

A brief study on most popularized theme parks in India

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Abstract

During the past several decades, theme and amusement park industry has attained considerable attention among the research scholars of various disciplines. Indian amusement park industry is rapidly booming as several factors such as demographic, social, and economic factors are acting as a driving forces. This article briefly discusses the top five most prominent theme parks in India with their location, capacity, and major facilities. The theme and amusement parks we discussed are: The Essel World and Water Kingdom Park, The Nicco Park, The Ramoji Film City, The Wonderla, the Adlabs Imagicaa. At first, a brief discussion is provided for each park followed by detailed comparison in a Table. Finally, the future scope and the challenges facing by India's theme park industry is discussed.

Keywords: *Amusement Park, Indian Prominent Theme Parks, Challenges, Tourism.*

1. Introduction

A park is basically an enclosed piece of land intended for recreation and leisure purposes. The term “theme park” is thought to have originated from amusement parks. The primary difference between an amusement park and theme park is amusement parks consist of entertaining rides and attractions, while a theme park comprises entertaining elements of a distinguished 'theme'. Theme parks attained considerable

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attention among the research scholars inside and outside the tourism industry. The Indian theme park industry is still in its early stages and hence the theme park industry has enormous growth potential in India as the country is still lacking high-quality amusement parks. Demographics, as well as the ever-changing social and economic environment, are important drivers for the demand of amusement park industry.

One of the major factors that drives the theme parks growth in India is its demographic advantage, largest percentage of young population. Over 28.5% of the Indian population comes under the age group of 0-15 years and 63.40% lies in the 15-59. Lifestyle changing, growth in the income levels, increased spending on the recreational and tourism activities, and rising urbanization are the other factors that attract more people to visit amusement parks. To spend their leisure time, consumers are spending more in experiencing rather than purchasing physical goods. Therefore, the theme park organizers are concentrating more on giving high quality balanced entertainment for all family members.

According to the Indian Association of Amusement Parks and Industries (IAAPI) report (IAAPI Expo, 2015), the amusement park industry in India attracts more than 30 million visitors annually, growing at a compounded annual growth rate of more than 17.5%, generates annual gross revenue of approximately INR 17 billion, and provides direct employment to over 75,000 people. Furthermore, the India's amusement park and theme park sector significantly contributes to the domestic economy and to the tourism sector by producing new paths to the entertainment of international standards. IAAPI estimated that the theme park industry in India continues to expand at an astounding rate as major global leaders in entertainment parks such as Universal Studios, Merlin, and Disney are pouring over investments worth of billion dollars, considering huge growth potential for the amusement park industry in India. Stated by EY report (Anand, 2015), a sum of approximately USD 4.5 billion (INR 297 billion) is planning to be invested in the Indian amusement park sector in the coming future. As per the industry

experts, most of the proposed investments are expected to follow the public private partnership model, in which private players get the required support from the Indian government in terms of land acquisition, tax incentives, etc. Many believe that there is a chance for remarkable investments in design of themes that significantly increase customer experience and participation. Though, the theme park industry in India is comparatively new to its global peers such as USA and Europe, there are many significant parks in India which are designed to intensify the customer satisfaction and entertainment. Till date, there are 150 amusement parks in India, across tier I and tier II cities and smaller locations. However, in this article, we restricted to provide discussion on top five most prominent theme parks in India, starting from the Essel World that opened in Mumbai in 1980s to the most recent one Imagicaa constructed in 2013.

2. India's prominent theme parks

This section briefly discusses the top most five theme parks in India with their location, size, major attractions with a comparison Table (Table 1) at the end. At the end of the section, the major challenges facing by Indian theme park industry are provided.

2.1 Essel World and Water Kingdom

Essel World (located in Gorai Island of Mumbai city) is one of India's largest and oldest (built in 1986) amusement parks and was designed according to international standards and schemes. Along with the Water Kingdom theme park (established in 1998), Essel World covers the span of 64 acres of land. The Water Kingdom Park is said to be Asia's largest water theme park with Aquadrome and gigantic wave pool are the main attractions. Other major attractions of Essel World include Top Spin, Aqua Drive, Tunnel Twister, Copper Chopper, etc. It is estimated that Essel World draws over 1.8 million visitors annually (Bhattacharya, 2021). It also contains a bird park, where tourists can observe and interact with over 400 exotic birds from 50

different species. Apart from entertainment, people can also enjoy shopping (souvenirs, clothes, sports gear) from different shops at affordable prices. Figure 1 shows a roller coaster ride in the Essel World Park and a kid's water slide in Water Kingdom Park (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Roller coaster slide in Essel World (left) and a kids' water slide in Water Kingdom (right)
(Source: <https://www.waterkingdom.in>)

2.2 Nicco Park

Opened in 1991, Nicco Park is in Bidhannagar city of West Bengal state. The main purpose for establishing this park was to create family-friendly recreation and educational entertainment for the Bandhan employees of West Bengal state. At present, the park spans over 40 acres of land, contains over 35 different rides and attracts over 1.3 million customers yearly (Bhattacharya, 2021). The park also includes a water body park named as Wet-o-Wild and some rain dance performances. The major attractions include the Toy train, Striking Cars, Paddle Boat, Flying Saucer, Pirate Ship, Tilt a Whirl, etc. People can also enjoy one of the best bowling alleys of India named as Nicco Super Bowl. It also has some natural attractions like a rose garden, and a 40 ft high waterfall as it is one of the oldest parks in India. An educational value is attached to Nicco Park by displaying a fighter aircraft (MIG-21) gifted from Indian air force for attracting students. Nicco Park also has a virtual reality theater and people can enjoy the panoramic view from the top of

an Eiffel tower that exactly mimics the Paris' Eiffel tower. Figure 2 shows the major attractions of the Nicco Park.



Figure 2. Major attractions of the Nicco Park (from left to right): Roller coaster ride, Wet-O-Wild (Water Park), Nicco Super Bowl, MIG 21 fighter aircraft, Virtual Reality theatre, and Eiffel tower. (Source: <https://www.niccoparks.com/>)

2.3 Ramoji Film City

Established in 1996, the Ramoji Film City (RFC) is located in Hyderabad (Telangana state). RFC is an ideal amusement park for kids and parents to spend their leisure time. RFC is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the World's Largest Film Studio Complex spread over 1,666 acres (Reith-Banks, 2019) with hotels for accommodate guests. Apart from its vast film studio complex, RFC is also home to one of India's largest theme parks that attracts 1.5 million tourists. The main attractions are thematic gardens, cinematic sets, birds park, replicas of historical monuments, caves, entertainment shows and carnivals, and beautiful fountains. Some of the attractions of RFC are shown in Figure 1. The Bird's Park is fast emerging as a popular bird's spot with wide varieties of unique species of birds from all over the world.



Figure 3. Major attractions of the RFC (from left to right): tourist bus facility, Baahubali movie set, Birds Park, a kids' ride, Filmi Dunia set, Fundustan, Kripalu Caves, entertainment show, a hotel, a shopping mall, a restaurant, and evening Carnival (Source: <https://www.ramojifilmcity.com/>)

Guests visiting RFC do love to walk along with the water birds as they get greeted with non-stop quacks, chirps, and hoots that can be heard right at the enclosure of the water birds. The cinema lovers can visit Baahubali movie set, which looks as if you are zooming into the fictional castle in your video game. The golden tinge of the monuments is accentuated by the bright sun and the massive corridors mesmerize the tourists with their mammoth width and aristocratic design. Tourists can also enjoy activities including Bungee Jumping, Zorbing, All-Terrain Vehicles, Paintball, and shopping activities.

2.4 Wonderla

Wonderla is the largest chain of theme and amusement parks in India. At present, the Wonderla company manages and operates three amusement parks in different cities [in Kochi (Established in the year 2000), in Bengaluru (2006), and in

Hyderabad (2016)]. The Wonderla in Kochi spreads over 30 acres with more than 60 amusement rides.



Figure 4. Pictures of Woderla at different locations (from left to right) at Kochi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and a Wonderla resort in Bengaluru (Source: <https://www.wonderla.com/>)

The Wonderla in Bangalore is spread over 82 acres of landscaped space. The major attractions of this park are 61 land and water rides, a musical fountain, laser shows, and a virtual reality show. Wonderla Hyderabad has 28 land-based and 18 water-based rides on 50 acres of landscape. The Wonderla received the most innovative rides and attractions award among all amusement park industries across India from the Indian Association of Amusement Parks & Industries. Figure 4 shows views of Woderla at different locations and a Wonderla resort in Bengaluru.

2.5 Adlabs Imagicaa



Figure 5. A bird eye view of Adlabs Imagicaa amusement park (Source: <https://www.imagicaa.com/>)

Located in Khopoli (near to Mumbai-Pune express way), Maharashtra state, Imagicaa amusement park spans over 130

acres. The park has been established with international standards and consists of a theme, water, and snow parks. It is estimated that the park can host up to a capacity of 15,000 visitors daily (Bhattacharya, 2021). Even though this park is opened recently (in 2013), it has attracted tourists (an estimated sum of 5.2 million visitors till now) very well. The major attractions include dry rides (Deep Space Roller Coaster, Cream Machine, etc), wet rides (Loopy Woopy, Pirate Bay), and a snow theme park (real snowfall, snow castles, snow mountain climbing, etc.). Figure 5 shows a bird eye view of Imagicaa amusement park. This amusement park features many India's first, largest, and biggest attractions such as largest, fastest, and scariest roller coaster named as Nitro, India's only high –speed dark indoor roller coaster (Deep Space), India's longest flume ride known as Rajasaurus River Adventure, India's largest Character Parade known as Grand Imagicaa Parade, etc.

2.6 Challenges

It is estimated that strong driving factors such as rising income levels, rapid urbanization, and demographic advantage (higher percentage of working age group) will assist the Indian theme park sector to register a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 19 percent over the next five years. However, the major hurdles for the growth rate are lack of: government support (less to no tax incentives to the organizers, highest tax rates on ticket sales), basic infrastructural facilities such as power and water supply, transportation facilities, safety awareness, available land at affordable rates, etc.

3. Conclusions

In this article, we briefly discussed top five most prominent theme parks in India with their location, size, and attractions. The theme and amusement parks we discussed are: The Essel World and Water Kingdom Park located in Mumbai city, The Nicco Park located in Kolkata, The Ramoji Film City located in Hyderabad, The Wonderla located in three different cities; Kochi,

Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and the Adlabs Imagicaa located near to Pune.

Table 1: Comparison of Most Prominent Theme Parks in India

Theme Park (Area, acres)	Location (State)	Established year	Major Attractions	Visitors Number (Yearly, Est.)
Essel World (64)	Mumbai (Maharashtra)	1986	71 Rides Wave-Pool Rain Dance	1.8 million
Nicco Park (40)	Bidhannagar (West Bengal)	1991	35 Rides Rose Garden 40ft Water Fall	1.3 million
Wonder La (30, 82, 50)	Kochi (Kerala)	2000	60 Rides	2.5 million
	Bangalore (Karnataka)	2006	61 Rides Musical Fountain	
	Hyderabad (Telangana)	2016	46 Rides	
Ramoji Film City (1666)	Hyderabad	1996	Film Studio Complex Thematic Gardens Beautiful Fountains	1.5 million
Adlabs Imagica (130)	Khopoli (Maharashtra)	2013	46 Rides Snow Theme Park	1.7 million

We also discussed the challenges faced by amusement park industry. Finally, we provided a table (Table 1) for comparing the top five most theme parks in India.

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