

The Magic(+) of 'DNA': How Digital and Analytics Transformed Disney's Customer Experience

Introduction:

Walt Disney World is the most visited vacation resort in the world, with average annual attendance of more than 52 million.

Problem:

- In 2008, Walt Disney World faced the problem of declining customer satisfaction, and a sharp fall in number of visitors
- Visitors complained about various pain points throughout the company's properties, affecting their likelihood to return to the resort
- With respect to technology, the company was failing to recognize key consumer trends that were starting to influence how people interacted with brands, such as social networking, and increased use of devices such as smartphones.
- The parks' inability to adopt new technologies to enhance the guest experience was harming their relevance

Solution:

The CEO of Disney, Bob Iger, suggested a digital and analytics tool, which was a billion-dollar investment at that point. He pitched his plan for MyMagic+ in order to improve customer experience at Disney.

What is MyMagic+?

- MyMagic+ consisted of a website, a mobile app and a wristband which allowed Disney to track, monitor and analyse customer experience, which would feed into creating a seamless and personalized Disney World experience for their customers.
- Influenced by wearable computing and the concept of the Internet of Things, the system was primarily designed to consolidate various functions, such as payments, hotel room access, ticketing, FastPass, into a digital architecture consisting primarily of radio systems, RFID-enabled wristbands known as MagicBands, and features accessible via online services and mobile apps.
- Customer would now be able to book and plan out their Disney World itinerary months in advance. Once they have made their reservations, the customers would be shipped their

MagicBands, which have radio frequency identification chips built in. The wristband is multipurpose: it serves as a hotel room key, admission ticket, wallet and a FastPass.

- It also collects data seamlessly for Disney's new "vacation management system" and allows Disney to track guests in real time. For example, if there is a long queue for an amusement ride identified by the MagicBands worn by the customers, Disney sends Mickey Mouse to engage with the visitors and also guide them towards other less crowded attractions, thus managing overall traffic. The band also lets Disney characters know if it is a child's birthday to give them a better experience with a unique birthday greeting.

Process:

- For this MyMagic+ initiative, over 70,000 employees had to be trained in the new technology, radio frequency readers were installed in over 28,000 hotel room doors.
- The initiative also involved adding scanners to the Park's hotels, shops and other attractions. Implementing MyMagic+ and its associated functionality required the installation of new equipment across the entire resort.
- Alongside upgrades to entry points, Wi-Fi had to be installed across the resort in order to allow use of the associated mobile apps by cast members and guests, and as mentioned before, locks on over 28,000 hotel room doors had to be upgraded to support the new RFID system.

Features and Functions of the Digital Transformation:

The MyMagic+ platform consists of four main components: MagicBands, FastPass+, My Disney Experience, and PhotoPass Memory Maker. These features are associated with guests via a Disney.com account.

- MagicBands are waterproofed, RFID wristbands that provide access to various functions across Walt Disney World, including access to the Magical Express shuttle service from Orlando International Airport, hotel check-in and room access, park ticketing, and FastPass+. MagicBands may optionally be linked to a resort reservation for contactless payments via room charge within shops and restaurants at the resort; spending limits can be placed on an individual guest's MagicBand to prevent overuse, and a PIN must be entered for purchases.
- The FastPass+ service allows guests to pre-book reserved times for up to three attractions per-day (including rides, dining, and VIP access to other events) in advance (60 days for Disney hotel guests, and 30 days for all other guests). Guests may make a further reservation after they have used their initial three selections.
- The My Disney Experience website and mobile app provide the ability for guests to plan and manage their visit to the resort, including FastPass+ reservations, maps, queue times, and the ability to share itineraries with friends who may also be attending the resort at the same time.

- PhotoPass Memory Maker allows guests to associate the pictures taken on attractions, dining, character meets, and entertainment locations with their MagicBand, Memory Maker card, or Disney PhotoPass card for 30 days.

Impact:

The initiative proved to be a huge success, increasing Disney's revenues, customers and customer satisfaction. Over 90% of visitors have rated the magic band as "very good" or "excellent" and customer experience has been on an exponential rise since then. In 2014, the system was awarded Fast Company magazine's "Innovation by Design" award for the year.

Sources:

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