

3-1-2021

Emma Jones: Theme Park Apps

Editorial Staff

dgroves@bgsu.edu

Emma Jones

emma.jones@attractions.io

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions>

Recommended Citation

Staff, Editorial and Jones, Emma (2021) "Emma Jones: Theme Park Apps," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 23 : No. 1 , Article 8.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25035/visions.23.01.08>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions/vol23/iss1/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Visions in Leisure and Business* by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@BGSU.

EMMA JONES: THEME PARK APPS

Editorial Staff

Article written by Visions staff from an article and an interview with Emma Jones

Emma Jones

Corresponding Author

Head of Marketing

Attractions.io

emma.jones@attractions.io

Emma Jones Article

How Theme Park Apps Help Smart Operators Ramp Up Guest Satisfaction and Spend

**Source: <https://blooloop.com/features/theme-park-apps/>
Article appeared on January 20, 2020**

ABSTRACT

This article is defined by our editors as a historical manuscript outlining the framework and foundation of the future of theme parks as it represents new approaches for guests and management. The interview with Emma Jones primarily focused on technology and its implications for the future of theme parks. The adoption of technology in theme park operation will increase customer satisfaction, generate more revenues, and serve as a platform to reach visitors on a pre-, during-, and post-event experience basis. It also can provide a new channel for management teams contacting participants and nonparticipants to enrich their experiences.

Key Words: theme park apps, guest satisfaction, revenue

ARTICLE

Introduction

As the trend of using digital technology becomes more applicable and sophisticated in the business, theme parks should incorporate these technologies to meet visitors' expectations and improve convenience, for instance, facilitating mobile payments with a smartphone . This does not suggest that any of the previous methods used for achieving guest satisfaction and administering business processes should be abandoned. It is an additional tool that may provide an opportunity for the park operators and marketing individuals to personalize the experiences and memories of participants and nonparticipants.

SMARTPHONE

One of the most powerful pieces of digitized technology is the smartphone. With the rise of mobile apps and their ability to create interfaces with guests, they can provide an enriched experience. This is one example of a platform that has far-reaching influences for application in theme parks and their management.

The saliency of smartphones and their influence upon society could not have been imagined 30 years ago. They have had a profound influence upon everyone's daily life, and one cannot imagine living without smartphones today. They have become an essential part of life, owned by everyone from young children to older adults. As new technologies are evolving, smartphones are the basic platform that can be used by new and returning visitors to parks. Smartphones are not the only platforms for technology, but they are the most prevalent within our society today. Business owners who have adopted this technology and their application to management have found new frontiers to engage the client and more effectively manage their operation. It will be difficult to keep up with technology because it is advancing so rapidly. The key here is the integration of technology and its adoption into the mindset of operators and managers.

Another interesting opportunity for use of this technology is the smartphone as a convenient tool for social media. This platform opens up the park to interactional sources. Many individuals share and discuss their experiences at the park with family and friends. Social media platforms also serve as a point of attachment for memories. What is being suggested is that these are only a few of the ways that the smartphone interacts with other platforms and technology to multiply or amplify the experiences within the park. One of the primary elements of theme parks is telling their stories and developing expectations prior to, during, and after the experiences at the park.

Another element is virtual visits and the use of technology to create an experience outside the park. In other words, for guests, the smartphone involves a different way to experience the park through technology, of which the smartphone is the most accessible currently. The other benefit of the smartphone is that the cost of developing apps is becoming more inexpensive, thanks to the advent of SaaS (software as a service) based app development and management platforms that bring down the barriers to entry.. Therefore, parks should be open to the adoption of smartphone apps and new technologies. They must find creative ways to engage the guests, and to help manage clients and tell their stories.

OUTCOMES

In Emma's original article, she points to the ability of mobile apps to deal with the structure and function of operations. She divides experiences into three stages: pre-visit, during the visit, and post-visit, and provides concrete examples of how this kind of mobile app may be used. The approaches suggested by Emma provide an organizational framework to help develop meaningful experiences for guests, increase guest satisfaction and spending, and provide information to operators to better understand guests. This affords insight that can be used in the decision making process. The outcomes are not only in terms of guest satisfaction, but also secondary outcomes that relate to the reduction of anxiety and the fulfillment of dreams. This translates to higher return rates to theme parks based upon increased customer loyalty. This also results in PR because the satisfied customer tells their good experiences and memories to family and friends. The personalization is what causes these types of outcomes.

Another benefit is the added value because of the depth of the experience. This depth comes from interactions with other guests, family, and friends, which allows the sharing of and bonding of the experiences. The key is being able to make better decisions in a complex environment and being able to fulfill their needs and dreams in these parks because of information used.

Clearly, technologies like smartphone apps are powerful tools to help managers and operators more effectively achieve their objectives, satisfy clients, and increase revenues through stimulation of sales inside and outside the park. Creativity is one of the elements to success in applying such technology. The central issue is the ability for better information management. These new technologies must be seen as a platform to which various types of programmatic elements can be added. As guest expectations evolve, experiences have to be designed to enhance park structure and function to meet their needs. Another important aspect to these technologies is that new dimensions can be added to the experience and revitalize attractions, so that return visits are enriched beyond the first visit.

Technology is not a panacea. It has the potential of being a very distracted element to the theme park experience. It will take much effort to integrate the technology into the experience so it will be an element to enhance the experience. Even though, the sophisticated visitor is already technologically savvy, if the experience is not engaging the individuals will retreat to their smart phones and tablets.

The technology must be well integrated and have a functional use for the individual. Another element is that it has to be simple to use. Familiar technology may be used as a platform. An essential pedagogical element to the success of the use of technology is some type of pre-experience and familiarity with the technology before the day of the visit. This is also an opportunity to follow up after the park experience. The key to the success of the use of technology is integration and familiarity. The technology of the park can extend far beyond the visit and have far-reaching impact to the visitor and their circle of friends.

IMPLEMENTATION

The ultimate decision about technology is often based upon return on investment, and smartphone apps have a high rate. They yield great value for a small outlay. They can be managed with a relatively simple setup. In addition, because of their simplicity, they are relatively easier to modify to meet advances in technology without a tremendous investment. How different media formats such as podcasting, gaming, and social media can be incorporated depends directly upon the extent to which the management of operations understands their customers' needs and social media expectations and chooses to invest in such a culture. The present problem is that there are not many operations that are willing to adopt this new technology; there is a gap in the adoption of these technologies. The important question is how to educate park operators so this technology can help to more effectively engage with visitors. A secondary element of education must be promoting the app to guests so that they know of its existence, download it, and utilize it. This is a combo of good marketing and delivering value to the user through functionality that removes common frustrations and/or enhances their experience. Another essential element to the development of this type of information system is evaluation and feedback. This evaluation should take the forms of spontaneous and long-term feedback. The immediate feedback helps in solving problems while the visitors are in the park. The long-term evaluation deals with the overall experience and how it fits into the guest's satisfaction. There is an obvious correlation between instantaneous and long-term evaluation. One of the benefits of instantaneous evaluation is being able to identify causal elements that lead to greater satisfaction. Long-term evaluation often provides little to no information about causal elements as they occur.

SUMMARY

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has definitely changed and reshaped theme park operations. The uncertainty is a crucial factor that influences future operations. Even so, COVID-19 may have just accelerated the changes that were going to occur. Now, park operations must consider new technologies to meet the new norms of society. Marketing professionals are the ones that will bear the brunt of these new norms in finding ways to meet the needs of guest demands.

Resources:

<https://www.themeparkinsider.com/flume/201311/3770/>

<https://phys.org/news/2014-08-theme-smart-phone-options-visitor.html>

<https://www.oregister.com/2019/06/25/are-mobile-phones-a-threat-or-an-opportunity-for-theme-parks/>