

Alton towers



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BUSTER**

Alton Towers is branded as the UK's number 1 theme park and a resort phenomenon. From an event destinations perspective, apply the 4A's framework to the case study and discuss how Alton Towers utilises events to attract visitors to the destination and how they may continue in the future.

Alton Towers is the most competitive theme park resort in the UK; this essay will assess and discuss the reasons behind the phenomenon. The reasons behind the success of Alton towers is not just down to one main attraction, more so a combination of several key attributes such as innovative rides and family entertainment for all ages and also being able to accommodate for business events such as conferences and corporate events.

Alton Towers was owned by the Tussauds Group but now is part of the Merlin Entertainment Group and started as a theme park in the 1980s, it has grown in to a resort with accommodation, other visitor attractions, a conference centre and other service provision. Alton towers is the UK's biggest resort which currently attracts over 2 million visitors. A resort is used for relaxation or recreation attracting visitors for holidays or vacations and this is what Alton Towers offers their customers. Competition is fierce direct or indirect. Flamingo land, Lego land and other parks are all becoming resort phenomenons. It was originally inspired by Walt Disney which explains the gothic setting and the parks ambitious props and scenery. As an original event destination, the park still strives to keep visitors going in and out of the park at an all time high with tough competition around the UK.

With the economic recession the park has actually seen an increase in visitors, this could be because people are less likely to go on holiday so they

are looking for alternative entertainment. Any attraction like this will have peak seasons of the year where they are likely to have more visitors, it is important for the resort to approach different marketing strategies and promotions to sustain a good number of visitors throughout the year.

Having visited the resort on Halloween I gained an insight into the amount of work that goes into attracting people to the park itself. From an event organiser's perspective there is a lot that needs to be taken into consideration. The idea of 'Scarefest' at Halloween is to make over the resort primarily changing the product to suit not only an allocentric customer who is looking for a more thrilling experience but also for families and children. The 'Scarefest' held numerous attractions ranging from an outdoor maze to a haunted house. The budget of 'Scarefest 2009' was £200, 000 a lot needed to be taken into consideration to change the look of the theme park and convince customers that they have value for money as they would have been paying slightly more per ticket.

Since the year 2000 there has been an increase in variety of resorts and experiences for a consumer, this has made the consumer much more critical. The park creates individual ride brands including 'Rita Queen of Speed' and 'Air' each ride has its own special feature. Alton Towers is the only Theme Park that offers white knuckle rides that no other theme park can offer. " An amusement park that has themed attractions" Lumsdon (2000)

This is all to do with bringing the fun and excitement to the park. The build of a new ride is kept a secret long before it opens the reason for this is to release hype and attract attention to the park, each time this happens it

creates a flock of new customers, a park like this must be always changing and finding new ways to offer new experiences to the consumer to keep them interested.

The site also has an award winning conference centre which holds a range of events, including conferences and dinner dances. There have been many successful events including concerts with artists such as Tina Turner in 1996. This can also have a positive effect on the host community as it puts Staffordshire on the map and can boost the local economy.

Alton Towers is a multi-purpose destination as there is more than 1 attraction. There are two different hotels in the park, a water park, theme park and gardens. 'The Alton Towers Hotel' a hotel with inventive features that is unique to the park, with evening entertainment and a restaurant with a slightly more grown up feel. Both hotels target families but this hotel is slightly more sophisticated. The other option is, 'Splash Landings Hotel' alongside a Caribbean restaurant and views of the Alton Towers water park. The strategy behind this hotel is to offer a cheaper alternative to leaving the country and going on holiday. The idea enhances the image of the resort being versatile and unique and offers consumers something different.

A luxurious spa is aimed at a more mature visitor, possibly tempting parents to listen to their children and stay at the resort whilst the children are consumed by the variety of attractions they can relax and unwind having a positive experience. Having the different hotels at the resort means that they can attract two different types of customers, 'Day Visitor' and a 'Stay Visitor' a day visitor is a visitor who will visit the resort for the day so they

will more than likely use the them park or water park. A stay visitor is a visitor who would stay for a longer period and would use the hotel and all other attractions such as the theme park, water park etc.

Alton Towers is an ever changing resort, over a period of time it has gained in investment which has allowed the park to grow offering new features and fittings. Any resort like this in a leisure attraction market is under immense pressure to stay popular.

The park attracts a wide range of customers from teenagers, parents with young children, grandparents and their grandchildren, and young professionals who have no children. The park caters for all age groups. They have rides such a The Nutty Squirrel ride for the young children and rides like Oblivion and Air for the teenagers and adults. Alton Towers offers different attractions for the different varieties of customer. They have nice restaurants and bars, gardens, white knuckle rides, the towers, arcades and shops, so there is always something to do for everyone.

Alton Towers is situated in Staffordshire; there is public transport to get to the resort which reduces traffic. They offer a shuttle coach service from Hanley Bus Station in Stoke on Trent for a small fee. The resort is also accessible from the M6 and M1 motorways, although once you have left the motorway you have a journey through the country lanes.

Alton Towers is partnered with Staffordshire Destination Management Organisation (DMO), their role is to increase the amount of visitors to the destination,

'The emphasis is on quality and higher-value offers and on encouraging overnight stays. The Staffordshire Short breaks campaign continues to yield benefits across the county and particularly encourages the capture of further benefit from Alton Towers visitors.' North Staffordshire Tourism Strategy (2004-2014)

Overnight stays in Staffordshire will also benefit and maximise people visiting Alton Towers, as it is a major tourist attraction of the area. There are also towns in Staffordshire such as Cheadle that are actually providing accommodation for Alton Towers. Alton Towers is advertised as a key attraction through Staffordshire, in the future there may possibly be stronger links made through Staffordshire and Alton Towers and new investment opportunities.

Is Alton Towers affected by seasonality? Seasonality is the main problem for Alton Towers as it is only open for around 8 months of the year. The busiest periods for the park is school holidays i. e. February half term and the summer holidays, the Christmas holidays and Halloween time are also busy periods. Alton Towers also has special events held throughout the year for example they will be having Pink performing in 2010 and also they hold a lot of corporate events and also a special event called the masquerade ball.

I believe that Alton Towers will continue to grow in the future, it will build more amazing rides that no other theme park will do. They have a conference suite where they will carry on holding conferences and weddings etc. The market is constantly changing and getting more and more competitive. If Alton Towers continue to target their audience and continue

to build new rides and attractions the customers will continue to come and it will also attract new customers. People will keep spending their money if they are getting good quality, and Alton Towers are giving that too them.