

THE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AS A CARRIER OF ENTERTAINMENT AND EDUCATION AT THEME PARKS

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Abstract: The history of children's books begins many years before. The creation of child heroes and characters gave birth to some legends over the years who still maintain their name at high levels of readers. The reputation of some characters didn't stay only in the books, but expanded and in other domains of projection, like the movie, theater and television. The phenomenon of some characters came with the creation of theme parks. The most popular heroes have the honor to "live" in their own theme parks. The purpose of this project is to study theme parks that are dedicated to children's book heroes. Analyzing the parks of Pinocchio, Asterix, Harry Potter and Popeye as case studies, it aims to highlight and demonstrate the educational and cultural importance of comics to all ages.

Keywords: theme parks, comics, education, culture, literature, Pinocchio, Asterix, Harry Potter, Popeye.

Introduction

There are many types of theme parks, each with its own fans. Some of them are inspired from favorite children's book heroes and they have a close relation with the literature. In this way literature is connected to the place and attracts visitors while it has the ability to evolve into the virtual world with the help of the internet and applications. (Hoppen, Brown and Fyall, 2014) Also the connection of the places with the literature and the characters of the books seem to be very important for the promotion of those destinations.

Usually the parks are constructed in the country that the history of the characters takes place or in the country of origin of their author. Except from the large parks like Disneyland, the children's literature parks are exclusively about the heroes and the scenes from their own history, throughout the width and length of the park exclusively. Most of them are located on the outskirts of cities and the reason why that is the areas that are used for these parks are very large. Theme parks belong to the leisure tourism industry. They can attract people from all ages as there are parks for the whole family with corresponding needs. The needs of today's people tend to increase as the quality of life and income improves and there is more free time compared to the years before. Theme parks of children's book heroes have educational and cultural value because they bring visitors in contact with educational and learning activities such as puppetry, painting of fairytale characters, theatrical games, and libraries with works by the author, etc. Also the visitors of all ages coming contact with new lands, customs, cultures while at the same time they are being entertained. (Matziris, 2010)

A different name for theme parks that is used these days is the word "Luna Park" that is mostly used in very large areas that they have as their goal and purpose to entertain their visitors, through a lot of activities, meeting the needs of the most demanding visitors who are looking for a dose of adrenaline. Many activities of the theme park are similar with those of a playground that is known to appeal to children of a young age. The difference is that the theme parks can also entertain older people. In short, we would say that the theme park is an entertainment center aimed at children and adults with a variety of educational-experiential activities of an entertaining nature.

The chronicle says that these kinds of parks are first seen in the 19th century as leisure gardens and then evolved in Luna parks. With the opening of Disneyland in 1950 the theme parks have taken on another dimension in the world of economy. Today the most known and big theme parks attract over 320 million tourists every year. The most known theme park managers are gathered in just a few companies, such as Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Merlin Entertainment Group and Universal Parks and Resorts. The theme Parks with the most visitors are located

in the U.S.A, Asia and then Europe in the 1960s. The activities are inspired by heroes of well-known comics in order to give the young visitors the feeling that the things that they read in the books are real and to be transferred to the magical world of fairytales, commonly to unite the imaginary with the real world.

1. Characteristics of theme parks

The simplest discrimination between theme parks is theme parks of destination and regional theme parks. The theme parks of destination include infrastructures like hotels, sights, food and activities. The theme, which is based on and is influenced by books, television, cartoons and movies, is transmitted through visuals, costumes, performances, and food and merchandise services. The main purpose is to wander the visitors to a fantastic atmosphere of another place and time. Most are tourists, (about 90%). This means that they travel a long distance to visit this place. Theme parks belong to the largest industries of attracting visitors. (Richard, 2016)

2. Literature figures and them parks

The greatest change in the past few years in literature tourism is its transformation from specialized to mass tourism as it has expanded worldwide. Where the evolution of mass tourism is seen is with the literary figure of Harry Potter. One in three Britons have visited the house of Harry Potter giving huge revenue to the country estimated at over 6 billion. At a more local level there is also the case with Alnwick Castle in the north of England which was given as Hogwarts, offering to the local community from 2011 to 2013, 9 million. Even the Elephant House in Edinburgh where J.K.Rowling wrote the first chapters of Harry Potter editions could be one of the few tourism opportunities to tap into the hero of a children's book. Most recently the development of The Wizard World of Harry Potter at the Universal's Islands of Adventure theme park in Orlando which is clearly made for mass tourism. (Daily Mail, 2013)

Gunelius (2008) raises the question of whether literature is commercialized through the provision of passive experiences. There is little doubt that J.K Rowling's iconic character has changed the landscape, marketing, dynamics and brand of literary tourism for many regions around the world. Harry Potter is not the only one how has influenced theme parks, but as evidenced by the Asterix park next to Paris and Dickens World in England, there are a lot more (Hoppen, Brown and Fyall, 2014). It is also important to mention that the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games was full of literary heritage and especially with heroes from children's literature such as Mary Poppins and Peter Pan. (Infimerida, 28/7/12)

Literary destinations are characterized by literary depictions, in connection with literary figures according to Squire (1996). Harry Potter is once again a major figure in the design and development of Universal Studio's Islands of Adventure theme park along with other literary figures such as Spiderman, Captain America, Sebach and others. Squire imagined multi-million theme parks that are developed around the world inspired by favorite children's stories, myths, cartoons, comic books as a form of literary tourism.

According to Watt son (2006) the experiences of literary tourists can be deeper, when the place of composition and the functional environment coincide. It refers to the case of cartoon creator Elia Disney, an American cartoon creator and an Orlando parks businessman. His interest turned the state of America into one of the largest theme park tourist destinations.

In a similar way, the prospect of generating destination revenue is better known by Disney with the acquisition of Marvel in 2009. Although a long-standing literary brand, the re-engagement of an entire generation in Marvel's favorite characters is proof of the dynamic marketing and branding of mass literary tourism.

3. Name of the destination

As autonomous destinations they may not have enough sights to attract visitors, so they use literary figures as marketing to attract families. Many destinations and theme parks over the years have developed a destination brand based on literary figures such as Dickens's London. The challenge for each destination is to create the right brand approach, exciting a large segment of the market that maybe attracted by different literary personalities. In many destinations the literary connections are visible throughout the destination, with different branding strategies, in order to attract different market segments, promoting the literary child figure. An example of such a

strategy can be considered the figure of James Bond who represents the adventure, and the timeless attractiveness of the destination. Harry Potter certainly has a great influence on the youngest audience, especially the millennials (Gunelius, 2008)

Literary tourism and parks with children's book heroes have evolved to a great extent commercially and this is obvious from the numbers mentioned above. The interaction of the real with the imaginary is a serious reason to visit the theme parks with comics.

3.1. Pinocchio Italy

According to the official website, the Pinocchio theme park is located in Italy and more specifically in a village in Tuscany. It was funded in 1956 in the village of Golodi, where the creator of the idea and character Pinocchio came from. It is a place that every lover of this fantasy character should visit at least once in his life. In a lush landscape with dense vegetation are located all the amazing exhibits related to the child hero of Pinocchio's book. The park was created at the suggestion of the mayor Rolando Angilotti of the city of Pescia in Tuscany in 1951 and the ticket price is estimated at 11 euro's for adults and 9 for children.

On the green path in the park the visitor sees many sculptures and buildings that incite his to relive the adventures of Pinocchio. The 21 sculptures that decorate the park are creations of important artists of the 20th century such as Pietro Consagra. There is a sculpture called "The Fairy" that indicates the highest point of the park. In the dreamy tract the visitor can enjoy the spectacular atmosphere among the heroes who dominate the park. It does not distinguish or stand out for the technology that surrounds it that's why it is considered traditional. What enchants the visitor is the simplicity and serenity, through fountains, statues and works of artists. Its most remarkable points are the monster (shark) that swallowed Pinocchio and Tsepeto. (Papathanassiou, 2011)

•Exhibits

Inside the park visitors have the opportunity to enjoy all the characters that take part in the script of the fairytale. They can stand in the square of the mosaics which is surrounded by walls with images from the adventures of Pinocchio and his company. Also in this area there is relief in honor of Carlo Goldoni, author of Pinocchio. Another special point in the park is the workshop of words and forms. A place specially designed for children and adults where they can be informed about the life and works of the author of Pinocchio. In this area also, performances are held and educational workshops are organized for visitors such as puppet shows, conferences, etc. (Pinocchio.it, 2021)

•Activities

Narrative stories by the famous Jiminy that reveals the secrets of the park, various games such as painting and crafts. Walks in the paths of 1950, face painting based on the favorite characters of the fairytale, performances that narrate all the adventures of Pinocchio, traditional games of Italian culture adapted to the data of Pinocchio. Adventure park with activities that raise the adrenaline "pirate ship" and the "bridge of Tibet" (Pinocchio.it, 2021) Another unique activity, is the ride on the wooden gondolas on the lake, also activities such as labyrinths, funicular, a huge chessboard, and a visit to the greenhouse of the colorful butterflies of the historic Garzoni Garden, carry mentally young and old to exotic destinations. The historic Garzoni Garden attracts even princess due to its beauty as it is lush and full of fairytale-like places. Finally, the restaurant of the park offers local Italian dishes and many other dishes to young and old who will be hungry during the journey. (Papathanassiou, 2021)

3.2. Popeye's village

In 1979 a wooden village was built in the northern part of Malta. This village was created for the shooting of a musical starring Popeye. For a very long time several crews worked together to get an amazing result. The film was shown but the locals made sure that the place would be never forgotten and took the advantage to create a magical place for young and old. The theme park was named "The village of Popeye" and is a complete integrated theme park with a variety of activities which attracts tourists from all over the world. The ticket costs 10.50 euro's and is open all year round. (Papathanassiou, 2011)

• Activities

Those who visit the park have the opportunity to meet up close and get to know the heroes of the children's world, to tour in the scenes where the film was shot and to go boating in the bay where you find the attraction. Also they have the opportunity to watch documentaries from the shooting of the film and to visit the museum of Popeye's comics. The park allows visitors to dive and swim in the waters of the bay in front of the park if the weather allows it. The wooden houses are so unique that the photos should definitely be in the souvenirs. The park also offers weddings, tasting festivals and school trips. (Popeymalta.com)

3.3. The park of Asterix

The park is located 35 km from Paris, in the province of Plailly. It is a theme park, based on the children's hero Asterix and the well-known comic book series Asterix le Gaulois. In 1989, shortly before the 30th anniversary of the release of the first issue of the series, the British company Barclays, in collaboration with other companies and organizations, financed the construction of this theme park. It cost about 850 million francs, while offering jobs to about 1000 to 1500 people. The choice of location is not random, as access from the capital is easily possible, while a traffic complex has been designed for the needs of the park. More specifically, someone can visit it via the A1 motorway or via a private bus route between the park and Paris Metro Line 7. In the imaginary universe created by Rene Goscinny and Albert Uderzo, a small Gaul village resists the Roman Empire. In fact, Asterix Theme Park continues to hold a steady annual number of visitors to the Disney Empire. The approximately 2 million people who visit the site each year may seem like "crumbs" in front of more than 15 million at Disneyland, but the important thing is that even today, in its 31 years of operation, Asterix Park continues to survive and to grow despite the adverse conditions. And while for Asterix and his company the gun, to face the Romans, is the magic potion of Panoramix, for the people in charge of the park the "magic potion" is the authenticity and the respect towards the buying public. (Park Asterix, 2021)

• Activities

It may not be comparable in size to Disneyland blockbuster, but Asterix Park is one of the best attractions in the area. Inspired with 100% detail in the comic book universe, but also respecting the history of ancient times, he has managed to create an environment in which young children can have fun, but also learn at the same time. The signs and maps of the park that are written in Galatians, as well as the employees, always dressed in costumes of the time, serve traditional delicacies and make the visitor feel that he is in 50 BC. The park, in addition to successfully preserving the local cultural heritage, is also a great economic breath both in the province of Plailly and in the whole region of Hauts-de-France. (Asterix, 2021)

3.4. Harry Potter world in England

This theme park has been created from the beginning and entirely for the famous British hero in contrast to the theme parks of Universal Studios, which include the Harry Potter franchise. Although the original idea for the Park first appeared with release of the first film, its realization took place just 11 years later, in 2012. In fact, what Warner Bros wanted to present to the public was a large space that would be shaped in the aesthetics of the film, decorated mainly with various authentic objects that were used during the shooting. So unlike the previous theme parks, this one has the form of a museum. It was built on a historic site in Leaves den, on a site that was used as an air base during World War II. In addition, this space has been used in the recent past for the needs of shooting great movies, such as Golden Eye, The Phantom Menace, and obviously for the Harry Potter movies.

• Exhibits

The 33 pounds a day that 6000 visitors have to pay to visit the museum is a great opportunity for any tourist visiting London, considering the exhibits inside the museum. It consists of 4 rooms that have been decorated and designed with the utmost detail to represent some of the most iconic set in the Harry Potter Universe. These are: the Diagonal Alley, the forbidden forest, while in 2015 the people in charge expanded the rooms with the creation of the Platform nine and three quarters.

In this area someone can admire the costumes and objects, the formal costumes of the protagonists and the various objects they used in the shooting of the films, while next door there are dolls which represent in detail the various CGI monsters and creatures that most of the visitors enjoyed in cinemas such as Basilisk and Goblin. Special mention is made for the special effects, with the existence of spaces dedicated to various effects created without CGI technology. The whole park is accompanied by exclusive background music, which is the work of the composer of the soundtracks of the films. This is a three-hour experience which, apart from being 100% value for money, will leave even the most diehard fan of the series completely happy. (Wbstudiotour.co.uk)

3.5. The mystical worlds of Eugene Trivizas

The theme park “The Secret Worlds” inspired by the Greek author Eugene Trivizas operated from November 3, 2017 until February 3, 2018 and had a large attendance and interest from the little friends of the books. The setting was set at the Helexpo Marousi exhibition center in Athens and left its own mark on theme park enthusiasts. The size of the park and the activities that someone could do could not be compared to the monstrous foreign parks we are used to but for our data it was a very good effort. The children were able to meet the heroes of the books and to perform with them various activities such as songs, dancing and a lot of fun. The contribution of the creative team Dream Workers also played an important role in the realization of the project, who did their best for a good result. Speaking of his creations, but also for the very process of creation, Mr. Trivizas, during the presentation of the theme park said: “Children’s readings touch us deeper, affect us more actively and sometimes accompany us for a life time...An idea created in the loneliness of an office, it is impressive to see it in front of you in three dimensions” he added. (Perdikaris, 2017)

Conclusions

Comics are an art that has a large fanatical audience around the world and especially for the children. Many companies taking advantage of this audience have created theme parks with various comic book characters. With the existence of Disneyland, the bar remains high, resulting in competition and continuous improvement in theme parks, while high competition works in favor of the spectator. Parks with children’s book heroes are for every child a magical journey into events that he has created in his imagination by reading the respective fairytale or watching the respective movie on the TV of his home. The world of child heroes will never stop evolving and producing work for the little lovers of the characters but also the adults who every time they see a child hero, the memory brings him memories of their childhood. An important factor of good and efficient operation is the areas where these parks are built which must have the specifications and infrastructure to host them.

There is a lack of large-scale theme parks observed in the area of southeast Europe, the near parts of Asia, as well as the northeast parts of Africa. The market gap could be filled with the establishment of a large-scale theme park in the Hellenic area, specifically in Thessaly or Boeotia. From the greater part of Thessaly Mount Olympus, enriched with the mythology of the Twelve Olympians, is visible. In close proximity, in the south of Thessaly, is the land of the infamous Achilles and the Myrmidon clan. Towards the east lies Pelion the land of the wise half-horse half-human centaurs; in close proximity in the south is the land of the ancient Iolkos from where Jason’s Epic Argonautic Quest for the Golden Fleece began.

Cinematography has already successfully depicted almost to its entirety the historical and mythological tales across the globe adding to the ever-increasing volume of literature. Considering the climate in the area, it tends to be benign. Furthermore, the public transport infrastructure in the area is one of the more advanced in the country. In addition, Greece is already a well-established tourism destination being reckoned as a strong brand name in the industry with over 30 million visitors per annum. Through the conduction of thorough scientific and economic research applicable and economically viable suggestions can be generated which will bring about economic growth and will constitute the region a key player in the socioeconomic map of the experience economy based on myth and literature.

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