

# SeaWorld Sees Little Backsplash

## Marine-themed parks keep growth plans in place

**Whale Interest.** The recent documentary detailing animal mistreatment at SeaWorld facilities is not affecting the business in any way, say SeaWorld executives. “Matter of fact, the movie in some ways has actively made people more interested in marine mammal parks and actively about us,” SeaWorld’s Jim Atchison says. The park plans on opening nine new attractions in 11 of its parks in 2014, which will likely justify admission-price increases this summer.

**Virtual Vows.** The average American checks their cellphone 110 times each day, which is why the XO Group, operator of TheKnot.com wedding website, is focusing on mobile initiatives. It will enable users to conduct wedding tasks virtually. “In the past, brides have always had to go in and try on the dress and visit the reception hall and go taste the cake in person. And the subsequent transaction happened in person,” XO’s David Liu says. “But now, they are able to discover and enhance these ana-



**Larissa Faw**  
The Business Roundup

log behaviors in real time.” Indeed, the site received 1.6 million views of wedding dresses in 24 hours.

**Let It Snow.** It may have snowed everywhere but the slopes. Total snowfall in Lake Tahoe was down 73 percent as of Jan. 31, compared to the prior year, Vail Resorts reports. Its Tahoe resort had only 33 percent of trails open by Jan. 31, compared to 95 percent of open trails at the same point last season.

**Smells Like Teen Spirit.** While the entire fragrance category continues to struggle – sorry, Justin Bieber – boy band One Direction was phenomenally successful with the debut of its One Moment. Corporate backer Ulta Salon, Cosmetics and Fragrances credits its success to a major 360 launch that included print, email, PR and digital marketing.

**Asian Security.** Prudential acquired 1.9 million new Asian customers in 2013, which translates to one policy every 10 seconds.

**Online Art.** Home decor chain Kirkland’s experienced a 50 percent jump in traffic to its website in 2013 and expects online sales to comprise 10 percent of its business. Still, 45 percent of online orders are picked up in-store.

**Flying Chairs.** Amazon.com announced it is raising the cost of its Prime membership by \$20, ultimately increasing the cost of shipping. This hike validates Williams-Sonoma, which has

priced the cost of shipping its furniture “competitively” over the years and lost shoppers to Amazon as a result. “We never [understood] when people come to deliver that sofa to your door, you knew that it’s not free,” says Williams-Sonoma’s Laura Alber.

**Krispy Expansion.** Krispy Kreme is launching ready-to-drink bottles of its Glazed Ice Coffee and Mocha Iced Coffee at 900 Walmart stores this spring. It will also debut packaged Krispy Kreme coffee and 40-ounce packages at 100 Sam’s Clubs in the Southeast. Also, the retailer is introducing single-serve K-cups of its coffee for Keurig Green Mountain machines later this year. Still, Krispy Kreme isn’t giving up on its heritage. The chain will open 20-25 new locations in the U.S. this year.

**Peak Pickles.** Single-serve frozen entrees represent 5 percent of frozen food sales, reports Pinnacle Foods. California drought conditions aren’t likely to impact its Bird’s Eye line of frozen vegetables. The largest

items that Pinnacle procures from California are tomatoes and garlic, both of which aren’t enough to impact the bottom line.

**Cold Crabs.** Ignite Restaurants’ Joe’s Crab Shack is affected more by weather than other chains, such as Olive Garden or Red Lobster. The large patios and surfside decor mean attract more visitors with warm weather and fewer customers during cold winter months: 35 percent of its guests sit on the patio. “When you look at it from the street, you see a giant picnic table and you can see it was built for people to think summer, think warm, sit outside, eat crab and drink beer,” Ignite’s Ray Blanchette says. Expect an “issue” with Dungeness crab this summer. It’s not price, but supply.

Larissa Faw covers business trends for Forbes, The Motley Fool and other outlets. Contact her at [larissafaw@gmail.com](mailto:larissafaw@gmail.com).

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