

MARKETING

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WEEKENDER™



SIM-BA

KING OF THE ATTRACTIONS JUNGLE

EDITOR'S NOTE

CONGRATULATIONS

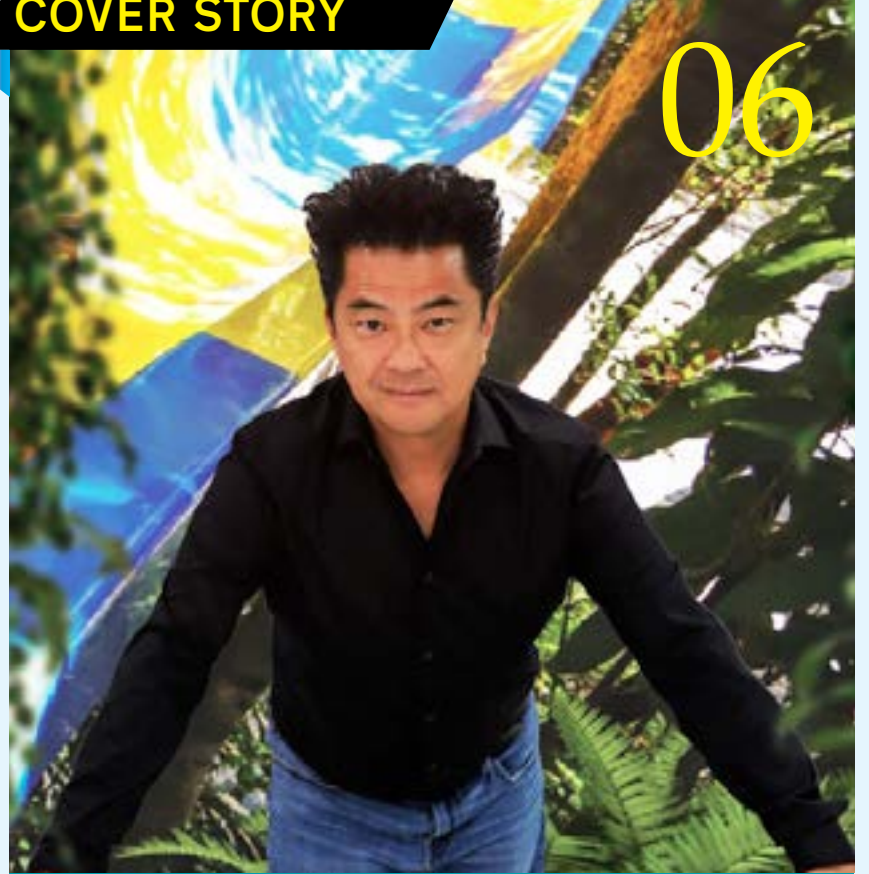
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“Sorry if we had hurt you in the past.”

DAP secretary-general Anthony Loke tells Sarawak GPS chief Abang Johari Openg in a reconciliatory meeting for a stable government.

“Good News! Lunch is served.”

Anwar Ibrahim announces to reporters waiting outside his house and gives them packets of nasi ayam goreng kunyit.

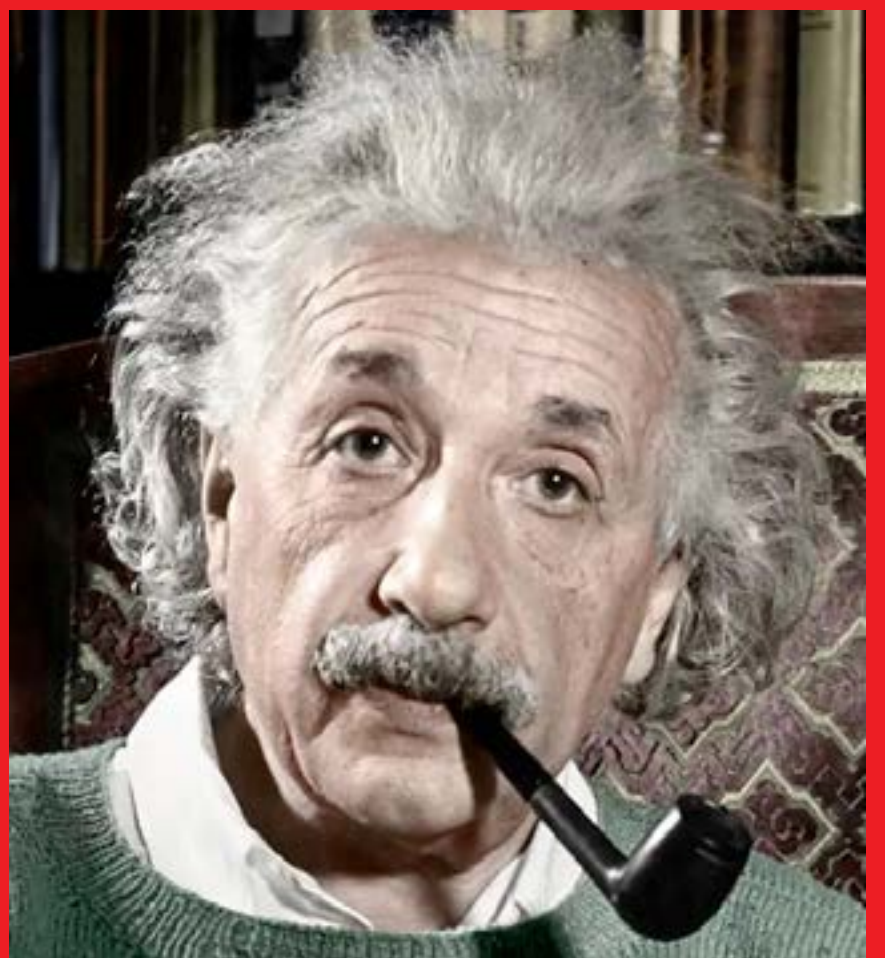


“People shouldn’t be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people.”

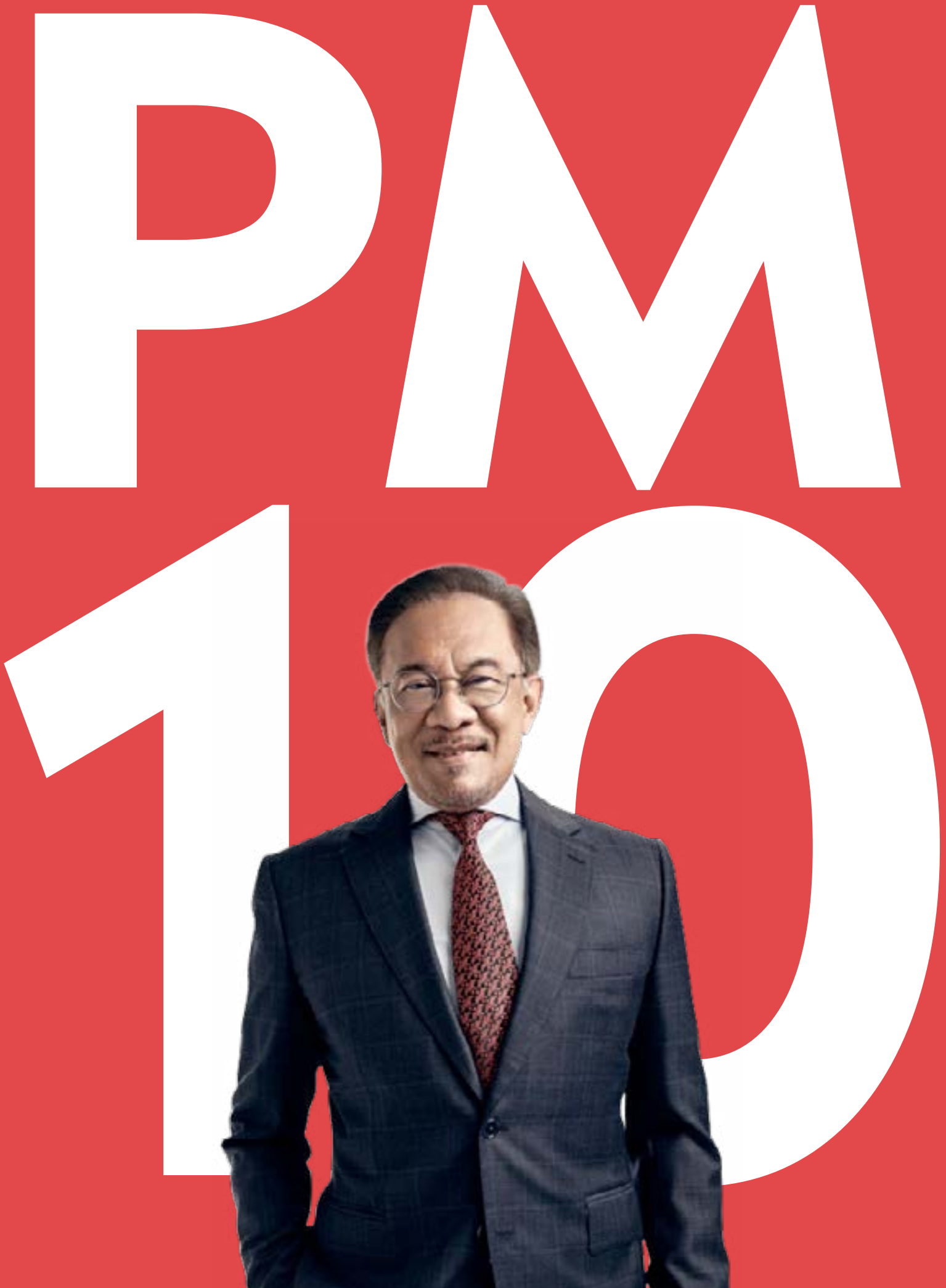
Alan Moore

“Weak people revenge. Strong people forgive. Intelligent people ignore.”

Albert Einstein



CONGRATULATIONS



SIM-PLY THE BEST!

Tina Turner may have once famously sung these words, but Sim Leisure Group (SLG), led by industry veteran Sim Choo Kheng, are fast becoming chart-toppers in the robust leisure industry! Embracing a back-to-nature retro-eco approach to many of the attractions within its portfolio, Sim shares how he became 'King of the (Theme Park) Jungle' and how the circle of life has played a pivotal role in the innovative destinations under the Group's collection of offerings.



We take a moment to speak to the roaring lion himself, who was the first Malaysian inducted for the second time into the Bloolooop (world's most trusted resource for attraction industry pros) list of 50 influencers, celebrating luminaries whose creativity, passion and drive have shaped and improved the global industry.

SLG began in 1993 as a humble one-man-show in Malaysia. Sim soon branched out, travelling throughout the world to establish his operation in Dubai, and became the only

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The best of good old-fashioned play at ESCAPE Penang - an escape to the outdoors to rediscover childhood adventure fun and reconnect with nature

Asian signing international theme park “Design & Build” contracts for some of the largest theme park brands across the globe. He eventually returned to Malaysia, establishing his own genre of theme parks, with the debut of Escape Penang. Inspired by outdoor play as opposed to the heavy machinery of so-called rollercoaster parks, Sim is a different animal altogether. With this notion forever etched in the back of Sim’s Machiavellian mind, a pivotal moment of inspiration in the outskirts of

Saigon Vietnam would set a series of ‘play-changing’ events in motion leading to a global attraction’s revolution!

“Visiting a Vietnamese village during the 90’s while developing a theme park for a client, I saw how the kids there played as I did as a mischievous kampung boy in Penang. It brought back so many fond memories of my childhood. It was then that the idea for a different kind of play experience came to me. I wanted to give people today the same kind of experiences I had as a

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child; the kind of carefree play experiences those kids had in that village. So, I developed these ideas that I had over the course of a few years and ESCAPE Penang was born,” recalls Sim.

Established in 2012, the ESCAPE brand is today SLG’s flagship, marketing to one’s inner child. The brand has since seen rapid expansion with the inclusion of ESCAPE Challenge in Paradigm Mall, Petaling Jaya, the acquisition of KidZania (Malaysia) and more ESCAPE destinations slated to open in Ipoh and Cameron Highlands as well as overseas projects in Sri Lanka, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and China.

Employing an innovative low OPEX and CAPEX business model, SLG is poised to become an economic driver for tourism in Malaysia, and has been heralded as a disruptor of the longstanding model used by conventional theme parks by focusing instead on the rediscovery of childhood fun and a reconnection with nature.

“With the ESCAPE brand, we sought to create a truly different experience using a ‘low tech, high fun’ approach where fun

is only measured in ‘smiles per hour’. Today, ESCAPE is a pioneer, answering the call from consumers for a different experience altogether,” explains Sim.

Known for this unconventional approach to attraction design and innovation, Sim has set the Group’s radar on “world domination”, which may not be such an implausible idea, considering the Group’s success and upward trajectory. In fact, the company recently made history by becoming the **first Asian attraction brand to be exported internationally**, lending further credibility to the Group’s quest of becoming the most successful leisure company in the world.

Sim Leisure Group’s efforts have truly paid off. The Group has announced phenomenal revenue and net profits for H1 2022, at RM26,571,119 and RM10,230,436 respectively – marking a three-fold increase in revenue and 10-fold increase in net profits, compared to that of 2019 (pre-covid). Meanwhile, SLG has been **known to turnaround loss-making assets**, such as KidZania Kuala Lumpur which the Group acquired in



The best in the world - ESCAPE Penang boasts the World's Longest Tube Water Slide measuring 1.1km as recognised by the Guinness World Records, which takes adventure-goers through lush greens

2020, which has, in turn, made a profit for the first time in its entire operating history!

Katie Perry famously broke the charts with her hit single,

ROAR. How do you market yourself differently from other theme parks?

When I started SLG, I didn't expect it to grow this big. I named the company just like

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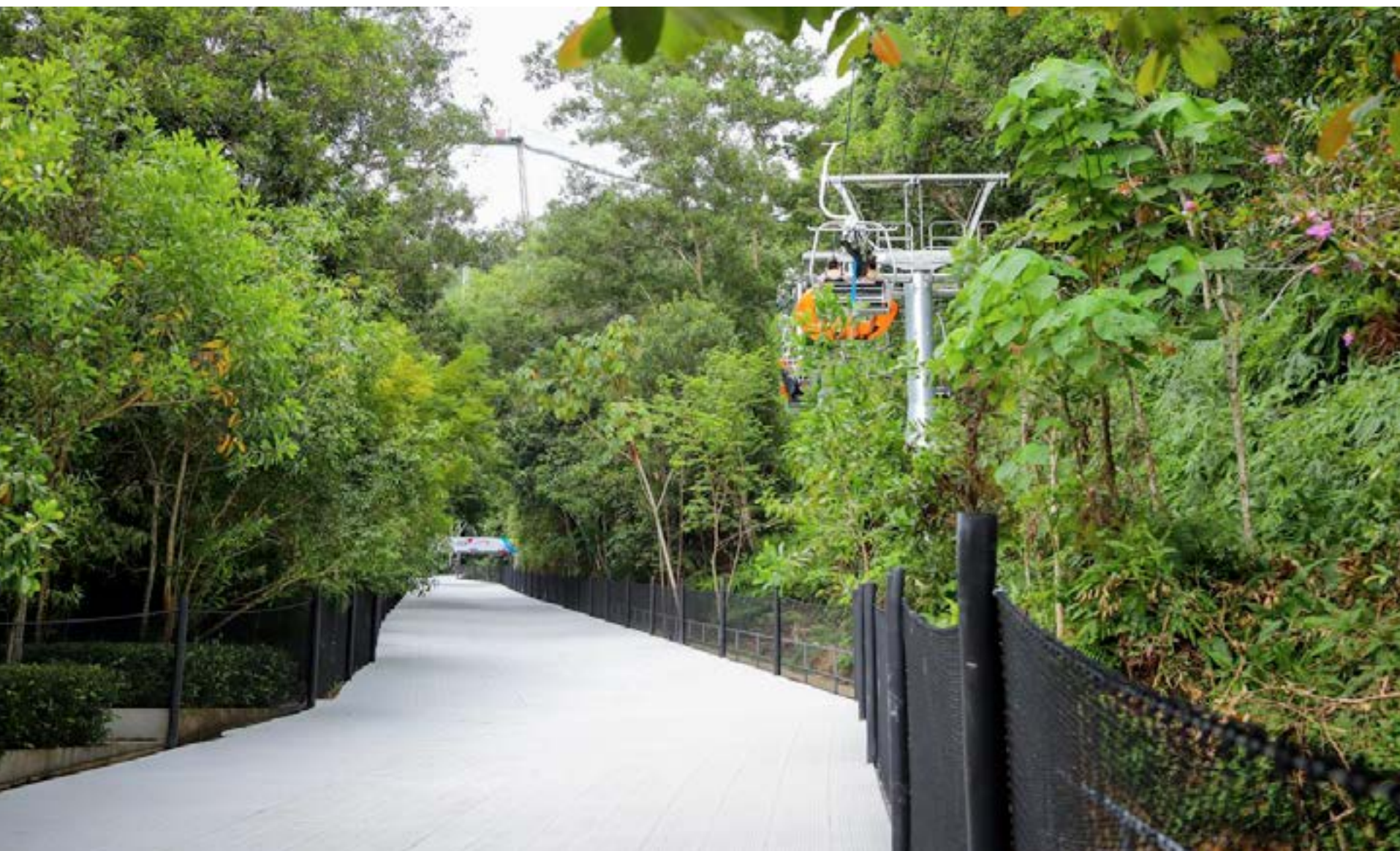
The best of Guinness World Records breaking attractions - ESCAPE Penang introduced a second world record breaking attraction with the launch of the World's Longest Zip Coaster measuring 1,135m

a mechanic would name his workshop *Ah Beng Motor*. I didn't come from a family with business experience. Everything has been organic. Our growth is a product of our hard work, creativity, passion, and circumstances.

But years of rivalry against some of the biggest international

theme park players around the world has made SLG competitive to its core, in order to survive in a level playing field overseas.

For example, our ESCAPE brand has been moving against the trend of heavy machinery from the get-go because we are all about reintroducing



The best in creativity - Sim Leisure continues to defy conventions with the recent launch of Malaysia's FIRST ski slope

childhood play in a natural environment – a niche in which we hold key dominance. The ESCAPE concept itself is low-tech with a massive dose of creatively-fuelled crazy ideas from my childhood mischief.

Today, many of our destinations are “world-firsts”, such as our Base Camp and the Guinness-record-breaking Longest Water Tube Slide and Longest Zip Coaster in the world in ESCAPE Penang, which has also recently become home to Malaysia’s first ski

attraction and our very own Dead Sea Pool.

My vision for SLG is SIMPLE - to be the most successful theme park group in the world! I also want ESCAPE to become an internationally renowned leisure brand. And success must mean commercial and financial success! We still have our eyes set on global domination. I am also determined to prove to be the sole Asian face, disrupting the leisure industry by proving that creativity is indeed mightier than money at the end of the day.

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The best in innovation - an industry disruptor changing the face of conventional theme parks, Sim Leisure Group's 'Low Capex, Low Opex' model proves versatile in being able to bring the successful outdoor concept of the ESCAPE brand indoors, as demonstrated through ESCAPE Challenge in Paradigm Mall, Petaling Jaya



The best in the business: Under Dato Sim's visionary leadership, the Group successfully turned around KidZania Kuala Lumpur, which made a profit this year - the first time in its entire operating history!

What does it take to build a theme park brand in Malaysia and Asia?

I feel that Malaysia has been losing its appeal as an international tourist destination among more adventurous, younger crowds who prefer action-packed Thailand or Vietnam. Before we arrived on the scene, the Malaysian attractions industry was more

conservative, appealing to older travellers. It's sad that tourism leadership in the country does not have the necessary global mindset. There is an urgent need for a new blood of tourism players in Malaysia. The pandemic itself dealt a big blow to the industry.

I truly believe in Darwin's idea of survival of the fittest, or most adaptable. In tough times, it

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takes real substance and merit to keep going. Much like during the pandemic, those who are unfit are most vulnerable and were the first to go. When everyone is strapped for cash, there are no other means of revenue. Theme parks with large Capex and Opex will find it hard to scale down. Those making bigger losses will ultimately throw in the towel.

As for us, even during the pandemic, we were extremely busy developing new ideas and business development prospects, which we are executing now. We will soon see more ESCAPE destinations here and abroad, while becoming a key driver for tourism in Malaysia and the region.

Are there opportunities for local or international brands to partner, engage and work with SLG group of assets?

Certainly! Our unique approach to our operations, and the very nature of establishments under the SLG umbrella has enabled us to truly incorporate brand convergence. This is especially evident in KidZania KL, where our very operating model involves collaboration with local and international

brands to give visitors real-world “edutainment” experiences.

These include well-established brands such as Air Asia, A&W, Subway, BFM, FINAS, Hotel Sentral, Kodomo, Faber Castell, and Optimax, among others. They’re all leaders in their own right, who have come to see SLG as a viable partner for business and marketing expansion, while contributing to revenue growth.

Meanwhile, in ESCAPE, we have established long-term partnerships with brands such as Etika and Captain Oats. We also conduct periodic events and campaigns, which are huge platforms in which brands can play a significant role, such as our recent engagement with the world’s leading action camera brand, GoPro, and the execution of our Pepsi ESCAPE Challenge, which saw participants vying for the best times to complete our Guinness-record-breaking World’s Longest Water Tube Slide.

Our engagement with brands has also opened new opportunities, including new ways to promote team-building in ESCAPE. In fact, the team-building business accounts

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for nearly a third of ESCAPE's attendance. We have seen explosive mutually-beneficial growth in this respect, bolstered by the fact that such activities conducted at ESCAPE are 100% HRDF claimable.

Besides brands, we have also partnered with prominent celebrities and personalities, such as Baki Zainal and Malaysian Comedy Veteran, Harith Iskander.

Recently, there was a (now refuted) rumour that Melaka would be home to SEA's first Disneyland. Is there a viable opportunity to build a brand like Disneyland in the region in today's market?

In my opinion, it's game over for these so-called roller coaster infused theme parks. This synthetic, adrenaline-pumping mechanical concept of attractions is on life support, merely surviving on superficial, excessive promotion by "big-boy" leagues of movie brands and roller-coaster manufacturers to their own agenda. They evolved from a noble idea of Fun Fair Park to Amusement Parks before getting hijacked by movie brands to recycle and turn their

superhero characters into roller-coaster rides, prolonging their relevance.

With breakneck development and progress comes a modern society of overindulgence, where childhoods are stolen in pursuit of materialistic prospects. It is only natural, having been submerged in modern society for so long, that humans have recently sought out to "ESCAPE" that materialistic pursuit, reconnecting to the great outdoors and rediscovering their childhood of outdoor, physical play in natural settings.

You don't need "experts" to build Ten Flags or Mickey Mouse lands at a billion dollars an hour when you have more cost-effective expertise right here in Malaysia. The ESCAPE brand speaks for itself. With the exception of the two years of Covid, we have been profitable since day one. And we can build an entire park for less than what it would cost to build just one roller coaster.

I foresaw the demand for retro-eco fun in a time when this genre was unheard of. My globetrotting life gave me that crystal ball. Most people are in a state of denial. We often look

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down on almost anything local. We are a herd; believing what the mainstream media propagates. Almost all imported brands of theme parks in Asia are making losses, yet investors are willingly getting duped into believing it's COOL.

Those are quite bold statements to make! So, going on this, what then is the future of themed and leisure attractions, especially with the obvious rise of the digital revolution. Has this changed the game in any way?

I am not denying that to do well in this business and industry, just like any other, we need to be able to foresee upcoming trends and where the industry is heading. But let me be clear - the future of the attractions business will no longer be focused on theme parks with mechanical rides. They have outlived their relevance.

Spurred by the digital evolution, we believe the attractions industry will be replaced by two very distinct trends – the first being Virtual Reality (VR) and the second, nature-based parks like ESCAPE, both for differing reasons.

The former is driven by the immediate disruption of VR within the coaster ride space, with much greater potential and richer content, at a fraction of the investment. In this regard, Sim Leisure has partnered with a leading Australian VR outfit, Haven XR, to bring VR-styled cinematic adventures to Malaysia and South East Asia.

We have also employed the use of our own proprietary, facial-recognition enabled digital technology at many of our parks, such as for ticketing systems and child monitoring facilities. As such, we are able to conduct our business more effectively at lower costs, such as by doing away with traditional human-operated ticketing booths.

Meanwhile, nature-based parks such as ESCAPE will continue to grow, allowing a new generation of astute consumers to reconnect with the environment through fun activities while offering respite from our devices, bringing us back to the original path of leisure and recreation.

For many organisations today, greenwashing seems to be the order of the day. How does SLG actualise their environmental

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agenda through actions and not just petty lip service?

The green agenda has always been at the forefront of the company's mission and ethos. Take ESCAPE Penang for example, which was built on a construction dump! But with our low-impact approach to development, we see such things as opportunities, giving old wastelands a new lease of life, while reducing waste and energy consumption. In Penang, we rehabilitated the land, planting more than 3,500 trees, while taking every effort not to compromise the already existing, decades old trees. Many of our buildings are cooled with vegetated roofing and enhanced with window openings that allow daylight to provide cool illumination.

We are also working towards developing a renewable energy partnership, to collaborate on a solar initiative to power all existing and future ESCAPE parks. The move will see ESCAPE Parks partnering with renewable energy companies to develop long-term solar infrastructure lease agreements. This will enable ESCAPE Parks to go off the grid and become

carbon neutral, utilizing stored energy from solar panels.

We're all about energy saving too. A typical wave pool uses a pneumatic system, which requires at least 100kW to generate waves. ESCAPE Penang uses a "wave ball" which only requires 4kW to generate waves. The wave ball has a low voltage electric motor, which drives the ball mass up and down to generate waves in accordance with the resonance principle. On the other hand, our "Kite Flyer" attraction utilizes the weight of a tank steadily filled with water to pull fun-seekers up before releasing them. This method saves ESCAPE Penang the need of a power-hungry mechanical winch.

ESCAPE runs 13 units of centrifugal pumps, totalling to 143kW capacity, to circulate water. All water parks require a large amount of energy to ensure the entire water volume is circulated, sanitized, and filtered every two hours to preserve water hygiene. The series of pumps, however, only operate at around 50% capacity as they are manually monitored and tuned to match the intensity of pool use by visitors.



Apologies for the technicalities, but I use these to demonstrate how the green agenda is ingrained into our very DNA.

Looking into the future, and having come the full “Circle of Life” from your childhood inspiration to today, what’s next for SLG in its quest for world domination in a global space that’s highly competitive?

We will always be fuelled by passion and creativity, which evidently has been our main drivers to get us to where we are today. I mentioned earlier that creativity is even more valuable than money, and we have a lot of it. In fact, I would say that our competitive edge is creativity, innovation and non-conformity.

We will continue to be led by these values and principles as we continue to change the face of conventional theme parks. And we choose not to rest on our laurels, continuing to evolve and grow with the times.

In terms of projects in the pipeline, I believe I have already divulged some immediate future projects in Malaysia and abroad. We are seeing particular growth in Saudi Arabia, where we have signed a sales agreement with Alam Albahjah Entertainment to establish ESCAPE branded establishments throughout the country.

Saudi Arabia is undergoing a transformation under the leadership of Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud which has seen the nation departing from a traditional oil-driven



... We expect to establish an ESCAPE Challenge in every corner of Saudi Arabia!..

industry to a mega tourism-driven economy. The country has also seen an explosion of family entertainment, something that was forbidden under the previous rulers. With a high number of malls per capita due to its desert climate, and most people preferring to spend their leisure time indoors, Saudi Arabia is the perfect market for the ESCAPE Challenge (mall concept of ESCAPE, similar to ESCAPE Challenge in Paradigm Mall, Petaling Jaya) which brings the outdoors, indoors.

We expect to establish an ESCAPE Challenge in every corner of Saudi Arabia!

Netcore Cloud concludes Malaysia's niche MarTech event



Global MarTech Leader, **Netcore Cloud** successfully concluded its fourth iteration of Martech Mashup 2022 in Kuala Lumpur recently. This year, the theme, “Next Gen Retention: Relationship over Rationale”, touched upon how brands can establish an effective customer

engagement strategy that improves retention and boosts conversion.

First held in 2019, Netcore Cloud initiated the Martech Mashup series to connect the best minds in the industry to share their experiences and insights for marketers everywhere. Following two years of COVID-induced

TECH



virtual sessions, MarTech Mashup this year saw a physical event for product, growth & marketing professionals.

Last month, Martech Mashup happened in 3 different cities of India & now the SEA series is in action which started with Malaysia this week.

A recent study by the company highlighted the importance of prioritizing loyalty over acquisition, with the rate of success in selling to a new customer being 5-20% as against that of selling to an existing

customer at 60-70%.

Towards this, MarTech Mashup 2022 threw light over the need to focus on marketing enabled relationships, retention, and loyalty.

The event saw the participation of brands like Malindo Air, **Malaysia Airlines**, **Dominos Pizza**, Doctoroncall, Mindvalley, Bonuslink, airasia and Reskills. As brands who are successful in this endeavor, the evening showcased an insightful



Hazwan Najib – Co Founder & CMO DoctorOnCall, Marisha Lakhiani – VP Marketing Mindvalley, Triton Dsouza – Vice President – South East Asia Netcore Cloud & Neal Estavillo – Deputy COO & Head of Branding & Marketing BonusLink

exchange of best practices with special emphasis on the role of technology towards scaling and sustaining relationships that go beyond the rationale.

Attendees saw a unique curation of growth lessons and actionable insights from top industry leaders who are disrupting the digital and mobile marketing space.

The first panel discussion consistent of esteemed panelists like Hazwan Najib, Co Founder & CMO, DoctorOnCall, Marisha Lakhiani, VP Marketing, **Mindvalley**, and Neal Estavillo, Deputy COO & Head of Branding & Marketing, **BonusLink** and they spoke on why long-term relationships matter in the age of

TECH



Vikas Kaushal – Manager – Enterprise Accounts Netcore Solutions, Leona Lim – Senior Manager, Branding, Marketing and Communications Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad, Ruhani Rabin – Senior General Manager, Digital Star Media Group and Niklas Frassa, – Founder / Chief Operating Officer, Limitless Technology

attention recession.

Key insights that came into light here were the importance of one-on-one personalization by accurate collection of data towards developing brand-affinity and building long-standing relations with consumers.

The next address by Anand Lakshmanan, Growth Lead, Netcore Cloud & Shashank Bhatt, Digital Growth & Strategy Lead, Netcore Cloud dwelled on building retention through smart engagement, creating delightful personalized touchpoints and engagements and how brands can use gamification to achieve loyalty.

The concluding panel discussion for the evening touched upon tackling digital impatience and the problem of choice.

It saw an esteemed panel including Leona Lim, Senior Manager, Branding, Marketing and Communications, Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad, Ruhani Rabin, Senior General Manager, Digital **Star Media Group** and Niklas Frassa, Founder / Chief Operating Officer, Limitless Technology.

The event finally concluded with an overwhelming response from the audience networking about their learnings over cocktails and dinner.

Build A Winning Brand Narrative For SaaS Business Using OOH

By *Moving Walls*



If you're a B2B SaaS company, you may think that large spectacular billboards along the freeways don't make sense for your industry.

Here's the truth: in case you assume out-of-home (OOH) advertising can't assist you, or that your competitors aren't pouring large budgets into the medium, you'd be wrong.

Getting your brand out there

In a heavily saturated B2B market, most brands are either

contemplating or switching to the Software as a service (SaaS) model, that is, if they haven't already. This has made competition tougher and costlier for brands like yours.

If there's one thing that separates you from your competition, that would be brand narrative. Nearly 82% of B2B marketers agree that brand execution is something SaaS companies need to emphasize on.

Yet brand investment isn't a new phenomenon. Simply put, it

OUT-OF-HOME



is creating a level of experience that has a direct impact on the perception of value and quality. Think of it as Simon Sinek's gleaming golden circle.

That said SaaS brands cannot stop with the why. The how and what needs to be in a flux. Meaning your brand needs fresh chum for the funnel and more fuel for sales.

Tech brands and those in the e-commerce sphere are also starting to realize that outsized budgets across social media platforms are not working. Instead many are turning to OOH medium for more visibility. OOH was once referred to as an old school medium however exciting new placements, audience targeting, geolocation data and triggers have transformed OOH into a sophisticated model for savvy markets.

Make a real impression to drive online engagement

We have found that while SaaS providers have become more effective at down-the-funnel activities, heavily relying on optimizing conversions, the top of the funnel is still the biggest single obstacle to hitting quarterly numbers.

The counter-intuitive appeal of OOH advertising for SaaS companies is simple: billboards create top-of-mind brand awareness as good as which is unrivaled. And when you're struggling to keep the top of the funnel full, more of *that* is what you need.

- **Be seen more often.** At the end of the day although brands are transacting in an online world, they are still trying to reach humans. Humans by design, what we see often, think

OUT-OF-HOME

... OOH is a medium that is unskippable, unstoppable and unavoidable...

often, do. So it does not help to merely be present in the digital medium, in fact it's costlier.

What works better is a marketing mix that combines as many touch points as possible. This enables brand recall and faster conversions.

- **Impressionable** - OOH is a medium that is unskippable, unstoppable and unavoidable. If your creatives are well-designed and throughout, chances are that customers' attention will be drawn to it and will linger in their minds longer. Customers will either look for your name or recognize it when it pops up.

- **In markets where you have no sales support** - it helps to have this kind of awareness where when a buyer eventually communicates with your brand, they would have already known, seen or heard something.

- **Cookieless world** - In a cookieless world it can get harder to reach clients if your marketing mix only has digital medium on it. Digital out-of-home takes things further by targeting people out and about by adding AdTech to the mix. Tools and technology such as tracking, retargeting, personalization are enough to deliver powerful campaigns

- **Multi-market** - Since the medium is digital, ads can be sold, changed, looped and interacted without manual labor. This makes targeting easy and cost-effective. Campaigns can be adjusted in real-time without setbacks such as those in the offline world.

What is your next move?

With so much competition for visibility and conversions, we hope this has given you some ideas to break through the noise. Our rich inventory has every kind of format from place-based, to street furniture and transit across several countries from APAC to beyond. If you'd like to learn more about launching campaigns, [explore and book](#) your first pDOOH campaign today.

For clients loved by agencies



DEADLINE: 30TH NOVEMBER 2022

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