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Title: Differentiating Hospitality Operations Via Experiences: Why Selling Services Is Not Enough

Author(s): [James H. Gilmore](#); [B. Joseph II Pine](#)

Subject(s): [Service Quality](#); [Customer Service -- Research](#); [Customer Satisfaction](#); [Hotel Marketing](#)

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Summary: Creating a memorable experience is a powerful way to differentiate one hospitality operation from another. Hoteliers and other hospitality operators need to consider how to turn their mundane services into memorable experiences-and avoid the trap of being treated like a commodity. One method for selling experiences is to imbue operations with a theme, a concept that infuses all services within a given venue with a single organizing principle. Themes can be overtly stated or quietly subtle, but either way, a hotel can use its theme to set itself apart from competitors. Themes are realized through motifs, which are visual manifestations of a theme. A theme can serve as an umbrella across all locations within a company's portfolio of locations, or it can be specific to individual locations. Regardless of the approach, motifs represent specific incarnations of an individual theme. Employing a theme allows a hotel to differentiate its offerings by creating memorable moments for guests out of otherwise mundane

interactions (e.g., a wake-up call or elevator ride) simply by layering an enjoyable experience atop the existing set of services-for instance, with unusual antics in a shuttle bus or recorded voices of celebrities to wake up guests.

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