

The background of the page is a photograph of an aquarium tank. In the upper right, a shark's head and dorsal fin are visible, swimming towards the left. In the lower left, a person is seen from the back, looking up at the tank. The water is a deep blue-green color.

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*Using Technology to Increase*

# GUEST ENGAGEMENT AT ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS

Many ZOOs and Aquariums are looking for innovative ways to encourage guests to visit their facilities and share the experience with friends and family. Consumer loyalty is extremely valuable for attractions that depend on ticket sales for a significant portion of revenue. With so many options for outings and activities, it can be challenging for ZOOs and aquariums to stand out as a top pick for consumers.



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Many operators are now turning to digital solutions to enhance the guest experience at their ZOO or aquarium – these innovative solutions also allow ZOO and aquarium operators to gain insight into consumer behaviors and preferences. RFID technology can be used to streamline the guest experience while also gathering informative data that can be used for future marketing plans, loyalty programs and facility development.

## CONVENIENCE IS KEY

Guests appreciate anything that will make their visit to the ZOO or aquarium easier and more frictionless. RFID wristbands serve as a convenient option for access control at busy attractions.

Guests simply need to provide their information once at registration, and can then scan throughout the facility to gain access to various areas. Wristbands are more secure, and less cumbersome, than printed tickets. Parent and child wristbands can also be paired, adding another layer of security for families visiting the ZOO or aquarium. If a child gets lost, a staff member can simply scan their wristband to have the parents notified immediately.

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Guests can also scan their wristbands to make cashless payments and participate in games and activations on site. A connected RFID wristband is a comprehensive solution that allows the guest to manage their entire experience with one simple tool. Wristbands can be used by guests of all ages, and there is no need to download an application or even have a mobile device on hand. By simplifying the guest experience, the ZOO or aquarium is demonstrating a willingness to put the interests of their guests first; this goes a long way towards developing a deeper connection with consumers of all ages.

## VALUABLE INSIGHT

Using RFID technology, ZOO and aquarium operators can benefit from a unique opportunity to learn more about their guests. The registration form associated with each RFID wristband contains key demographic information that can be used to gain a better understanding of who each guest is and what their key interests are. Consumer behavior data can be analyzed and used for strategic marketing plans and new initiatives to increase visitor retention. While it is important for ZOOs and aquariums to encourage guests to visit their facilities, it is equally important that the guest feels engaged throughout the experience and thereby more likely to visit again.



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Many ZOOs and aquariums are discovering that education is a motivating factor for visitors at their attractions. Interactive and educational games are being developed to reach today's tech-savvy consumers in a way that makes sense for them. "The importance of visitor retention should not be diminished. While an enriching environment is imperative to promoting true learning, the best educational situations in the world will not lead to learning unless the visitor spends some time engaging with the exhibition in which they are present." Guests of all ages can use their RFID wristbands to participate in educational scavenger hunts, trivia contests and more by simply scanning at various touch points throughout the ZOO or aquarium. By sharing content that drives both educational and conservation-based messaging, the facility not only provides an opportunity for learning, but also establishes a sense of interest and commitment with each guest.

<sup>1</sup> Interactive Technology in the Modern Zoo and Aquarium, Drew Heyward, South Carolina Aquarium. <https://nairegion3.wordpress.com/2015/03/17/interactive-technology-in-the-modern-zoo-and-aquarium/>



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