Rethinking Play: A WhiteWater Report on the Psychology of Play and it’s Practical Application

At WhiteWater, we believe play is at the core of why people visit parks. Revaluating play is more than just creating the right play structure or slide, it’s about understanding the play psychology of your visitors and creating play experiences that can help them bring their play types alive - it’s about helping them discover who they are and empowering them to be playful, once more.

By using quantitative research methodology, we surveyed 3 different types of audiences comprising 1100+ adult respondents from within the industry and consumers across US and China - with the idea to probe deeper into the psychology of play, understand the fundamental human drive behind why people play and how they play. And more significantly, how these insights can be applied practically to create parks that are not just more satisfying, but more profitable as a result. Here are the some of the key findings from the report:

* According to the survey findings, most respondents like to indulge in a combination of different activities when it comes to Play. While there is a single definitive play type for everyone, it’s critical to understand how there exist other personality traits along with the dominant one.

When it comes to planning the play experience in parks, this could imply a careful selection of rides and attractions that could spark the interest of all play types in a way that accommodates a drifting dreamer, an adventurous Socializer as well as a social Challenger.

* Family groups are made up of different play types who will want to play together. An Adventurer will traverse along the Lazy River with a Dreamer. A Challenger will share a ride with a Socialiser. And a Dreamer may be drawn to experience the thrill of a Boomerango with an Adventurer. While creating a play experience, it’s essential to capture the spirit of Play as a collaborative activity that allows different Play types to play together.
* Based on the survey findings, Adventurers have emerged as the most popular and leading play type, outnumbering the other three play types both in the industry sample and consumer sample, while Challengers have emerged as the lowest across the industry and the general population. The industry results reflect the dominance of Adventurers and Dreamers as opposed to the other two play types which reflects the creative side of the industry, reinforcing the passion to create with the love for adventure.
* While evaluating choice of play objects / toys, it was interesting to see how a majority of the industry respondents seemed more interested in selecting toys that allowed them to ‘create’ versus ‘socialize’. Whereas, the general population’s response showed the US respondents as more interested in interactivity together by choosing ‘board games’, and Chinese respondents in future focused adventure through ‘space ships’ as their favourite toys.
* When it comes to favorite leisure activity, more than half the respondents in China opted for ‘discovering the side streets of a city’ while in the US ‘seeing friends’ emerged as most popular – again telling us how there is a growing sense of maturity and need for community in the US population, in direct contrast with the China respondents where there is a yearning for exploration and adventure.

While these are just a few of the survey findings, the complete Play report offers detailed findings of the survey, tips on bringing play alive in parks, a play evaluation tool and expert insights on the psychology of play. To know more, **sign up for the complete Play report** **now!**