

11-9-2011

Experiential Hospitality Environments: The Roles of the Interior Architectural Features in Affording Meanings of Place

Tari Pelaez

Florida International University, tpela001@fiu.edu

DOI: 10.25148/etd.FI11120612

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

EXPERIENTIAL HOSPITALITY ENVIRONMENTS: THE ROLES
OF THE INTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES IN AFFORDING
MEANINGS OF PLACE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERIOR DESIGN

by

Tari Pelaez

2011

To: Dean Brian Schriener
College of Architecture and the Arts

This thesis, written by Tari C. Pelaez, and entitled *Experiential Hospitality Environments: The Roles of the Interior Architectural Features in Affording Meanings of Place*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Philip Abbott

Sarah Sherman

Janine King, Major Professor

Date of Defense: November 9, 2011

The thesis of Tari Pelaez is approved.

Dean Brian Schriener
College of Architecture and the Arts

Dean Lakshmi N. Reddi
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2011

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family. Without their patience, understanding, support, and most of all love, the completion of this work would not have been possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the members of my committee for their encouragement, support, guidance, and good humor. Their manageable but rigorous direction has been most appreciated. I have found my coursework throughout the program to be stimulating and challenging, providing me with the tools needed to explore both present and future research. Philip Abbott was particularly helpful in guiding me toward my thesis topic and establishing a qualitative methodology. Sarah Sherman's experience with research and her training in Atlas.ti were elemental to my qualitative content analysis. Finally, I would like to thank my major professor, Janine King. From the beginning, she had confidence in my abilities, was understanding with my responsibilities to the Solar Decathlon, and allowed me to gain teaching experience.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
EXPERIENTIAL HOSPITALITY ENVIRONMENTS: THE ROLES OF
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by

Tari Pelaez

Florida International University, 2011

Miami, Florida

Professor Janine King, Major Professor

People's authentic sense of place is being overshadowed by less authentic experiences referred to as placelessness. Consequently, a demand for experiential interior environments has surfaced. Experiential environmental and place attachment theories suggested that the relationships between self, others, and the environment are what encourage users in creating meaningful authentic experiences. This qualitative study explored the roles of the experiential interior architectural features in affording users of hospitality environments higher-level needs, such as meanings of place. For the case study, ten participants stayed at a hotel for two nights. Participants were given a guided list of ten facets of an experience, which was insidiously structured by both experiential environmental and place attachment theories. The participants used photographs to document each of the facets on the guided list. The photos were then used during the photo elicitation interviews, which evoked additional qualitative information. Participants identified specific interior architectural features and described them using the themes associated to place attachment theories. The findings revealed

that the interior architectural features might enrich the meanings a person associates with a given place. Possibly affording users higher-level needs. As a result, if an experiential interior environment allows users to foster relationships between self, others, and the physical environment, they may experience more authentic experiences and give more meanings to a place.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, people seeking social status, desiring more meaning, and pursuing psychological self-realization has induced a demand for experiential interior environments. Researchers argue that people's authentic sense of place is being overshadowed by less authentic experiences referred to as placelessness: the careless dissolution of distinctive places and the creation of standardized environments that emanate from an indifference to the significance of place (Relph 1976). Relph suggests that placelessness surfaces from an unsuspecting tolerance of mass values or from the prevailing burden of efficiency. The outcome of these two forces, which materialize through mass communication, mass culture, and central authority, is the 'undermining of place' and the purposeless substitute of significant places with unclassified and exchangeable environments (Relph 1976, p. 143 as cited in Seamon & Sowers, 2008).

Recent literature validates a need to better integrate the influence of human experiences into the present dialogue of people-place relationships. Research additionally has shown that people seem to covet more experience value in their purchases (Markowitz as cited in Synder 1999). People covet amusement so much that the present market is identified as the "experience economy" (Synder 1999). In terms of fulfilling human needs, simply buying goods and services are no longer sufficient.

LITERATURE OF REVIEW

Experiential Interior Environments

According to philosopher John Dewey, an experience is the intertwining of people and their environments. Dewey believes that experiences surface from a person's "...functional need to interact effectively with the world, restoring stability by means or

actions” (Dewey, 1925, as cited in Alexander, 1987, p. 126). The environment’s capacity to be acted upon and the person’s capacity to act on the environment are what define experiences (Dewey, 1925, as cited in Alexander, 1987, p. 126). People have already developed into experts at “...reading a symbolic landscape, one bristling with referential content” (p. 109) People expect these environments, and look for it everywhere (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 109). Experiential-based design attempts to so thoroughly recognize the consumer’s experience that it can identify the values that he or she perceives as defining. The objective of experiential-based design is to form a product and marketing design approach, which reflects that experience into a brand culture that promotes the product and inspires passion (Ashcraft, & Slattery, 1996, p. 41).

The experience economy business model, acclaimed as the fourth economic offering, illustrates the desire for experiential qualities in interior environments. The agricultural economy began with the extraction of commodities from the earth and shifted to an industrial economy due to the production of goods. When the delivery of services emerged, the economy was then industrialized. And presently, the fourth economic offering, experiences, materializes as services are re-packaged and presented as complete experiences (Gilmore & Pine, 1999 as cited in Hayes & Macleod, 2007, p. 45).

When framed by environmental psychology, the experience economy business model could be applied to several servicescape settings: retail, health care, education, and hospitality. A servicescape is the environment in which a service is delivered and where a company and its customers interact (Bitner, & Zeithanal, 1996). Any tangible

commodities that aid in the performance or communication of the service are also considered parts of the servicescape. Oftentimes services communicate through the actual physical environments where the service is performed, delivered, and consumed (Bitner, & Zeithanal, 1996). It appears that the experience economy can be applied to servicescapes for that is where people interact with businesses and make purchases. Some theorists have already conceptualized the experience economy as frameworks applicable to built environments (Gilmore & Pine, 1999; Ander & Stern, 2008; Dant as cited in Cooper, & Press, 2003, p. 73). These theories ascribe an environmental psychology perspective, which focuses on the symbiotic relationships between humans and their environments. In these transactions, individuals change the environment and their behaviors and experiences are changed by the environment (Kopec, 2006, p. xv; Gifford, 2007, p. 1).

As mentioned earlier, the standardization of environments has led to placelessness. Specifically, servicescapes such as retail and health care environments fall victim to this issue due to issues such as mass production and efficiency (Relph 1976). Currently, the hospitality servicescape industry is evolving to support higher-level human needs (Goff, 2005, ¶ 1). For decades, the aim for most hotel chains was consistency to assure that each hotel's offering was uniform. Hotels were designed to sustain the most basic needs: sleeping, eating, bathing, etc. Recently hotels have discovered losses of market share to small, intimate hotels and have reacted, not with character, but with higher standards (Goff, 2005, ¶ 2). This research seeks to examine the physical settings of experiential servicescapes in order to ascertain the role of the

interior architecture features in affording users of hospitality environments higher-level needs such as meanings of place.

Experiential environments are distinctly different than themed environments. Themed environments focus on entertaining the user and are typically fantasy environments orchestrated to synchronize sensory and symbolic cues. The goal is to evoke a general mood of excitement or, more often, nostalgia by evoking another time and place detached from the regional or temporal context (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 113). Fundamentally, themed environments communicate explicit allusions or metaphors; they allude to another place or time by relying on the creation of an atmosphere through imagery, whether painted, built up in relief, or projected on screens (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 113). The Rainforest Café is an example of a themed environment, which transports users into a rainforest dining experience. The users' sense of reality is warped within a themed environment. The intent of the setting is to dissolve consciousness of self as anything other than a protagonist in a script (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 118).

Due to the misinterpretation of themed and experiential environments, the general public relates experiential environments to entertainment. It is often assumed that adding elements of entertainment to existing offerings qualifies as an experience (Gilmore & Pine, 1999, pp. 29-30). A themed environment is that acts upon users by sending them prescribed messages; the experience is one-sided. On the other hand, an experiential environment provides a reciprocal experience, one that acts upon the users and allows the users to act upon it. Experiential environments are those, which closely reflects Dewey's idea of synergy between people and environments (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 118, Dewey, 1925, as cited in Alexander, 1987, p. 126). Gilmore and Pine (1999) define

experiential environments as service settings that promote entertainment, esthetics, education, and escape (p. 30). When an environment encompasses all four realms it offers richer experiences (Gilmore & Pine, 1999, p. 39). However, there is limited knowledge about how the physical environment contributes to creating a rich experience. According to Gilmore and Pine’s model, entertainment is only one of the characteristics of an experience; designing experiences is not simply about entertaining people; “it’s about engaging them” (1999, p. 30).

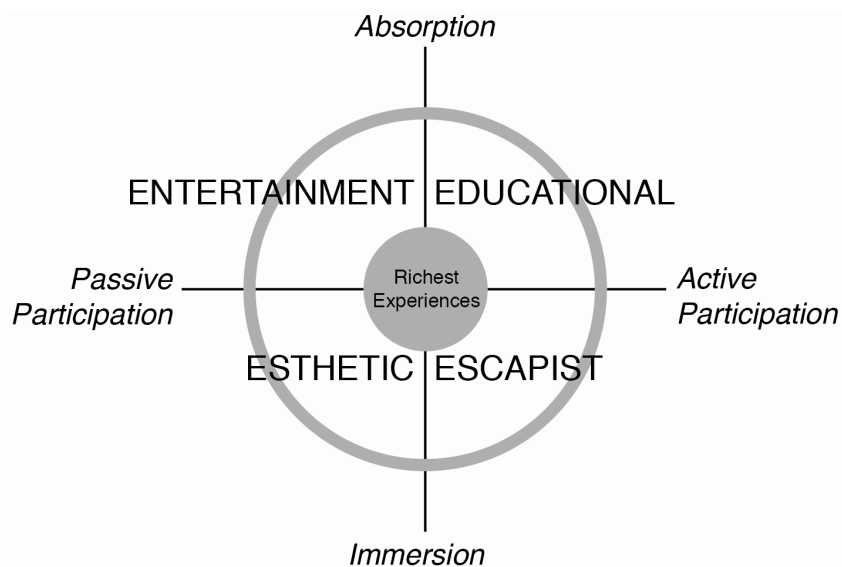


Figure 1. Four Realms of Experiences adapted from (Gilmore & Pine, 1999, p. 30)

Gilmore and Pine operationalize their concept of engagement in experiential service environments as a structure of overlapping polar scales. At the top of the vertical axis is *absorption* —seducing a person’s consciousness by making the mind mindful of the experience —at the bottom end of the vertical axis of the vertical axis, *immersion* — performing physically (or virtually) as an element of the experience itself. Absorption can be described as an experience that ‘goes into’ the user, as when watching a movie.

For example, in a themed environment, a user's role is limited to that of a reader who interprets cues from the environment, but does not actually perform actions that advance the experience any further. Contrastingly, when the user 'goes into' the experience as when playing video games, the user aids in the creation of their experience and is thus immersed into the experience. The polar scales of the horizontal axis of Gilmore and Pine's framework consist of *passive participation* on one end, and *active participation* sits at the other end. This model characterizes *passive participation* as a one-way interaction where users indirectly influence the experience. For example, when symphony goers act only as listeners their influence on the outcome of the experience does not derive from direct interaction with the orchestra, but rather from absorbing the sounds from the orchestra and interpreting it themselves. *Active participation* is when users themselves shape the performance or event that affords the experience, as in a rock climber who actively contributing to his or her overall experience (Gilmore & Pine, 1999, pp. 30-31). In this case the environment and the user reciprocally influence the other. For example, the rock climber is positioned in a particular environment for the activity, yet the climber is the one who determines how high or how fast to travel. At the center of the overlaid polar scales is a true rich experience, which represents the integration of entertainment, esthetics, education, and escape elements. This configuration allows researchers to assess experiential environments by categorizing an experience on the *absorption* and *immersion* scale and then on the *passive* or *active participation* scale. An experience can then be rated as a true rich experience derived from the experience's distance to the center of the model. Although Gilmore and Pine's model provides us with an effective assessment of experiential environments it focuses

primarily on the effects of an individual user and does not fully take into account matters related to interactions with others and the physical environment.

Parallel to Gilmore and Pine's experience economy business model is Ander and Stern's revolutionizing retail theory (2008). In their book *Greentailing and Other Revolutions in Retail*, retail consultants, Ander and Stern, describe six revolutions in retailing, including experiential retailing. Ander and Stern, like Gilmore & Pine, recognize the economic shifts that have influenced the retail industry. According to the authors, retail is shifting its focus on selling commoditized goods at the lowest prices to addressing the more complex needs of consumers. Based upon multiple site visits and case studies, Ander and Stern developed a list of features or factors that are common in experiential retail environments (Ander & Stern, 2008, pp. 160 – 161). They are as follows:

1. Superior product: The product being sold must be of quality, eco-friendly, in demand, or high-tech.
2. Solution-oriented: The products must be displayed in vignettes showcased in the context of the customer's end-use.
3. Employees as acolytes: Associates in the store must be esteemed, a devoted follower or attendants of the brand, and feel part of a corporation with a greater cause; cult-like.
4. Intense product interaction: The store is proud of what they sell and eager for people to interact with the products.

5. Values-based mission: The corporation must have a strong values-based mission. They sell “why” —they do what they do —in addition to the actual tangible product. A values-based mission is an organizational approach that assures the corporation is managed strictly on value, typically increasing shareholder’s value.
6. Tight brand group: The customers feel they are part of a select group; believe they are in the know, and proud to share this with others.
7. Visible identification: The corporation must use logos or symbols on their products so that users can prove brand affinity.

Ander and Stern’s list is relevant for it focuses on the effects of individual users, and it introduces the significance of interactions with others. In conjunction, Gilmore and Pine’s and Ander and Stern’s theories illustrate how both users and others can influence experiences.

Dant’s (1999) design experience model expands both Gilmore and Pine’s and Ander and Stern’s theories for it discloses not only the importance of the importance of users and interactions with others, but it includes features of the physical environment as influencers of experiences. Sociologist, Tim Dant, reveals in his design experience model six modes of interaction that allow users to explore the properties of designed objects or spaces (1999, p. 55 as cited in Cooper, & Press, 2003, p. 73).

1. Function: Extends or enhances at least one of our physical actions.
2. Signification: Signifies social group membership —it marks our differences.
3. Sexuality: Arousing in some way or signifies sexual identity or activity.
4. Knowledge: Delivers knowledge or information to users.

5. Aesthetics: Induces emotion by its beauty of form.
6. Mediation: Enables or enhances communication between people.

Dant's design experience model evinces a series of distinctive user experiences. Experiences change the way users complete physical tasks, provide forms of social identity and difference, induce aesthetic responses to designed objects or spaces, and enables new forms of social relationships (Cooper, & Press, 2003, p. 73). It shall also be noted that the design of any object or space cannot be disconnected from the way it is advertised and packaged, the context in which it is sold, the stages of use, the experience it produces, and the mode by which users finalize use or ownership of it (Cooper, & Press, 2003, p. 73).

These three theories aid us in interpreting the relationships between a design's attributes and the experiences that they present users. The theories illustrate how users themselves, others in the environment, and specific features of the physical environment play important roles in creating experiences. However, the dynamic nature of those user experiences —how they transform over time, interrelate with each other, and generate a demand for new and distinctive experiences —has yet to be explored.

Marketing specialist Rhea believes that understanding the holistic cycle of an experience is essential in order to anticipate the various challenges and opportunities for design. "The real challenges come when we step back and reassess all the ways a design might influence and benefit customers —physically, emotionally, intellectually, and culturally" (1992 as cited in Cooper, & Press, 2003, p. 73). It is users' experiences with designed environments that uncover the opportunities of applying design in inventive ways that may indiscernibly meet users' needs and expectations. Rhea advanced the

design experience model as a conceptual tool, which helps designers understand the complete cycle of user experiences. The experience cycle commences before users are even first informed of a product. It then moves through engagement and use, to disengagement. And the final phase is how the experience is integrated into their lives (1992 as cited in Cooper, & Press, 2003, p. 73).

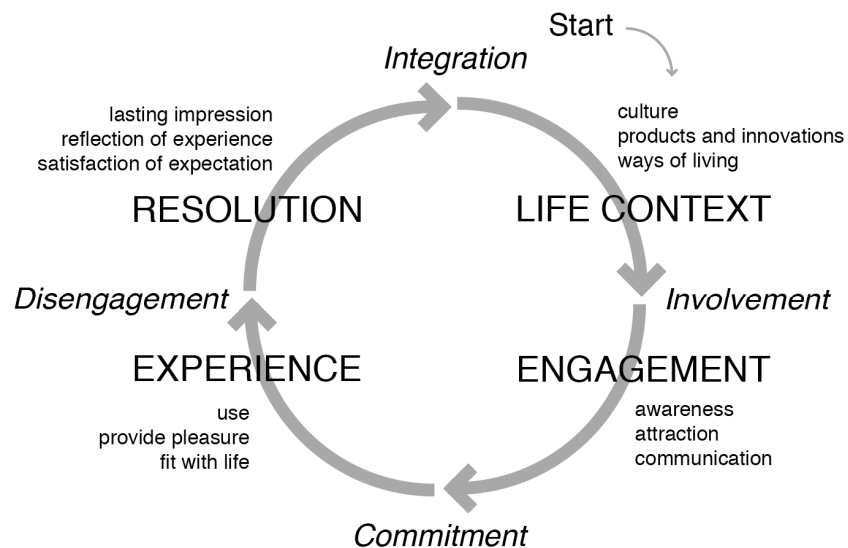


Figure 2. The Design Experience Model adapted from (Rhea, 1992, p. 12)

The cycle of an experience is subdivided into four major components: *life context*, *engagement*, *experience*, and *resolution*. Linking each of the major components are intermediary phases, which represent the transitional shifts from one major component to the next. The cycle of an experience commences at *life context*; this is the cultural and social circumstance of a user. The *life context* of each user can include the way they live, things they own, things they want, etc. These factors actuate a user's reaction to a design, and the distinct ways a user may use or experience it. The second major stage in the cycle of design experience is *engagement*. This starts an intermediary phase Rhea

terms as *involvement*, which is when users first become aware of the design. During *engagement*, design must achieve three tasks: it must make users aware of its distinct existence, it must intrigue and sustain interest, and it must convey the design's differentiating characteristics. The design responsibility for this stage of the cycle is to communicate values that are pertinent and appealing to the user. *Engagement* can be accomplished through effective branding, packaging, advertising, and product design, all working collectively to underline individual user experiences. Successful *engagement* leads to *commitment*, when the user invests in the design. This leads to the third major stage in the cycle —*experience*, when the design is used and becomes part of a user's life experience. The challenge at this stage is to not only fulfill users' expectation, but also to surpass the expectations and provide additional, unanticipated benefits. Also at this stage, the functional aspects of design become vital to the experience of the design. The intention is to generate a design that renders rich sensory pleasure. At a certain point of an experience, users *disengage* from the design and enter the phase of *resolution*, the fourth major stage. In many circumstances, users reflect on the experience phase of consumption. The design objective is to shift users through this phase positively so that they *integrate* their experience into their *life context*, and initiate the cycle again (Rhea, 1992 as cited in Cooper, & Press, 2003, pp. 73-79). Although Rhea's model identifies the cycle of user experiences, the model does not identify the role the physical environments plays in the process of transition from one stage to another.

Investigating the features of successful designs, and how they interact within the cycle of experience users go through seems to be a critical challenge facing design today. Designers design products and spaces. They are aesthetic innovators and problem

solvers. Recent literature also suggests that in addition to these roles, designers are facilitators and creators of experiences that influence the quality of human experiences of place (Cooper, & Press, 2003, p. 79).

Meanings of Place

Although experiential theories are framed by environmental psychological structures, the theories suggest that users underlying individual psychological needs influence how they experience places. Individual psychology is a theory of human behavior underlining the force to conquer feelings of weakness by compensation and the need to reach personal goals that have value for society (Individual Psychology, 2007). According to Stewart (2007), environmental psychology and individual psychology may reciprocally inform each other (p. 67). This could be because environmental and individual psychologies emphasize the steadfast presence of people within both social and physical contexts (Stewart, 2007, p. 81). More so, individual psychology is applicable to environmental psychology for the accumulated behaviors of individuals affect perception of environmental quality (2007, p. 67). Adler, like Stewart, expresses an association between individual psychology and the built environment. In both of these later psychologies, the environment is paramount regarding its promotion of basic psychological needs and in affording self-actualization (Hoffman, 1994 as cited in Stewart, 2007, p. 68). The links between environmental psychology and individual psychology presage a more specific parallel between experiential environmental and place attachment theories. The experiential environmental theories revealed the significance of user participation, interactions with others and the physical environment

in influencing experiences. Place attachment theories also identify self, others, and the environment as important factors.

Meanings of place are presently an important topic in the social sciences (Gustafson, 2001, p. 5), environmental psychology in particular. Some theorists argue that personal relationships have become gradually interceded by media and communication technologies, and hence disengaged from their local context (Meyrowitz, 1985; Giddens, 1991; Hay, 1998 as cited in Gustafson, 2001, p. 5). This reflects early phenomenological perceptions of place, which asserts that modernity and internationalization generate “placelessness,” and inauthentic interior environments (Relph, 1976 as cited in Gustafson, 2001, p. 5). According to Relph, an authentic sense of place is ‘a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places—not mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor following stereotyped conventions’ (Relph 1976, p. 64 as cited in Seamon & Sowers, 2008). These arguments raise questions regarding how experiences of place are interrelated to the conception of place within social and behavioral sciences.

Specific terms have surfaced in the literature, particularly, place attachment (Altman & Low, 1992; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 20010 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 47), place identity (Proshansky, 1978; Sarbin, 1983; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 47), and sense of place (Buttimer, 1980; Tuan, 1980; Steele, 1981; Hay, 1998 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 47). These concepts are broadly defined. For example, place attachment is conceded as the “bonding of people to places” and focuses on assessments of places (Altman & Low,

1992 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 47). Place identity has been defined as the dimensions of a person that extend in relation to their physical environments and how places shape identity (Proshansky, 1978; Moore, 2000 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 47). Sense of place is an experiential process established by a setting together with what a person commits to it (Steele, 1981, p. 9 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 47). Certain researchers contend that sense of place and place identity are extensions of place attachment (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck, & Watson 1992; Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 47). Although research has identified place attachment as a primary concept overlaying both place identity and sense of place, the role of interior architecture features in supporting the creation of place attachment is poorly understood.

Table 1
Meanings of Place Terms

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Place Attachment | The “bonding of people to places.” |
| Place Identity | The dimensions of a person that extend in relation to their physical environments and how places shape identity. |
| Sense of Place | An experiential process established by a setting together with what a person brings to it. |

Researchers from a variety of fields have established theoretical concepts of place. In his influential work regarding place and placelessness, Relph (1976) identified three components of place: physical setting, activities and meaning. He states that perhaps meaning is the most complex of the components to grasp, however it is of critical importance (*cf.* Tuan, 1977 as cited in Gustafson, 2001, p. 6). If architects and designers do not fully understand the meanings that place afford users they risk ignoring authentic places and/or designing inauthentic ones (*cf.* Seamon, 1979; Buttimer &

Seamon, 1980; Relph, 1981 as cited in Gustafson, 2001, p. 6). Sixsmith (1986) suggested a parallel framework of place in a paper investigating the meanings accredited to “home.” Using a mixed methods approach, the study divulged some 20 different meanings of home. Additional analysis indicated that the meanings could be divided under three broad categories, or “experiential modes”: personal, social, and physical. While Sixsmith’s framework categorizes users’ attributions of meanings (as cited in Gustafson, 2001, p. 6) it does not identify the role of the physical environment nor activities in the creation of meaning.

Canter (1997) expanded a more complex “facet theory,” that involves the classification of four interrelated facets of place: functional differentiation, place objectives, the scale of interaction, and aspects of design. Two of these facets, functional differentiation and aspects of design are clearly related to the areas of interior architecture and architecture. The facet of place objectives takes into account the individual, social, and cultural aspects of place experiences. The fourth facet, scale of interaction, stresses the significance of environmental scale. Although Relph, Sixsmith, and Canter represent diverse disciplines, they attempt to categorize the principle elements of place and impart critical similarities (*cf.* Sime, 1986; Groat, 1995 as cited in Gustafson, 2001, p. 6). These theories of place attachment relate to the experiential theories for they also emphasize how the reciprocity between self, others, and the physical environment make for stronger senses of place and thus richer experiences.

This study will use a theoretical model developed by Gustafson, which is a meta-analysis of works by Relph, Sixsmith, and Canter. Gustafson suggested an analytical framework, which helps identify what makes places meaningful. This qualitative study

asked participants to list places they considered significant and explain what these places meant to them. The analysis of the interviews implied that meanings spontaneously related to places could be positioned around and between the three poles of self, others, and the environment. Gustafson’s triangular model expresses how the meanings of place were repeatedly positioned in the relationship between *self*, *others*, and/or *environment*, instead of explicitly correlating to one of the poles (Gustafson, 2001, pp. 9-11).

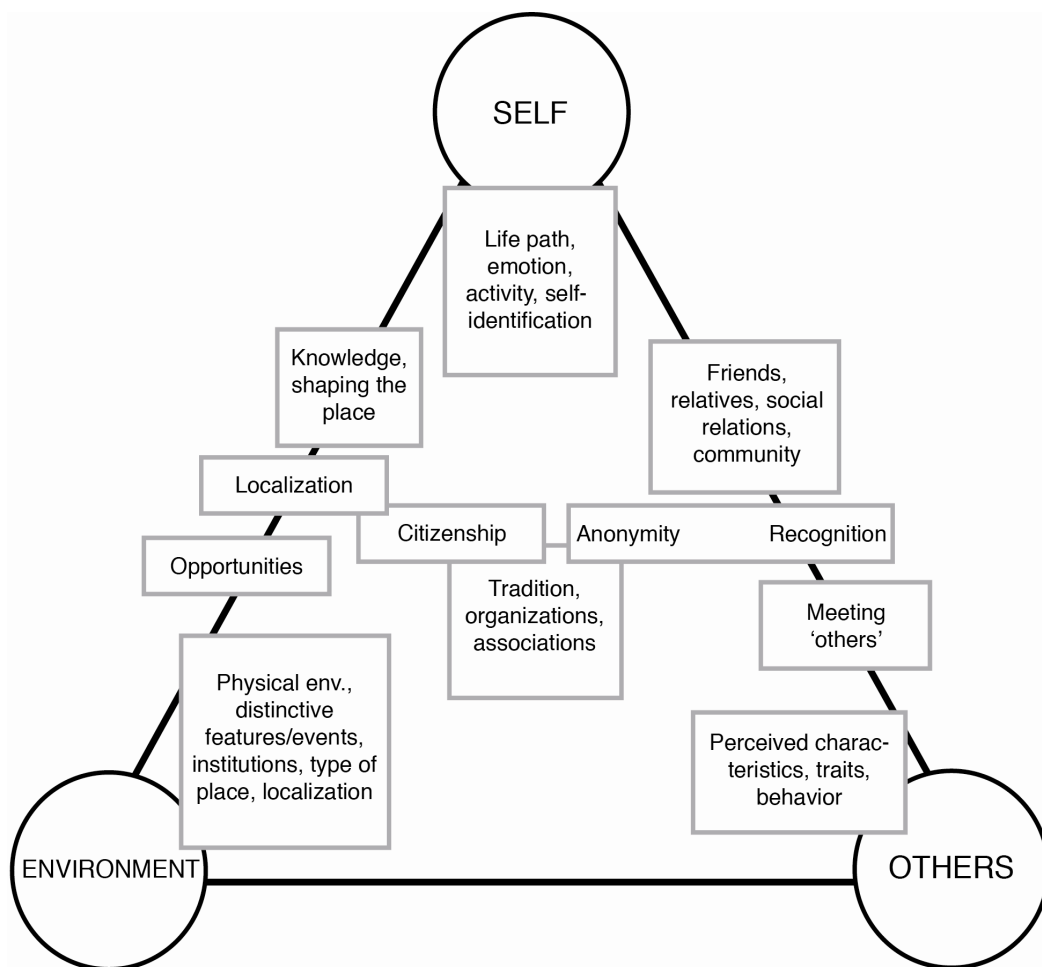


Figure 3. Meanings of Place Attributed by the Respondents adapted from (Gustafson, 2001, p. 10)

Self.

Places commonly have personal meanings. An important theme of self is an individual's life path. A life path includes the places where an individual has lived for a long period of time or places they numerously revisit. An individual's life path stems from rootedness and continuity. Another theme of meaning is emotion. In particular, participants in Gustafson's study correlated their places of residence with safety and a feeling of home. A third theme linking self to place is activity. The study revealed that the participant's work and leisure activities were associated with their meanings of place. The fourth theme suggests that places are sources of self-identification (*cf.* Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996 as cited in Gustafson, 2001, p. 9). Participants used their place of residence for explaining to others who they are. Additionally, participants sometimes felt they represent their town, region, or country.

Self-others.

The relationship between self and others is another important category of meanings. In the study, places became meaningful because of participants' interactions and relationships with local people and the feeling of community that such social relations form. A similar theme is recognition; specifically, being recognized by and recognizing others in the environment. Opposite to recognition is anonymity, described as a self-environmental relation.

Others.

Places may also be related to others without specific indications of social interactions or encounters. In this instance, places are ascribed meaning through perceived characteristics, traits, and behaviors of their inhabitants and not as a result of

social exchanges. Assuming characteristics of inhabitants can be considered stereotypical and are frequently contingent on specific evaluations relating “us”/ “here” and “them”/ “there” (p. 10). This theme exposes individuals’ desires to belong and their yearning for insiderness. Nevertheless, a handful of participants clearly dismissed such generalities, insinuating that the inhabitants of a place are not always a uniform group.

Others-environment.

The others-environment theme is difficult to categorize into one pole, and therefore it is located amid the poles of others and environment. In this study, numerous participants recount the atmosphere, the climate, or the street-life of a place in such a manner that features of the inhabitants illustrate the urban environment itself. Additionally, place appears to be associated with a certain type of inhabitant —e.g. immigrants, newcomers, etc.

Environment.

Oftentimes, meanings of place are embedded exclusively in the physical environment and not derived from a sense of self, relationships, or opinions of others. The participants’ descriptions of place concerned the physical environments, which includes the natural environments, natural conditions (weather, seasons), and the built environment. Furthermore, the distinct features particular to a place may also be essential in these cases. Meaning can be attributed to a place not merely as a physical environment, but also as a symbolic or historical environment. Subsequently, symbolic cues identify environments as a certain “type[s]” of places (e.g. metropolis, farming area) (p. 11). Finally, places are depicted with orientation to their localization, their proximity or remoteness to others.

Environment-self.

The relationships between self and the environment may also establish meanings of place. These relationships are frequently derived from the participants' knowledge of the place. Certain participants refer to a contextual knowledge, such as geography and history; others value their awareness with the inhabited physical environment. An interrelated theme concerns the manipulation of the physical environment by the participants themselves e.g. repairing the houses they live in or creating privacy barriers in their offices. In addition, the environment is often interpreted as being meaningful if it affords users opportunities: to perform certain tasks, to experience something desirable, or to advance personal development. Another class of relationship between self and environment, in terms of an institutional environment, is citizenship. Citizenship may also be expressed in terms of contribution and would therefore be interdependent on others. There is also a localization theme in the environment-self relationship. This is when the location of a place is not determined based on geographical distance to another place, but is based upon a person's access to it—close or far away, easy or difficult to reach.

Self-others-environment.

Some themes incorporate all three poles of the self-others-environment model. For example, traditions, festivals, and anniversaries often involve self, others, and environments, ranging from a local scale to a national scale. Additionally, when an association or organization spatially defines an individual's membership to a place it becomes more meaningful to that individual. Contrastingly, if an individual is not a

member, the place is not as meaningful to them. This theme emphasizes that self, others, and the environment appear to contribute to the overall meaning of place.

Gustafson's findings divulge several meanings that places afford. It should be noted that not all places signify the same meanings to everyone. Some participants affirmed that they do not consider particular meanings applicable; these participants often regarded places as mere physical environments. In this case, other inhabitants in the environment or what they themselves do and experience there does not influence their meanings of place. The three-pole model illustrated in *Figure 3* does not assume that all individuals attribute the same meanings to places. The model is a framework, which aims to capture the variations in the attributed meanings of place (2001, pp. 9-11).

Research indicates that an individual's degree of place attachment may vary between places of different spatial scales (Kaltenborn, 1997 as cited in Gustafson, 2001, p. 12). Specifically, place attachment has been operationalized and investigated predominantly in terms of residential environments (Guiliani, 1991; Bonaiuto, Aiello, Perugina, Bonnes, & Ercolani, 1999; Nanistora & Mesarasova, 2000; Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 48). Place attachment research has also recently focused on nature and wilderness experiences (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Steel, 2000; Wickham, 2001; Vitterso, Vorkinn, & Vistad, 2001 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 48). Moreover, Gustafson's study denotes that places of different spatial scale may be attributed with different meanings (2001, p. 12). His analysis of participants' responses elucidates that small places were often given meanings stemming from the self pole of his three-pole model or from the self's relations with others and/or the environments. On the contrary, larger places appeared to be linked more with others and

various features of the environments and not with any peculiar reference to the participants. Smaller places, such as neighborhoods and cities, are primarily ascribed with self-related meanings, while meanings related to others and/or environments are coupled with larger places, such as regions and nations (Gustafson, 2001, p. 12).

Ultimately, if a place affords positive environmental cues and allows users to identify with themselves and with others, users are more likely to form a strong sense of place attachment (Gustafson, 2001, p. 10). A user's place attachment is based upon the combination of self, others, and the environment, rather than simply one or two of the facets. For example, a themed environment may have a strong environmental component, but it doesn't focus on aspects of self or others. A themed environment is a one-way interaction, where the environment sends users messages, but the users themselves do not strongly impact the experience. Therefore, a themed environment is strong in terms of environmental cues but weak in terms of place attachment for it doesn't bridge to the other components of self and others.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Recent literature evinces a need to better assimilate the influence of human experiences into the current discourse on people-place relationships. This can be inferred for the literature implies that people's emotional relationships to places cover a range of physical settings and emotions (Manzo, 2003, p. 47). The literature also indicates current societal and economic shifts that suggest an examination and redefinition of interior design's commitment to users.

In many cases, the standardization of servicescape environments, make it difficult for interior designers to respond to the higher-level needs of users (Li, 2004, ¶ 2). In a

field of standardized environments, the design of servicescapes focused on affording distinct experiences for users may be instrumental in satisfying higher-level needs.

Literature suggests that coalescing environmental psychology theories with experiential environment theories in design of hospitality environments may help establish a set of design guidelines regarding the qualities found in experiential environments.

Empirical research on meanings of place has investigated residential settings (Hay, 1998; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001), urban settings (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), and most recent studies of place attachment concentrate on nature and wilderness experiences (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Steel, 2000; Wickham, 2001; Vitterso, Vorkinn & Vistas, 2001 as cited in Manzo, 2003, p. 48). There is little research on how people form meanings of place in the interior of buildings, and the role of the interior environment in forming meaning of place.

The experiential environment and the place attachment theories suggest that relationships between self, others, and the environment aid users in creating meaningful rich experiences. In order to investigate the effects of combining experiential environment and place attachment theories, this study will raise the following important research question:

- What are the roles of the experiential interior architectural features in affording users of hospitality environments higher-level needs such as meanings of place?

In order to answer these queries, this study will be framed by the following subsequent questions:

- What can the study of environments that exemplify applications of experiential environment theories tell us about designing hotel settings that support humans' needs of meanings of place?
- How do users perceive interior architecture features within hotels that are examples of experiential environment theories?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the roles of interior architectural features in supporting higher-level needs, such as meanings of place. In principle, this study will help establish a set of guidelines benchmarking the design of interior architectural spaces, which may afford users authentic experiences and meanings of place.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In principle, this study aims to contribute to the interior design body of knowledge by providing information on creating place in servicescape environments and by establishing guidelines regarding which interior architectural features contribute to meanings of place. The results of this study are equally valuable to servicescape providers, such as retailers and hoteliers forecasting the future, to designers of hospitality environments, and users of hospitality environments. Understanding what roles the interior architecture features play in affording place attachment, place identity, and sense of place in highly experiential hospitality environments will assist hoteliers and hospitality designers in the creation of environments that are functional, significant, arousing, knowledge-bearing, aesthetically satisfying, and mediators of communication. Hoteliers may prosper if they recognize their economic offering as a true experience and not as an inflated good or glorified service (Bills, 2003). Specifically, for designers of

hospitality environments, this study seeks to provide a series of design guidelines for materializing experiential environmental psychology theories into built environments. Interior designers should go beyond the current design-focused strategy and redefine interior design's commitment as experience facilitators for users. Decorating an uninspiring concept that lacks a viable experiential factor is insignificant (Bills, 2003).

As a result, experiential environments may emerge as a foundation for interior architecture. This indicates a historical shift from thematic environments that provide symbolic appeals to cognition toward the creations of diffusive sensory environments that connect awareness with scripts (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 117). Such places are straightforward, revealing their references without much anxiety to the visitor, and are to be safe to occupy and easy to leave (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 116). More than ever, interior spatial settings will become the main event themselves and can no longer be conceived solely to contain events; rather than simply reflecting social change (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 117). Buildings will increasingly shift from being neutral backdrops of human life to becoming agents in the actuation of scripts of daily life (Isenstadt, 2001, p. 117).

But how can a hotel support and engage users' higher needs? Can a hotel be design to support not only the base needs of users, but also needs such as place attachment, place identity, and sense of place? One hotel group appears to believe that they can and must meet these needs. Conley, CEO of Joie de Vivre Hotels, asserts that he make connections with both his employees and his guests at higher needs, not just providing them with comfortable beds and good showers, but making connections with them (as cited in Goff, 2005, ¶ 5-6). Higher-level needs should influence all aspects of the design of a hotel for both guests and employees. If this is embedded in hotel design,

then everyone will benefit (Goff, 2005, ¶ 15). “Design for hospitality should no longer be simply considered only a ‘wow for the eye,’ but a ‘wow for the mind’” (Goff, 2005, ¶ 17). Using design to engage higher needs supports the guests, the employees, and the stakeholders (Goff, 2005, ¶ 17). If hoteliers and designers of hospitality environments rise above the fulfillment of basic human needs, it appears that users will then attain higher-level needs of place attachment, place identity, and sense of place. These factors generate memories for the users, which may perhaps lead to greater satisfaction and customer loyalty. This may be assumed for experiential retail environment theories state that individuals adapt slower to experiential purchases when compared to material purchases, for memories keep an experience from declining in satisfaction over a period of time (Goodman, Irwin, & Nicolao, 2009). Research indicates that these positive experiences may be linked to the principles of human happiness, and negative experiences may signify the impediments of these principles (Goodman, Irwin, & Nicolao, 2009). “The true purpose of architecture [comprising of interior architecture] is to help make human existence meaningful” (Bradley as cited in Wernick, 2008, p. 19).

Various sources reveal that users will be more satisfied with experiential purchases, which commonly transpire in environments where experiential theories and models have been implemented. A classification of satisfaction and happiness would be appropriate but it has been accepted that, “happiness is measurable, predictable, and comparable across contexts” (Diener 1984; Diener et al 1999; Gilbert 2006; Layard 2005 as cited in Goodman, Irwin, & Nicolao, 2009, p. 189). Gilovich & Van Boven (2003) performed a study using a procedural methodology, which measured whether people are happier with experiential or material purchases. Four different studies,

including surveys, interviews, and questions, revealed that experiential purchases — “... those made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience...”—do make people happier than material purchases —those made with the primary intention of acquiring a material good (Gilovich & Van Boven, 2003, p. 1193). The authors suggested that this is true for experiences are more open to positive reinterpretation, are more central to one’s identity, and have greater social value (Gilovich & Van Boven, 2003). Participants also experienced more positive feelings while pondering over an experiential purchase than while pondering over a material purchase. The authors gather a person would be made happier by investing in life experiences more than material possessions.

Ryan Howell conducted a study to determine whether experiences make people happier than possessions. Howell’s study developed from work by Thomas Gilovich and Leaf Van Boven. The findings reveal that experiential purchases tend to reveal higher levels of satisfaction, when compared to material purchases. In addition, when an experience was shared happiness was increased for the buyer and for those sharing in the experience. Howell believes this can be explained for a feeling of intimacy with others —getting closer to family and friends —may be one of the reasons why experiences led to more happiness. Another reason experiences generate more happiness can be because people felt more alive or a greater sense of vitality during the experiential activity (Howell, 2009).

Another positivist and empirical study, completed by Goodwin, Irwin, and Nicolao, measured the effects of experiential versus material purchases in three different experiments. For this experiment participants were separated into two groups, material

purchases and experiential purchases, they were then told they could use three ‘lab dollars’ to purchase an object or experience. Their happiness with the purchase was then measured with a questionnaire (Goodman, Irwin, & Nicolao, 2009, pp. 190-196). The results reveal that individuals adapt slower to experiential purchases when compared to material purchases, for memories don’t allow for an experience to decline in satisfaction over a short period of time. “Research also has suggested that positive experiences not only live on in memories but also lend themselves to even more positive reinterpretations over times as the negative aspects of them fade” (Mitchell et al. 1997; Van Boven 2005; Van Boven and Gilovich 2003, p. 197).

These three studies suggest the significance of experiential environments for users. The three studies present evidence that reveals that people were more satisfied with experiential purchases when contrasted to material purchases. The researchers’ rationale for increased satisfaction levels included the person’s the ability to share with others and the creation of a memory during an experience. These two factors establish an association between the concepts under investigation in this study: place attachment, place identity and sense of place. Fundamentally, the origins of these concepts stem from levels of satisfaction, or happiness, and positive memories.

METHODOLOGY

This study seeks to explore the role of physical interior features in creating place attachment in hospitality environments. Therefore this study will adopt a qualitative research strategy. Qualitative researchers are interested in discerning how people construe their experiences, how they conceptualize their worlds, and what meanings they equate to their experiences (Merriam, 2009, p. 6). Instead of introducing a

particular theory (as in postpositivism), inquirers inductively foster a theory or model of meaning (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Groat & Wang, 2002, pp. 173- 202). According to Morse, the qualitative research paradigm may be applicable to this study for the topic of experiential interior environments is unexplored, has never been addressed with a specific sample, and current theories do not relate to the particular sample under study. This can be stated for qualitative research samples a wide range of variables and results in a much broader understanding (Morse, 1991 as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 18).

The researcher's aim is to delineate or interpret the understandings others acquire about their environments, which originates from a social constructivist philosophical worldview. The social constructivist worldview ascertains that people seek realization of their environments. The intent of a social constructivist study is to ardently commit to participants' disposition of the situation being studied. The qualitative research strategy will initiate with a grounded theory approach. In grounded theory, the researcher seeks to enter a setting without preset notions or theories, allows the "going-on" of the setting ascertain the data, and then lets a theory emerge from the data (Groat & Wang, 2002, p. 180).

The key strategy involves a case study, which adopts techniques from an ethnographic practice. Case studies are in depth explorations bounded by time and activity (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). Researchers implement a case study when they seek

specific information about a particular environment and its context, rather than information that can be generalized relative to a large population (Zeisel, 2006, p. 98).

Moreover, in studies of the built environment, the case study method is highly applicable because of its particular advantages: (1) a focus on specific cases with their real-life contexts; (2) findings from specific cases are explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory; (3) a reliance on multiple sources of evidence in the forms of data; and (4) an opportunity to generate a theory. (Groves & Phuong, 2010, p. 8)

The case study is rooted in ethnographic practices for “ethnography is a research approach that produces a detailed, in-depth observation of people’s behaviors, beliefs, and preferences by observing and interacting with them in a natural environment” (Laurel, 2003, p. 26). Ethnographic researchers study an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational and interview data (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). An ethnographic viewpoint will most prominently be exercised during the user participation data collection and photo elicitation interviewing.

The case study will follow a plan similar to a sequential explanatory strategy, which is described as a collection of data which informs subsequent collections of data in a second phase and so on. Thus, data collection and analyses from each part will contribute and guide the subsequent part. The study will be organized and implemented in two phases:

- Phase I: Establishing the Case as an Experiential Hospitality Environment
- Phase II: Photo Elicitation Interviewing to Assess Users’ Experiences in Hospitality Environments

SEQUENTIAL EXPLANATORY STRATEGY CASE STUDY

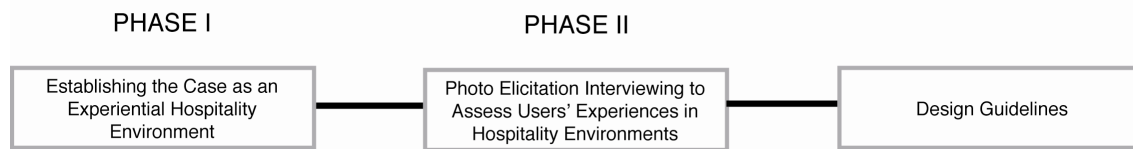


Figure 4. Case Study Using a Sequential Explanatory Strategy

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher interprets the data, collaborates with the participants, and brings personal values into the study. The disclosure of the researcher's personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study is requisite (Creswell, 2009, p. 17). The researcher's contribution to the study can be instrumental and positive rather than destructive (Locke, et al., 1987 as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 196). My perception of designing experiential interior environments and redefining spaces for users has been shaped by my academic and professional experiences. I have completed four architecture studio courses, in addition to four interior architecture studio courses. Supplementary courses included architecture history, architectural theories, structures, building methods and materials, programming, and research methods. I am exceptionally interested in the environmental psychology aspects of interior environments. I have professional experience working at both a residential and a commercial design firm. I believe my comprehension of interior architecture enhances my awareness and knowledge on this topic and shapes my presumption that people seek an understanding of their environments. I also deem that a focus on experiences will inescapably sustain the humanness within interior architecture.

Although every effort will be made to ensure objectivity, biases could structure the nature I comprehend and decode the data collected. To counteract this bias, multiple researchers will review all content analysis and coding. In terms of counteracting biases for the interview process, all interview transcriptions will be returned to each participant for confirmability. I initiate this study with the viewpoint that users of The Hotel will perceive the experiential qualities of the interior and will be afforded place attachment, place identity and sense of place.

Case Study

The name of the hotel has been changed to protect its identity.

Phase I: Establishing the Case, Experiential Hospitality Environments

Sample: The sample will consist of an assortment of communication media. Media may include The Hotel's website, advertisements, brochures, menus, and social media accounts. According to Rhea's experience cycle model, ideas and opinions formulate prior to actual engagement with a design, making the analysis of the media important (1992).

Tactics: Content analysis of the media will be used to confirm that The Hotel is an experiential hospitality environment. The content analysis will focus on The Hotel's corporate identity. "Corporate identity manifests itself primarily in three major areas: products or services (what you make or sell), environments (where you make or sell it), and communications (how you explain what you do" (Olins, 1984 as cited in Cooper & Press, 2003, p. 47). The communication media will be analyzed for information regarding the products or services sold, the designed environment, and the types of media. Understanding The Hotel's corporate identity is essential in order to evaluate

how the hotel meets the criterions of the experiential environment and place attachment theories.

The primary researcher will perform an initial content analysis; two additional researchers will assess and validate the results of the content analysis to establish triangulation. The two researchers will be identified by a convenience sample method, which is one of the most regularly employed sampling methods in behavioral sciences. In convenience sampling, participants are chosen based upon their availability and willingness to respond (Forzano, & Gravetter, 2009). In spite of the biases associated with non-probability sampling techniques, convenience sampling is commonly used for it is easy to carryout, relatively less expensive, and more timely (Forzano, & Gravetter, 2009, p. 141).

Table 2

Initial Content Analysis of The Hotel by the Primary Researcher

| Dant's experiential environment theory | The Hotel |
|--|-----------|
| Function | ✓ |
| Signification | ✓ |
| Sexuality | ✓ |
| Knowledge | ✓ |
| Aesthetics | ✓ |
| Mediation | ✓ |

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures: The criteria for the media selection will emphasize media that communicates The Hotel's vision and experiential features of the hotel. The media must be self-reported information by The Hotel. The researchers will determine whether The Hotel is an experiential environment by performing content analysis on the media and evaluating it with Dant's design experience model (1999).

The Hotel must meet the six criteria described by Dant's theory in order to be considered an experiential hospitality environment.

Phase II: Photo Elicitation Interviewing to Assess Users' Experiences in Hospitality Environments

Sample (Users): A participant convenience sample will include ten users at The Hotel. The participants will be selected based upon: having the ability to complete the task successfully, have visited hotels similar to The Hotel, and fit The Hotel's target market and demographics.

Tactics: Ten participants will stay at the hotel for a minimum of two nights. Each of the ten participants will document their experiences by taking ten photographs using a focused list as a guide. The ten facets of an experience listed were identified through an analysis of the experiential environment and place attachment theories. The ten facets were created by first linking the most apparent themes between the theories, those with very similar meanings; associated themes were then linked between the theories (see Appendix). The list of facets will not openly express the theories to the participants. Rather, the list will act as a guide or outline, which emphasizes the open-endedness of the study. The participants will only see the ten facets of an experience and not the theories listed below.

Research Instrument, Guided List for Phase II

1. This is a space that aroused my senses.
 - Entertainment (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Sexuality (Dant, 1999)
2. This is a space where I learned something.

- Educational (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Absorption (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Active Participation (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Knowledge (Dant,1999)
3. This is a space that is esthetically pleasing to me.
- Esthetic (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Passive Participation (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Immersion (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Aesthetics (Dant, 19999)
4. This space let me disconnect and get away.
- Escapist (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Immersion (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Active Participation (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Self (Gustafson, 2001)
5. This is a good space to people watch.
- Absorption (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Passive participation (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Entertainment (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Others (Gustafson, 2001)
6. This is a space where I was highly active.
- Immersion (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)
 - Active participating (Gilmore & Pine, 1999)

- Intense product interaction (Ander & Stern, 2008)
7. This space met my needs best.
 - Solution-oriented (Ander & Stern, 2008)
 - Function (Dant, 1999)
 - Self (Gustafson, 2001)
 8. This space reveals the hotel's mission best.
 - Values-based mission (Ander & Stern, 2008)
 - Employees as acolytes (Ander & Stern, 2008)
 - Visible Identification (Ander & Stern, 2008)
 9. This is space where I felt like I belonged.
 - Tight brand group (Ander & Stern, 2008)
 - Signification (Dant, 1999)
 - Others (Gustafson, 2001)
 - Self-others-environment (Gustafson, 2001)
 10. This is a space where I interacted with other guests the most.
 - Mediation (Dant, 1999)
 - Self-others (Gustafson, 2001)

The photographs will be used during photo elicitation interviews with the participants. Photo elicitation is founded on the idea of including photographs into a research interview. The difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews exclusively using words lies in the ways participants react to these two forms of symbolic representation (Harper, 2002, p.13). There is a scientific foundation to this

concept: the section of the brain that processes visual information is evolutionarily older when compared to the section that processes verbal information. Therefore, images induce deeper aspects of human consciousness than do words; interactions based on words alone utilize less of the brain's ability than do interactions in which the brain is processing images in addition to words. In addition, photos sharpen participants' memories and reduce the areas of misunderstanding during interviews (Harper, 2002, p.14). The use of photos also allows participants to speak in great length regarding the content in their photos for the photos aid recall and reflection (Le Dantec, & Poole, 2008, ¶ 6). Essentially, photo elicitation interviewing appears to not only generate more information, but also evoke more qualitative information from participants (Harper, 2002).

Photo elicitation interviewing is appropriate for this study for it for it affords participants an experiential method of exploring experiences. This method will form a core technique to enhance collaborative/participatory research. The interviewing process will bridge the psychological and physical realities through the use of photos (Hurworth, 2003, p. 3). The photo elicitation interviews will also help the researcher interpret the roles of interior architecture features for the participants will document and describe each photo, information that is qualitative and not quantifiable. Additionally, the data collected will be less bias for it will be self-reported, which is not achievable through questionnaire or surveys. Lastly, photo elicitation interviewing provides a component of multi-methods triangulation to improve rigor (Hurworth, 2003, p. 3).

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures: Each participant will receive a digital camera and the guided list of items to photograph. After completion, the photographs

will be developed and tagged with the participant's name. Within three days of the participant's checkout, the researcher will interview each participant individually. The researcher will first ask the participant to sort the images based upon the ten facets of an experience. The researcher will then ask open-ended questions transferring the power dynamic towards the participants by allowing them to discuss the content in their photos. The researcher will transcribe and code the interviews. Phrases will be linked to each of the ten facets found on the guided list. Results will be returned to each participant for confirmability and to reduce bias. In order to ensure establishing credibility and confirmability, two individuals will code the data independently. The overall interpretations of the data will then be submitted to interviewees for verification and clarification.

Data Collection Strategies.

The participant's photographs will be developed. The photographs will be tagged on the reverse side with the participant's name. The researcher will meet with each participant individually and record each interview. The researcher will first ask the participant to sort the images based upon the ten facets of an experience. The researcher will then mark each photo with the corresponding line item. When carrying out a photo elicitation interviewing technique, the photos are to be used to structure qualitative interviews. The researcher will ask open-ended questions transferring the power dynamic towards the participants by allowing them to discuss the content in their photos.

Data Analysis Procedures.

The researcher will transcribe each of the interviews. The researcher will then code the interviews. Phrases and descriptions from the interviews will be linked to each

of the ten facets of an experience. The coding will be completed using ATLAS.ti, a tool used for the analysis of qualitative data, which may include substantial amounts of text, graphics, audio, and other forms of visual data. “It offers tools to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data in creative, flexible, yet systematic ways” (Muhr, 2004 p. 1). ATLAS.ti allows the researcher to visually see relationships between theories, more specifically, between codes.

The results will be returned to each participant for confirmability and to reduce bias. In order to ensure establishing credibility and confirmability the data will be coded by the primary researcher and then evaluated by a second researcher. Disagreements in interpretations will be clarified, resolved, or rectified. The overall interpretations of the data will then be submitted to interviewees for verification and clarification.

RESULTS

All ten participants documented each of the ten facets of an experience using photographs. Even though the photographs were to specifically illustrate interior environments, many of the participants photographed exterior spaces.

Table 3
Number of Interior vs. Exterior Photographs

| | Interior | Exterior |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| Participant #1 | 4 | 6 |
| Participant #2 | 1 | 9 |
| Participant #3 | 4 | 6 |
| Participant #4 | 2 | 8 |
| Participant #5 | 6 | 4 |
| Participant #6 | 6 | 4 |
| Participant #7 | 5 | 5 |

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Participant #8 | 2 | 8 |
| Participant #9 | 4 | 6 |
| Participant #10 | 5 | 5 |

In addition, the photographs varied in spatial scale; photographs were taken of objects and artifacts and increased in scale as sizeable as the entire building. It was observed that several of the participants photographed the same space in the hotel for the same facet of an experience, such as the lobby. The lobby was photographed and associated with the *This is a space where I learned something* component of an experience by five of the participants. Contrastingly, some spaces were repeatedly photographed for multiple facets of an experience; that particular space may afford more than one facet. For example, the pool area was photographed a total of thirty-one times by the participants and associated to eight of the ten facets of an experience.

Table 4
Number of Themes Associated for Areas Most Photographed

| | Pool | Lobby | Courtyard | Suite | Tower | Hallways |
|---|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|----------|
| 1. This is a space that aroused my senses. | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. This is a space where I learned something. | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 3. This is a space that is esthetically pleasing to me. | 1 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4. This space let me disconnect and get away. | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. This is a good space to people watch. | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. This is a space where I was highly active. | 6 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. This space met my needs best. | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|---|---|---|
| 8. This space reveals the hotel’s mission best. | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1 |
| 9. This is space where I belonged. | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 10. This is a space where I interacted with other guests the most. | 7 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Totals | 31 | 18 | 13 | 8 | 6 | 6 |

The interviews and photographs of the participants suggest that the interior architectural features may afford users of hospitality environments, higher-level needs, such as meanings of place. The photographs of the interior and exterior architectural features revealed that participants are fairly cognizant of associating the architectural features to the different facets of their experiences. The fact that participants were able to identify and distinguish the different facets of the experience through a variety of photographs sustains experiential theories, which propose a multifaceted factor to how people experience space.

Considering the intangibility of the meanings of place theories, which encompass Gustafson’s themes such as *Self, Others, and Environment* (2001), the photographs did not explicitly depict whether participants thoroughly comprehend how they give meanings to places. It was while discussing the photographs that the participants pointed to the themes related to meanings of places. The interviewing process allowed participants to divulge abstract information that was not literally captured in the photographs. For example, one participant photographed the hotel’s tower to communicate the *...hotel’s mission best* facet, and during the interview the participant stated, “when I think about Miami, I think about Coral Gables, and this building.” *This space reveals the hotel’s mission best* was originally associated only to Ander and

Stern's *Value-based Mission*, *Visible Identification*, and *Employees as Acolytes* themes (2008), but the participant subconsciously introduced one of the meanings of place themes: *Environment* by Gustafson (2001). This could be interpreted because the *Environment* theme consists of meanings of place, which can be attributed to a place not only as a physical environment, but also its symbolic or historical elements. According to this participant, the tower is not only where the hotel reveals its mission, but is also emblematic of the city.

Basically, the photo elicitation interviewing acknowledged which themes were most significant to each of the facets of an experience. As assumed, themes were either affirmed or rejected. Nevertheless, during interviewing additional themes, not originally affiliated, were suggested.

This is a space that aroused my senses.

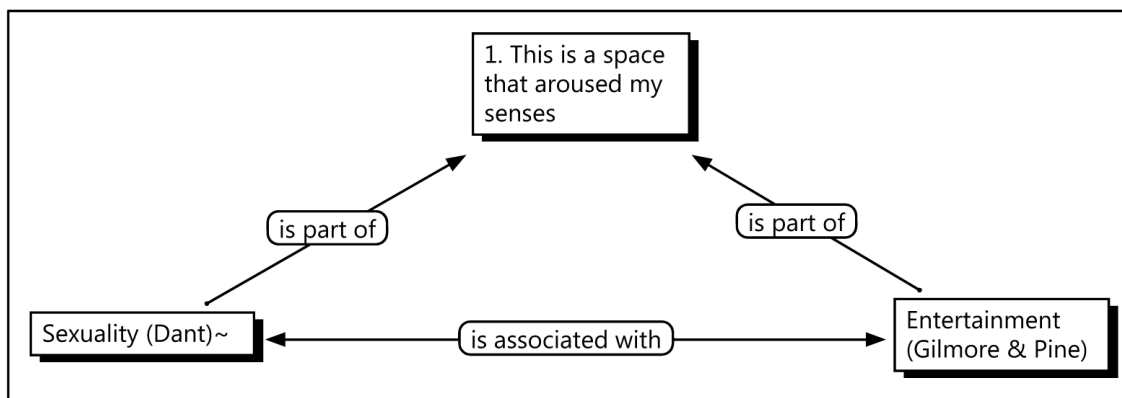


Figure 5. Theories Initially Linked to ...aroused my senses.

The theme most closely associated to the ...aroused my senses facet is Dant's *Sexuality*, which entails anything arousing in some way or signifies sexual identity or activity (1999). Most participants spoke of visual experiences, allowing the sense of sight to dominate. One participant spoke of "colors, patterns, ceiling heights, and

perception of size.” While another participant summarized the whole experience as, “a visual experience: [The columns] drew my eyes up to the ceiling.” A number of participants also discussed experiences in relation to a combination of the senses: sight, smell, and sound: “The space that aroused my senses was the [courtyard] because of... the fountain, the garden, the greenery, and the aromas of the different foods they were preparing in the kitchen.” A theme that arose through the photographs and interview was *Esthetic* (Gilmore and Pine, 1999)/*Aesthetic* (Dant, 1999). Specifically, one participant photographed the courtyard for both the ... *aroused my senses* facet and the ...*esthetically pleasing to me* facet. It is fair to consider an association between *Esthetics/Aesthetic* and the ...*aroused my senses* facet, for the participants confirmed the prevalence of the sense of sight, which is an influential factor for the *Esthetics/Aesthetic* themes. *Entertainment* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999) was originally associated with the facet, but was not identified in interviews or photographs.

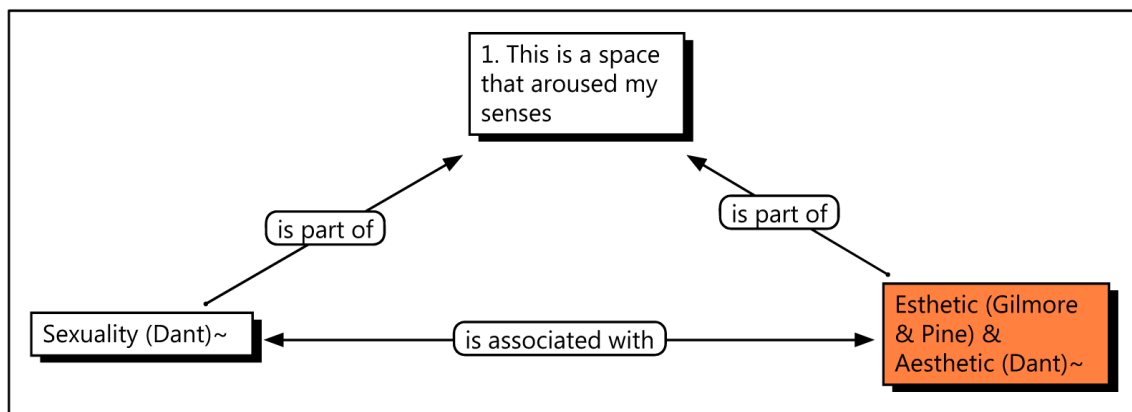


Figure 6. Theories Linked to ...*aroused my senses* According to Findings.

This is a space where I learned something.

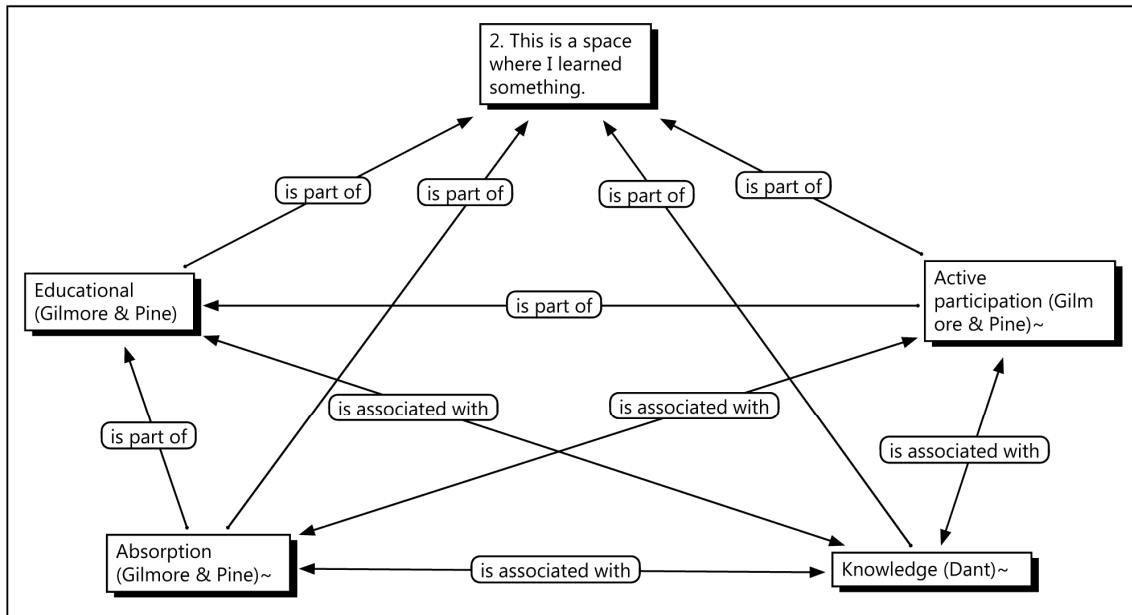


Figure 7. Theories Initially Linked to ...I learned something.

The themes linked to the ...I learned something facet include *Absorption* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), *Educational* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), *Active participation* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), and *Knowledge* (Dant, 1999). The participants all referred to historical elements when they photographed and spoke of this facet. The lobby was the most photographed space for learning. A participant reinforced their selection by describing the lobby as having a “rich history.” Other participants referred to a collection of artifacts in the lobby; “the [collection] had old silverware, ...and they had a lot of [objects] from the 20s. ...pamphlets from weddings.” In view of the many historical reoccurrences in the participants’ photographs and interviews, the *Environmental-self* (Gustafson, 2001) theme appears to be applicable. Gustafson suggests that the relationships concerning self and environment may create meanings of place, which are consistently resulting from the participant’s knowledge of place or

contextual knowledge, such as history (2001). In addition to the focus of historical factors, *Mediation* (Dant, 1999) or exchanges with others was also indicated. A pair of participants referenced a tour of the hotel with an animated guide and others mentioned, “we discussed the historical impression the hotel has on the city of Miami.” In essence, participants revealed that learning occurred both independently, through artifacts, photographs, etc. and through exchanges with others. It could also be noted that for this facet, the interior architecture of a space could either promote or discourage learning; some environments promote more learning than others. The lobby, for example, clearly demonstrated a historical context for the participants, which encouraged learning. This points to the fact that the learning occurred in environments, which were fitting. The learning was not forced; it emerged.

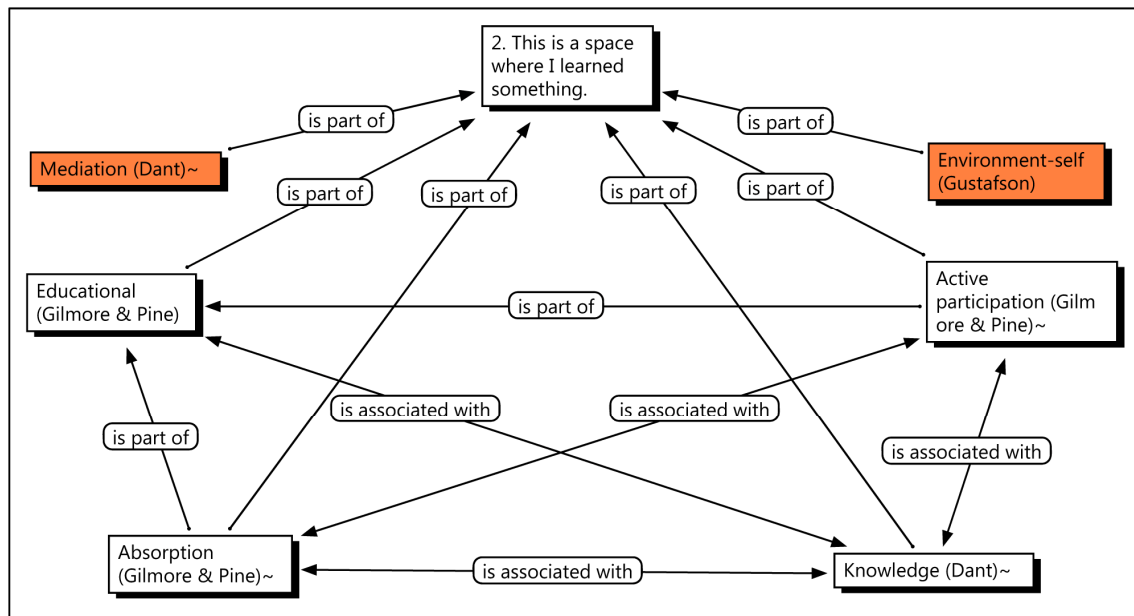


Figure 8. Theories Linked to ...I learned something According to the Findings.

This is a space that is esthetically pleasing to me.

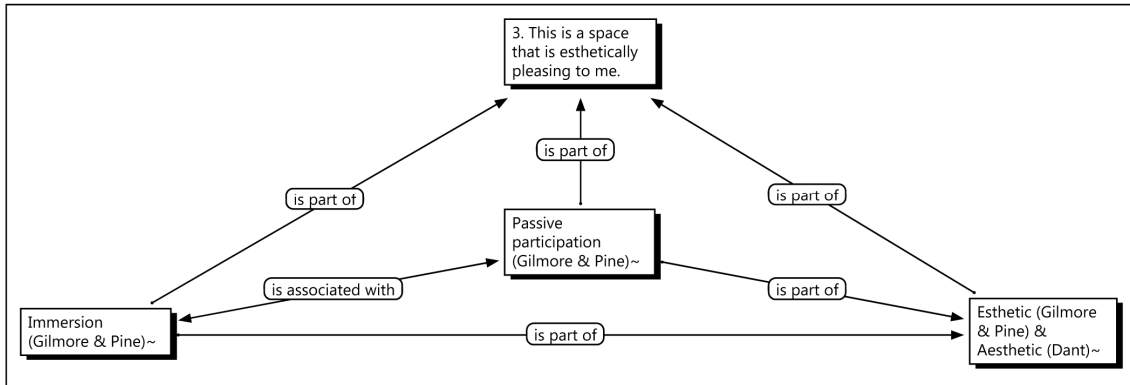


Figure 9. Theories Initially Linked to ...*esthetically pleasing to me*.

The themes related to the ...*esthetically pleasing to me* facet include *Esthetics* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), *Immersion* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), *Passive participation* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), and *Aesthetics* (Dant, 1999). There was a strong relationship between elements that were esthetically pleasing and the senses, *Sexuality* (Dant, 1999). Participants described spaces that were esthetically pleasing by accrediting their senses, “The shade. The shape of the sculptures. The colors.” Many participants discussed the theme of *Passive Participation* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), a one-way interaction where users indirectly influence an experience. Participants talked about perusing and observing the esthetically pleasing elements in an environment.

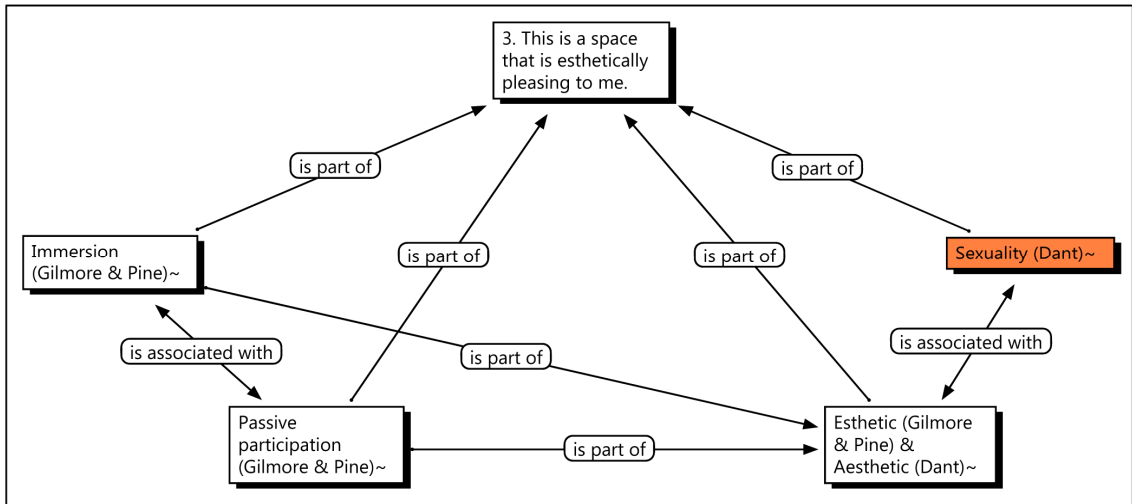


Figure 10. Theories Linked to ...esthetically pleasing to me According to the Findings.

This space let me disconnect and get away.

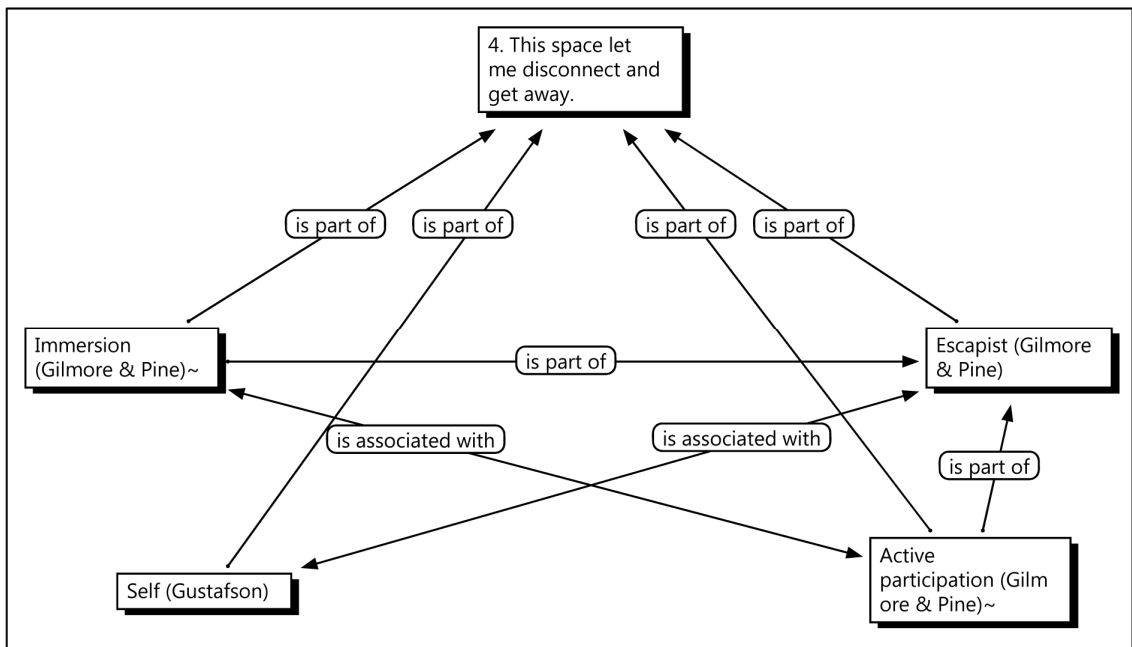


Figure 11. Theories Initially Linked to ...disconnect and get away.

The themes initially connected to the ...*disconnect and get away* facet are *Escapist* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), *Immersion* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), *Active participation* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), and *Self* (Gustafson, 2001). Comments regarding escape include, “even though I am in Miami, I would feel somewhere else” and “you

definitely feel like you are away. I literally felt like I was on vacation for the day.” Half of the participants photographed the pool as the space that let them ...*disconnect and get away*. One participant described their experience at the pool as, “...mentally, it brings me a lot of peace. Escape.” These remarks link to both the *Immersion* and *Self* themes. Associations to the *Esthetics* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999) and *Aesthetics* (Dant, 1999) themes were mentioned, but the association was not as lucid as the other themes. Participants suggested that the esthetically pleasing elements of a space might have inspired them to disconnect. The participants however did not recognize the *Active Participation* theme.

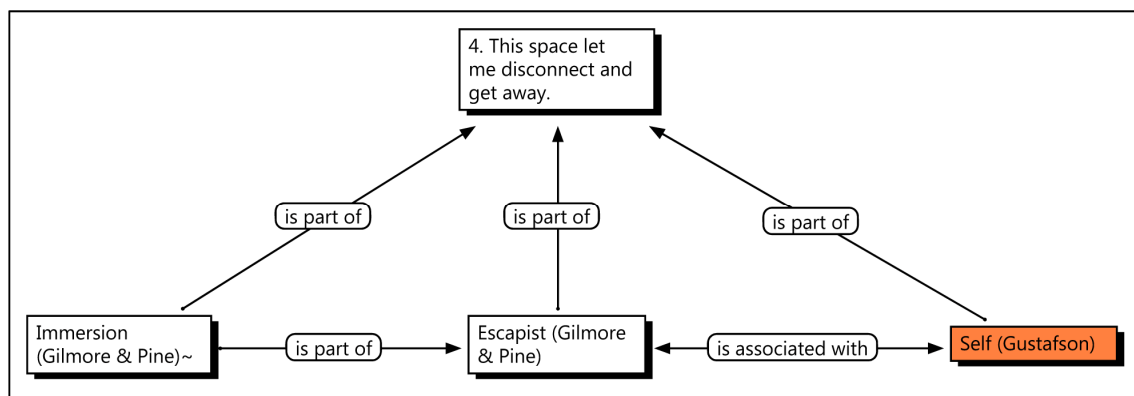


Figure 12. Theories Linked to ...*disconnect and get away* According to the Findings.

This is a good space to people watch.

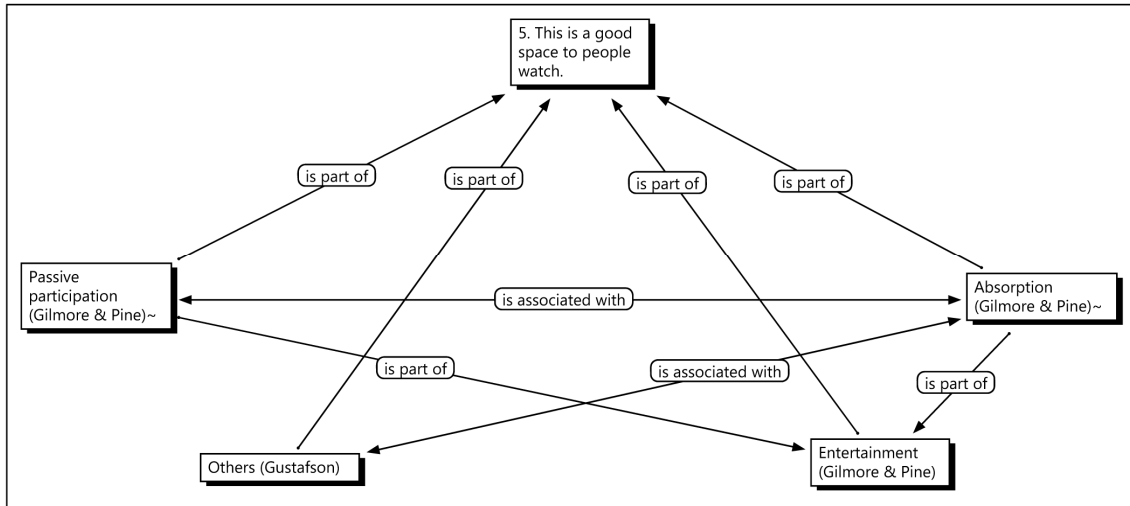


Figure 13. Theories Initially Linked to ...people watch.

Gilmore and Pine’s (1999) themes of *Absorption*, *Entertainment*, and *Passive participation* paired with Gustafson’s (2001) *Others* shaped the ...people watch facet. While discussing this facet all participants mentioned some form of movement or circulation, “...it was busy. People would come in and out, in and out” and “that is where you saw all the movement.” Four new themes arose: Gustafson’s (2001) *Anonymity* paired with *Self-environment* and Dant’s (1999) *Mediation* paired with Gustafson’s (2001) *Self-others*. Both *Anonymity* and *Self-environment* allude to some level of enclosure or privacy. When asked from where they took their photographs, one participant stated, “you are ...behind a wall and you can see out” and another stated, “we were standing above on the balcony.” These participants revealed that were reasonably out of view from the people they were observing. The introduction of *Mediation* and *Self-others* may have occurred because the spaces for people watching were described as “dense.” Interactions with others may have increased in these areas due to the higher number of people in one space.

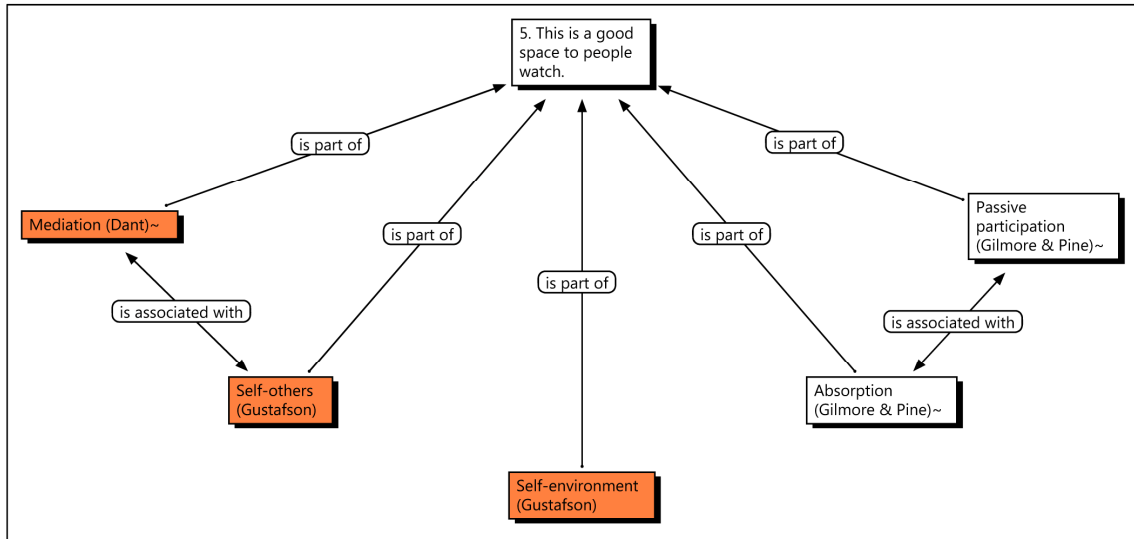


Figure 14. Theories Linked to ...people watch According to the Findings.

This is a space where I was highly active.

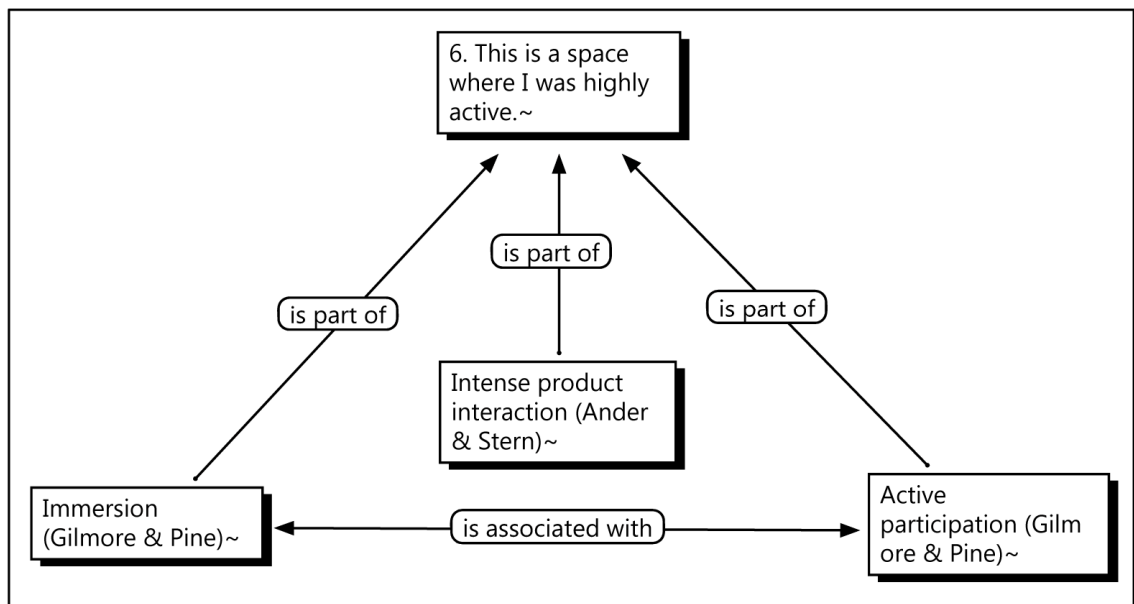


Figure 15. Theories Initially Linked to ...highly active.

The themes originally linked to the ...*highly active* facet are *Active participation* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), *Immersion* (Gilmore & Pine, 1999), and *Intense product interaction* (Ander & Stern, 2008). Activities participants depicted included, “we were in the pool, we were jumping into the pool, we were enjoying the pool...we couldn’t

stand still there.” In addition, a connection between the ...*highly active* facet to *Mediation* (Dant, 1999) and *Self-others* (Gustafson, 2001) may perhaps exist; it is possible that the ability to interact with others encourages high activity. The photographs and interviews revealed the pool as an area where both interaction and high activity transpired. Participants did not distinguish the *Intense Product Interaction* theme.

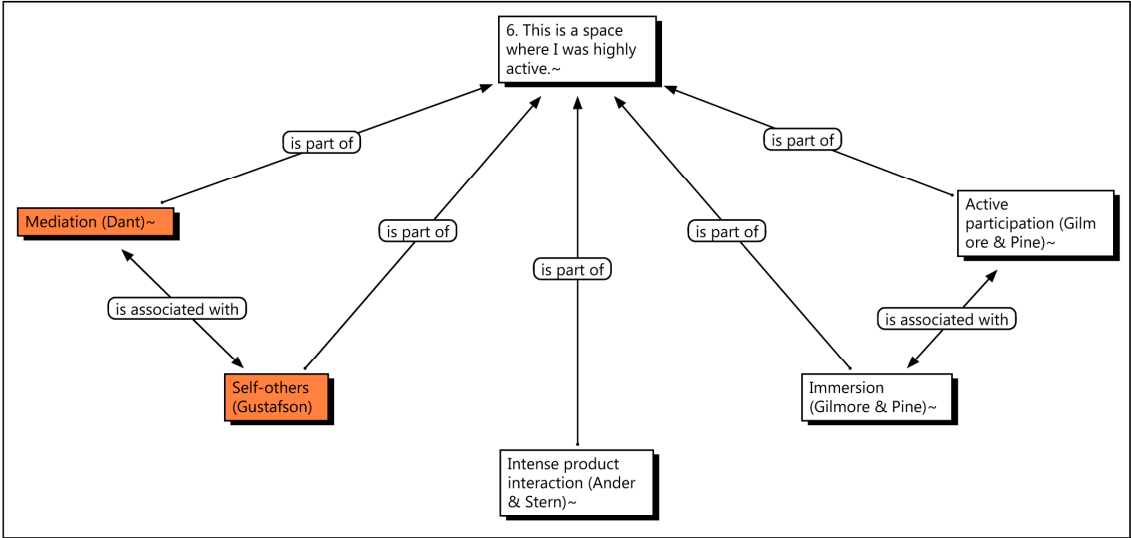


Figure 16. Theories Linked to ...*highly active* According to the Findings.

This space met my needs best.

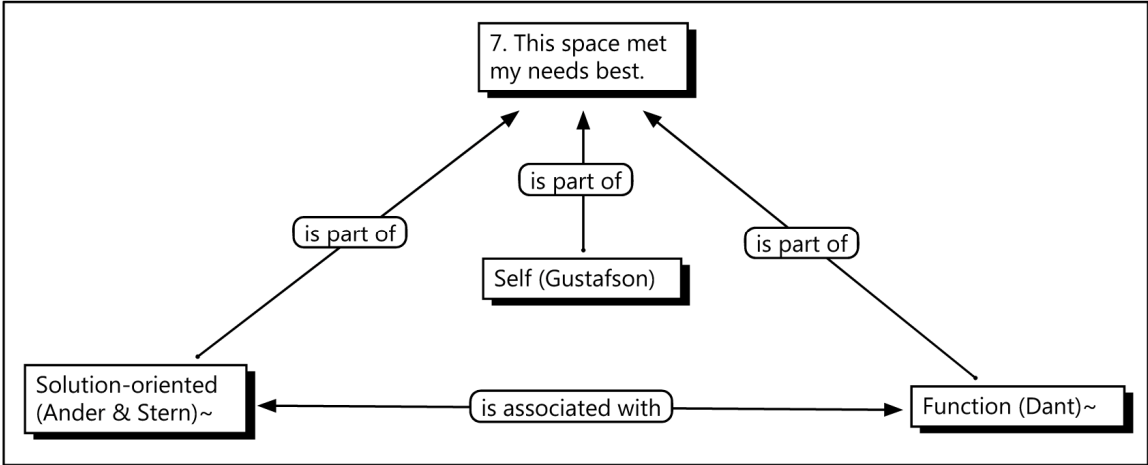


Figure 17. Theories Initially Linked to ...*met my needs best.*

The ...*met my needs best* facet was initially composed of the *Function* (Dant, 1999), *Self* (Gustafson, 2001), and *Solution-oriented* (Ander & Stern, 2008) themes. Some participants interpreted this facet in terms of functional or physical needs, “the bedroom, because I slept like a baby.” Another participant referred to their spatial needs; this particular participant felt their needs were met since their suite had a small living area, separate from the sleeping area, where they could invite friends. Others interpreted this facet in terms of needs of relaxation, “the pool really helped me unwind.” A reoccurring theme was *Environment-self* (Gustafson, 2001); an environment is interpreted as significant when it affords users opportunities. This appears to be applicable for users described settings that provided various options and flexibility such as, “[this space] in reality would meet anyone’s needs. You are by the pool, you have a view, food service, it’s shaded.” It appears that when an environment presents a range of options for a user in an environment, it is more likely for their needs to be meet. The *Solution-oriented* theme was not identified.

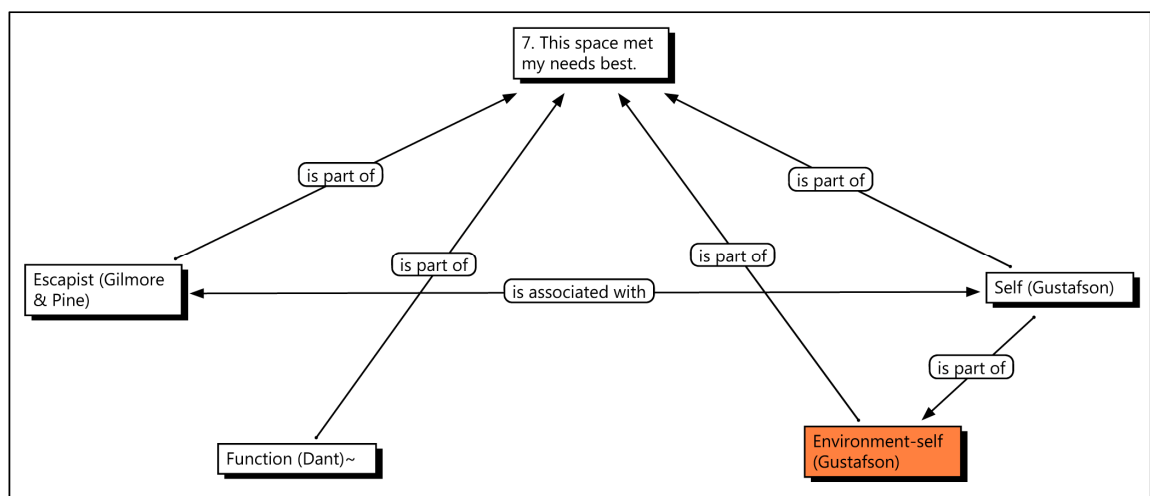


Figure 18. Theories Linked to ...*met my needs best* According to the Findings.

This space reveals the hotel's mission best.

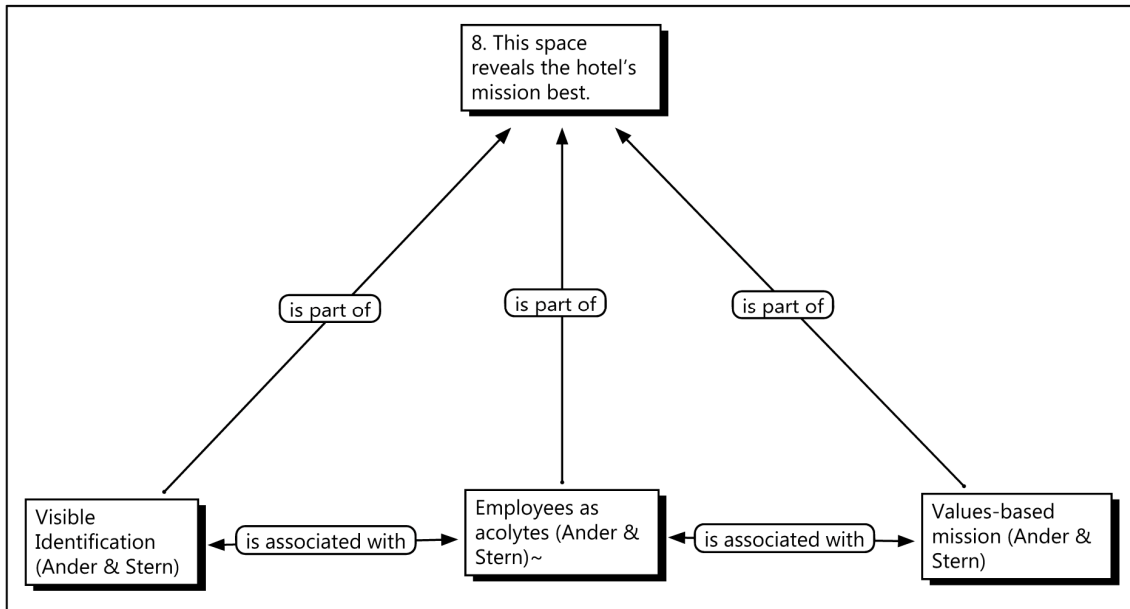


Figure 19. Theories Initially Linked to ...*hotel's mission best*.

The themes primarily associated with the ...*hotel's mission best* facet include Ander and Stern's (2008) *Values-based mission*, *Employees as acolytes*, and *Visible identification* (2008). Participants described the hotel as a place that inspires a "lifestyles of luxury," and as "more like a community center." The strongest relationship to this facet was *Visible identification*; visual cues were imperative. Participants photographed both the lobby and the building's tower; "there is nothing as iconic as that." It seems that the architecture from both the interior and the exterior informed participants of the hotel's mission. Gustafson's (2001) *Environment* and *Environment-self* themes were also exposed. This could be because meanings of place are rooted in people's contextual knowledge of a place and their understanding of the inhabited built environment.

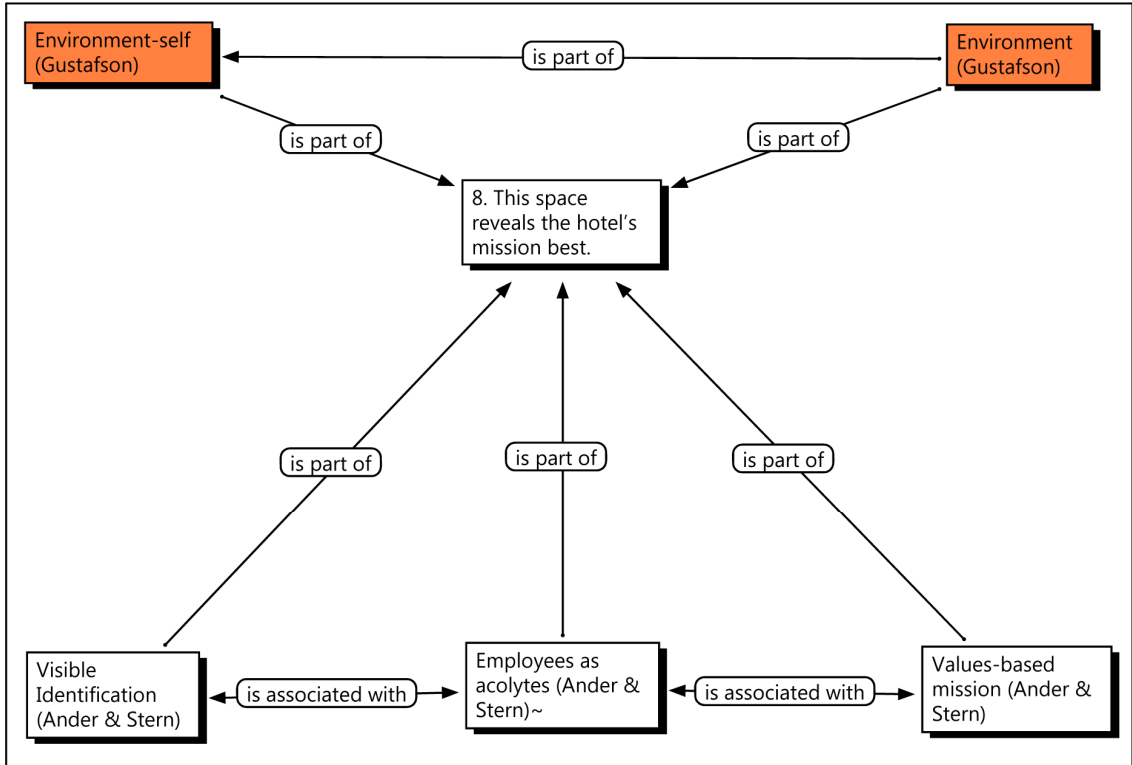


Figure 20. Theories Linked to ...hotel's mission best According to the Findings.

This is space where I belonged.

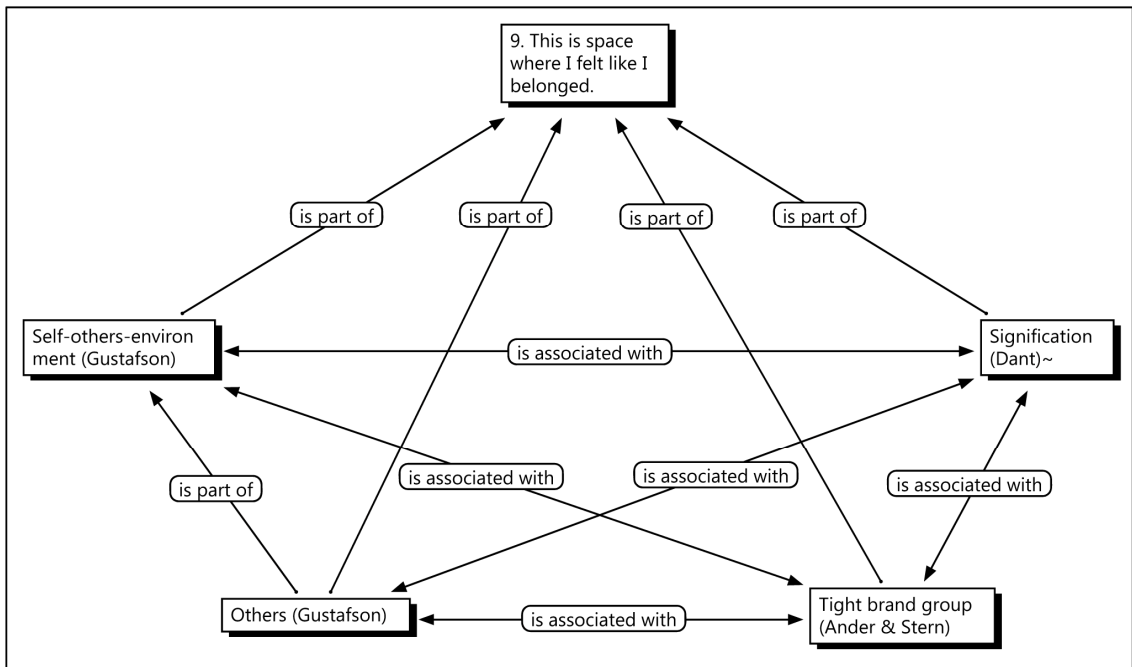


Figure 21. Theories Initially Linked to ...I belonged.

The *Others* (Gustafson, 2001), *Self-others-environment* (Gustafson, 2001), *Signification* (Dant, 1999), and *Tight brand group* (Ander & Stern, 2008) themes established the ...*I belonged* facet. Participants explained scenarios where they felt a sense of belonging in terms of a group setting or an individual setting. For example, one participant acknowledged the fact that the people they were with helped created a sense of belonging, “I felt that because the people we were with.” This aspect of interaction with others points to the *Mediation* (Dant, 1999) and *Self-others* (Gustafson, 2001) themes. Contrastingly, other participants described the sense of belonging in terms of individuality, “I felt like I was at home. I felt like it was my space.” This individuality and sense of home allude to a new association to Gustafson’s (2001) *Self* theme, which elucidates how people correlate a sense of home to emotional meanings of place.

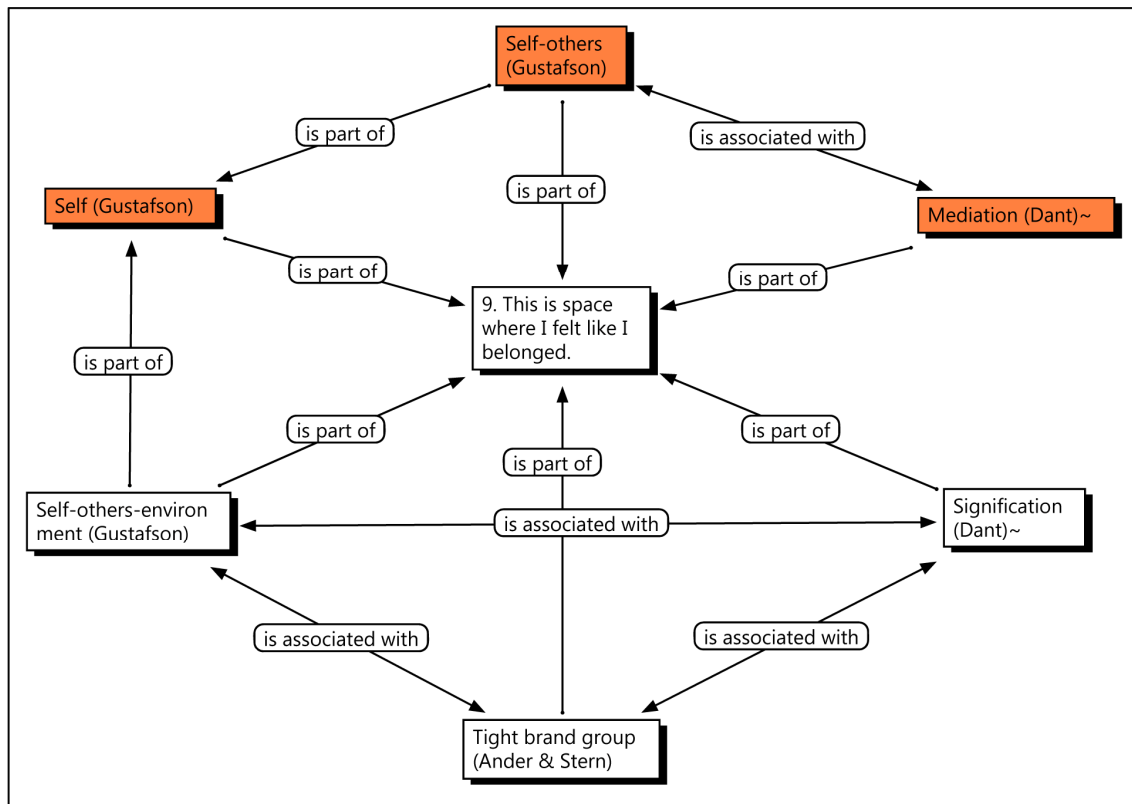


Figure 22. Theories Linked to*I belonged* According to the Findings.

This is a space where I interacted with other guests the most.

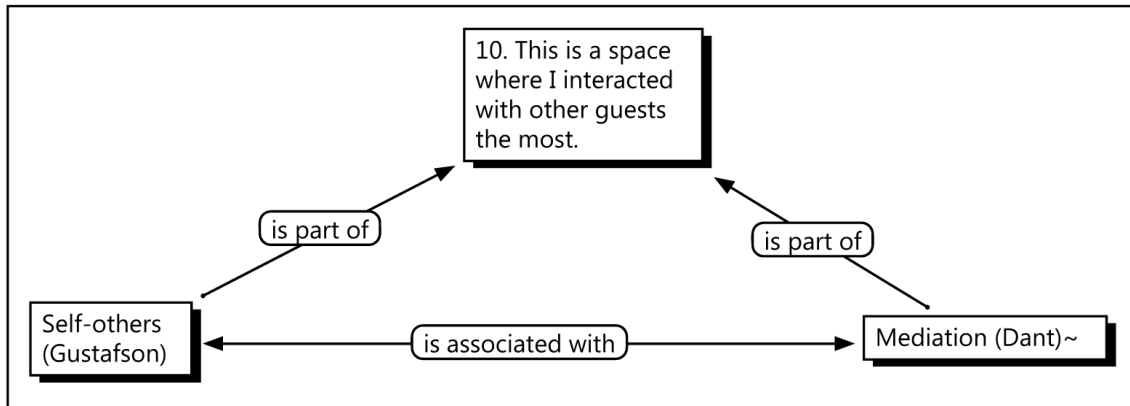


Figure 23. Theories Initially Linked to ...where I interacted with other guests the most.

The. ...where I interacted with other guests the most facet is visibly connected with the *Mediation* (Dant, 1999) and *Self-others* (Gustafson, 2001) themes. All participants described interactions, encounters, or conversations with others to affirm the themes' associations to this facet.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal how experiential interior architectural features may influence how users of hospitality environments create meanings of place. The participants documented and discussed various instances where experiential theories related to the meanings of place theories. Fundamentally, the experiential theories link to the meanings of place theories for they reiterate how the interchange between self, others, and the physical environment may enhance a sense of place and hence afford a more authentic experience. For example, *Mediation*, part of Dant's (1999) experiential theory continually linked to *Self-others*, part of Gustafson's (2001) meanings of place theory.

According to the findings the interior architectural features generate associations to the place attachment theories; thus affording users higher-level needs. And therefore,

if an experiential interior environment allows users to foster relationships between self, others, and the physical environment, they will experience more authentic experiences and associate more meanings to places. When a user is able to identify themselves in a space, they feel less estranged and included in the environment. Additionally, when users interact with others they are more welcomed and invited into that space. And lastly, when a user can relate to an environment, their needs are met, they feel included, and their senses are aroused. Ultimately, it is evident that users' experiences are multifaceted. There is no specific answer or formula in creating experiences since each user is so uniquely different. But by including multiple facets of an experience into a design, more users are bound to connect or identify with one or more of those facets.

Experiential interior environments are to be complete, holistic environments that arouse senses, foster learning, encourage interactions. When users experience different aspects of self, others, and the built environment their overall experience becomes more authentic. Experiential interior environments provide a reciprocal experience, one that acts upon the users and allows the users to act upon it. Users can better identify themselves and with others in these types of environments and eventually are afforded higher-level needs, such as meanings of place.

CONCLUSION

This study has also revealed information regarding how to design a hotel setting that will support humans' needs of meanings of place. In order to design for authentic experiences, designers should consider the many facets of an experience. This study revealed ten facets, which may afford users higher level needs.

When designing a space that arouses the senses, designers should strive to establish a sensory experience that entails multiple senses. In terms of visual experiences, consider a variety in lighting, color, spatial volumes, geometries, patterns, ceiling heights, and perceptions of size. It can be assumed that multi-sensory experiences will allow users to relate and interpret a space better, which may support place attachment.

The participants identified the spaces of learning as unenclosed spaces they could browse through and discover, not a forced learning approach. The collections and historical artifacts the participants acknowledged may be significant for they allow users to see where a company came from and how it has transformed, grown, and developed. Another element to consider is implementing a space where interactions with others can occur, for participants spoke of exchanges with others, which fostered learning.

In regards to esthetics, designers should be aware and considerate of people's different esthetic preferences. This facet of an experience closely relates to the arousal of senses. Therefore, a multisensory design should also be deemed as significant when addressing esthetics. Perhaps the introduction of the design theories regarding complexity, order, and mystery could also contribute to the multisensory and esthetic experience.

When designing a space that allows users to disconnect and get away including elements that afford escapism is critical: comfort, feeling of home, relaxation, and vacation. One recurring element for the participants was a sense of privacy or seclusion. A level of privacy may better allow for users to disconnect, for they are less concerned with others nearby or interfering.

Another experiential facet to consider in a design is generate a good space to people watch. According to the participants, an area with circulation and movement affords this scenario. Conceivably, by arranging seating spaces adjacent to circulation paths or nooks along corridors this form of interaction will be encouraged. An extra factor to consider would be the integration of a moderate level of privacy for the observer. It was noted that many of the participants felt more inclined to people watch when they were positioned at a different level as the person or people they were watching, either from above on a balcony or sitting in a large chair.

A space, which supports a high level of activity for its users, will most likely impact how a person experiences a space. A high level of activity could include both mental and physical activity; the main focus should be on keeping users engaged. Sustaining engagement could also be established by inducing interaction between users. Exchanges with others also advance the activity level of a user.

In order to design a space, which meets people's, needs, designers need to evaluate and focus on a client's needs of functionality. Undoubtedly, a space must promote the primary functions or activities of its users. However, aside from functional needs, designers need to assess a user's human needs, including emotional, mental, and spiritual needs. Fundamentally, the design needs to not only function, but also remain human and livable.

When designing a space, which manifestly expresses a companies' mission, visible identification is vital. Users identify, acknowledge and interpret symbolic cues from a space, which in essence, informs their outlook regarding a company or brand. Logos or iconic symbolism should be well developed. Designers could seek

environmental graphic consultants, which could meaningfully influence this facet of an experience.

The participant's interviews informed design guidelines regarding the ...*I belonged* facet. Designers must be responsive to the participants' descriptions of belonging in terms of both an assembly and a solitary setting. Belonging can be translated into a design by affording areas where one could feel included into a group. Though, a design cannot only offer group interaction, for some feel a sensation of belonging not by directly interacting with others but merely due to proximity to others. Another aspect of an individual sense of belonging includes a feeling of comfort and home. This allows one to associate a space with relief and refuge, which can provide more meaning to that space.

Participants affirmed the original themes associated with the ...*where I interacted with other guests the most* facet: *Mediation* (Dant, 1999) and *Self-others* (Gustafson, 2001). In order to design a space that offers users a place to interact, designers need to consider how and why those specific users will interact. Other things to consider when evaluating the types of interactions are culture, sex, age, and settings (formal vs. informal). This can be stated, for people of different cultures for example interact differently in different settings. Being clear on who the users are and why they would interact is crucial to the success of the relations.

Ultimately, designers need be responsive to the many facets of an experience by integrating various elements into their designs. This study only focused on ten, but it can be imagined that the complexity of users would require many more interconnected facets. The study revealed how users can effectively identify interior architectural

features, which contribute to their experience of a space. In addition, the participants associated the interior architectural features to experiential theories and meanings of place theories. This leads one to believe that the experiential interior architectural features could essentially afford users higher-level needs, such as meanings of place.

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APPENDICES

CODE LIST

1. Absorption (Gilmore & Pine)
2. Active participation (Gilmore & Pine)
3. Educational (Gilmore & Pine)
4. Employees as acolytes (Ander & Stern)
5. Entertainment (Gilmore & Pine)
6. Environment-self (Gustafson)
7. Environment (Gustafson)
8. Escapist (Gilmore & Pine)
9. Esthetic (Gilmore & Pine) & Aesthetic (Dant)
10. Function (Dant)
11. Immersion (Gilmore & Pine)
12. Intense product interaction (Ander & Stern)
13. Knowledge (Dant)
14. Mediation (Dant)
15. Others-environment (Gustafson)
16. Others (Gustafson)
17. Passive participation (Gilmore & Pine)
18. Self-environment
19. Self-others-environment (Gustafson)
20. Self-others (Gustafson)
21. Self (Gustafson)
22. Sexuality (Dant)
23. Signification (Dant)
24. Solution-oriented (Ander & Stern)
25. Superior Product (Ander & Stern)
26. This is a good space to people watch.
27. This is a space that aroused my senses.
28. This is a space that is esthetically pleasing to me.
29. This is space where I felt like I belonged.

30. This is a space where I interacted with other guests the most.
31. This is a space where I learned something.
32. This is a space where I was highly active.
33. This space let me disconnect and get away.
34. This space met my needs best.
35. This space reveals the hotel's mission best.
36. Tight brand group (Ander & Stern)
37. Values-based mission (Ander & Stern)
38. Visible Identification (Ander & Stern)