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Seven technology trends

turning visitor attractions into more engaged places.

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Downloadable Guide

Seven technology trends turning visitor attractions into **more engaged places.**

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Introduction

Remember the days when QR codes (quick response codes) got us all excited and what we could do with them to encourage people to engage with us at our visitor attractions? Now, we have a multitude of digital options available to us to elicit responses from visitors and readers that make the QR code seem so yesterday, but actually, as a result of the pandemic, the QR code has made a significant comeback. We all got used to seeing them again as part of our Covid passports and in truth they've never really gone away.

Invented in 1994, the QR code is an optical barcode that contains information about the item to which it is attached. Initially aimed at the automotive industry, QR codes quickly found their way into advertising and the retail mainstream, as well as time tracking and document management, for their ability to store large quantities of data.

Introduction cont'd

With the arrival of the smartphone, these QR codes could be scanned by the camera (built into the phone), to reveal all sorts of secrets. For the visitor attraction sector, they unlocked a host of ideas and ways to convey additional information and started the 'engaged' audience phenomena.

Fast forward to 2022, and with ever increasing amounts of data gathering, and smarter mobile devices, we have new ways and means in which to store this information and make it accessible to consumers. In the visitor attraction and experience economy, these new technologies are proving to be a boon and a fun way in which to hook the imagination and continue that relationship with the visitor/consumer, turning them into lifelong fans and supporters – the Holy Grail of the experience economy.

1.0 E-ticketing

The top 7 trends influencing the visitor attraction sector at present, are:

To help move from paper to digital there is a huge array of existing programmes and apps that can assist visitor attractions in quickly, smoothly processing the purchasing of entrance tickets. In most instances, these are built into the visitor attractions own website by way of API into the specialist provider of the technology.

This assists on several levels, not least of all that the process has become paperless and thus a benefit to the environment, but the data can also be tracked and stored for future use – opted in of course – and analysed to better understand customer's buying habits and trends, which will ultimately improve the overall experience. It also leads into the next evolution that is turning the industry on its head.

2.0 Digital Wallets

This is worthy of another walk down memory lane to a time when we used to go into a bank to conduct our financial affairs. Nowadays, many of us have stored all our financial information on our mobile device, including our bank card details and passwords, that allow us to transact online, anytime, and anywhere, without the need to carry any of the cards with us.

This is a great help for ticketing at visitor attractions, as well as for paying at the tearoom, curio shop etc. More than that though, these digital wallets can also store membership card details – again diminishing the need for paper – reservation advice, even someone's driver's licence. They also lend themselves to pre-order and pay scenarios, which helps visitor attractions manage their finances and queues.

3.0 Object Recognition
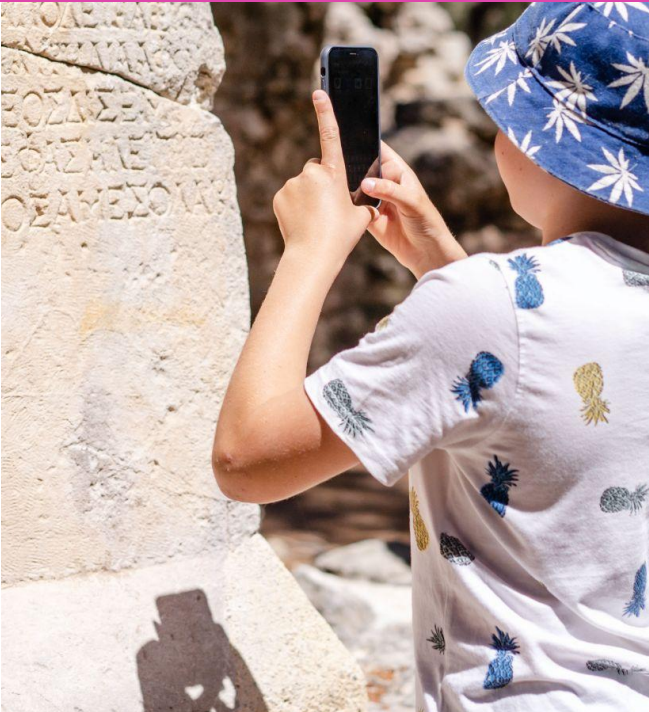
A real leap forward on the QR Code, and again driven by the camera on the mobile device, technology has advanced to a point where let's say a heritage site feature has been scanned into an audience engagement platforms repository and when the visitor stands in front of it with their mobile phone's camera pointed at it – from any angle or position – it automatically relays whatever information has been stored on the platform. This could be layers of learning or other triggered digital media. It remains for the operator to decide how far they wish to go to engage with their audience.

4.0 Beacon Triggering

Visitor attractions are as much about the fun of the experience, as they are about the learning. But Bluetooth enabled beacon triggers are a whole other level of engagement. In essence, beacons are always on and constantly transmitting their messages, waiting for mobile devices to pick up on them and reveal their hidden secrets.

Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) technology transmits a unique identity and has several benefits, not least of all is its accurate positioning (better than GPS), but what makes it exciting for visitors at museums for example, is how it can trigger the release of information/content as a visitor with the requisite app loaded to their smartphone, walks past. This often causes the visitor to stop and further 'engage' with the object of interest.

Plus, this technology is brilliant for use in geofencing applications, navigational signposting, trace, and track capabilities, as well as the ability to trigger special offers and notifications all designed to enhance the visitor's experience and engagement.

5.0 Dwell Time Monitoring

Understanding visitor behaviour is critical to the sustainability of any establishment. For website analytics, it's the amount of time and which pages a user lands on, that counts. In the retail sector, statistics and insights show that the longer a consumer spends dwelling at a particular display, the better the chances are they will spend more.

In the visitor attraction sector, knowing which exhibits resonate better with audiences, those that don't and even why, is critical to planning, adapting or eradicating exhibits. Monitoring and interpreting dwell time is an essential part of research for all visitor attractions, as well as determining future efficiencies.

Tracking this behaviour online is simple. In a physical environment it can be a challenge, but that again, is where visitor experience apps play a part in allowing smart technology platforms to remotely monitor, through the installed app on the visitor's mobile device, just where specific visitors have lingered and even, what they have done there – engage with the display through beacon or object recognition for example.

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6.0 Push Notifications

This technology feature allows publishers and operators to either manually or automatically, to send out a message to a user's device. These messages pop up on the smartphone, whether the app is open or not, although it must be installed of course. They are 21st century information alert boards that can spark an engagement or simply deliver a 'notification'. In the visitor attraction sector, they are a keyway of continuing the conversation with guests and keeping them in the loop. For instance, they can alert as to upcoming events and attractions, share special offers and coupons, act as reminders and so on.

In short, they are a very simple yet highly effective way to improve customer satisfaction.

7.0 Gamification

In 2020, Fortune magazine notes that the global gaming industry is worth a whopping USD 203.12 billion. It is forecasted to hit more than USD545 by 2024.

Wikipedia defines gamification as: "the strategic attempt to enhance systems, services, organisations, and activities in order to create similar experiences to those experienced when playing games in order to motivate and engage users. This is generally accomplished through the application of game-design elements and game principles (dynamics and mechanics) in non-game contexts."

For the visitor attraction sector, gamification – on and off site – paves the way for enhanced engagement and enjoyment, leading to an increased likelihood in repeat visits, sharing of the experience to friends and family (wither peer to peer or on social media channels), and thus broadening the reach of the visitor attraction in question. It has also been shown to lead to better knowledge retention as the act of pitting skills and knowledge in competition leads to enhanced memory.

Summary

All the above, culminates in what we call an Audience Engagement Platform (AEP), a cloud-hosted SaaS tool that spins out an audience experience app, that combines all the above trends and more, into one seamless mobile digital experience. The technology gathers, interprets, and unlocks an abundance of insights into the likes, dislikes, and behaviour of the visitor, to improve on site and post visit experiences and outcomes.

Just a few ways in which technology is helping to modernise visitor attractions, turning them into happening places – at all hours.

If you want to know more, why not request a demo of the n-gage.io audience engagement platform that can do all of this and more and is leading the way in deep learning visitor engagement outcomes.

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Get in touch.

For more information about how n-gage.io can help transform your digital audience engagement strategy:

Bryan Hoare
Founder & CEO

e: bryan@famemediatech.com
t: 07860 107636

Kate Dearlove
Director of Media & Content

e: kate@famemediatech.com
t: 07570 99305

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