



# What Awaits Attractions: Key Insights

Powered by  **IAAPA**  
The Global Association  
for the Attractions Industry

An aerial, black and white photograph of a theme park, showing various rides, buildings with striped roofs, and landscaped areas. The image is tilted diagonally from the top left to the bottom right.

2022

## Introduction

# Key Trends we expect to discover

The attractions industry globally is a billion-dollar sector and it plays a key part in making up the travel ecosystem. From museums to parks to zoos and everything in between, attractions encompass those things that pull us to an experience.

For generations, people have travelled for the experience. Think of days gone by when families would hop on the train to enjoy the fresh sea breeze and seaside theme parks, or, more recently when theme parks became the 'must-do' holiday experience. We are in times defined by uncertainty. From the emergence of a global pandemic to the outbreak of war in Europe, and that's not to mention the gloomy clouds of rising energy prices and global financial rollercoasters, we are living in a global context of anxiety and nobody really seems to know what is going on.

However, within the leisure and travel industry, we are seeing consumers wanting to enjoy the chance to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Travel and Leisure are taking on a new era: the era of premium-layered travel. Now, consumers are prepared to pay and prepared to level up their experience. It's a combination of being constrained and held back from travel for a couple of years and a general desire to go all-in that is fueling a new scaling up of travel.

It also coincided with the rise of consumer demand, and consumers wanting more personalisation, individualisation and convenience throughout every aspect of their life.

People want food delivered to their door at the click of a button, people want businesses to provide better services, and people want hard-earned travel and leisure experience to reach exactly their expectations. And no less.

Aligned to this, is the fact that while people want travel to be more individualised and tailored - many of them still aren't travelling far. It means that attractions and parks need to keep reinventing themselves to continue to be relevant and attract returning local visitors. Using advances in data and technology, parks and attractions can ensure they are answering consumers' needs and wants.

Within this context, these are the key trends we expect to discover.

## Trend 1

# Data Trips

Data is needed by the travel industry in order for the sector to be self-analytical and to constantly improve itself. Through using data, attractions and parks can better understand consumer habits and tastes and then act upon insights and conclusions. By doing this, they can then better encourage visitors to return or even share with their wider circle about the experience.

Marketing teams are also using data strategically to boost communications and brand awareness - now, it's as if the journey can begin before leaving the house. With actionable data, parks and attractions can keep their

prospective visitors up to date with the latest experiences.

Beyond how using data can give insights into travellers, it also opens up another layer to business in travel. It opens up space for companies that can provide travel and leisure operators with the business intelligence, software and tools they need to offer better experiences. It's about data acquisition, translation, interpretation and execution to create the GOAT travel experience: the Greatest of All Trips.





## Trend 2

# Beyond the Parks

As the visitor numbers to parks and attractions have been dwindling over the past couple of years, it has been a call for park operators to get creative on their business strategies - more than ever! Resulting on more premium and exclusive experiences for their guests, offering more than just one experience.

Traditionally known to host three entities (the rides, the restaurants, and the retail) now there are many opportunities for parks to get creative around their offer. Parks are open to create a new sense of identity within their wider park brand, as they add more value to the visit while hosting exhibitions, shows, and a variety of exclusive events.

The park is no longer *just* about the park. From using cutting-edge technology and hosting immersive experiences, to offering seasonal foods and beverages at their spaces, there seems to always be a new way to experience the park. At least while people go to the park to enjoy something. They want to stick to their group of choice and spend time together while experiencing something new - but they are still curious and open to what this newness can be. What's ahead is a big opportunity for park operators to make creative uses of their data assets to understand their customers and design new offerings, experiences and products that appeal to them.

### Trend 3

## DIY Experiences

This is the era of personalisation. People want to go to a park to enjoy what they want to enjoy - and they are prepared to pay extra to do so. It's time for attractions to spice up the offering and add opportunities for guests to tailor their own trip. This is something akin to "experiences a la carte" and it's bringing a whole new layer of premium.

Exclusive experiences seem to be shaping the pricing segment, giving space for dynamic pricing and pricing upgrading as two key subsections that are arising.

Dynamic pricing is all about using data insights (we love a good trend overlap) to

monitor and adjust how much guests will pay for the experience. Depending on a wide variety of factors such as crowd numbers, the weather, the time of year, the seasonal offerings and so forth, attractions can now implement a sliding pricing scale that adapts to the wishes of the visitors. Reflective of the fact that thanks to covid and us becoming accustomed to lower numbers in attractions, some museum spaces are now hosting fewer people - and the operators are increasing the price depending on peak times. And visitors are prepared to pay.

Secondly, there is now the chance to ➤



### Trend 3

# DIY Experiences



go all-in on upselling and encouraging secondary spending. This concept feeds into the wider idea of piecing together the perfect trip and gives travellers and guests the chance to craft their individual experiences.

Examples here include guests considering if they want to include dinner with a certain show they will attend, or if they want a pass that lets them skip all the lines, if they want to buy a ticket to re-visit at the same time as buying their first ticket, and so forth and so on.

Pricing options like the above bring more freedom and control to the guest - which they love - and also the chance for the operator to make the experience even more luxurious and premium in sensation.

Parks can go further and implement this with the process of adding more value to their offering. Adding the likes of a museum,

exhibitions, shows and immersive experiences to parks gives the chance to add levels of tickets. Giving guest options to choose. Do they want a basic entry or do they want to also get the chance to enjoy a fine-dining experience, or maybe they also want to get dressed up and enjoy a theatrical production? It puts the control of the experience in the hands of the guest.

One example is of course the famous 'skip-the-line' pass. Most parks have a fast pass option and in most parks, it sells out. Now, there's a level above - the no-queue pass, the virtual queue add-on - the sky is the limit.

Personalisation of pricing is all about letting guests prioritize what they want. In doing so they can craft their GOAT travel experience, and feel less hesitant to spend money on travel as they know they are paying exactly for what they want - no more, no less.

## Trend 4

# Sustainable Loops

While ecological sustainability is probably the first vertical that springs to mind when considering sustainability. Keeping our environment and planet healthy and happy should be the priority of societies, governments and enterprises globally - a collaborative effort that is acquiring more and more regulation and stringency.

In parks, this is being seen primarily through renewables and recycling. Parks are introducing different initiatives that encourage guests to be mindful, but, at the same time can also reduce costs for them. One big one is, of course, energy. It is now a familiar sight to see the parking lots of attractions covered in solar panels. Parks are becoming self-sufficient for energy - and this is good for their sustainability outcomes, for the park's reputation with guests, and their bank accounts.

Social sustainability refers to how the park interacts with different stakeholders.

Let's face it, parks require massive investment and need to be viable in the long term. But, in the long term, they can bring up some challenges in their respective society and community.

From noise pollution, enhanced traffic in the area, to relations with staff and the wider community - park operators have to deeply consider how to operate sustainably on a human level.

Lastly, there is of course economic sustainability. None of the above matters if a park can't stay financially afloat. Within considering financial sustainability, park operators and attraction providers need to think about financial transparency, longevity, and keeping to regulations. Where we see many challenges, there also lay many opportunities for experts to turn into actionable insights to creating a sustainable experience.

Sustainability is at the forefront of everyone's minds. Travellers and guests want their visit and experience to have as minimal impact as possible, and attraction operators want their business to thrive for the long term. It means a balance must be achieved across three verticals: the economic, the ecological and the societal.

Let's break this down.



## Trend 5

# Tech it up

Travel without tech doesn't exist anymore. It's become second nature, and not just to younger generations. From boarding passes on phones, to buying tickets online rather than at the antiquated ticket booth, tech is nothing new. What is new, is the type of tech and how it's being used.

Beyond online tickets and communication to target audiences, tech is now being used to level up the experience at the park. Two areas we can see within this are the rise of technological 'edutainment' and the metaverse.

Edutainment refers to using entertainment

to educate - and attractions are the perfect place to implement this. Parks can use technology to make their experience more entertaining, more engaging, and grasp attention in that crucial initial 7 seconds - bringing education directly to visitors.

While everyone has a smartphone in their pocket, the question may arise of what a museum, a zoo or an aquarium can teach a visitor that their mobile can't?

Well, through the use of technology parks are making the learnings more accessible, more visible, and more dynamic. ➤

## Trend 5

# Tech it up

Think of a GenZ traveller visiting an aquarium. They're captivated by the sharks - but beyond that, what do they get out of the experience? Making it immersive, bringing in an extended reality of seeing the sharks through an immersive element can educate, inspire and entertain the guest. They then leave having extra value than simply having seen the shark. It's about enhancing the experience with different touchpoints.

Leading on from this, we have the metaverse. Travel is all about the five senses. It is inherently about reality. So, how can the virtual be used?

There's a lot of curiosity about the possibilities of meta in travel, and one area it could be most impactful is in this zone of edutainment. It can allow exhibitions to go beyond their physical constraints and limitations - for example, a zoo could use it to recreate an extinct or highly endangered animal, while a museum can use it to recreate communities and cultures of times gone by.

The use of tech in attractions brings up a lot of questions, and while there might be few answers, it is clear that the scope for innovation is there.



# Final Takeaway



Travellers and guests want, above all else, to feel valued. They want their experience to be worth it - they want it to be personal to their tastes, they want to experience something new and be a part of a new trend, they want to enjoy some premium quality, they want to spend time with their friends and family, and they want to know they aren't damaging the planet in the process. They want their experience at a park or attraction to value their viewpoint and perspective.

The future of travel is contingent upon this and it opens up the door to a crafting experience in the attractions industry. It can bring more revenue to the operators, and more value to the visitor.

Here is the lesson - reinvention is now a constant that has benefits in many layers. Shaping immersive, exclusive experiences that can attract international attention while also appealing locals to continue to revisit the park in a new, unexpected way. While we navigate the age of staycations, locals and

the park's neighboring communities have become great customers and partners, turning its constant reinvention into a key aspect of survival for parks.

Meeting these trends and upcoming expectations from visitors requires preparation.

To get ready, and to find out how to put these trends into action, IAAPA Expo Europe 2022 is a must-attend event. This year's edition counts on an extensive conference programme with special events taking place to expand further on these trends, as well as to provide the opportunity for participants to network with attractions industry professionals who can share their experiences and know-how.

**Travellers and guests  
want, above all else,  
to feel valued.**



# IAAPA Expo Europe



**12 - 15 September**



**In-person event**



**ExCeL  
London, UK**

## About the event

IAAPA Expo Europe is an annual event owned and produced by IAAPA. IAAPA is a diverse and dynamic community of global attractions professionals. As the largest international trade association for permanently located attractions, IAAPA unifies the attractions community, connects people to learn and grow together, and strives to promote the highest professional standards for excellence and safety around the world.

It will host more than 15k net square meters of show flow and 470+ exhibitors that offer a wide range of solutions to elevate experiences and operations.





**IAAPA** is a diverse and dynamic association for the global attractions industry.

Bringing people and companies together, the organization inspires the attractions industry to move forward and provide meaningful experiences for guests around the world.

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