brightness and a score of other variables in virtually every frame, as well as to remix the soundtrack to optimise it for IMAX's custom sound system.

"Working directly with such incredibly talented film-makers has opened the door to a whole new world of visual and audio artistry, and these technological and creative collaborations have enabled us to offer cinema-goers something above and beyond anything they've experienced before," says Greg Foster, senior executive vice president of IMAX Corp. and chief executive of IMAX Entertainment.

Another increasingly popular trend is for these film-makers to shoot sequences of their movies with special IMAX cameras. These cameras are renowned for being the highest-resolution cameras in the world and they allow the film-maker to not only display unparalleled image quality, but also make use of the entire floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall IMAX screen.

Exclusively in IMAX, sequences shot with the IMAX camera will expand to fill the entire screen, allowing movie-goers to see up to approximately 40 per cent more of the image with unprecedented crispness, clarity and colour saturation.

Recently *Star Wars* director Abrams used IMAX cameras to film the key action sequence, tweeting a photo of the IMAX camera on location with the hashtag #bestformatever.

"*Star Wars* and IMAX are an ideal match," says Mr Foster. "The film-making team has worked closely with us to deliver the definitive version of the film, including the brightest, sharpest and clearest images on the legendary IMAX screens and a remixed soundtrack that somehow even takes John Williams' score to another level."

IMAX says it has no plans to deter its focus on innovation, and will continue to work with film-makers to try and push the envelope when it comes to providing an immersive cinematic environment.

The challenge of creating new experiences in the cinema that engage and thrill audiences has never been greater, but it's also something the technology experts at IMAX clearly relish.

www.imax.com

“
Technological innovation, combined with artistic creativity, lies at the heart of what IMAX is all about

Building with imagination

Theme parks may seem like whimsical worlds, but there is an exact science in creating them, involving teams of specialists with

◆ BUILDING A THEME PARK

● CHRISTIAN SYLT

Building a blockbuster theme park can cost north of \$1 billion and with so much at stake investors can't leave anything to chance. Whether it's a ride, a show or an entire resort that is being built, a precise formula is followed and it's more logical than magical.

Next year the doors will open to a multi-billion-dollar Disney resort in Shanghai and, although it will be Disney's newest resort, the format at its heart will not be drastically different to the very first park opened by Walt himself in 1955.

Many Disneyland parks have a central fairy tale castle approached along a turn-of-the-century-style street and themed lands surrounding it. The rides are so dense with detailed touches that repeat visits are necessary to see it all.

The 3D shows have moving seats, scents are pumped in to match the on-screen action, droplets of water are released from above during storm scenes and jets of air are fired from under the seats to convey the impression that creatures are crawling below. The simulator rides take different paths randomly to encourage repeat visits and the music, piped into the parks from hidden speakers, changes as guests walk through the themed lands.

Children love the Disney characters and catchy tunes while adults wander round slack-jawed wondering how it's all done. It is thanks to the Disney "Imagineers", the wizards who design the parks and whose name is formed from a combination of imagination and engineering. Their work is far from theoretical.

It is not uncommon to see guests tapping the antiques fastened to shelves in the turn-of-the-century arcades to see if they are real or plastic copies. Disney generally follows the principle that anything within touching distance should be real while objects out of arm's reach just have to look real. It is this attention to detail which keeps guests coming back and the Imagineers have it down to a fine art.

They start each project in the uncharted territory of blue-sky brainstorming where no idea is too radical to be considered.

Post-it notes and sketches are core to the early stages of the process

and soon become formalised as storyboards and models, both digital and physical. Next come detailed set drawings which are essentially blueprints for the attraction.

"We go through the creative process and we get the attraction up to what we call schematics," says Björn Heerwagen, imagineering show design and production manager at Disneyland Paris. "I then take over from that point and complete it. I have to make it such that we can actually build the thing. I have to take some crazy ideas and think about how to make them realistic."

There's a feasibility analysis to decide, for example, how a ride will be engineered and this is condensed into a contract document which outlines the work required to build it.

Mr Heerwagen is in charge of 40 divisions which range from animated props, themed paint and special effects to graphics, media and video projection. His team's latest triumph at Disneyland Paris is themed to the Oscar-winning Disney movie *Ratatouille*. It features cutting-edge trackless simulator cars which move through huge indoor sets in time to events on giant 3D screens. This gives the impression that the riders are the size of rats that are being chased through a restaurant.

The synchronisation process involves such exacting moves as making sure that fake rats' eyes flicker from behind crates while a smell of bread is pumped in when the ride car enters the pantry scene.

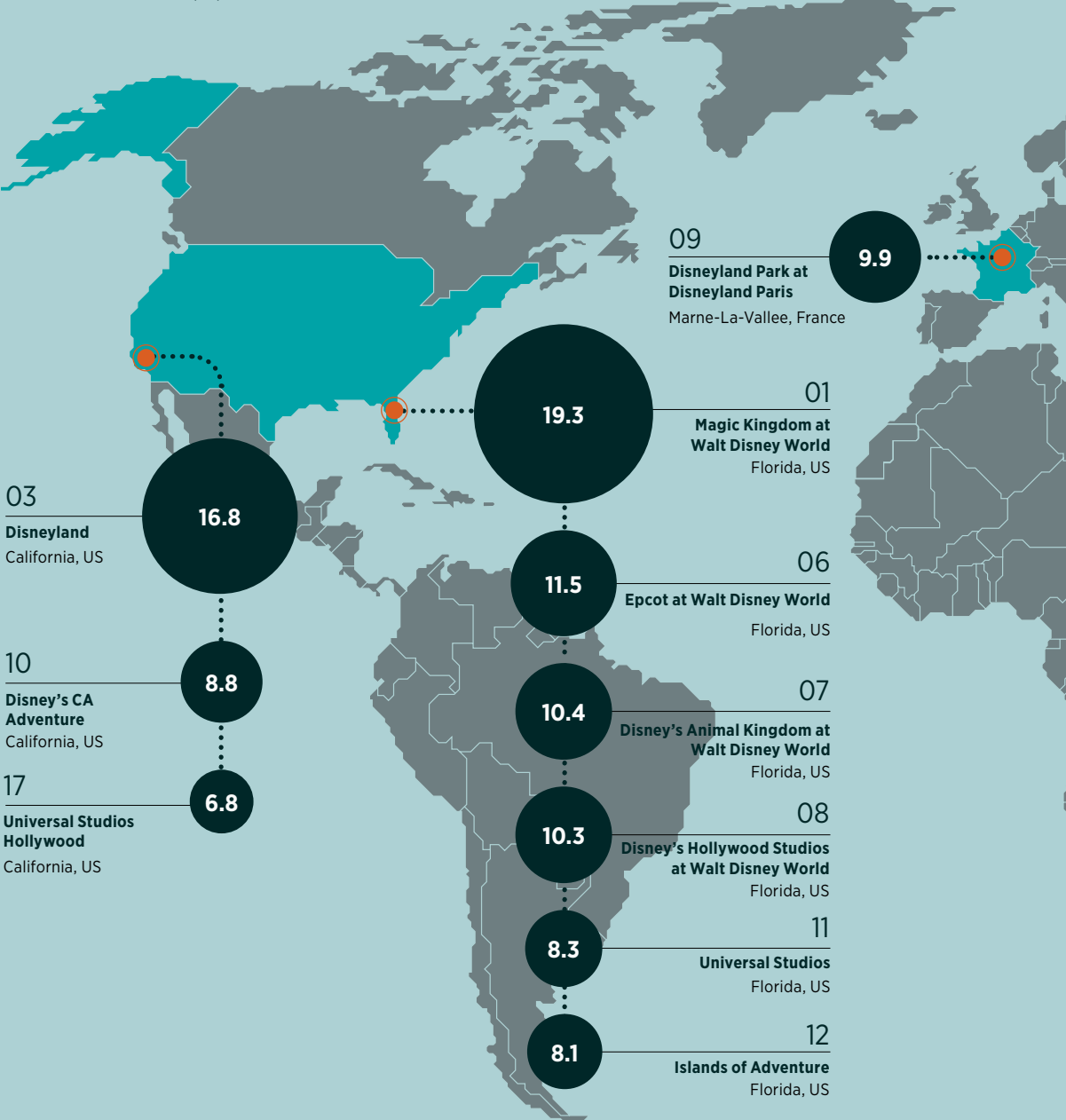
"I bring all of the stuff in and start the installation process. I make it look pretty, make sure that it stays within the theme and tells the story that we want to tell," says Mr Heerwagen, adding that the next step is to synchronise everything, which sounds easier than it actually is. "Then we run the attraction for 72 hours non-stop for reliability before going into soft opening and the grand opening."

"We have to look up to 20 years ahead because, if you take something like *Ratatouille*, it took five years to make from start to finish."

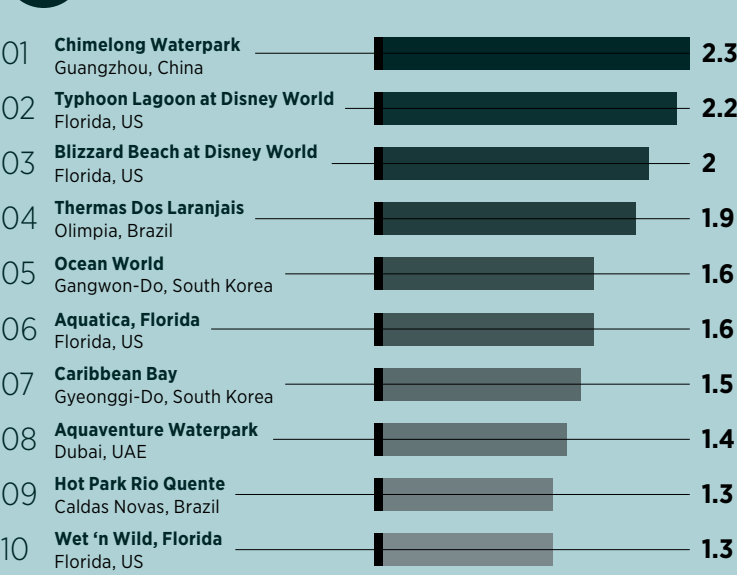
It goes to show that although the rides may seem like magic, it takes more than the wave of a wand to pull them off.

“I have to take some crazy ideas and think about how to make them realistic”

TOP 20 AMUSEMENT/THEME PARKS IN 2014, BY ATTENDANCE (M)



TOP 10 WATER PARKS IN 2014, BY ATTENDANCE (M)

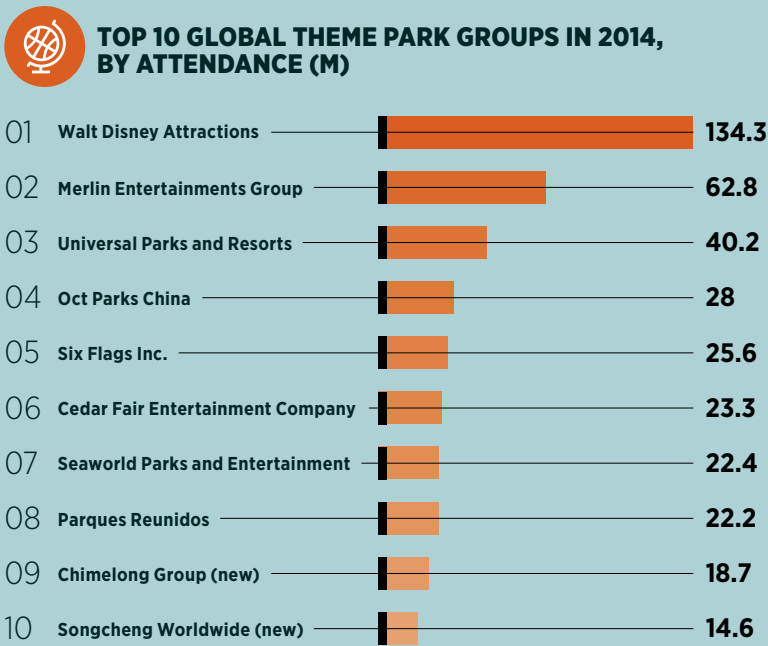
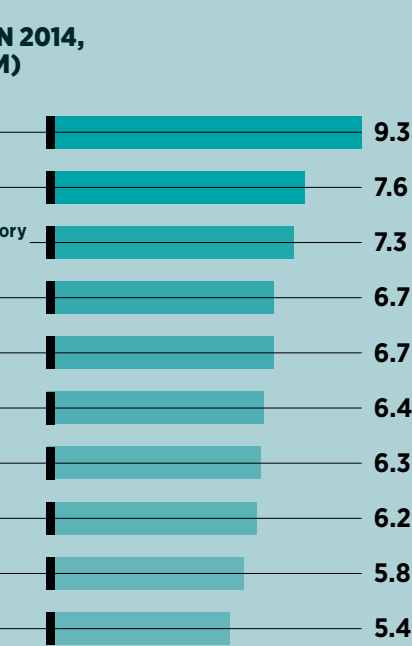
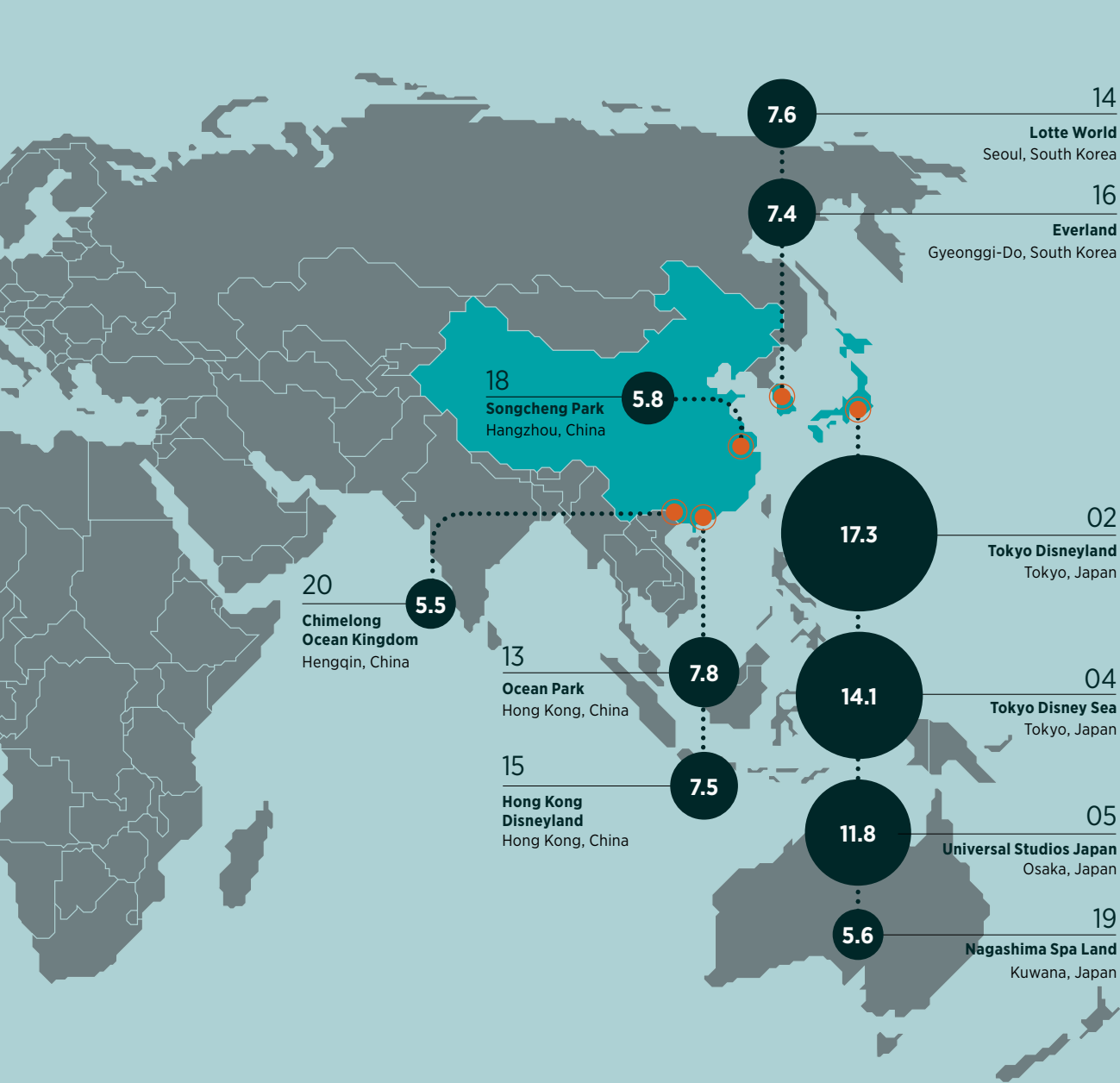


TOP 10 MUSEUMS IN 2014, BY ATTENDANCE (M)



and engineering expertise

flair and technical expertise to turn fantasy into fact



10 STEPS TO MAGIC

- 01 BLUE SKY** Designers brainstorm about what the attraction could involve. The direction of discussion is mainly driven by the type of technology they want to use, the story they want to tell or the geographical location of the attraction.
- 02 STORYBOARDING** Storyboards, which are a series of hand-drawn illustrations showing the key moments in the attraction, are prepared.
- 03 MODEL-MAKING** The strongest concepts are turned into models to show what the finished attraction would look like.
- 04 COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY** The models are supplemented with computer-generated imagery of the attraction from the guests' perspective.
- 05 SET-DRAWING** After an estimation of costs, a detailed set of drawings, which are essentially blueprints for the attraction, are produced.
- 06 FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS** This focuses on the technical detail and engineering which will underpin the attraction. The special effects and audio designers use the models and set designs for reference, and the acoustics team studies the proposed building to provide input.
- 07 CONTRACT DOCUMENT** The designers pool their feedback into a contract document, which outlines the work required to build the attraction.
- 08 CONSTRUCTION** Ride systems are typically manufactured by specialist companies and it is the design surrounding them which makes the overall experience unique.
- 09 TESTING** Once installation is complete, the attraction goes through a test-and-adjust period, which focuses on areas such as audio levels, programme animation and effects.
- 10 FINALE** Then comes the grand public opening.

Immersed in a wondrous new fantasy world

Augmented and virtual realities are transforming theme parks into high-tech immersive experiences

◆ IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES
● CHARLES ORTON-JONES

Theme parks tend to bill the big rollercoasters as their main attraction. Monster rides such as the Tower of Terror at Dreamworld in Australia or the Colossus at Thorpe Park offer sensations you just can't get at home on a video console. But no theme park can rely only on rides. Consumers' stomach acid won't permit it. Which is why there is such an intensive drive in the industry to create attractions which offer a rather more gentle, serene and cerebral appeal.

Immersive experiences offer a way for visitors to disappear into a new world. Tom Sawyer's Island at Disney World's Magic Kingdom was the original venue, designed by Walt himself. There's the river Tom and Huck boated down, a fort island and the sounds of a blacksmith working. Visitors feel they've slipped inside the book, and can play at being frontier settlers exploring Harper's Mill and Injun Joe's Cave.

Some of the best immersive experiences include the Fortress Explorations at Tokyo DisneySea in Japan, a Renaissance-era world featuring an alchemy lab, planetarium, replica of Leonardo da Vinci's flying machine and lavishly rigged 16th-century ship. Cars Land at Disneyland and the Castle Dungeon tour at Warwick Castle, where actors put members of the public on trial in front of a hanging judge, are two outstanding examples.

To up the appeal of immersive experiences, theme parks are turning to technology. 4D cinema is like 3D cinema, but with chairs that rock, vibrate and tilt, combined with smells, lasers, wind and water sprays. The 4D Ice Age attraction at Alton Towers, which opened in 2012, is one of the most highly regarded. Viewers wear paper disposable 3D glasses and watch a specially designed show based on the popular *Ice Age*

movies. The seats shudder with mammoth footprints, and the snow and wind fans draw the viewer into the action. The whole cinema and queuing area is themed with characters in costume to add to the sense of occasion.

4D seats are getting more extreme in their movement. Virtec Attractions' FlightRider keeps viewers five feet off the ground, with no foot support. The angular movement and in-seat vibrations are extraordinary. It's easy to forget you are in a cinema and not on a rollercoaster.

Augmented reality (AR) is a growing component. National Geographic's *Dino Autopsy* exhibition used a smartphone AR app created by INDE to let visitors peer inside the body of the dinosaur and "see" creatures move around the hall. It helped attract 150,000 visitors to the tour on the opening day in Shanghai.

The next stage of the immersion is interactivity. Sitting on a tilting chair and using an AR app is one thing. But what customers really want it to control the experience.

Holovis is one of the leaders in interactive immersive experiences. Based in Lutterworth, Leicestershire, Holovis produces 3D domes, dark rides and AR experiences for some of the world's largest theme parks.

“Instead of looking at a screen, we are putting you into the game – the action is all around you

“The Xbox and PlayStation generation expects the very best,” says Holovis chief executive Stuart Hetherington. “They need something they can't get at home. And what that means is complete immersion. Instead of looking at a screen, we are putting you into the game – the action is all around you.”

Holovis has just unveiled its latest attraction for theme parks. Crimson Wing is a ten-meter dome which houses twelve people at a time. The Holovis MotionSeat platform delivers all the usual bumps and judders, with air and water thrown in. But the real breakthrough is true interactivity during the performance. Viewers are given a laser gun to fire at the screen. It's like a mass participation video game in 3D on a moving platform.

“3D domes have been around for a while,” says Mr Hetherington. “What we've developed is a clever way of rendering the dome so that all the guests are engaged. We can also project on to abstract

shapes. No one's done that before.”

The interactivity can be done pretty much any way you like. “For example, you can fly through a world using a laser-pick to mine from an energy source,” he says. “Hand gestures are another method. We are not constrained in the way you interact in any way.”

It is clear that virtual reality (VR) headsets will play a role at theme parks. But how? One exciting new concept may point the way.

The Void is a US theme park in Utah opening for testing next summer. The concept mixes headset VR with physical immersive worlds. Users put the headset on and see a computer-generated world. It could be an intergalactic war on an alien planet or a dungeon with flaming torches and monsters. They then walk around a maze filled with objects which match what they see. See a bench and you can sit on it. Walls can be touched. Guns and swords can be used to fight monsters. Add in smells and heat, and you can see why it's being billed as 5D, touch being the fifth dimension. Six to eight players enter the arena at once.

The reaction from the few testers to try The Void in its pre-beta format has been



The Void VR theme park in Utah, due to open in 2016

universally effusive. “These guys created a real-life Holodeck,” said *Time Magazine*. “The Void will bring the visions of *Star Trek*, *The Matrix* and William Gibson's [science-fiction novel] *Neuromancer* one step closer to reality.” Games blogger Jeff Naye said: “It's very hard to find other media or entertainment to compare it to... it's very different to anything I've ever seen.”

Another exciting concept is the VR and rollercoaster mash-up. VR Coaster creates virtual worlds, viewed on a Samsung Gear VR headset. Sequences are synchronised with a position sensor so the dips and tilts of the ride coincide with the footage. Now a rollercoaster can become a battle with a dragon or a space battle, with no investment in scenery needed.

Innovations such as this are vital. The challenge for theme parks is to stay one step ahead of what consumers can use at home. It's won't be easy.

The 4D theme park ride will soon be on sale for home cinema lovers. The Immersit motion simulator sofa sits on four pneumatic legs which pitch and roll along with the movie. VR headsets such as the Microsoft HoloLens and Google-backed Magic Leap will bring immersive experiences to home audiences.

Theme parks must think big and be bold to stay ahead.

EDITOR'S PICKS: WORLD'S BEST IMMERSIVE ATTRACTIONS

1993	1999	2000	2000	2001	2006	2007	2010	2011	2015
Dreamflight Efteling, Netherlands	The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man Islands of Adventure, US	Valhalla Blackpool Pleasure Beach, UK	Pooh's Hunny Hunt Tokyo Disneyland, Japan	Soarin' Disney California Adventure, US	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory: The Ride Alton Towers, UK	Atlantis Adventure Europa Park, Germany	Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey Islands of Adventure, US	Transformers: The Ride Universal Studios, Singapore	Justice League: Battle for Metropolis Six Flags Over Texas, US



PHONE +41 91 690 5005



ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY FROM
ANOTHER GALAXY
VISIT WWW.VIRTEC-ATTRACTIONS.COM

- innovative & creative 4D/XD systems
- media-based interactive VR attractions
- individual solutions for customers world wide
- planning & distribution services

IMMERSIVE 4D/XD EXPERIENCES

OPINION



COLUMN

Storytelling, theming and immersion

Whether it's bringing to life fictional characters and stories or creating haunted experiences year-round, most attractions use themed storytelling to immerse guests in an experience

KAREN STALEY

Senior vice president, EMEA
International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions

“ Intricately themed rides, attractions and park areas create a more immersive or intense experience for guests. This year, in particular, a lot of theming is focused on well-known television characters and stories, where successful intellectual properties were further developed into the themed world of an amusement or theme park.

The immersive theme park experience drives attendance which continues to make a robust economic footprint. Amusement and theme parks generated estimated revenue of €5.2 billion in 2014, of which 80 per cent is attributable to spending in the parks, 15 per cent to hotels, and 5 per cent to sponsorships, corporate events and other income streams.

Each year visitors to the amusement parks expect something new. In order to deliver, investment is paramount to the success of the sector. Such

investment in wonderful immersive experiences creates environments that provide families and their children with memories that last a life time.

Amusement parks continually invest in the development and improvement of their attractions, in enlarging accommodation, additions of swimming resorts and leisure pools, and new shows and entertainment.

This investment and focus on improvement by the industry matters because behind the fun and escapism of a day spent in an amusement park or attraction, there are some hard economic facts and figures:

- 157 million guest-visits a year in Europe
- 55,000 full-time employee equivalents in the EU



- €10 billion in direct and indirect economic impact
- €1.2 billion paid in direct and indirect taxation.

The amusement and theme park industry is also a sector that is capital intensive; they need to invest in new and existing rides to keep guests coming back to parks and attractions. Capital expenditure for European theme and amusement parks is estimated to equate to around 12 per cent of industry revenues.

This rate of investment has not reduced even during difficult economic times and very often it stays within Europe as most suppliers of new rides are based here.



This rate of investment has not reduced even during difficult economic times and very often it stays within Europe as most suppliers of new rides are based here

Take, for example, Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen opened in 1843 or Tibado in Spain that will celebrate its 100th anniversary soon. Europa-Park in Germany, the second largest amusement park in Europe, is owned and managed by a family that has been in the business of amusement park rides since the 18th century. There are many more stories like this in our industry, which underlines the deep roots that this sector has in Europe.

Europe also boasts incredible diversity. The sector ranges from world-class destination parks, such as Disneyland Paris, to small and medium-sized theme or amusement parks, attractions, water parks and family entertainment centres. Collectively they constitute a thriving European industry.



EXPERIENCE THE EXPERIENCE

FOR FORTY YEARS, POLIN HAS BEEN FOCUSED ON THE WATER PARK INDUSTRY. WE EXPANDED FROM A FAMILY-OWNED COMPANY TO A GLOBAL MARKET LEADER THAT PLACES EMPHASIS ON PERFECTION AND INNOVATION.

WE'RE PROUD TO OFFER THE INDUSTRY'S WIDEST RANGE OF WATERSLIDES AND WATER PLAY ATTRACTIONS. OUR GAME-CHANGING INNOVATIONS AND SIGNATURE RIDES SET THE STANDARD AROUND THE WORLD.

WE OFFER THE HIGHEST TECHNOLOGY, SUPERIOR QUALITY, MAXIMUM SAFETY AND GROUNDBREAKING DESIGNS.

POLIN HAS ALWAYS CREATED UNIQUE EXPERIENCES AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO REMAINING AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE INDUSTRY FOR THE NEXT FORTY YEARS.



PolinWaterparks
THE EXPERIENCE

polin.com.tr polinwaterparks

Theme park designs that changed the game

From the first loop-the-loop to the interactive rides of today, innovative attractions have thrilled and excited down the years

◆ DESIGN TIMELINE
● BENJAMIN CHIOU



1 CAROUSEL

Few things are more synonymous with fair grounds and theme parks than the carousel. Invented by New York master carver Charles I.D. Looff in 1876, who attached his carved wooden animals on to a moving circular platform, the carousel may lack the speed and technology of most modern attractions, but is still beloved by visitors of all ages around the world.



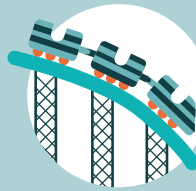
2 FERRIS WHEEL

In 1893 organisers of the Chicago World's Fair issued a challenge to create an attraction that would overshadow the grandeur of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, which had hosted the World's Fair four years earlier. While Gale Ferris Jr only managed to build a 264ft wheel, dwarfed by Gustave Eiffel's 1,063ft iron behemoth, it carried 36 cars holding up to 60 people, giving an impressive total capacity of 2,160. What's more, the Ferris wheel would go on to become a mainstay of theme parks the world over for the next century.



3 WOODEN COASTER

While not the first wooden coaster to be built, Leap-The-Dips at Lakemont Park in Pennsylvania today stands as the world's oldest operating ride of its kind. Built in 1902 by the E. Joy Morris Company, the ride was forced to close in 1985 due to disrepair, but a successful fundraising campaign led to its restoration in 1999. Standing at a mere 41ft, the ride is quite tame by modern standards, but has been named a national historic landmark and is still bringing in crowds to this day.



4 STEEL COASTER

Matterhorn Bobsleds was a revolution in rollercoaster design. Disneyland introduced the world's first tubular steel coaster in 1959 which meant, unlike conventional wooden rails, the track could be bent

in any direction, paving the way for the loops and corkscrews that we know today. It is said that Walt Disney's original concept was to give guests the experience of tobogganing down a snowy hill.



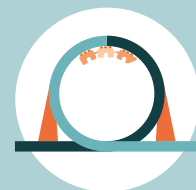
5 IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING

A 1960s indoor boat ride with singing dolls doesn't sound like much, but It's A Small World at Disneyland in California remains one of the park's most revered attractions. Featuring more than 300 audio-animatronic dolls in traditional costumes from around the world, singing an annoyingly catchy theme song, the ride was originally created as a tribute to the UNICEF 1964 New York Fair, but became a huge hit and moved to Disneyland where it is still going strong.



6 DARK RIDES

Dark rides have been around for years, such as the first 1930s ghost train at Blackpool Pleasure Beach or the ubiquitous Tunnel of Love of yesteryear, but they really came into their own in the late-1960s. Disneyland's Adventure Thru Inner Space was the first attraction to use the patented Omnimover system, with rotating pods that control line of sight and animation showing riders what's it's like to be shrunk down to the size of an atom. Though the latter closed in 1985, Florida Disney World's popular shooting-gallery game, Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin, still uses the same system, with riders able to spin around in their carriages while firing infrared lasers to help Buzz in his battle to defeat the evil Emperor Zurg.



7 INVERTED COASTER

Magic Mountain and Cedar Point have been battling it out for the crown of "rollercoaster world capital" for four decades, ever since they competed to build the modern looping coaster in 1976. Magic Mountain

pipped Cedar Point to the post by just a week with the creation of the single-inversion coaster Revolution, though the latter's corkscrew includes both a vertical loop and double-corkscrew. Full Throttle at Six Flags Magic Mountain in California, however, currently stands as the ride with the tallest loop at over 127ft.



8 TRACKLESS ATTRACTIONS

Pooh's Hunny Hunt in Tokyo Disneyland, while not one for thrill-seekers, was a groundbreaking trackless dark ride built in 2000. Based on the Winnie the Pooh children's books, the ride uses a unique "local positioning system", enabling computers to move each carriage from room to room, following Pooh and his friends in their search for honey in the Hundred Acre Wood. Adrenaline junkies may well steer clear, but Pooh's Hunny Hunt is Fantasyland's most popular attraction.



9 MULTI-SENSORY

Multi-sensory attractions were the inevitable next step in theme park evolution, using advanced technology for a fully immersive thrill ride. The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man at Universal Orlando is one such attraction, submerging visitors in a 3D virtual reality where they follow the comic book hero in a moving car through city streets and over buildings, including a simulated 400ft freefall. Journey to the Centre of the Earth, the 2001 dark ride inspired by the Jules Verne novel, is also noteworthy. The Toyko DisneySea attraction transports visitors on a mining carriage through caverns, mushroom forests and earthquakes into the heart of Mount Prometheus, using light, sound, heat and motion for a complete, multi-sensory experience.



COMMERCIAL FEATURE

THE ARCHITECTURE OF EXPERIENCE

A Berlin creative agency is battling convention to become an innovative world leader



dan pearlman

"If knowledge is a bank and imagination the currency, the ultimate future investment is experience," says Kieran Stanley, founder and associate of dan pearlman, the company behind the much-anticipated Islands development at Chester Zoo, England's largest zoo development project, which opened in the summer.

Designing and investing in an experience was key to the project's strategy from an early point in the planning and development of Islands. Visitors are taken on an immersive journey around six islands of South-East Asia, encountering indigenous wildlife in an, albeit recreated, native setting, as well as equipment like note books, sketches and observation posts along the way.

"By becoming part of the research team, we enabled the visitors to take on a different role and become actively involved in learning about the conservation work of Chester Zoo," says Mr Stanley.

dan pearlman, based in Berlin and working internationally, creates brand and leisure environments that inspire and enrich. The 100-strong interdisciplinary company works in dialogue with its clients to develop

holistic projects in a range of areas, including leisure, retail and wellness.

Their portfolio includes such iconic projects as the BMW Welt in Munich, as well as the unique master plan development of Hanover Zoo with its immersive environments, including Yukon Bay or the world's first amphibious safari through the Lost Valley at Everland Resort in South Korea, plus strategic development plans for Berlin's Zoological Garden and Tierpark, among others. In fact, Mr Stanley says: "Our work turns brands into experiences and experiences into brands."

When planning experiences such as Islands, he says, it's crucial to look at things from a user's perspective. This means sitting down with all the stakeholders, zoologists, curators, technicians and designers to determine what would make the experience work best for everyone. This is the basic principle of the "design thinking" process that the company as a strategic partner applies across all its projects.

By taking an integrative approach, dan pearlman is able to develop a unique solution that takes all areas into account. Zo-



ological requirements, greater operative efficiency as well as the animals' needs have to be considered. During the design process, dan pearlman comes up with behavioural enrichment innovations, such as the wave machine at Hanover Zoo which enables polar bears to "hunt" fish in a more natural way.

"Our simplest strategy was to offer the visitors a day's holiday," says Mr Stanley. "When you start looking at what that actually means for a whole family, you get a complicated and holistic list of needs and

“Based in Berlin and working internationally, dan pearlman creates brand and leisure environments that inspire and enrich

wants." A zoo as a leisure environment poses an interesting challenge too as it's one of the only places a family can be together all day so there's a need to develop something everyone can enjoy.

Mr Stanley believes that through immersive engagement and experience, people can learn and understand quite complex content lightly, intuitively and sustainably. This is why in designing zoo and recreational facilities, creating a narrative is one of dan pearlman's strong suits. "We tell stories by turning them into built reality," he says. "Instead of defining architecture by its structure, we prefer to define it through a conscious choice in the sequence of space, light, content and experience, indoor and outdoor."

This is similar to methods used in storytelling and scenography. But Mr Stanley prefers the term storybuilding to storytelling, explaining: "We build a story so it can be experienced in an intuitive manner, encountering things along the way and engaging with the content. Experiencing

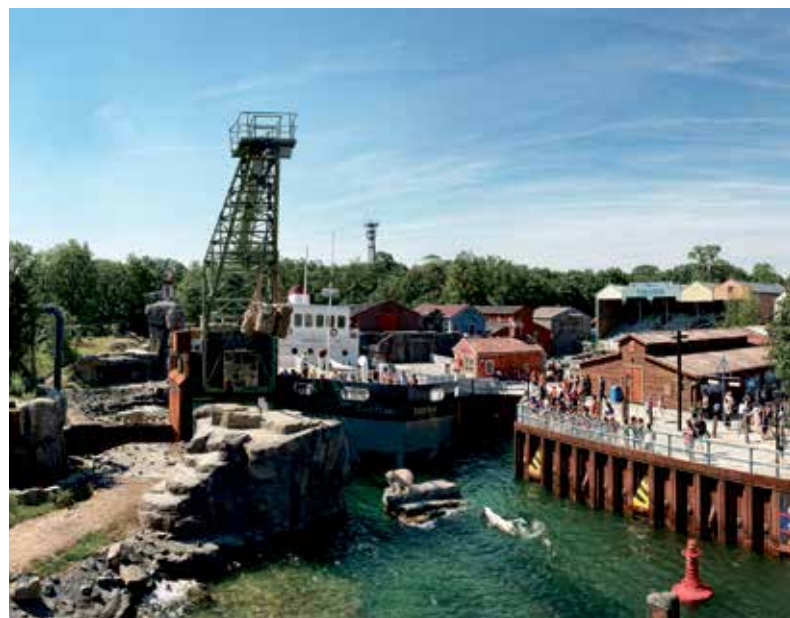
things first-hand anchors them cognitively with a relevance which ultimately is more sustainable." Storybuilding, such as the Islands project, creates an emotional connection which enhances the visitor experience, but serves the goals of the client too, he says.

Another project in development is The Giant, the world's largest moving statue and the biggest artistic sculptural project. On multiple levels, The Giant represents myths and legends, great historical figures, contemporary and fictional heroes, great inventions and developments.

The Giant is a great example of how a better outcome can emerge from collaboration. The client originally wanted a giant statue in every city – Einstein in Berlin, Dali in Barcelona, Warhol in New York. With dan pearlman on board, it's become a museum, an iconic piece of architecture and an immersive attraction with relevance. Instead of just a piece of art, it's now an experience that seeks to find out a person's skills, passion and potential.

"The idea now is that everyone can be a giant and it serves to 'awaken the giant in you'. This way the client receives something much greater than the initial brief and this is what we strive for," Mr Stanley concludes. "In our work it is often less about themed entertainment and more about immersive engagement."

danpearlman.com





Lagotronics Projects®
creating unforgettable memories



Museum Experience 2.0

The best interactive systems in the world!



Bring your shopping mall back to life



Visitors of your theme park in the lead role

www.lagotronicsprojects.com

HQ: Venlo | The Netherlands | info@lagotronicsprojects.com

Creating an emot

From museums to malls and breweries to waterparks, attractions are using tec

◆ OUT OF THE PARK

● CHARLES READ

Themed entertainment has moved out of the park. Once it was only the theme parks that offered immersive, active experiences, but now the skills and techniques of their designers and architects are being utilised by a growing number of other attractions. From zoos, aquariums and museums to factory tours and heritage sites, attractions are racing to turn interactive, investing in richly themed environments.

It's easy to see why. Attractions are in competition with a huge array of leisure activities, from sports and shopping to increasingly sophisticated in-home entertainment and online gaming.

Visitors have high expectations and low boredom thresholds. They are also fully tech savvy so designers are adding cutting-edge mobile and digital technologies alongside complex themed design and architecture to put the attraction's story across in the most compelling way.

It's all about visitors experiencing the attraction in a much more visceral way, connecting on an emotional level and creating an enduring relationship with the brand. Think of it as rollercoaster retail and emotional "edutainment".

Back in 2009 Amsterdam's The Heineken Experience netted around 350,000 visitors. By 2013 the figure had more than doubled. The reason was simple – a makeover by BRC Imagination Arts, a California-based design firm. BRC's redevelopment was extensive, incorporating a strong story line and four floors of interactive exhibits alongside brewing artefacts, a tasting bar and even a ride.

"Success was not attributable to the technology used, but to the emotional connection forged through a powerful narrative," says Dirk Lubbers, The Heineken Experience managing director.

The Guinness Storehouse in Dublin, Ireland's leading visitor attraction, also benefited from a BRC makeover. Once again, the aim was to "emotionalise" the visitor journey with a story-driven sensory experience augmented by multimedia technology. Interactivity is key. Guests not only learn how to pull the perfect pint, but get to share their experience on iPads. They can also leave a message on a digital wall. It's proved a popular move, says Guinness Storehouse managing director Paul Carty, as more than 65,000 messages were left in the first 12 months.

Zoos are also transforming with a deepening emphasis on visitor engagement. Stacey Ludlum, a zoo designer with St. Louis-based PGAV Destinations,



explains. "The goal of most modern zoo exhibits is to transport the guest to another time and place. It's the romantic notion of sharing an experience with the animals. Barriers of some kind will always exist, but getting creative to minimise those barriers is the real innovation," she says.

Chester Zoo's £40-million Islands project, which opened in spring this year, is a good case in point. Designer Kieran Stanley of Berlin's dan pearman architects aimed to "turn the guests into explorers". Visitors head off on an "expedition" across six South-

East Asian islands. Rather than simply showcasing the wildlife, Islands reconstructs the daily life of naturalists in the field so visitors become part of the team, leaving with a feeling of ownership and a deeper understanding of the urgent need to protect fragile habitats.

Museums and galleries are turning digital as they seek to engage with the gaming generation. The British Museum and Tate have both turned to *Minecraft*, the multi-award-winning video game to help bring exhibits to life for a new, younger audience. Often described as "LEGO on steroids", the game allows players to develop and build worlds within a virtual 3D environment using textured building blocks.

Tony Guillan, multimedia producer at Tate Media, says: "It was clear from the massive popularity of the game and the amount of time young people spend



playing it, that it has huge potential for engaging young people with the arts."

So Tate launched a series of *Minecraft* "maps" inspired by artworks in their collection, using typical elements of *Minecraft* game play to allow users to explore the themes of the artworks. One map, based on Andre Derain's 1906 painting, *The Pool of London*, focuses on Fauvist colours, incorporating an adventure around London where players search for pigments.

In contrast, the British Museum has enlisted the help of the game's vast fan base to build a virtual copy of itself in the *Minecraft* world. Designed to help the museum engage with a wider audience, the aim is eventually to recreate its entire collection within the game.

ional connection

hniques developed in theme parks to deepen the connection with their visitors



1. Islands attraction at Chester Zoo

2. Replica city at KidZania in Westfield London

3. Brewery at the Heineken Experience in Amsterdam



and other digital devices are now a part of everyday life for a lot of people. So it makes sense that museums and galleries will take advantage of this technology.”

Gaming technology has even been incorporated into waterparks. The slide-board from Vancouver’s WhiteWater West is a high-tech “ride vehicle” that allows rider and slide to interact, creating a bespoke experience for the rider.

The growth of online shopping has created a headache for malls. To counter this, shopping centres are establishing themselves as leisure destinations, creating miniature theme parks inside their venues. This is “retailtainment”, a concept first identified by American sociologist George Ritzer.

“Entertainment has emerged as a guiding paradigm for shopping mall development,” says Yael Coifman, a partner at LDP, a London-based leisure consultancy. “The increasing availability of in-home entertainment and gaming make the more traditional forms of commercial entertainment in malls, for example bowling, less of a draw.”

Adding entertainment space has multiple benefits. Most mall visitors come from within a 30-minute drive, but adding good quality attractions can extend the catchment up to a two-hour drive time and encourage repeat visitors.

An example of retailtainment in action is KidZania London, which recently opened in Westfield Shopping Centre.

With new locations opening worldwide, KidZania is a mini city where kids learn about the world of work through play. While their parents shop, children get to try out a variety of jobs – pilot, fireman, animator, chocolatier, radio host, mechanic – earning money in the form of kidZos to spend or save.

The benefits of retailtainment are reciprocal. Being located in a mall, with a heavy existing footfall, represents a real opportunity for the attractions.

Waterparks have also seen the potential. For decades they have looked pretty similar – a collection of blue waterslides shining in the sun. Waterparks have certainly lagged behind theme parks in immersive theming and branding, but the industry has started to appreciate the need for more creativity in this field.

Cartoon Network Amazone is a notable trailblazer with richly themed slides and attractions from Polin. The waterpark opened a year ago in Thailand and characters from shows such as *The Powerpuff Girls*, *Ben 10* and *Adventure Time* give an added dimension. “The Cartoon Network characters are equally as important as the water attractions,” says Liakat Dhanji, chairman of Amazon Falls, the owner of the park.

The move to tell stories that engage, create themed environments that resonate and utilise technologies that amaze will continue as mobile technology enables brands to understand their customers better, and create the individually tailored experiences we will come to expect. The days of dusty exhibits, dry facts and dull shopping trips are gone. Theming is coming out of the park.

The move to tell stories that engage, create themed environments that resonate and utilise technologies that amaze will continue as mobile technology enables brands to understand their customers better, and create the individually tailored experiences we will come to expect. The days of dusty exhibits, dry facts and dull shopping trips are gone. Theming is coming out of the park.

Share this article on social media via raconteur.net



BHSTS Master Plan Brighton



Fashion Hotel Dubai



Rainforest House Hannover



Int. Sports Village Cardiff



Ripleys BION Museum London



Bentley Pavilion Autostadt



Grand Pier Weston-Super-Mare



London Paramount London



Railway Station Castellon



Restless Planet Dubailand



Dreamland Margate



Kidzania London Westfield, White City



VW Pavilion Autostadt



VW Brandland Autostadt



Balloon Apartments London



Visitor Centre Durrell Wildlife



Lingfield Racecourse Surrey



Snowdon Summit Visitor Centre Wales



Marwell Wildlife Cafe Graze Hampshire



Master Plan ZSL London Zoo Land of the Lions

DEFINING RETAILTAINMENT

The term “retailtainment” was coined in 1999 by author and American sociologist Professor George Ritzer, who described it as “the use of ambience, emotion, sound and activity to get customers interested in the merchandise and in a mood to buy”.

The Victoria and Albert Museum has also incorporated gaming to bring exhibits to life. BAFTA-award-winning Sophia George, their first game designer in residence, created a game inspired by William Morris’ Strawberry Thief furnishing fabric. She says: “Smartphones, tablets

rayholearchitects

...museums brandlands cultural attractions botanic gardens
zoos safari parks visitor centres themed attractions mixed
development heritage centres science centres hotels restaurants...

info@rh-architects.com | 02086624600
www.rayhole-architects.com

Disney’s sporting venture

Involvement in sport is not the first thing that comes to mind when Disney is mentioned, but the theme park giant plays a wide game

◆ DISNEY AND ESPN
● CHRISTIAN SYLT AND CAROLINE REID

Disney is renowned for innovation. The company didn’t just invent theme parks as we know them, it also helped develop much of the technology needed to thrill and entertain. But less well known is that Disney is a pioneer in sport.

Striding through the giant gates of the Wide World of Sports in Orlando, Florida, it soon becomes apparent that this is no ordinary sports complex. Its tall yellow towers and spotlessly clean sweeping archways resemble those found in Mediterranean towns, and give visitors a regal feeling of arrival. Its wrought-iron railings form the shape of baseball bats and inside the ballpark clubhouse even the light fixtures resemble ballplayers.



The sports complex was designed by the same wizards who build Disney’s state-of-the-art theme park rides

The same attention to detail is found throughout the complex which is no mean feat given its sprawling size. The 250 acres comprise facilities for hosting more than 70 sports. There’s an 11,500-seat baseball park, four multi-sports fields, a track and field complex, a six-field softball complex, ten tennis courts and two indoor arenas, with the flagship venue big enough to accommodate twelve volleyball courts.

It is run by Walt Disney World Resort’s sports division and was the brainchild of its majority owner, the Walt Disney Company. The sports complex was designed by the same wizards who build Disney’s state-of-the-art theme park rides. Perhaps surprisingly, its purpose was to entice guests to nearby Disney World, the world’s most-visited theme park complex that features four theme parks, an entertain-



ment and shopping complex, two water parks and more than 25 hotels.

What makes the Wide World of Sports truly unique is the vast majority of the events staged there are for youth and amateur teams and competitors. Crucial to this strategy has been the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), the largest amateur sports organisation in the United States.

The AAU announced its support for the Wide World of Sports several years before the complex opened in March 1997 and even relocated its headquarters to Disney World. It committed to staging more than 35 national events annually at the venue and it hosts 26 national basketball events

there each year as well as others in baseball, gymnastics, fastpitch softball, track and field, and wrestling.

The top coaches and college scouts from America’s National Collegiate Athletic Association come to the AAU national championships to recruit the best high school talent before each season begins, and the same goes for other sports.

“We offer a wide variety of youth events for athletes of all ages and skill levels,” says Maribeth Bisienere, senior vice president of the Wide World of Sports. “They range from the Disney Soccer Showcase, featuring the top high school boys and girls soccer players in the nation, to the Pop Warner Super Bowl and the AAU Volleyball National Championships, to Disney High School Spring Training, which is open to any high school team, such as soccer, lacrosse, field hockey or golf, looking to train and compete outdoors here during the spring.”

Attracting extra guests to Disney World was one of the key reasons for the creation of the Wide World of Sports. According to Disney officials, research shows the majority of the more than 150,000 athletes, coaches and fans, who come to the Wide World of Sports annually, would not have come to Walt Disney World Resort if it were not for the sports complex.

The competitors tend to visit the nearby theme parks in between matches in a tournament or after the games have finished, so it is good synergy for Disney’s business. As the athletes tend to be young, they inevitably come with their family members, which brings even

more business Disney’s way. It welcomes them with open arms and even creates bespoke packages for competitors, so for example they can get discounted park tickets valid after 2pm which is useful if they have been training in the morning.

Many of the big Disney endurance races are cleverly scheduled to coincide with the slowest times of the year for Disney. In January and November it hosts marathons through its theme parks, but with more than 100 sports events staged annually at the Wide World of Sports, they also take place at busier times.

70+

sports are played at the 250-acre ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex

In December, there’s the Soccer Showcase, the biggest youth football tournament in the US, which features more than 500 teams from over 20 countries. “Perhaps the biggest growth sports at our complex are soccer, endurance races, volleyball, and cheer and dance,” says Ms Bisienere.

The Wide World of Sports has a prestigious patronage and the list of young athletes, who competed there and went on to reach the top of their games, reads like a roll-call of sports stars.



- 1. Rocco Baldeli of the Boston Red Sox at ESPN Wide World of Sports Champion Stadium
- 2. Mickey Mouse with New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex
- 3. ESPN Wide World of Sports Welcome Center

They include Wimbledon champion Serena Williams, Lleyton Hewitt and Pete Sampras, and from basketball NBA stars O.J. Mayo and Shane Larkin. American soccer star Freddy Adu played in the Soccer Showcase when he was 12. However, aspiring to these lofty heights is only one of the hooks which lure kids to the complex.

The Wide World of Sports has hosted practice events for teams in the three primary American professional sports leagues and in February every year the Atlanta Braves Major League baseball team holds its spring training there.

Sports stars who have trained or visited include Lionel Messi, Ricardo Kaká, Tiger Woods, Muhammad Ali, Billie Jean King, Shaquille O’Neal, Michael Jordan and Justin Gatlin.

The US-based global cable and satellite TV channel ESPN, which is part owned by Disney, broadcasts from the Wide World of Sports.

“Nowhere else can athletes, coaches and fans feel like they have made it on to ESPN than at our sports complex,” says Ms Bisienere. “We are laser-focused on bringing the ESPN experience to life at our sports complex through various aspects of ESPN, including ESPN broadcasts of the events at our sports complex – there were more than 140 live shows and games from our complex in 2014 – ESPN experiences for our guests, interaction with ESPN on-air talent and ESPN technology.”

The ESPN brand is displayed on digital boards and jumbotron screens around the facility which show clips of the matches there. Competitors can even end up on television outside the complex as the action is streamed to both the ESPN3 website and a dedicated channel which is available in more than 27,000 Disney hotel rooms nearby. This alone is believed to reach at least ten million people annually.

The next major development at the Wide World of Sports is the arrival in May of the Invictus Games, the multi-sport event, founded by Prince Harry, for wounded, injured or sick armed services personnel.



Look where Santa is hanging out this Christmas...

Theme parks and other visitor attractions are cashing in on the festive season by creating winter wonderlands for family fun

◆ CHRISTMAS

● HAZEL DAVIS

You don't conjure up images in your mind of rollercoasters covered in snow and children in winter coats queueing for the bouncy castle. But the festive season is nonetheless vital for the UK's leisure industry. As well as being a popular time with youngsters, mince pie makers and high street retailers, Christmas is becoming a busy time for visitor attractions.

This time of year is an obvious fit for a destination such as Windsor Castle. Until January 2016, the State Apartments are transformed into a festive Regency-themed display, depicting how the Prince Regent spent Christmas. The State Dining Room is laid for Christmas dinner and the Octagon Dining Room is decorated with a yew tree, the first tree to be brought indoors to be used as a Christmas tree in England. In St George's Hall, there's a 24-ft Christmas tree, decked with gold decorations and more than 20,000 twinkling lights.

On selected days in December, the castle has a Christmas storyteller and choirs from local schools perform around the tree. In addition, the Royal Collection Trust, which oversees the royal residences, revamped its online gift store last year which, according to their annual report, had a significant impact on Christmas sales.

Similarly at Chatsworth in Derbyshire, visitors have the opportunity to celebrate Christmas with Mr Toad from *Wind In The Willows*. The house is staying open late on Thursdays and Fridays throughout December, and there are nativity performances in the farmyard as well as a Christmas market with more than 100 stalls.

Lions, tigers and Santa hats might not be an obvious mix, but for Knowsley Safari Park on Merseyside, the winter season is an opportunity to see these animals in a completely different environment, according to Richard Smith, head of visitor ser-

vices. During December, the safari park also dishes up a themed Santa breakfast and there are Christmas stalls.

Rachel Scott, Knowsley Safari Park's head of marketing, adds: "For the first time, this year we will be creating more of a Christmas ambience for visitors with additional events from festive markets for the adults and amusement rides, Santa's Grotto and Christmas storytelling for the little

“
Over the festive period, the attractions industry has to work harder to grasp the public's attention as they're absorbed in Christmas shopping

ones. On top of this we have introduced a new pricing structure for December allowing people entry to the walk-around area for free and just £10 a car for the safari drive.”

It's still early days for Christmas events at the park, but they are using this year to inform and develop future festive offerings, says Ms Scott.

As the UK's most visited zoo, you'd expect Flamingo Land to be in its element in the summer. The attraction sees 1.5 million visitors each year, but in December 2014 it doubled its winter revenue by allowing Santa and his elves to take up residence in the Georgian Kirby Misperton Hall, along with more than 140 species of reptiles, mammals and birds, and rides for children.

Stockeld Park in Yorkshire has been running its Christmas Adventure for the last nine years. The park is nestled in one of the county's most ancient woodlands and is known for its sculpture-filled Enchanted Forest, extensive maze and Nordic ski trail. The winter season, from October to January, attracts more than 100,000 visitors.

The park's Christmas Adventure was born out of an idea to sell some of its home-grown Christmas trees; it's now home to Yorkshire's largest Christmas tree farm. It seemed like the most sensible thing to open up part of the park as a family experience.

Owner Susie Grant says: "The Christmas Adventure took on a life of its own, and we have invested year on year to keep our customers coming back for new and interesting experiences." The festive experience has grown organically, she says, and has been so successful that the park is also open for Halloween and Easter-themed family activities.

Juliana Delaney, chief executive of Continuum Attractions, a leading operator of UK cultural heritage experiences, says: "Over the festive period, the attractions industry has to work harder to grasp the public's attention as they're absorbed in Christmas shopping."

But in December alone, Ms Delaney says, Continuum's revenue can increase by up to 30 per cent and she thinks the retail industry can learn from visitor attractions at Christmas. "You can't replicate an experience on the internet and get it delivered to your door," she says.



Share this article on social media via raconteur.net



simworx

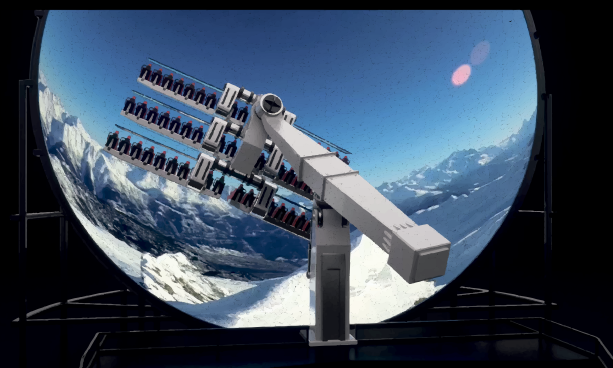
ROBOCOASTER

The power to move you...

WORLD LEADERS IN THE DESIGN, MANUFACTURE & DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA BASED ATTRACTIONS



**IMMERSIVE TUNNEL
360° FLYING THEATRE
4D EFFECTS CINEMA
ROBOCOASTER RCX
STARGAZER MOTION SIMULATOR
3D/4D FILM CONTENT
AGV DARK RIDES**



Worldwide Head Office:

Simworx Ltd
37 Second Avenue
The Pensnett Estate
Kingswinford
West Midlands
DY6 7UL
United Kingdom

W www.simworx.co.uk
E sales@simworx.co.uk
T +44 (0) 1384 295 733
F +44 (0) 1384 296 525



Experts in...

- Concept
- Attraction Design
- Theming
- Animation
- Set Work
- Manufacture
- World-wide Installation

meticulousltd
complete themed solutions



@meticulousltd

70E & 70F Brazil St.
Leicester LE2 7JB, UK
Tel: +44(0)116 2852777
info@meticulousltd.co.uk
www.meticulousltd.co.uk

Taking a trip to h

The exacting attention to detail in a themed hotel transports guests to a make-

◆ THEMED HOTELS

● CHRISTIAN SYLT

Most travellers expect a hotel to be a box-shaped building with a sign hanging outside – but the themed entertainment industry does things differently.

Guests of themed hotels find themselves sleeping in surroundings designed to look like Roman palaces, giant hunting lodges or foreign seaside towns. Pulling it off takes much more than just copying the source material.

Competition has never been higher in the hotel industry. First the internet then low-cost transport broadened travellers' horizons and increased competition on accommodation pricing. Next the economic downturn put the brakes on many extended vacations. It is now tougher than ever to lure travellers so resorts in particular are looking to stand out from the crowd.

Three hotels in Orlando's Universal Studios park complex are at the forefront of this trend as they aren't just themed, they are based on architecture styles from all over the world. It means that they have to stand up to comparison with the real thing as well as operating as a full-service hotel which is a challenge in itself. Universal does it so well that the hotel and its theme become one.

The grandest of the bunch is the Loews Portofino Bay Hotel. From the moment guests drive down the winding cypress tree-lined road to the hotel they are immersed in an experience that tries to convince them they are in Italy. Old Italian posters adorn the exposed brickwork in the lobby, Vivaldi is pumped in through hidden speakers and padded tapestries line the inside of the elevators. Corridors are even mocked up as city streets with faux star scenes on the tall ceilings and porcelain plaques, which would usually have a house name etched into them, showing the room numbers.

A series of Continental-style multi-coloured road signs direct guests to the heart of the hotel – a harbour lined with Vespas, olive trees and cafés. A string quartet is even on hand to serenade guests from a balcony in the evening. Souvenir shops housed in fishing huts and cream-coloured apartments with cracked plaster walls surround the water's edge. They are actually rooms, but it's hard to tell as the exteriors are decorated so ornately.

"The façades of the buildings are one of the most unique features of the property," says Russ Dagon, vice president of Universal Creative. "Modelled after the real city of Portofino, the relatively simple façades are hand-painted by skilled artists using a technique known as trompe-l'oeil to create the illusion of detail that is simply not there. Shadowed brickwork and detailed awnings give the buildings a look that from a distance truly deceives the eye."

Nevertheless, there's nothing make-believe about the Portofino's facilities which include a full-service spa, nine



restaurants and lounges, and three pools with one suitably styled as a ruined Roman aqueduct. The Italian theme pervades throughout the hotel's 795 rooms and suites as the beds have huge padded mattresses, lace sheets and sculptured wooden headboards.

“
The attention to detail
is infectious and you find
yourself reaching to tap
antiques to check if
they are genuine

Italian paintings hang on the walls and there are only a few give-aways. There's the plastic phone and bedside alarm, which look out of place in such regal surroundings. The lack of rubbish on the streets around the harbour is another tell-tale sign that this isn't the real Italy – it's better.

The attention to detail is infectious and you find yourself reaching to tap antiques to check if they are genuine. They are. Mr Dagon says: "The theming is everywhere, from custom light fixtures using Italian glass, to hand-painted tapestries and hand-painted tile door plaques. The sight lines were very important to the team that worked on the design of the property to ensure that our guests would be fully immersed in their Italian experience at every turn."

It even extends beyond what the guests can see. The back-office areas of most hotels are decorated very plainly, but not the Portofino. This is where the staff slip into character and the decor plays a part in that.

"Loews Portofino Bay Hotel is themed in our back-of-the-house areas as we want to infuse the Italian theme into all aspects of the guest and team-member experience," says managing director Diane Petit. "Our team-member cafeteria is called 'Ciao' and our training for new team members includes Italian language, history and customs. Our team members embrace the theme and to assist them we give them a passaporto, which contains popular Italian service phrases they can use during guest interactions."

The idea for the hotel, which opened in 1999, came from movie producer Steven Spielberg who was a consultant on Universal's Islands of Adventure park in Orlando. One of his favourite hotels is the historic Splendido in Italy's Portofino, but he went one step further than suggesting a recreation of the building – his proposal was for a mock-up of the entire village.

The task was given to architects, Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo (WATG), a renowned firm behind design at Atlantis hotel resorts, Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, The Palace of the Lost City in South Africa's Sun City, as well as numerous Mandarin Oriental, Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons and Fairmont properties worldwide.

hotel fantasyland

believe place that becomes almost real



Universal



Universal



Universal

1. Exterior of the Loews Portofino Bay Hotel in Orlando

2. Harbour at the hotel, designed to replicate Portofino in Italy

3. Balcony looking out on to the harbour

“In some cases we have been asked to develop the brief from scratch with little more than a room count. The briefs may or may not include design direction, in which case we have been asked to initiate the vision,” says Michael Chun, WATG’s senior vice president. The source material used by the company can be very diverse.

“With properties like Caesars Palace in Las Vegas there was already an existing Roman vocabulary to draw from,” says Thomas Fo, fellow WATG senior vice president. “When we designed the Venetian hotel in Las Vegas we spent a week in Venice with the owner and his staff, walking the streets and the piazzas, sketching, and taking lots of photographs and video. We talked to not only the locals of Venice, but the tourists. We were looking for what made Venice special and different from other cities, what people liked, and where they gathered, ate and relaxed. There was no substitute for what we learnt in that week.”

The design process follows key criteria and has clear stages. “The first thing we like to do is establish the main storyline,” says Mr Fo. “It is something that you can always go back to, to see if your design is visually making sense. We do a lot of research on whatever theme we are doing. We gather a lot of images from books, videos and articles,

and if possible visit buildings of the same theme. As we start to develop the design we do a number of design sketches to see how the theme and the massing of the building can integrate into the programme of the hotel.

“The theming of our hotel, from the harbour piazza to the food, music and ambience, helps us make lifelong memories

ity of the theme.”

Mr Chun explains that WATG also produces an art package for all themed hotels it works on. “This art package is the further conceptualisation of the themed details such as, with Atlantis,

the sea life, shells, fish, animals as well as other potentially fictional elements which transcend reality into fantasy. Not all Atlantis’ themed elements are ‘of this Earth’ which adds an additional element of surprise and delight to the guest.” This is the ultimate aim for all themed hotels.

“We believe travel is all about creating memories,” Ms Petit concludes. “The theming of our hotel, from the harbour piazza to the food, music and ambience, helps us make lifelong memories for our guests. We know that our guests arrive expecting a stay that is truly unique and memorable, and our team consistently delivers on that commitment. Our goal is for your vacation experience to begin the moment you walk into our hotel and get a taste of ‘la dolce vita’ – the sweet life.”

Share this article on social media via raconteur.net



NEW IN SPRING 2016
Our 14th European themed area!

Experience Time Together.
At Germany’s biggest theme park!



World first: "Alpenexpress VR Ride"



Wonderful overnight stays

Info-Line +49 7822 77-6688
www.europapark.com

MACK



HELIX - LISEBERG - SWEDEN



WALRUS SPLASH - CHIMELONG

Coaster, Water Ride or dark ride -
we built the ride of your dreams.

Visit us online at www.mack-rides.com
and www.facebook.com/mackrides

MACK
RIDES GmbH & Co KG

MACK
INTERNATIONAL

A promotional poster for Disneyland Paris. On the left, a large, close-up image of Woody from Toy Story, wearing his signature brown cowboy hat and yellow checkered shirt with a sheriff's star. He is smiling warmly. A young boy with dark hair is peeking out from behind Woody's arm, looking up at him with a joyful expression. In the background, the iconic Sleeping Beauty Castle is visible, its pink and white towers and blue-roofed spires slightly out of focus. The sky is a clear, light blue.

**THE PLACE WHERE
DREAMS COME TRUE.**

Disneyland
PARIS