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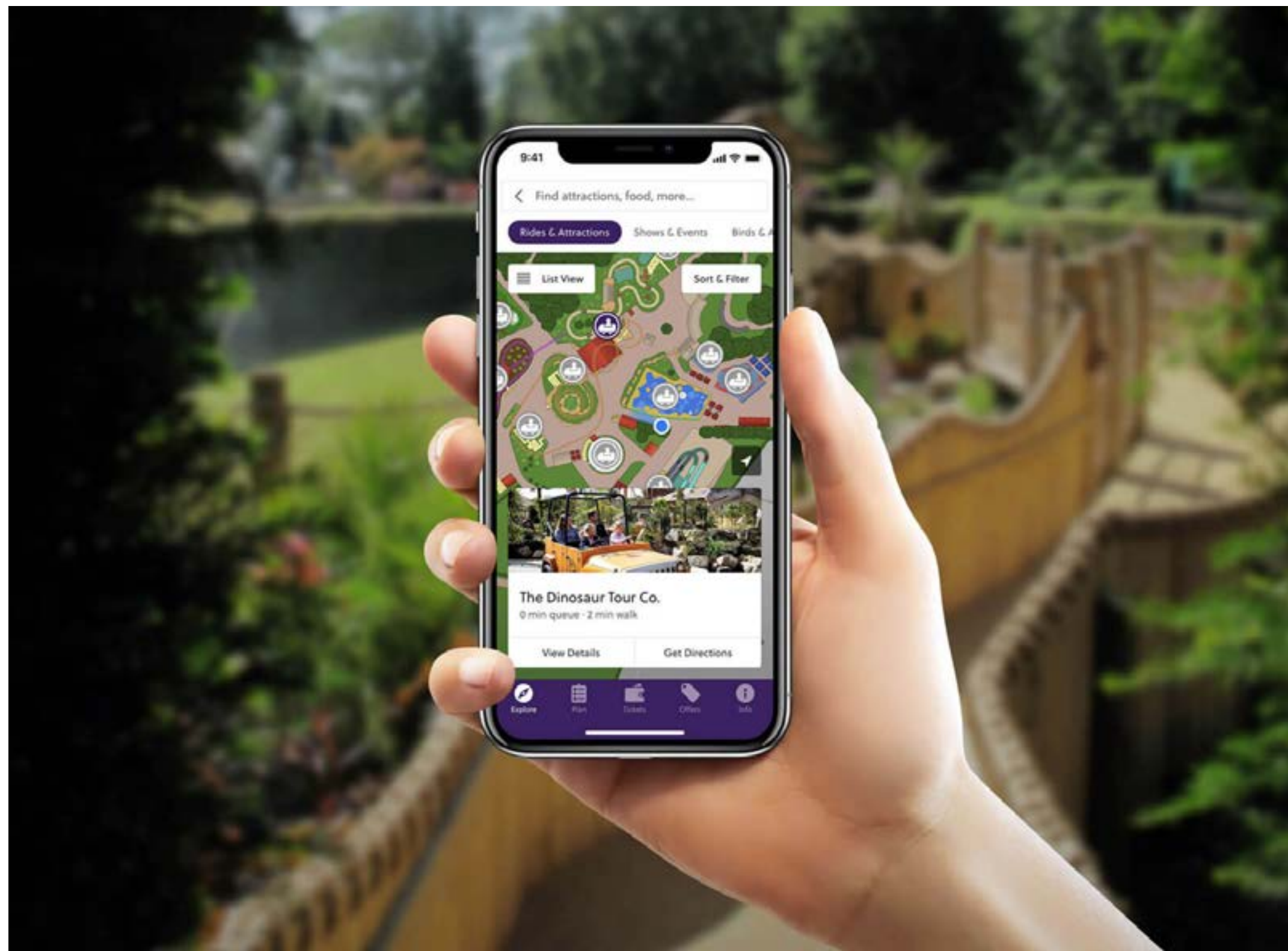
How to Launch a Successful Mobile App for Your Visitor Attraction



Your guide to delivering a mobile app that helps to improve guest experience, grow revenue and streamline operations



Are mobile apps the attraction industry's best-kept secret?



Every year, millions of guests are using mobile apps during their visits to theme parks, zoos, resorts and other visitor attractions.

Some of these apps are truly transforming the guest experience, driving double-digit increases in NPS and transacting millions of dollars in revenue.

At the same time, others are disappointing guests with limited features, unintuitive user interfaces and low app store ratings that detract from the brand.

With today's guests accustomed to world-class mobile experiences from brands like Uber and Netflix, attraction operators need to ensure they meet the expectations of their guests when embarking on a mobile app project of their own — but it's not easy.

Many of the features which add real value to visitors and operators alike are

complex — whether it's wayfinding, digital ticketing, mobile food ordering or virtual queueing.

This guide aims to help those embarking on a mobile app project of their own to maximise the chance of a highly successful launch.

[Read on to find out...](#)

- Why there's never been a better time to offer an app to your guests
- How to ensure your app meets your business objectives
- The benefits an app can bring to different types of attractions
- How to build a business case for your mobile app
- How to choose the right a vendor to develop your app
- What you need to measure to ensure your app is successful

#1: Why now?

There's never been a better time to offer your visitors a mobile app

Here's why:

1. Smartphone adoption is ubiquitous in many geographies, and app usage continues to rise — Statista forecasts 258 billion app downloads in 2022. As for usage at attractions, we've seen user adoption increase by 37% between 2018 and 2019, a growth trajectory that's continued to accelerate over the past few years.
2. According to eMarketer, over 70% of e-commerce sales worldwide will be transacted on a mobile device in 2020. Today's digitally native consumers are comfortable with mobile payments and are ready and willing to pay for premium experiences.
3. The explosion of cloud computing over the last decade has made way for a host of new SaaS (Software as a Service) providers. For the first time, platforms like Attractions.io can provide attractions of all sizes with a world-class guest-facing app, without needing a seven-figure budget.

GUEST SATISFACTION

Have your cake, and eat it

It's not uncommon for tensions to arise between the seemingly competing objectives of offering the best guest experience while generating as much revenue as possible — but it doesn't have to be that way.

It's worth remembering that spending money is about exchanging value. Each time your guests transact, it needs to be a frictionless experience and provide good value for money. If you get that right, then spending more during a visit should result in a better guest experience, not a worse one.

REVENUE GENERATION

Equipping both you and your guests with the best technology...

For guests: Equipping visitors with a digital concierge that surfaces tailored content to help at every stage of their journey — reducing friction and maximising the fun!

For operators: Providing your team with the tools and technology to design the ultimate guest experience from start to finish. Plus, access to guest insights and realtime operational data, enabling you to make data-driven decisions.

#2: Defining your objectives

Don't confine your app project to your marketing department

Typically, when a mobile app project is up for consideration, it falls solely within the marketing department. The problem is, marketing teams are driven by their own budgets and objectives, such as increasing visitor numbers and improving website conversions. Without taking a more holistic approach, the success of your app can suffer.

A mobile app has a role to play across the entire digital guest journey and to support an attraction's broader business objectives, it's essential to treat it as a cross-departmental initiative.

Consider setting up an internal task force with representation from each area of your organisation. By looking at how the app can add value and solve pain points for each team, you can align the app's objectives in a way that has a far more significant impact on business success.

Here are some benefits different areas of the business might consider...



Operations

- Make data-driven operational decisions by visualising guest flow
- Reduce wait times by surfacing live wait time information and signposting guests to less crowded areas
- Streamline food and beverage operations, reducing queueing and better managing capacity with pre-orders



Marketing

- Grow visitor numbers by incentivising loyalty, referrals, social shares and positive reviews
- Optimise marketing communications by leveraging behavioural data from guests across multiple channels
- Increase your marketing database by collecting email addresses and GDPR-compliant marketing consent from app users



Commercial

- Increase spend per capita by intelligently up-selling photos, fast passes, food, retail, ticket upgrades and more
- Cut printing costs (and paper waste) by digitising maps, menus, tickets and season passes
- Better utilise human resource by supporting convenient self-service in admissions, food and beverage, guest services and more



Guest Services

- Monitor guest satisfaction and NPS daily by collecting feedback from app users
- Reduce visitor enquiries by proactively surfacing answers to frequently asked questions at the right time and place
- Turn guests who've had a bad experience into brand advocates by intervening in real-time and "rescuing their day"

#3: Scoping your requirements

Turning your objectives into the right functional requirements

Now that you have a cross-functional view of your objectives, it's time to turn those into a set of functional requirements.

To do this, look at the entire guest journey and overlay every friction point and opportunity you find along the way. From there, you can explore how your app might be able to reduce the friction and exploit the opportunities.

Once you have a shortlist of app functionality, you can create a clear and concise functional specification, ready to put into action.

Ideally, you want to deliver value as quickly as possible, learn from your guests and then feed this back into any additional functionality you develop. With this in mind, consider breaking down your requirements into phases that you can release incrementally.



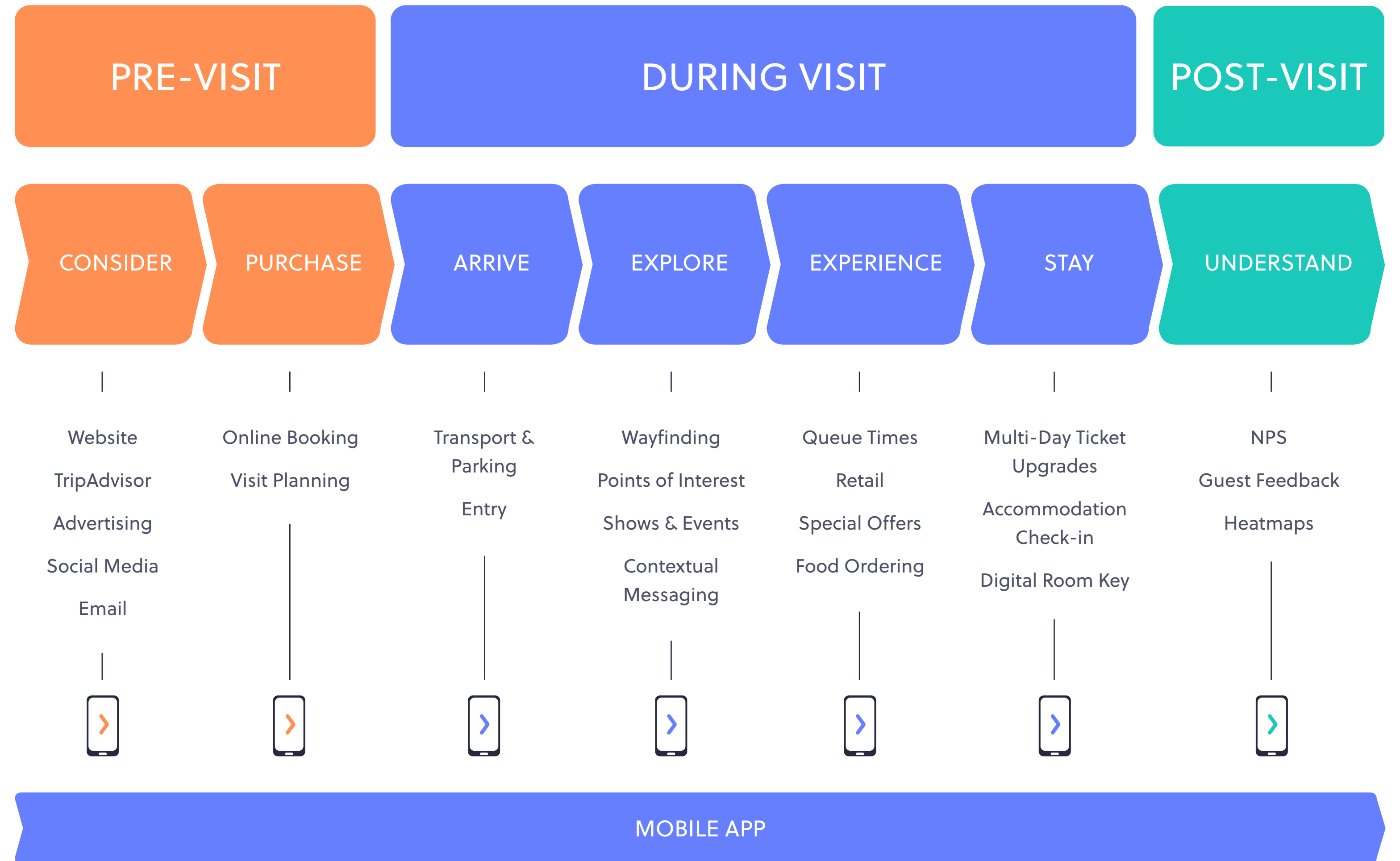
#3: Scoping your requirements

Delight guests at every turn by mapping out your guest journey

The best thing you can do to ensure your requirements are well thought through and will add significant value is to map them against the guest journey.

When mapping out your guest journey, consider the example shown. Starting with the broad areas of pre, during and post-visit, you can then break the stages down into more fine-grained steps tailored to your attraction.

Once these are in place, it's worth mapping out the existing digital touchpoints as well as exploring new ideas. A mobile app is unique in that it can span all touchpoints in the guest journey, giving you plenty of room to explore functionality that will benefit your guests.

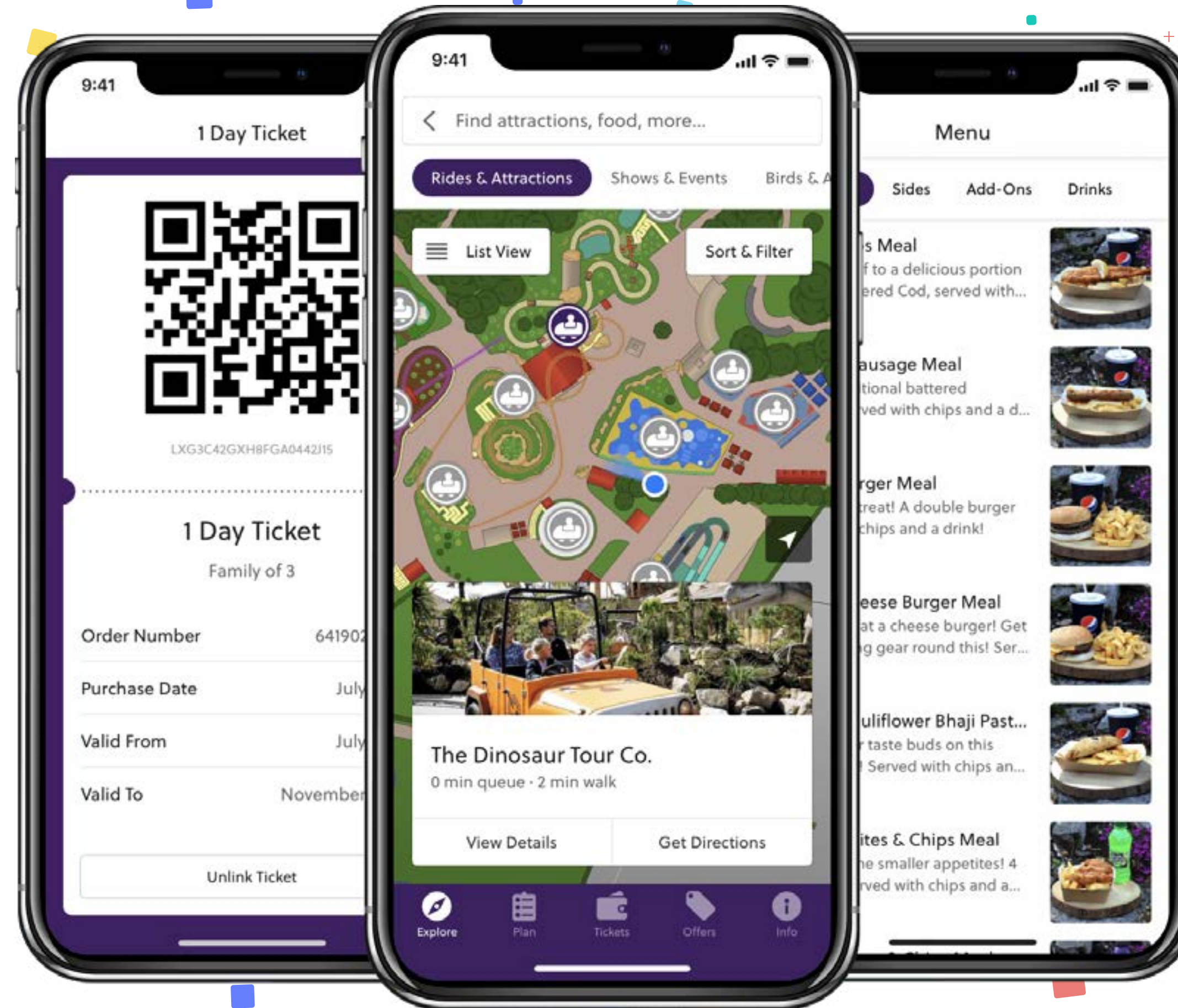


#3: Scoping your requirements

Here are some example features you might like to consider for a few different types of attraction...

Theme Parks & Amusement Parks

- Mobile ticketing
- Wayfinding
- Live wait times
- Queue jump offers



Zoos & Wildlife Attractions

- Dynamic exhibit information
- Live animal feed and talk times
- In-app adoptions and donations
- Digital map (sustainability)

Resorts & Hotels

- Room check-in & access
- Room service
- Restaurant reservations
- Activity bookings

#4: Building a business case

How to think about your app's ROI

For those thinking about launching an app for the first time and who need to compile a business case, it doesn't have to be a "finger in the air" guess or overly complicated.

The direct commercial opportunity for apps comes in two varieties: an increase in per-capita spend and a decrease in operational overhead. There's an indirect effect on loyalty and satisfaction, which can drive repeat visits, but that's less quantifiable from the outset.

The simplest way to estimate ROI is to look at how an app can increase revenue/decrease costs on a per-guest basis.

To start, write down all areas where you think an app can increase the average spend per guest and put a number on it. If you're working with an experienced vendor their help in using realistic numbers here can be invaluable. Do the same for cost savings.

You should have something that looks like the following:

Revenue Increase (Per Visitor)

Ticket upgrades: -----

Fast pass sales: -----

F&B transactions: -----

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Total: -----

Cost Savings (Per Visitor)

Printed passes: -----

Printed maps: -----

Admissions staff: -----

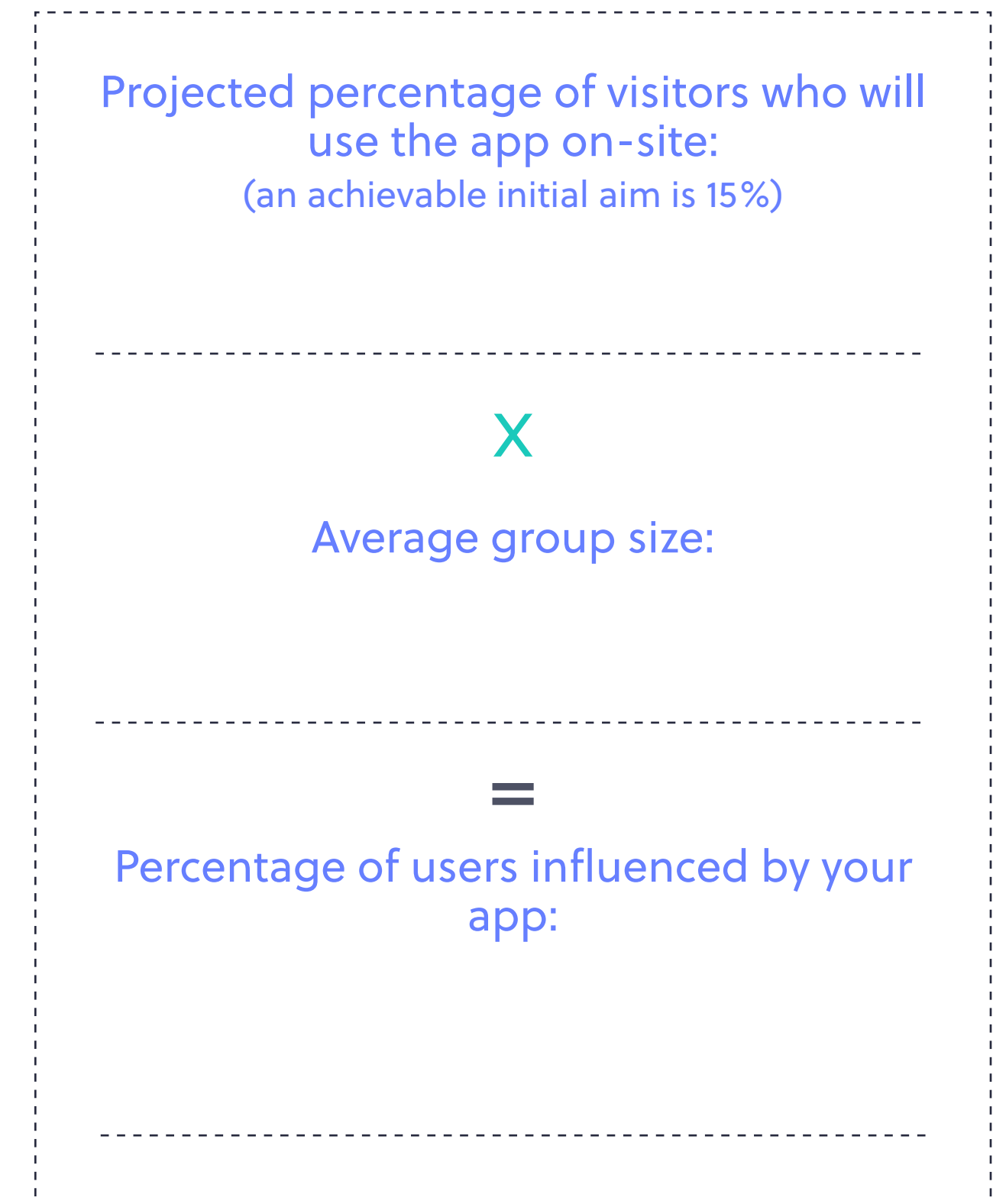
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Total: -----

Next, work out how much you will be paying on a per-guest basis. To do this, estimate the number of visitors who you think will use the app on-site, and multiply this by the average group size. This will give

you the total number of guests influenced by your app. The final step is to divide the annual app costs by this number to find out your cost per influenced guest.

If your revenue and cost savings exceed the cost-per-influenced-guest figure — you're in business.



#5: Choosing the right vendor

➤ Capability

The most important thing when choosing a vendor to develop your app is their quality and credentials. Not all apps are created equal, and there's a huge gulf in class between providers — skimping on quality is a false economy.

Ideally, you want to choose a vendor that has past experience and results within the attractions industry. If you choose a platform, you can test existing apps running on it and see end-user reviews of the experience.

➤ Cost

When deciding on budget, use your ROI estimates to guide you. It's better to have a high quality app that has fewer features than to try and do everything but execute it poorly.

You should also consider on-going costs, rather than the up-front investment, and ensure you fully understand what will be included. Will you get improvements and bug fixes? Do you need to pay extra for good support?

➤ Capacity

When shortlisting potential suppliers, you should consider how quickly you'd like to get up and running. If you use an agency or build in-house, you can expect development to take several months for a quality app. With platforms, you could be up and running in a 3–4 weeks.

Another thing to consider is whether you will be a priority for the vendor. Do they have the capacity to support you sufficiently?

➤ Case Studies

There's no better judge of an app provider than seeing case studies from other visitor attractions, where you can hear from members of their team and understand what they managed to achieve.

Always ask potential partners who they've worked with and what results they've attained. Don't be afraid to ask for references to speak to so you can be fully confident when making your decision.

#6: Measuring app success

Your goal is to get the wheel turning

More users = more influence = more revenue opportunities & better insights

When the moment comes to launch your app, don't forget the basics. Having a strong app store listing, with a well-thought-out description and high-quality screenshots is essential.

When promoting the app, think about the guest journey. For example, once someone moves from "consideration" to "purchase", it makes sense to promote the app so that they can install it before they "arrive". In this case, your booking confirmation email would be the perfect spot!

Don't rely on everyone downloading before their visit though, be sure to carry on with promotion on-site, and consider launching introductory offers to drive adoption further.

Be a smart operator

Once you have visitors walking into your attraction and using the app, you need to ensure you're using it to its full potential.

Firstly, don't neglect updating content. Your attraction's app should be the source of truth for show information, wait times, opening hours and more — if you let the content get out of date, users will immediately lose trust and hit uninstall.

You should also make sure you have internal teams on-side so that you can maximise commercial opportunity. For example, F&B and retail teams should be able to provide you with a calendar of exclusive in-app offers.

An app is the perfect channel to connect with guests and offer a personalised experience en-masse. Don't be too commercially driven and forget to delight your guests with timely messages that truly enhance their day.

For the best results, experimentation is key, and this is where an experienced provider can really help as they will have seen what works and what doesn't for your type of attraction.

Know what to measure

Here are the top things to track post-launch:

- **Revenue:** A good app platform will allow you to easily log in and see all revenue generated from your app. If, like most attractions, you use Google Analytics, make sure you track links to your website with UTM tags so that subsequent purchases can also be tied back to the app channel.
- **Satisfaction:** A great way to measure the impact of your app once is to ask users whether they used it during their visit when you survey guests. Armed with this information, you can perform cohort analysis to understand how your app impacts other scores such as satisfaction.
- **Engagement:** For most apps, you want guests to spend the most time possible in-app. At a visitor attraction, you actually want as many meaningful interactions in the least time as possible. Rather than having guests glued to their phone, give them quick access to the information they need for a great day.
- **App store ratings:** App Store ratings are simple — if you're scoring less than 4/5, you need to make improvements.



Attractions.io

The advice in this guide has come from working with some of the world's leading attraction brands to deliver exceptional mobile experiences — we hope you've found it useful.

If you'd like to see how we can help with your mobile app project, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Find out what the Attractions.io platform could do for your attraction by requesting a personalised demo...

About Attractions.io

The Attractions.io mobile app platform is used by some of the world's leading attractions to provide their guests with a branded mobile app that improves the guest experience, drives additional revenue and unlocks visitor insights.

