Theme Park Business; Convergence of technology, psychology, design, tourism, and everything

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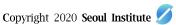*School of Digital Media, Kyungsung University, Korea[1]

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1. Concept and Category of Theme Park

The concepts and definitions of theme parks vary widely. Some scholars have defined the concept of theme parks as unique themes, while others classify them according to their spatial composition and marketing methods. To summarize the characteristics that scholars have mentioned in these various concepts and definitions, first, they have a unique theme that integrates and represents the entire theme park. Second, a theme park is an independent, complete fantasy system that is unusual and distinct from everyday things. Third, with the unity of the whole theme park, everything in the theme park should be organized and unified according to its theme. Fourth, as a comprehensive entertainment element, theme parks are not characterized by some fields, but rather a comprehensive gathering of various fields such as architecture, landscaping, design, music, performance, products, fashion, and food(Choi et al., 2020). Therefore, the theme park, which is spot-lighted by consumers due to the change to leisure society, is a park that can create a non-routine space based on specific themes and stories(Han & Zhang, 2021).

Theme parks can be categorized into various categories depending on the theme and content. It can be divided into Amusment Park such as Disneyland and Studio Theme Park such as Universal Studios. Both Amusement Park and Studio Theme Park have themes and similar in that they have software that gives stories to facilities within the park. However, there is a difference that studio theme parks actively use the theme of movies in the process of directing themes and stories, while Amuse Park emphasizes non-routineity. Recently, both Amusement Park and Studio

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Theme Park have been developing devices that enhance visitors' immersion by utilizing digital technology.

2. Analogue Beginning to Converging Digital Hi-tech

Walt Disney pictured world first business of combining cartoon characters and real world in 1955. Disney Land was result of this imagination and made huge success using differentiated themes from the existing amusement parks. But researchers consider Tivoli Park in Copenhagen as the pioneer theme park in the world. Pleasure Garden in 1760 was regarded as beginning of amusement park. But Tivoli was the first amusement park that combine urban park and amusement facilities in 1843. Now Tivoli is being called 'The beginning of modern theme park' and introduced as 'text book of european theme park.' European countries made use of tactics that maintain current amusement park after appearance of Tivoli because they did not realize the importance of theme park development until Disney Land starts.

American theme parks also started from amusement park or large gathering of people. The first city which tried to open theme park was New York and Coney Island at Brooklyn area was example of this case. Just as European case, US amusement parks also lack of adapting new concept of developing theme park. Thus US amusement parks were on the declining period and people are tired of old facilities and operations. US theme park business did not liven up till the Disney Land opened at Anaheim near Los Angeles in 1955. Now Disney Land at Anaheim is widely recognized as representative theme park of US and biggest one that has many branches in the world.

Lately world theme parks are adopting new strategy of renew current facilities and create added value. Enforcing interaction between user and theme park applying digital media technology is typical trend of this strategy. Even world-class theme parks are applying cutting-edge technology of interaction between various attractions and riding machines. Mobile media and VR became basic interaction tool nowadays.

3. Two directions of theme park

In early 17th century, various play tools and rides made debut in Europe. Collections of these facility naturally led to small size amusement parks. As years go by so-called Pleasure Garden that has certain scale

come on the scene in all over the Europe. Tivoli Park was typical sample of this Pleasure Garden.

But Pleasure Garden evolve into two directions after Tivoli appear. One is amusement park which focus on entertaining factor and the other is city park. The former steps forward to theme park and the latter remains as urban resting park.

The former changing process has interesting common factors. The first factor is characteristic of strolling players or wandering theater troupe. This is due to seasonal factors of bad weather. Northern Europe's poor climate forced wandering theater troupes to every area of European countries and this culture embedded into current shape of theme park. Settlement of strolling players produced convergence of entertainment and market. Many similar cases exist in European cities. The second factor is combining amusement facilities with parks. Vauxhall Garden at London, established in 1729, is typical case.

European theme park market which has long history maintains good business result upto recently. These spots normally located in a rural area and keep steady number of visitors. But expansion of global theme parks, opening of new brands, and M&A between majors bring about upheaval in theme park business.

4. Movement of Asian theme park

Asia, including China and India, is rapidly emerging as a new market for the theme park industry based on the huge population. In particular, Japan has successfully laid the foundation for domestic demand by attracting global theme parks such as Disney Japan and Universal Studio Japan, and has acquired Vekoma[1] to join the entertainment facility manufacturing sector. Japan's Sansei Technology purchased "S&S Worldwide", a Utah-based amusement facility company in the U.S., in 2012, and became the largest shareholder of Vecoma in 2018, spreading its ambition to become the world's best theme park ride industry. It has supplied rides to the world's leading theme parks, as well as Universal Studios and Disney, Sansei's biggest customers, and sales in 2019 amounted to about 280 billion won.

China also began to produce its own rides, which relied on imports due to growth in its theme park industry. Guangzhou's Golden Horse Technology Entertainment Corp. and Zhipao Group in Hebei, Habuk Province, are expanding by selling price-performance-oriented rides to

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[1] https://www.vekoma.com/

Chinese theme park giants Wanda group, Chemelong Group and Fanta Wild Group.

In Japan, theme parks were developed around facilities displayed after the end of the exposition, which had been prevalent since the Meiji era.

The full-fledged development of Japanese theme parks began in the 1980s with the birth of Tokyo Disneyland, Japan's leading theme park, and Nagasaki's 'Huis Ten Boch" in 1992. Japan's theme parks were as large in size as Western theme parks, and the overall concept was maintained and the technology and construction methods were up-to-date. It also has a unique atmosphere of Japan and has excellency in operation and service, attracting more visitors each year than Disneyland's original U.S. counterpart.

Now, Asian theme parks such as Japan and China are constantly evolving. In particular, rides are becoming a core facility of theme parks, and are becoming a high-tech competition venue that must satisfy the safety, psychology, and cost efficiency of users at the same time. It is safe to say that the history of Amusement Ride manufacturing is older than that of automobiles. Even before the introduction of cars equipped with internal combustion engines, hand-mechanical rides such as merry-go-rounds and bicycles began to be developed constantly. Therefore, rides in theme parks and amusement parks around the world continue to evolve as they converge with new technologies, psychology, and heterogeneous industries.

Rides are the core facilities of theme parks, and they must meet high-tech, safety, user psychology, and profitability at the same time, so they can never succeed with only higher and faster technologies. The reason why Intamin and Vecoma[1] are becoming the world's most expensive and safe amusement facilities is that they have met not only technology but also stability, user psychology and profitability without considering higher and faster technological aspects.

References

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1 https://www.intamin.com/

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