

Visitor management in highly-visited attractions: What can we learn from the theme park industry and the North American national parks?

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The strong growth trend of international tourism accelerates the problem of over tourism

- The recent surge is an outcome of stronger economies, increasing consumer confidence, low airfares, and growth in international travel.
- In private enterprises, managers can implement crowd control measures and develop innovative strategies.
- However, in public spaces, like cities and natural attractions, it is less apparent who has the authority to manage the crowds.



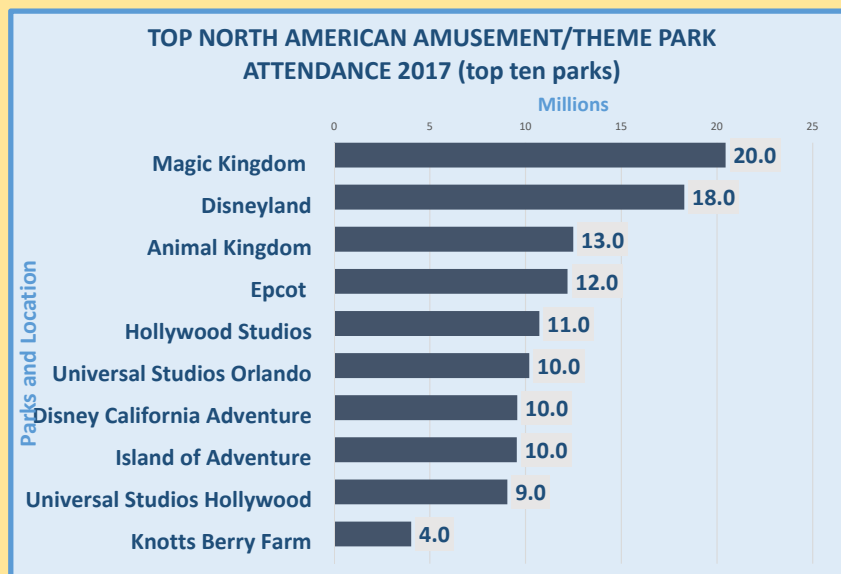
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Why Look at the theme park industry?

In 2017, the top 25 global theme parks hosted 475,767,000 visitors
An increase of **8.6%** from 2016



In 2017, 151,380,000 visitors attended the top 20
North American theme parks



Source: Rubin, Judith (ed.) (2018). 2017 Theme Index: The Global Attractions Attendance Report. Themed Entertainment Association/Economics Research Associates. Retrieved on 6/23/18 from http://www.teaconnect.org/images/files/TEA_268_653730_180517.pdf



The theme parks' approach to visitor management

- Theme park crowding is unique, as the parks provide multi-focus resources like attractions and rides, shows, restaurants, retail stores, and more.
- Guests make decisions regarding their visit's path and the time they allocate for each resource, according to their personal preferences.



Source: Retrieved on 9/15/2018 from: <http://b40ad1317d45595cd0df-4d1987ef3a36cccd5478db4931039f0.r84.cf3.rackcdn.com/assets/media/2018/01/APAC-Disney-Parks-blog.jpg>



Visitor management through experiential design

The "Everywhere at Once" information technology

We are surrounded by technological innovations, and technology is finding more ways to enter our lives.



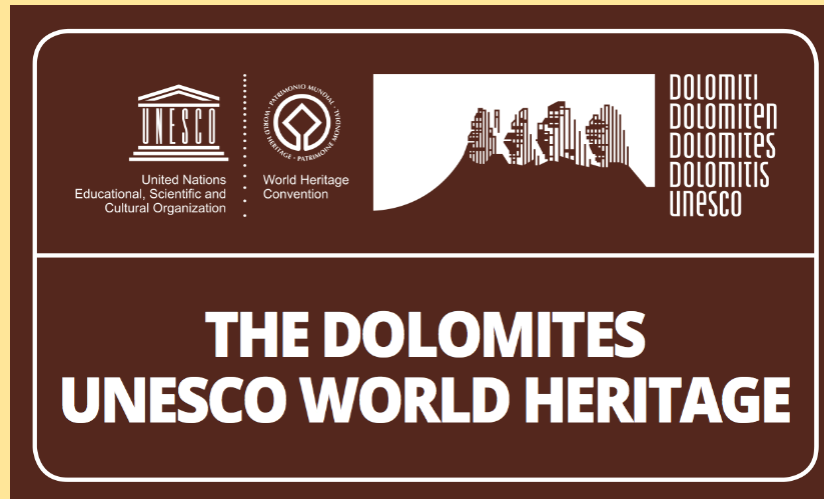
Adopted from: Schmitt, B.H. (1999). *Experiential Marketing*. New York: The free press.

Source: Retrieved on 9/15/2018 from: <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/16/c0/aa/16c0aa353e967f6d0f22341a9ddf9d36-disney-planning-trip-planning.jpg> and <https://secure.parksandresorts.wdprmedia.com/media/disney/parks/blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ma029840293842039fi-624x351.jpg>



The Supremacy of the brand

Even things we don't traditionally think of as brands - are now treated and marketed as brands



Source: Retrieved on 9/15/2018 from: https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn.cnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/07/disney_logo_2006.jpg



The presence of communication and entertainment

Communication is no longer information, everything is entertainment!



Source: <http://www.yebber.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/cimg2460.JPG>



The Theme Park Industry's Strategies for Guest Management



Source: Retrieved on 9/19/2018 from <https://www.dadsguidetowdw.com/image-files/disney-world-crowds-busy-castle-laurie.jpg>



1. Increase Capacity

- The largest expansion in the history of the Magic Kingdom that doubled the land's size (2012).
- By expanding the experience with more attractions, restaurants and retail, visitors will spend more time and money, and be less inclined to go somewhere else.



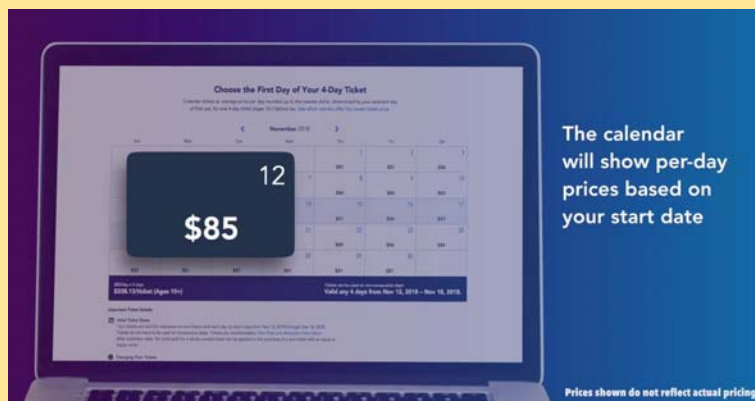
Source: Fun Facts: New Fantasyland. WDWnews. Retrieved on 8/31/2018 from: <http://wdwnnews.com/releases/fun-facts-new-fantasyland/> and <https://secure.parksandresorts.wdprmedia.com/media/disney/parks/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/fan3845435MALL.jpg>





Disney World is changing their ticket prices beginning October 16, 2018

- One-park ticket price will be between \$109 and \$129.
- Pricing is determined when the guests arrive and how long they stay.



Source: Retrieved on 9/26/2018 from: <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/travel/attractions/theme-park-rangers-blog/os-et-disney-world-ticket-prices-change-2018-09-26/story.html> and https://i0.wp.com/mydisneydorks.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Disney-World-Online-Tickets_2928s.jpg?fit=1200%2C630&ssl=1

4. Preferential Access to Resort Guests: Walt Disney World Extra Magic Hours (EMH)



Source: Retrieved on 9/12/2018 from: <http://mickeyblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Extra-Magic-Hours-Disney.png>
<http://media.cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-s/0c/63/4e/8a/magic-morning-available.jpg>



5. Skip-the-crowds tickets or passes

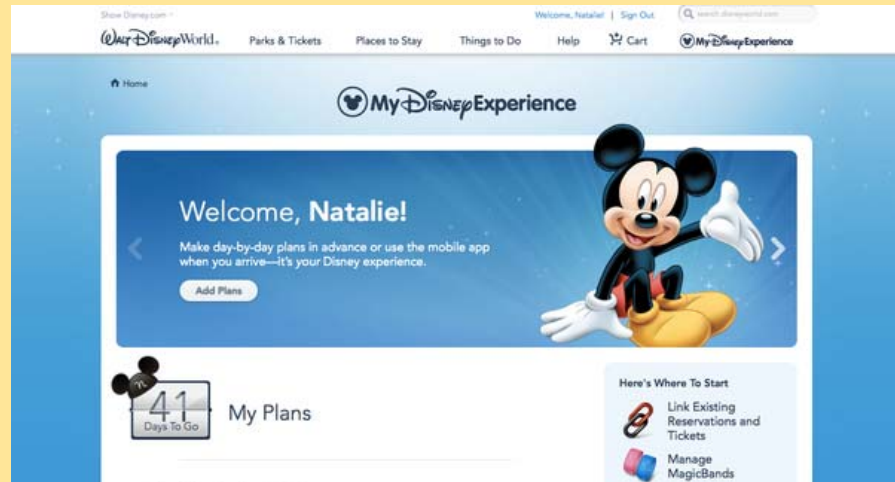
The extra-ticket events allow a limited number of guests into the park after regular closing time for three hours (starting at \$125)



Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: <https://fb.magicalgetaway.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Disney-After-Hours-Return-to-Magic-Kingdom-2.png>



6. Virtual Queuing



Source: Retrieved on 3/5/2015 from: http://cdn2-b.examiner.com/sites/default/files/styles/image_content_width/hash/47/a6/47a644f4b8e85204f04c2a2e103c6a29.png?itok=PfvcyUA1



Source: Retrieved on 3/5/2015 from: <http://parksandresorts.wdprmedia.com/media/disney/parks/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/go102948LARGE.jpg> and https://www.knowbeforego.com/Merchant2/images/fastpass_logo.png





7. Interactive Queuing Experience

Engaging guests and occupying their wait time -
Making the wait part of the attraction itself



8. Delay the Crowds by Harmonizing Related Experiences



Source: http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2037/2533637992_ca9348661f.jpg



9. Off-peak Visiting Incentives (events)



Source: http://albums.mouseplanet.com/ContributedProcessed/donald_daisy_topiary.jpg



10. Commercial Websites as a Source of Information for Guest Management

Suggested traffic patterns



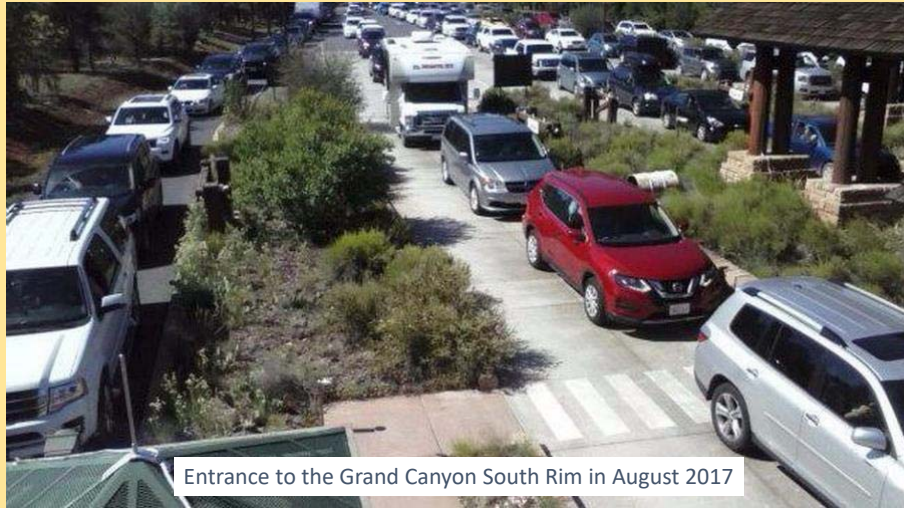
Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: <https://wdwprepschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2dayMKsmall.jpg>



Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/c5/US-NationalParkService-ShadedLogo.svg/2000px-US-NationalParkService-ShadedLogo.svg.png>



Crowding is a major concern in the NPS:
In 2017, the parks hosted over 330 million visitors.
Half of the visits were to the 27 most popular parks



Entrance to the Grand Canyon South Rim in August 2017

Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: <http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-overtourism-20171028-story.html>

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The U.S. National Park Service Strategies for Guest Management



Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/sites/default/files/styles/panopoly_image_original/public/media/yell-photos_crowd_dixon_700.jpg?itok=1fX1ec17

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1. Park Zoning and Designated Use Areas

Defining areas of parks as car-free wilderness, and assign other areas for various tiers of traffic (Bullinger, 2018).



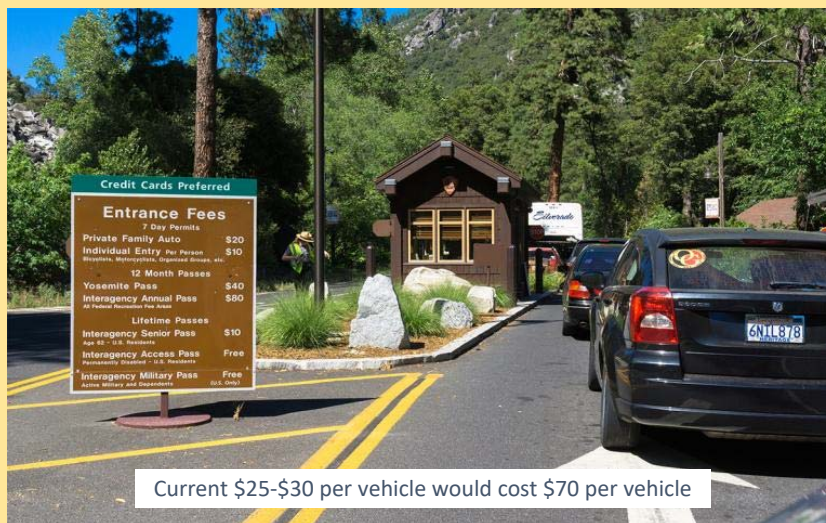
Hikers waded through the Narrows, one of the most popular hikes in Zion National Park, July 2017.

Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: <https://e360.yale.edu/features/greenlock-a-visitor-crush-is-overwhelming-americas-national-parks> and <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/27/us/national-parks-overcrowding.html>



2. Increase fees in general, or during Peak Season

In 2017, the NPS announced that it was considering raising fees by up to 180% for its most popular parks



Current \$25-\$30 per vehicle would cost \$70 per vehicle

Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/styles/flexslider_full/public/sierra/articles/big/SIERRA%20Park%20Fee%20Increase%20WB.jpg?itok=...



3. Establish a Reservation System

Over 45,000 facilities at over 1,700 locations can be reserved up to six months in advance



Source: Retrieved on 9/17/2018 from: <http://www.kernvalley.com/sequoia/nrrs.gif> and https://www.denverpost.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/20160114_20160117_E11_TR17COLUMNp1.jpg?w=467 and https://www.nps.gov/muwo/playyourvisit/images/Reservations_1.png



4. Use of Apps and Social Media to Inform Visitors about the Crowds



Postings on the Twitter site of Zion National Park reflect the flood of visitors.

Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: <https://e360.yale.edu/features/greenlock-a-visitor-crush-is-overwhelming-americas-national-parks>



5. Allow Only Certain Types of Vehicles for Designated Parking Lots Within the Parks
Some parks, however, lack the staff to enforce those requirements



Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/sites/default/files/styles/panopoly_image_original/public/media/yell-fairer-falls-parking-sign-700-sm-image2itokemNONh2WAA



6. Free transportation to reduce car congestion within the parks



Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: https://www.nps.gov/grca/playyourvisit/images/hiker_xpress_100321.jpg?maxwidth=650&autorotate=false



7. Enhance Visitor Experience with More Employees

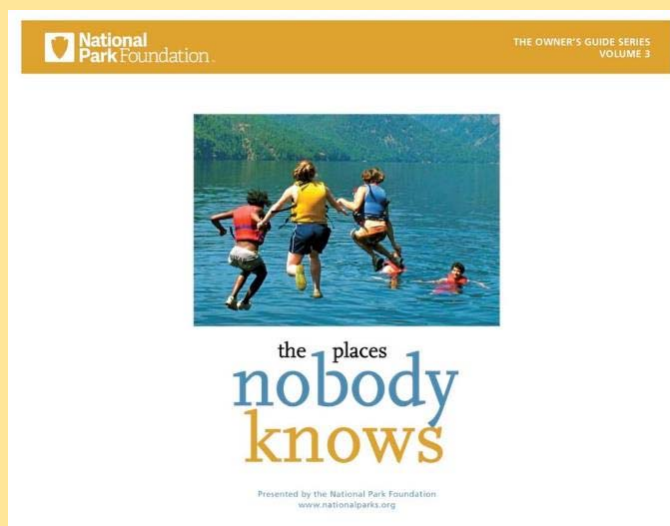
The Grand Canyon National Park adds extra workers to help visitors find open parking spaces and put up signs to notify drivers when the parking lots are full.



Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: <https://s.hdnux.com/photos/75/02/16/15999916/5/920x920.jpg>



8. Encourage visitors to visit lesser known parks that do not experience the same degree of overcrowding (Sullivan, 2018).



Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: http://kellysmithtrimble.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/places_nobody_knows14-1024x791.jpg



“For every Grand Canyon, there's a lesser-known park where the scenery shines and surprises”



Black Canyon Of The Gunnison National Park, Colorado

Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/sites/default/files/styles/panopoly_image_original/public/media/blca-chasm_view_nps_lisa_lynnch_700.jpg?itok=as169U1e



9. Park Closure



Source: Retrieved on 9/14/2018 from: https://archive.sitrib.com/images/2016/0610/zionride_061016~4.jpg



Visitor management in highly-visited attractions: What are the takeaways from the theme park and the NPS?

- Hot spots destinations need significant destination-management plans and policies to ensure sustainability, including overcrowding.
- Visitor management strategies should incorporate through experiential design and experiential marketing.

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Some strategies that could be adopted may include...

- Develop and continually revise crowd management policies:
 - Capacity control policies based on guests' visitation characteristics
 - Members of certain environmental organizations, donors
 - Establish closure policies based on capacity
 - Establish park/attraction zoning and designated use areas
 - Allow certain types of vehicles for designated areas
 - Free public transportation to reduce car congestion within the parks
- Admission price policies as a crowd-control mechanism:
 - Adopt admission price policies at different times of the year
 - Preferential access to certain guests at non-traditional times (early or late during the day)
 - Skip-the-crowds tickets or passes (\$)

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Some strategies that could be adopted may include...

- Reservations and virtual queuing
 - Establish user-friendly reservation systems
 - Interactive queuing experience while waiting (Apps)
- Delay the crowds by harmonizing related experiences (“pre-show”)
 - Interpretation center, lectures, related activities
- Enhance the role of technology
 - Use of Social Media to inform visitors about the crowds
 - Commercial Websites as a source of guest information
- Creative marketing strategies:
 - Encourage visitors to visit lesser known parks/attractions

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