

'Each guest experience will be different': VR and the future of theme parks

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Put these leisure activities in order from 1 (your favourite) to 5 (your least favourite). Give reasons for your choice.

- visiting a theme park
- playing video games
- going to the cinema
- reading a book
- walking in the park

2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

delay

headset

interactive

monster

virtual reality

1. A _____ truck is a very large truck.
2. _____ is computer technology that makes you feel you are in a real space when you use it.
3. A _____ is a piece of equipment that you wear on your head.
4. _____ technology reacts to the instructions that you give it.
5. A _____ is a situation in which something happens later or more slowly than you expected.

benefit

option

queue

thrill

transform

6. A _____ is something positive that you get from a situation.
7. If you _____, you stand in a line and wait to buy or use something.
8. If you _____ something, you change it completely.
9. An _____ is something that you can choose in a particular situation.
10. A _____ is a sudden feeling of being very excited.

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- 1 More than 10,000 people met in a convention centre in East London to experience the future of the theme park-one that includes monster trucks and virtual-reality wars.
- 2 There were an enormous number of virtual-reality headsets in the hall. Virtual reality (VR) threw around riders on a monster truck so that the riders felt that they were driving around a real arena. And, using VR, rollercoaster manufacturer Mack Rides could demonstrate some of its own rides so people didn't need to visit the company's own Europa Park in Germany.
- 3 The technology is also interactive, something that is going to become more and more important to the experience, according to Mark Beumers, Chief Executive of Dutch company Lagotronics Projects.
- 4 "Visitors expect more and more, and they want to experience technology in a theme park in a different and better way than they can at home."
- 5 But, Beumers says, virtual reality has its limits. Just getting headsets on and off riders causes delays, and the technology doesn't yet let you share the experience with the friends and family you visit with.
- 6 Now, says Maximilian Roeser, Mack Rides's head of marketing, people want the kind of virtual reality that lets riders experience all its benefits but keeps them in touch with the real world.
- 7 In the company's latest creations, riders even put the headsets on before they get on the rollercoaster itself – there is some virtual reality when they are queueing, getting on and getting off.
- 8 But Roeser says the biggest changes haven't happened yet. "Theme parks will develop in a way that will be more and more interactive.
- 9 "All the parks will know who is coming in, their name, their age, probably what they like and what they dislike, and therefore they can transform the park for each guest. And each guest experience will be different and probably fit that guest directly".
- 10 "We already have some options for our rollercoaster ride so that you can choose your own experience: one person that is sitting on the left-hand side could see a different movie from the person on the right-hand side."
- 11 But the classic theme-park experiences are still with us. For many, like Julie Rice-Witherell of conference organizer IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, there's nothing like the thrill of riding a new rollercoaster for the first time.
- 12 "Every time they build a new one anywhere near me, it's just something different. I wouldn't say it's better, but it is faster. It's always something new that you've never experienced before."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer these questions about the text.

1. How many people attended the theme-park event in East London?
2. Where is Europa Park?
3. Who is Mark Beumers?
4. What, according to Beumers, has its limits?
5. What can riders do before they get on the Mack Rides' virtual rollercoaster?
6. How, according to Maximilian Roeser, will theme parks develop?
7. What will theme parks know about each visitor?
8. What can you already choose to do on a Mack Rides' rollercoaster?
9. What is the IAAPA?
10. What does Julie Rice-Witherell like most?

4 Key language

a. Complete the table using words from the text.

verb	noun
1. create	_____
2. ride	_____ (person)
3. experience	_____
4. opt	_____
5. organize	_____ (person)
6. attract	_____

5 Discussion

a. Answer this question.

- Which is better: a real rollercoaster or a virtual rollercoaster? Why?

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6 In your own words

a. Choose a virtual-reality game you have experienced. Tell the class:

- its name
- where it happens
- what the aim of the game is
- your opinion of this game