A DIGITAL ATTRACTION ENSURES REPEATABILITY, HIGH PLAY-VALUE AND TONS OF FUN

This article was written based on an interview with Dr. Raine Kajastila who has a strong background and experience in digital interaction technologies and international business from a combination of both academia and industry. While there is an increasing number of digital attractions, not all family entertainment center (FEC) owners are familiar with their benefits. Furthermore, they are not always able to pinpoint the features that a digital attraction should have. Meanwhile, the generations growing up with computer and video games demand high quality entertainment also in the FEC's. So, what is there to gain when upgrading analogue structures, such as climbing walls and trampolines to have a digital dimension? Simply put, a digital attraction can help leisure and attraction industry professionals – such as trampoline parks, FEC's, softplay locations, fitness clubs as well as hotels and resorts – become successful and stay relevant for their millennial and centennial visitors.

Dr. Raine Kajastila – specialist in digital attraction technologies

Dr. Kajastila is the CEO and founder of Valo Motion. Valo Motion products are pioneering digital attractions that come in the form of interactive game platforms for climbing walls and trampolines. The heart of the products is based on Dr. Kajastila's postdoctoral research on augmented exercise and sports training environments. Previously Dr. Kajastila expanded his PhD research to two spin-off companies, from which one was ultimately acquired by Facebook.

Why and how to choose a digital attraction over an analogue one?

The indoor location visitors are used to high quality gaming in their homes. Therefore, they are expecting to get the same experience in an indoor location. This is one of the reasons why we are seeing more demand for high quality active gaming. Therefore, indoor location owners are looking for solutions that will help elevate analogue attractions to arcade and video game level. To be more exact, digital activities can no longer be simple, but need to entertain one or more people for longer periods of time, while generating repeat visits.

When choosing a digital attraction, naturally it makes sense to choose a high quality one that helps to enhance repeatability and has significant play-value. These, in return, can be achieved by generating fast ROI, encouraging customer retention and helping to bring in new customers. However, there is an array of solutions to choose from, ranging from attractions with just buttons and timers to more elaborated interactions such as full body tracking with an immersive gaming experience.

In addition to a digital attraction offering revenue drivers, they also have the potential to support visitors' active lifestyle. To that end, it makes sense to choose an attraction that combines a high quality digital attraction with an energising and motivating activity. This combo will help set the indoor location owners truly apart from their competition, while staying relevant for their millennial and centennial visitors.

Which features help to increase repeatability and grow play-value?

In order to guarantee high repeatability and play-value, on one hand, a digital attraction should include games that are immersive and motivating. On the other hand, the game selection should stay fresh, surprising and up-to-date through automatic updates.

That's not all, a digital attraction that is truly worth the investment should contain industry grade hardware, but also include a comprehensive software package. Dr. Kajastila uses Valo Motion products as an example. They come with software that includes Valo Motion Cloud Service. This tool gives the operator access to game statistics, different on-site marketing tools and game administration.

In order to achieve even higher repeatability and play-value, a digital attraction should have the ability to immerse and motivate the person to move again and again, while being safe to use. Valo Motion achieved this with their own products by creating fast and accurate tracking and unique high-quality game design. Game platforms were designed in a way that several people can safely enjoy the attraction at the same time. However, they didn't want to stop there. Dr. Kajastila believes that a good digital attraction should be immersive in the best possible way: allowing also the audience to feel like they are part of the experience.

More than that, an attraction should also include inbuilt marketing tools to help the indoor location owners drive extra revenue for their location. For example, with Valo Motion interactive game platforms, the visitors can share their game videos on their social media channels for each and every game they play. This is where it gets interesting: each time a game video is shared, the visitors spread the word about the actual location since the location owner can add their logo to these videos.

One of the trends that is getting increasingly popular is linking social sharing and community building to an attraction. Quite simply, everything is more fun when played together and with an audience cheering! When these tools are being used effectively, this can be beneficial for everybody, the visitors as well as the location owners. On one hand, by choosing an attraction with social sharing tools, the location owner can be sure that the visitor's positive experience does not only stay in the location. Instead, the visitors should be given the chance to share their video memories through different social media channels. Maximum benefits are reached when sharing does not have any extra costs. On the other hand, a digital attraction should allow online sharing of highscores, which in return enables friendly competitions between the visitors or have different locations battle each other. In other words, a good place to kickoff the community building is creating social and multiplayer events at the location itself. This was one of the reasons for Valo Motion to continue designing two-player games for their interactive trampoline game platform, ValoJump. The community building and social sharing can be taken even further by giving the visitors a platform, for example a web page, where the highest scores and best videos can be collected for everyone to see.

Finally, sometimes sharing is even more fun when you are involved in the creation process. Therefore, it makes sense to choose a digital attraction that gives the visitors the opportunity to create content themselves. For example, for our interactive climbing wall, ValoClimb, the visitors can create and name their own climbing routes.

What locations are digital attractions best suited for?

Digital attractions should be designed so that they are suited for any indoor locations. For example, Valo Motion made sure this was true for their products by ensuring that they have a relatively small footprint, significant repeatability and high play-value. In fact, Valo Motion products are being used very successfully in softplay environments for younger kids, trampoline parks for teanagers, and even fitness gyms for adults, in over 55 countries around the world.

What has allowed this diversity has been the versatility of the products. In order to guarantee high repeatability, the digital attraction should be an actual game platform. Meaning that the attraction comes with several different games, levels, modes and themes. Finally, when choosing a digital attraction, it's good to make sure that the product was

created with different age and fitness levels in mind. For example, when planning the game content for each of our game platforms, Valo Motion game developers figured that if the games and activities are designed to be interesting for adults, they definitely will also keep kids intrigued. In fact, Valo Motion products are often enjoyed by entire families.

What are the next trends for the digital attraction industries?

Geographically speaking, the highest demand and fastest growth can be seen in the United States, in Europe and in select countries in Asia, such as Japan, China and Korea. This is true not only for digital attractions, but more specifically the demand for active gaming has increased significantly.

Furthermore, the next big trend is to give the visitors the opportunity to play together with friends and even have several people having fun and moving together. Requirements grow a lot from the technical side, but it's rewarding to see groups or families enjoying the experience together. For example, in order to maximize faster ROI and gain more repeat visits, Valo Motion is planning on growing this communal aspect of their games and applications into a global league, where different locations and players can compete against each other.

Finally, indoor locations are creating bigger areas dedicated to digital sports. For example, Valo Motion even has customers dedicating places called Valo Arenas, only for Valo Motion products.

"*We set out to design games and applications that would be enjoyable and entertaining for everybody to play. By creating high quality products that are full of fun games and easy to use, we have managed to create attractions that generate clear benefits, like high repeatability and play-value, for the location owners. At the end of the day, when designing Valo Motion products, an exceptional gaming experience is all that matters, while making sure that our products are worth the investment.* "** – Dr. Kajastila

Connect with Dr. Kajastila:

Linked **in**