

Magic Meets Mobility: Disney Cruise Line's Interactive Guest Experience



Source: Unsplash (2024)

Background

Founded in 1996, Disney Cruise Line (DCL) is a subsidiary business under The Walt Disney Company, which operates six ships and two private islands in the Bahamas (Cruise Critic, 2023). Although still a relatively small business, the (DCL) is becoming an increasingly important contributor to Disney's overall financial performance. With plans to expand its fleet to 13 ships by 2031, DCL aims to bring the 'Disney' experience to new audiences and new places above the sea (SCMP, 2024).

To offer a more seamless experience to its guests, DCL introduced the "Disney Cruise Line Navigator" mobile application. Prior to boarding, guests can use the app to plan their trip, make payments, book premium activities, make special requests and complete online check-in at home (DCL, n.d.). Once onboard, the app transforms into 'Onboard Mode', enabling guests to participate in safety drills, view daily schedules, reserve activities, communicate with family and friends via the onboard chat feature, and receive timely ship updates (DCL, n.d.). This integrated app enhances convenience and helps guests maximize their use of onboard amenities.

In addition to operational functions, DCL has also embedded entertainment features into the app. Launched with the Disney Wish in summer 2022, "Disney Uncharted Adventure" is an onboard interactive game that allows guests to turn their mobile devices into a magical spyglass and join Captain Minnie Mouse in the search for the missing Wishing Star (Forbes, 2021). Leveraging special effects and Augmented Reality, the experience immerses guests in Disney and Pixar stories (DCL, n.d.). Users can also create their own 'DisneyMe' avatar and team up with family and friends to earn rewards and achievements through the "Disney Cruise Line Navigator" app (DCL, n.d.).

Challenges

While the "Disney Cruise Line Navigator" app provides several conveniences including online check-ins and activities reservations, these features are now considered standard across the cruise industry. For example, Royal Caribbean International offers a similar app with comparable functionality, making it difficult for DCL to gain a competitive advantage through these features alone.

Moreover, although "Disney Uncharted Adventure" is an original and distinctive innovation, it is currently available only on Disney Wish and the newly launched Disney Treasure. DCL has not announced plans to extend this interactive experience to the rest of the fleet, limiting its reach and impact on the overall brand experience.

Discussion Questions:

1. How important is the role of mobile applications in maintaining guest engagement and satisfaction from purchase to service delivery?
2. What additional features could be introduced in the app to boost engagement and create a competitive edge over other cruise companies?
3. What are the potential benefits and challenges of incorporating interactive experiences like "Disney Uncharted Adventure" into onboard experience?
4. Do you think the cruise line should incorporate its interactive experiences like "Disney Uncharted Adventure" across its entire fleet? Why or why not?

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- Cruise
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- Augmented Reality (AR)
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