

CASE STUDY | MINOR ENTERTAINMENT

Minor Entertainment makes spectacular family theatre events in unique spaces. On its upcoming 2015 tour the company will be staging four shows a day (10am, 12 noon, 2pm and 4pm) running six days a week, in an inflatable show-dome.

THE THREE Cs OF VALUE

Minor Entertainment recognises the importance of value, or creating a relevant offer. For parents, the value lies in sharing a formative experience with their young child(ren), creating a memorable day together as a family. Recognising that memories depend on the whole experience being a positive one, the company considers the entire experience holistically, curating it from start to finish. The customer experience is seen as starting when they first arrive at the website, with the physical visit starting in the car park (or even following the signs en-route to the car park). Emphasis is placed on making the visit easy for parents (“everything is really family-friendly, from the welcoming staff to ample buggy parking, microwaves, flushing toilets, with toddler steps and seat inserts, and baby-changing facilities”).

While many organisations see merchandise simply as a means of making money, Minor Entertainment recognises that for many customers it’s a crucial component of the experience. A common question pre-show is what merchandise is available and audience research undertaken by Minor Entertainment into what parents remembered about their first trip to the theatre found that the merchandise and/or ice cream are commonly mentioned. Interestingly, the company observes an inverse relationship between spend on tickets and spend on merchandise – some customers value the ticket more highly and are less likely to spend on merchandise, while others opt for cheaper tickets but spend heavily on merchandise. This reinforces the idea not just of price differentiation, but that different people will value options differently. Discounts when buying in advance are used to encourage early purchase and money-back guarantees are offered to minimise barriers to advance purchase – if audience members don’t like the goody bag, for example, they can hand it back for a full refund. Wider value is created for families around the experience itself including an app with games and puzzles (where you can provide your email address or share on Facebook to access higher levels) and an online advent calendar, giving families chance to interact on a daily basis and where prizes can be won.



In terms of communicating value, the company finds that the best way to deliver value that meets or exceeds the expectations of families is to ensure those expectations are shaped in advance. Videos are made available online, sharing the experiences of other audience members through reviews/Facebook, etc. There is also an email countdown from 10 days before the show - families receive four emails during this period answering FAQs (yes it's ok to take photos); reminders and information about parking, etc.



During the evening after their visit, bookers receive an email thanking them for coming with a post-show survey. The company uses value for money as a key indicator, asking customers to score the show and items such as the goody bags. This is then used in promotion e.g.: "Last year's Goody Bag was our most popular ever. We sold over 10,000 Goody Bags and parents gave the Goody Bag 8.8/10 for value for money". The company also seeks feedback as to how it can improve. On one occasion a customer mentioned that it would have been helpful to have a playpen to put their toddler in when changing a nappy - by the next day the company had installed a playpen.



THE IMPORTANCE OF PRICE DIFFERENTIATION

The company recognises the need for price differentiation. It offers different prices according to seat location (rows 1-5 are more expensive than rows 6-13, recognising that families with small children place a 'Premium' on seats at the front) and according to time of day. Prices then increase according to demand. By varying the price for different performances, the company can smooth demand, benefitting both the company operationally and the audience in terms of the experience. The company is clear that prices will never go down in order not to dis-incentivise early booking. As with budget airlines, the strategy relies on customers being able to compare prices and adjust their behaviour in order to obtain a cheaper price should they wish to:

	10am		12pm		2pm		4pm	
Sat 05 Sep	Premium £23 6 Left	Standard £14.50 Available	Premium £25 Available	Standard £17.50 Available	Premium £25 8 Left	Standard £14.50 3 left	Premium £23 Available	Standard £14.50 Available

The company is absolutely transparent about its pricing policy: up-front on the production's home page it explains that "The earlier you book the less it costs" (crucially the price differentiation strategy is presented as a reward for early booking, not a penalty for late booking). It also makes it easy for people to search for either premium seats or lowest prices. Just tick the "Lowest Prices" box, for example, and the website will flag up those performances that have tickets for £12.50 (the cheapest ticket price) available.

TO DISCOUNT OR NOT TO DISCOUNT...?

Although the company's research into price identified that parents prefer differently priced tickets for adults and children, the company decided against also differentiating prices according to age: "Instead we're offering attractive discounts for our off-peak performances". It was felt that an additional level of differentiation on top of time of day and seat location would be one level of complexity too many.

The company does, however, offer heavily reduced prices for children aged 0 - 5 months, finding that this has the effect of increasing party size, and uses sales promotions in the form of time-limited discount coupons (save £5 if you spend £60 or 5% off if less than £60 - with the amounts set based on average basket size) to track offline marketing activity such as print ads and to increase urgency to purchase (your discount expires tonight - book now!).

In early 2015 Minor Entertainment will be launching Familytickets.com, a new ticketing service focused on making access to tickets and the all-important information that families need a little bit easier.

With thanks to Andrew Collier,
Creative Director of Minor Entertainment
www.minorentertainment.com

