



WHITEPAPER

Experiential Design in Themed Spaces

Core Concepts in Creating Immersive User Experiences

WACKY WORLD
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A PLAYCORE Company



Introduction

Space is a critical element of interior design. With a considerable portion of our lives spent indoors, the spaces we occupy have a massive influence on our moods, feelings, behavior and physical wellbeing.

Themed environments can enhance a range of human experience in a wide array of spaces including commercial real estate, medical offices, entertainment venues, restaurants, museums, and many others. Through the psychology of space, theming can immerse guests in a story, envelope them with a sense of place, alleviate fear and discomfort, and transport them to new worlds.

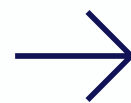


What is Experiential Design and Why is it Beneficial?

The psychology of space, also known as environmental psychology, refers to the interaction between people and the space they inhabit.¹ Our brains are affected by varying elements in that space. In recent years, the link between interior design and psychology has been getting a lot of attention and recognition for its importance.

Consequently, architecture and design are steering towards a people-centric focus and creative methods to make a space more immersive for the social and psychological needs of its occupants. Those core concepts are the foundation of experiential design, or designing a space to ensure it delivers an experience to the people who enter. It's especially critical in themed space design.

**There are four key
elements to consider.**



Four Elements of Great Themed Environments

1

Theming

While theming is also the broadest concept, it serves as an element within the creation of the space itself. Theming encompasses the overall concept of taking an empty space and delivering an immersive experience, and sets the tone for all elements used to execute the experience. Will the space be designed to encourage calmness, comfort, and relaxation, or will it motivate excitement and activity? Will it take on a specific theme like outer space, underwater, in the woods, or will the theme be a more abstract concept? Wall coverings, window clings, decals, and ceiling treatments are critical elements in shaping this broader experience.



2

Access

Access is critically important. Intentional design that promotes inclusion for people with disabilities helps ensure the greatest number of people can use the space to the greatest extent possible. A good themed environment will address the physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communicative needs of all guests. These inclusive considerations should align with evidence-based design practices to break down both physical and social barriers to participate. Ensure the team you work with has experience and understanding of this concept.

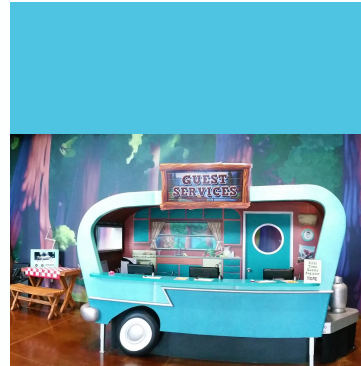
Four Elements of Great Themed Environments

3

Signage

Signage is a key element in a themed space, and includes the visual aspects of wayfinding, communicating identity and information, and shaping the experiences that connect people to place. If a visitor cannot find their way through the themed space, it becomes frustrating and therefore impossible to enjoy in the way intended.

Signage may be used to enhance directional instruction, lesson-based content, text, and images to impart an idea, display content (such as in museum exhibits,) and deliver branded content (as found in restaurants and commercial spaces.) Signage should always follow the overall theme so it becomes part of the experience.



4

Amenities

Finally, amenities are the elements used within the space to complete the 360-degree immersive experience. Themed amenities will take traditional functional elements, like tables, benches, etc. and combine design and art in a fanciful way to complement and enhance the experience within the space. 3D sculptures, interactive room features, and other elements help define user encounters, and what the result of the encounters will inspire. Amenities may include theming an existing element in the space to create a positive experience, for example, theming a medical apparatus to reduce fear and increase comfort .

Connecting the Dots Between Theme & Experience

The best themed spaces seamlessly integrate design and experience. Design might catch guests' attention, but the experience is what will keep them coming back. The sophistication and complexity of successful themed environments require development teams who can listen, adapt, and innovate to create spaces that deliver a sense of place that aligns to the site owner's vision for the user's experience.



That's Where We Come In!

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A **PLAYCORE** Company

Let's Create Next Level Environments...Together!

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