

BRITISH HOLIDAY
& HOME PARKS
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Although superior guest service will always involve attentive face-to-face interactions, holiday parks who evolve with a shift towards a mobile-first digital approach can truly excel at providing instant access to information and self-service options that guests now crave.

Many parks are now opting for app-based technology, which guests can easily download to their mobile phone, to help them increase their brand awareness, market to their customers and define the guest experience.

Meeting park guests' digital demands

Guest expectations and demands have undergone radical changes over the last few years. Covid-19 was a key driver in the push towards more contactless connections in our daily lives and that trend continued as we came out of lockdown.

Holiday park customers today expect personalisation – on-tap wi-fi, speedy check-in and more. It's not just a matter of meeting expectations. Parks now need to exceed those expectations. The bar has been raised thanks to technology, sharing experiences on social media and familiarity with streamlined services throughout all areas of an individual's life.

Communication between staff and customers has also never been so important and should be a key part in a holiday park's strategy to improve guest satisfaction.

The hospitality sector is always looking at new ways to deliver the best guest experience. Parks can engage with guests digitally in different ways, such as through well-designed responsive websites, email marketing or on-park signage.

However, there is now an opportunity for holiday parks to engage with guests throughout the whole customer journey using one device.

More parks are seeing the advantages of having a digital app in comparison to a website. A park can establish a direct connection with guests by *literally having their brand in their guest's pocket.*

Guest engagement apps

Mobile apps have become an integral part of daily life and fundamentally transformed the way people travel.

Today's travellers expect immediate access to information and staff to quickly respond to requests on a 24/7 basis. A guest app can provide personalised, real-time content, increase customer satisfaction and build a stronger bond, as well as cultivate loyal customers.

The growing millennial population and youngsters also seemingly want to avoid unnecessary personal interaction with businesses unless absolutely necessary. They want to make service requests using digital mediums to avoid miscommunication and misunderstanding.

Holiday park apps



Key Digital's David Lakins considers the next digital tool for holiday parks

Spotlight on Marriott Hotels' Bonvoy app



Those who have recently stayed in a large hotel chain will have seen how the sector has mobile-enabled many of its services.

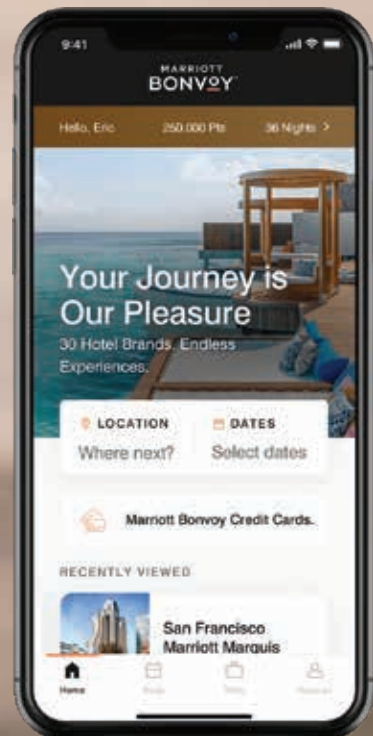
Marriott Hotels is one example of a brand that were early adopters of the mobile-first approach with their Bonvoy app. It now has over 1 million users and has generated \$1 billion in e-commerce revenue.

Marriott became the first hospitality player to offer mobile keyless entry, Apple PassKit for payments and Apple Watch-enabled check-in. The app has become a central part of the guest experience – and an essential extension of Marriott's brand.

As the centrepiece of the company's mobile-first mindset, the Marriott Bonvoy app enables members to customise their experience through features such as:

- **contactless check-in and check-out**
- **mobile keys** – a mobile key is delivered to a guest's phone (and Apple Watch) as soon as a room is ready
- **food and beverages** – guests can browse menus and order food
- **guest requests** – guests can also request housekeeping services, extra toiletries or luggage assistance
- **loyalty management** – the app tracks Marriott's guest loyalty program. Users can instantly earn and redeem points on property or at participating restaurants.

Sarah Searls, Senior Vice-President Digital, Marriott International, commented, *'The app simplifies the travel planning process, allows for the most frictionless experience before and during your stay and gets smarter the more you interact with it.'*



Benefits for park owners

When holiday park guest spending is at a premium and staff shortages in the hospitality sector are at an all-time high, it is time to look at new ways of working.

Rolling out a holiday park app not only enables parks to provide a personalised guest experience, it gives the opportunity to:

- achieve greater brand visibility on a guest's phone as the app becomes the key tool for their stay
- earn more from every booking by upselling services or promoting products or services from local partners
- create new revenue streams by promoting special offers, caravan sales and late-season deals with push notifications
- save staff time and reduce costs by providing all the key information and messaging that a guest needs via a branded app unique to the park
- provide an extension of the reception and concierge staff, booking staff and housekeeping, as well as food and beverage teams
- deliver a consistent, on-brand response and engage with guests exactly how and when they want to be served.

Implementing an app for a holiday park

There are several things to consider when thinking of an app for a holiday park, such as should the park:

- build their own or use an existing app solution?
- develop a native app or go for a web app?
- build for both Android and iOS?

It helps to think of an app in a similar way to a park booking system – parks can build their own or buy into a software solution from one of the main providers.

The cost of creating an app will depend on multiple factors – the type of app being built, the features being implemented and the development method will have the most significant impact on the price.

A bespoke app could cost upwards of £15K-£20K and the cost will rise significantly as features continue to be added along with functionality and complexity. Therefore, it is often more cost-effective to buy into an app solution that already exists.

Members also need to think about whether they implement a native app or a simpler web app.

Native apps

Native apps are software applications that the user needs to download and install on their phone. Native apps have the advantage of being faster, use all the features of a phone such as the camera and GPS, but they will require the user to download updates. Users download these apps from the online marketplaces such as the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store.

Web apps

Web apps, on the other hand, are software applications that run in the phone browser, but without needing to install anything on the phone. They are often simpler to implement, but web apps need an active internet connection to run, whereas native mobile apps can work offline.

The final question to think about is whether to build for Android or for iOS? The quick answer is that it is better to build for both platforms. Creating an app for one and not the other risks neglecting a significant group of guests.

Engage with guests throughout the customer journey

Mobile apps already exist for many of the larger holiday park groups such as Haven, Butlins and Parkdean Resorts, but what can be done with the app varies greatly. Some provide basic information such as guest books, event schedules and park maps, but others are completely changing the way holiday parks go about their business.

Imagine being able to directly connect with customers whilst they are on park – e.g. allow guests to login and see their booking details, provide contactless check-in, open their lodge with a smartphone key, provide personalised things to do and enable bookings of a restaurant table or activity.

With traditional media consumption moving to digital platforms and apps, here's an opportunity to add more value to a guest's stay and ultimately drive loyalty and additional sales.

Holiday parks can now engage with their guests on many levels throughout the customer journey – before, during and after their stay.

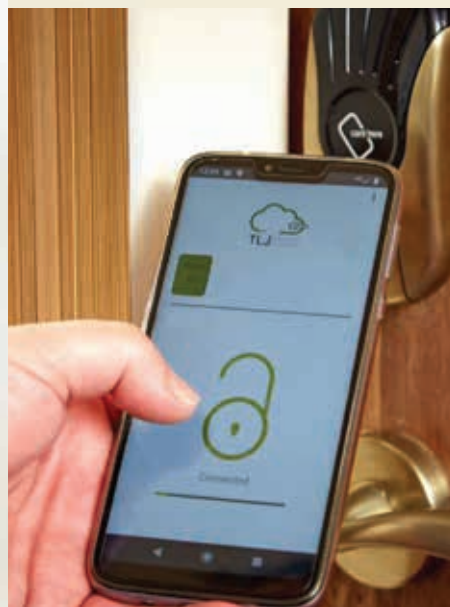
Here are some examples of how mobile apps could be used by holiday parks during the three stages of the customer journey.

Pre-stay

- Encourage guests to download the app a few days before they travel so that they can start planning their stay on the park.
- With park management system integration, guests will be able to check their booking and pay any outstanding balance, and even be shown a countdown clock to keep them excited about their stay.
- Welcome guests prior to their arrival and send them useful information about how to get to the park and make their journey easier.
- Share local knowledge via the app and let guests create their own personal itineraries from suggested things to do, events and activities to build anticipation for their stay.
- Speed up the guest check-in process by keeping guests informed with all the information they are going to need and what to expect when they arrive.
- No more printing welcome packs – deliver them in a digital format to save printing and easily keep them up to date¹.
- If the park has a schedule of events and activities, guests can be encouraged to book and pay for them in advance.

In-stay

- Allow contactless check-in. Display booking details or the arrival pass in the app so guests can check-in without waiting in line at reception. Customers love this approach, which is why more hospitality companies are using this feature.
- Encourage self-service – this approach allows staff to be less transactional and focus on establishing genuine connections with guests. If the park has a shop, for example, why not take a few products and sell them via the app as a 'welcome bundle'?
- Keyless door entry access – there are a lot of neat, contactless electronic locks that are available for holiday accommodation². As well as a dedicated Mobile Keys app, software can also be embedded in existing resort apps.



Associate Member TLJ Access Control's contactless software app



- Holiday parks can drive users to their app, grab their attention and help promote offers or incentives that can generate more revenue.
- Park map – make sure guests can orientate themselves with the park layout and check where the all-important facilities are with an interactive map.
- Reduce calls to reception for frequently asked questions with simple how-to guides. Combine them with in-app video clips of 'how to use the oven' or 'how to control the heating'.

- In-app messaging – allow guests to contact staff directly via the app, share their concerns or even compliments.
- Promote special offers and upsell services by sending push notifications. It's a smooth and simple way to inform guests about last-minute slots and cancellations in the restaurant or for on-park events.

Push notifications

Communicate with guests easily via in-app push notifications. This type of messaging is standard with most apps. It offers one of the biggest opportunities and powerful ways to get a guest's attention. They enable you to send messages directly to an app user's phone – in a similar way to sending a text message.

Apps are now allowing holiday guests to personalise their visits, e.g. create 'things to do' itineraries and reminders, as well as book on-site events. The ability to fully personalise a guest's stay using their smartphone is a service that cannot be matched. Consumers in today's market care about having a product or service specifically catered to their needs to create a personalised holiday experience.



*EliteParks app for owners
by Associate Member
Elite Dynamics*

Parks could consider further extending their apps by including the following features to allow guests to personalise their stay and enhance their experience:

Concierge services

Take concierge services into a park app to build stronger guest relationships and showcase the services on offer. This feature can even be used to send special invitations, promotions and to surprise your clients electronically.

Food and beverage ordering

For parks who run a restaurant or takeaway service, why not allow restaurant table bookings and food ordering through the app? It's a simple function that works both for guests' convenience and for the better planning of restaurant seating and meals.

Park guests are using Deliveroo and Just Eat, so whatever is decided upon needs to be simple and easy to use.

All of them have slightly different offerings and price points, but consider if they are needed to integrate with the park's own EPOS or kitchen system.

Some food and beverage ordering apps to consider:

Square POS for Restaurants Review

- Storekit - www.storekit.com
- EasyOrder - www.easyorderapp.com
- Flipdish - www.flipdish.com/gb
- Hungrrr - www.hungrrr.co.uk

Food ordering with EPOS integration

- Zonal - www.zonal.co.uk

Table and restaurant booking

- OpenTable - www.opentable.co.uk

Loyalty program

Reward customer loyalty by building an even stronger bond with the park, as guests are influenced when they are on-site.

A good loyalty program will provide customers with something truly convenient that they want to be a part of. Here's an opportunity to connect with them and develop real brand loyalty.

Parks could consider:

- reward points for every purchase of service
- offering discounted pricing for a guest's next booking
- showing additional complimentary services for achieving new tiers in brand loyalty, etc.

Promotion of holiday caravan sales

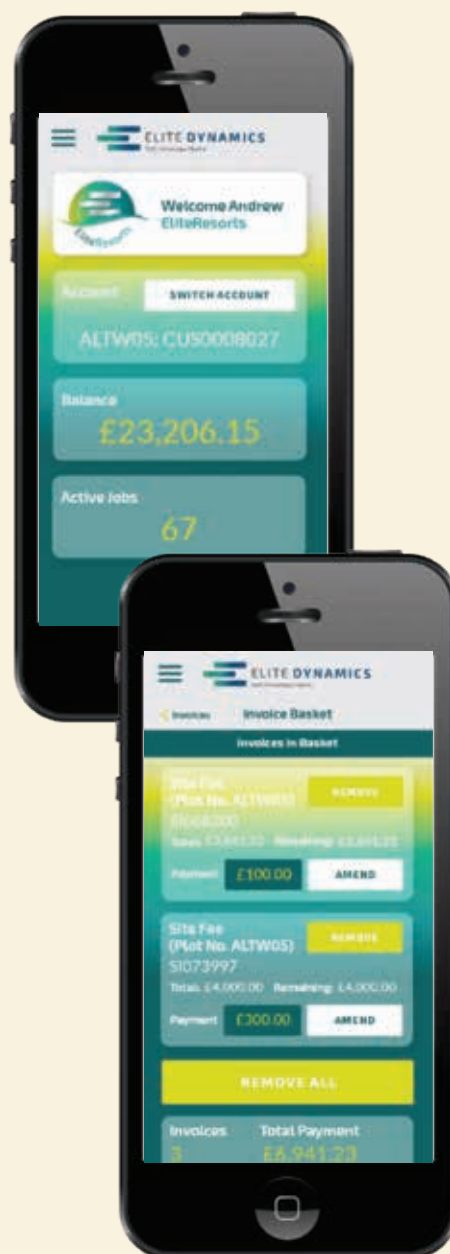
Many customers who have enjoyed a holiday will have gone on to purchase a holiday caravan. This is why an app is the perfect place to promote any current holiday caravans for sale.

Show the latest holiday caravans for sale along with virtual tours and more – engage with potential owners whilst they are still on the park.

Don't just think of an app as a tool for holiday parks with hire fleet. There is a clear opportunity for holiday parks to have closer connections with their holiday caravan owners.

Becoming a holiday caravan owner on a park can be a big step, with a new community for owners to get to know and new things to manage. Think of the app as a loyalty/VIP tool that is a great way to welcome new owners, whilst offering easy ways to manage a caravan and receive exclusive services and special deals.

Give owners the self-service opportunities to report a fault, track a maintenance request or give a meter reading online³.



Post-stay

Why wait until guests have left the park before asking for a review? Parks can be smart and proactive about procuring good reviews in the first place. In-app surveys can be offered throughout a guest's stay and provide the opportunity to respond to any issues before they escalate.

In-app surveys can allow parks to gain valuable insights about customer behaviour, which can be utilised and leveraged to create personalised offerings and services.

While actual personal data remains off-limits, a park app owner can decide what usage metrics contribute to a deeper understanding of what park guests are most likely to purchase and benefit from.

Reward customers for their booking and give them an incentive to book again to drive loyalty. Encourage guests to book direct to save on commission and increase profit.



The Beverley Holidays app is powered by Holidaymaker, a bespoke app that integrates with leading park management system providers

Next level apps

Park management system integration

Some apps are taking the guest offering to the next level and providing new ways for park owners to connect. Mobile apps that dynamically connect your park management system (PMS), booking and event/entertainment systems will deliver the next big move in guest engagement⁴.

By integrating a booking system with an app, the app experience can now be personalised. This allows members to know when guests are on the park and what accommodation they are in – so they can be shown their pitch, personalised offerings be suggested to them and appropriate extras offered.

Guests or holiday caravan owners can also be given access to timely information about on-park events as well as local tourist information and major attractions.

Back-office integration

There are even apps designed to help with park management and cleaning schedules!⁵ App technology can be used to let housekeeping teams view and update a caravan's status and log maintenance issues quickly and easily from a mobile device.

Housekeeping teams can see lists of their tasks, start and then complete them. They can add images or videos, issues and notes for caravans they have already cleaned.

Conclusion

Smartphones have taken over from other digital devices because of the convenience they provide. With convenience being one of the most desired traits for customers, holiday parks simply cannot ignore their existence if they wish to be competitive in the future.

While a mobile-friendly website has long been the status quo for most holiday parks, mobile apps tend to fare better for personalised user experience and offering additional functionality.

Don't forget that they are a permanent reminder of the park's logo on their screen! Mobile applications are ever-present brand logos on guests' smartphones, which the average Brit checks 28 times a day! Once downloaded, an application never drops out of sight and serves as a constant reminder that a park is only a tap away. ■

Further information

¹ Digital welcome guide example: www.touchstay.com

² TLJ Access Control, contactless software app: www.tljlimited.com

³ Elite Dynamics, EliteParks app for owners: www.elitedynamics.co.uk

⁴ Example of app provider offering PMS integration: www.holidaymakerapp.co.uk

⁵ Park management apps: www.goaudits.com
www.hotelperfect.co.uk