

**KEY
TAKEAWAYS**

LeisurUp: How to win the race for customers

Leisure comes in all shapes and sizes and can help define a destination, but developers and landlords need to choose the right formats and resist seeing leisure as a space-filling solution.



Partnerships are the way forward

Retailers and leisure operators are combining to launch ambitious projects

The pandemic has influenced visitors

People want to socialise but value safety protocols in the wake of the pandemic

Digital challenges out-of-home

Leisure operators need to differentiate to rival at-home leisure options

One size does not fit all

Leisure comes in all sorts of formats, destinations need to choose carefully

Combining activity, retail and leisure

Sporting activities are opening-up opportunities for retail

“We had a record number of leisure operators and concepts in Cannes this year for the first physical LeisurUp and the message was loud and clear — partnerships and curation can deliver fantastic results for destinations. However, the leisure concept has to be right for the destination, the location and the visitors.”

Francesco Pupillo,

LeisurUp, The Hapetite and MAPIC Italy director

Partnerships are the way forward

Retailers and leisure operators are combining to launch ambitious projects



MALL OPERATORS are turning to the power of storytelling to animate their spaces, and in a groundbreaking deal French landlord Apsys has formed a partnership with Warner Bros to bring a Batman-themed attraction to one of its Paris malls. The scheme was unveiled at the MAPIC conference session Activating Brands and Spaces: the Power of Storytelling.

Moderator Laurent Taieb, president at Licensing International, told delegates: "Storytelling embraces experience through characters - it's all about emotion." And he added: "The emotion is the key part because it creates a link to that place that will make you want to come back again." Apsys will bring Batman Gotham City Adventures to a 2,000 sq m space in Paris in 2022. The format was the brainchild of escape room specialist Dama Dreams. Co-Founder David Harari told the conference: "We knew they wanted to do live entertainment and we thought Batman was perfect for the format. It's an 80-year-old IP."

And on the other side of the deal, Harari explained: "We knew the format needed a big space, and Apsys was looking for something that could be the future of their malls." The attraction will be split into four zones, sitting some-

where between escape games and immersive theatre. In addition, there will be a shop and a bar/restaurant.

"Even the store will be immersive, but it will be open to the mall," Harari said. "And the bar will allow you to enjoy the atmosphere of Gotham City even if you don't want to play the games."

Large-scale attractions require major investment from both the mall owner and from the operator, and Bart Dohmen, CEO at Unlimited Snow, said: "The issue is how do you earn your money back? That can be directly or it can be in the broader picture, but there's always a solution. Our approach is that we're there to attract footfall to the mall." Considering the future of malls, Eurofund Group president Ian Sandford added of the development of retail destinations into locations with a strong leisure and F&B offer: "If a visitor is only coming for a specific retailer, then the reasons for them to come could be challenged by online retail. However, if they are coming for the overall experience, and because they want to spend time with their friends and family, then you have something which the internet can't challenge. So to me, that's the Holy Grail for shopping centres right now." ■

The pandemic has influenced visitors

People want to socialise but they value safety protocols



Fri Forjindam: “There was a clear desperation for connection”



Reinhart Viane: “The model today is to believe and then test”

WHILE leisure activities remain as popular as ever – and perhaps even more popular after periods of enforced lockdown – inevitably the pandemic has reset visitor priorities. And while the industry inevitably remains concerned about ongoing and future restrictions on capacities and rules, in fact demonstrating strong health protocols may well prove to be a selling point for destinations.

Consumers are more attracted to destinations that provide clear safety protocols as the desire to go back to normal life has been tempered with caution over personal safety in the aftermath of the pandemic, delegates were told.

Speaking at the LeisurUp session *Restarting Your Business*, Fri Forjindam, chief development officer at theme park and immersive-experience design company Mycotoo, said: “As things started opening up, anything that advocated safety helped boost sales.”

She also noted that Gen Z is the largest growing group in terms of leisure spend, with millennials not that far behind, as she concluded: “The more we know about con-

sumer behaviour, the more we can target demographics.” Forjindam said of post-lockdown behaviour: “There was a clear desperation for connection and initially you could see that with anything that was COVID-safe, like the popularity of drive-in events, for example.”

Reinhart Viane, business development director, KCC, added that many more leisure options had come online because operators had found lower-risk and cheaper ways of bringing concepts to market. “The model today is to believe [in the concept] and then test, which is less risky, for example by starting with small pop-ups and looking for differentiation.”

Forjindam agreed and said that the model was to “trust and verify by firstly trusting that a leisure concept would work and then achieving verification through producing profits”.

Viane added that technology and digital would be increasingly integrated into the storytelling around leisure and that this also meant that many leisure schemes would need less physical investment, as the technology could change the space. ■

Digital challenges out-of-home

Leisure operators need to rival at-home leisure options



Nicolas de Villiers: “There are no boundaries between work, education and home



Pascal Ferracci: “Leisure remains a robust sector”

While digital tends to be seen as a rival to store-based retail, the leisure sector could also be vulnerable to the increasing availability and quality of leisure in the home. During the pandemic many households have upgraded their streaming services, for example, while also investing in comfort for their home.

At the LeisurUp session Leisure & Retail: A New Chapter, on Tuesday, November 30, Nicolas de Villiers, president, Puy du Fou, told MAPIC delegates that he viewed digital as a bigger threat to retail than leisure, because replicating physical experiences is not possible, even though people do have ever-increasing at-home entertainment options.

“As soon as we create strong physical, emotional experiences that you cannot get at home, then we can attract people,” he said. “[There are] no boundaries between work, education and home... so this is a good opportunity to answer something new in people’s lives. We have to face this new world.”

He said his dream was to be able to reach children in Brazil and China and attract them to the parks in Europe, showing that digital could be used to connect with completely new markets.

At the same session, Pascal Ferracci, CEO of Parque Reundos, said: “Digital is transforming the way we interact

with our guests. We have quite an extensive digital road map. We use local brands, based in our communities. So we are not as dependent on tourism as many competitors,” he said of a business that operates in 12 different countries and also across a range of different activities.

“We are enhancing our value proposition through investment, animation and entertainment,” Ferracci added. “We will invest €800m over the next five years by expanding and acquiring sites. Turnover now is close to €700m.”

Ferracci stressed that leisure remains a robust sector: “Currently everything out-of-home is almost back to normal. Our industry is benefitting from an increasing demand and a local demand. A large proportion of the population is prioritising time with their friends and family. A great way to capture this is through local brands and regional parks, close to our customers.”

Puy Du Fou is “an epic journey through time, where many visitors spend two or three days. The company has been expanding its model and has sites in France and Spain,” DeVilliers said, adding: “Our purpose is to get four parks by 2030 and a new urban format, to show inside the city,” he said. “I believe that leisure enhances retail because we talk with emotion to the heart of the people. It is more important than ever.” ■

One size does not fit all

Leisure comes in many varieties, destinations need to choose carefully



PlayPower's three-storey installation at the Kennedy Space Center

LEISURUP showcased a range of formats to suit all spaces and budgets in its Leisure Talks programme, demonstrating that concepts can be anything from a major entertainment destination to a temporary pop-up. Spree Interactive offers high-throughput VR games installations that can revitalise a mall space, according to CEO Jonathan Novak. In the five years since it launched, Spree has carried out 40 installations and its business is now growing at 250% annually. Novak said the typical site attracts 3,500 players per week, who go on to spend 90 minutes in the mall when not playing.

By contrast Xtrem Adventures offers physical play. CEO Raphael Jamgotchian focused on two formats – the Net Course and the Zipcoaster. The Net Course is a series of climbing nets that can be suspended in void spaces, above stairwells or over escalators, to form a 3-D maze. Jamgotchian said the company has recently completed a five-storey installation in a Singapore mall that soars 40m from the floor to the mall's roof level. And the Zipcoaster is an indoor zipline ride that soars through the mall's roofspace, either using gravity or small electric motors to drive the rider forward.

For a more sedate experience, Concept 1900 provides traditional carousels, hand built in France, that can operate in enclosed or outdoor mall spaces. Commercial director Inna

Legrain said more than 600 carousels had been installed worldwide since the company was founded 40 years ago. Meanwhile, according to US-based play giant PlayPower both indoor and outdoor play facilities have been proven to increase dwell times and encourage repeat visits at shopping centres.

PlayPower is the world's biggest supplier of playgrounds, delivering 30,000 installations per year. And the company is looking to step up its presence in the European market, according to business development manager Lars Nielsen. "Our indoor play business had been very US-focused but Europe's now a priority, with a focus on the shopping centre market," he said.

Nielsen said the playground market is evolving and becoming more sophisticated. "Themed playgrounds that bring storytelling to the mix is the new trend," he said. "This can be character-driven to create a point of difference."

Equally, education through play is growing in importance according to Nielsen. For instance, PlayPower has just completed a three-storey installation for NASA at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida that takes children on a journey through the solar system. And Nielsen predicted that shopping centre managers might adopt this approach so that their playgrounds become part of their corporate social responsibility agenda. ■

Combining activity, retail and leisure

Sporting activities are opening-up opportunities for retail



Baptiste Caulonque



Zlatimara Bancheva



Nicole Srock-Stanley



Bart Dohmen

BRINGING sports attractions to retail environments enables destinations to appeal to a wider variety of customers, from ardent and regular sports fans to sports novices. In turn, this helps to increase the return on investment and encourages repeat visits as all guests feel comfortable with the activities.

Much of this has been made possible by technology, which has not only allowed some sports to be better replicated within malls and leisure destinations, but has also flexed the amount of space required to establish a sports offer.

So said Endless Surf by WhiteWater chief commercial officer Baptiste Caulonque and Walltopia commercial director Zlatimara Bancheva as they discussed the benefits of incorporating sports attractions within retail spaces.

Bancheva said that climbing – an activity introduced at the Tokyo Olympics this year – “makes for a very sustainable business model” as it appeals to a wide range of people, who all come together as one community.

He identified several types of business opportunities that work well for climbing walls in retail spaces. One is the traditional entertainment offering. This is a regular, active entertainment centre that caters to small children and their families and which offers a high-volume, single visit offering. There is also the opportunity for an athletic facility with a climbing wall, with more repeat visitors and a membership system.

Caulonque discussed how wave technology has developed to mimic the action of the ocean, which has boosted the popularity of wave simulators because surfers have become repeat customers. Technology advances have also allowed for varying the size of waves, so that installations can be adjusted to appeal to children, beginners and pro-surfers alike.

In a separate session, Nicole Srock-Stanley, CEO and founder of Dan Pearlman, plus Bart Dohmen, CEO of Unlimited Snow, talked about creating “happy places”.

Srock-Stanley said that shopping is a leisure activity and people invest time into shopping, rather than just money when they buy online. As a result, retail should already be considered part of the leisure industry.

Dohmen cited the Dubai fountains as an example. Although they cost around \$200m and there is no charge to view them, the rent on the spaces around the fountain is higher and the fountains drive footfall each evening. ■