

Experiential Graphic Design as a Catalyst for Sustainability

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Abstract:

As sustainability becomes a goal in urban design, Experiential Graphic Design (XGD) is emerging a tool to promote environmental awareness, behavioral change, and community engagement. This study examines how XGD can support sustainability in environments. By integrating information design with spatial experience, XGD not only enhances user navigation but also communicates sustainable values. Samples from different projects demonstrate how XGD contributes to enhancing the people's wellbeing, encouraging building sustainable communities, and strengthening place identity. The research highlights the nature of XGD, calling for collaboration between designers and urban planners. The study argues that XGD is not just an aesthetic or functional element, but a strategic instrument for achieving long-term sustainability goals in cities.

Keywords:

Experiential Graphic Design, Sustainability, Wayfinding.

Study problem:

The research problem is concluded in the following questions:

- 1- What is the meaning of XGD & its history?
- 2- What are the kinds of XGD?
- 3- How is XGD used by different brand to achieve sustainability?

Objective:

This research aims to investigate the meaning of Experiential Graphic Design. The research also identifies the functions of XGD which includes achieving sustainability. The research focuses on examples of different brands that integrates XGD.

Study approach:

The research will use the qualitative method as it is the study that is used to explore the phenomena of experiential graphic design and its role in achieving sustainability by collecting data, then the analytical approach for samples of experiential graphic design. It will analyze the data that is processed according to thematic analysis.

الملخص:

مع تحوّل الاستدامة إلى هدفٍ محوريٍّ في تصميم المدن، تبرز أهمية التصميم الجرافيكي التجريبي كأداةٍ لتعزيز الوعي البيئي، وتغيير السلوك، والمشاركة المجتمعية. تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية مساهمة التصميم الجرافيكي التجريبي في دعم مبادرات الاستدامة في البيئات العمرانية. من خلال دمج تصميم المعلومات مع التجربة المكانية، لا يقتصر دور التصميم الجرافيكي التجريبي على تعزيز تنقل المستخدم وتفاعله فحسب، بل ينقل أيضًا القيم والممارسات المستدامة بفعالية. العديد من النماذج لمشاريع مختلفة تُظهر كيف يُسهم التصميم الجرافيكي التجريبي في تحسين رفاهية الناس، وتشجيع بناء مجتمعات مستدامة، وترسيخ هوية المكان. يُسلّط البحث الضوء على الطبيعة متعددة التخصصات للتصميم الجرافيكي التجريبي، داعيًا إلى التعاون بين المصممين ومخططي المدن. التصميم الجرافيكي التجريبي ليس مجرد عنصر جمالي أو وظيفي، بل هو أداة استراتيجية لتحقيق أهداف الاستدامة طويلة المدى في المدن.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

التصميم الجرافيكي التجريبي، الاستدامة، إيجاد المكان

Introduction:

Experiential Graphic Design (XGD) plays a critical role in shaping how people perceive, navigate, and connect with physical spaces. By combining elements of architecture, interior design, wayfinding, branding, and storytelling, XGD creates meaningful, user-centered experiences in environments such as parks, stadiums, hospitals, campuses, transportation hubs, and cultural institutions. Experiential Graphic Design is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on shaping the experience people have within physical spaces through the use of visual communication. It blends elements of graphic design, architecture, interior design, industrial design, and digital media to create environments that are not only functional but also meaningful and engaging.

Experiential Graphic Design have many advantages; it helps users easily find their way through complex environments. It communicates the personality, history and the identity of a place. It can promote inclusivity, cultural awareness, and sustainability, turning static environments into dynamic contributors to broader societal values. All of these pros are main goals of sustainability which seek for the welfare of human being and upgrading their life.

Definition of Experiential Graphic Design (XGD):

Experiential Graphic Design is previously called Environmental Graphic Design (EGD), which is the orchestration of typography, color, imagery, form, technology and content to create experiences and environments that communicate and connect people to place.¹ The word “experience” means practical contact or an event or occurrence which leaves an impression on someone.² As this field is related to the experience of people in a place, therefore it is called experiential graphic design. The use of graphic design elements to enhance the experience people have within a space.³ It is the graphic communication of information in the environment. Using the tools and story-telling approaches of XGD to create more engaging and meaningful interactions between people/visitors and the environment.

Experiential Graphic Design (XGD) is a cross-disciplinary field that has gained recognition and importance over the past 40 years only. It embraces many design disciplines including graphic, architectural, interior, landscape, digital and industrial design, all concerned with the visual aspects of creating experiences that connect people to place.⁴

Types of environments that use experiential graphic design:

- 1- **Educational institutions:** where experiential graphic design is being used to create stimulating and inspiring learning environments, enriching the educational experience for students.

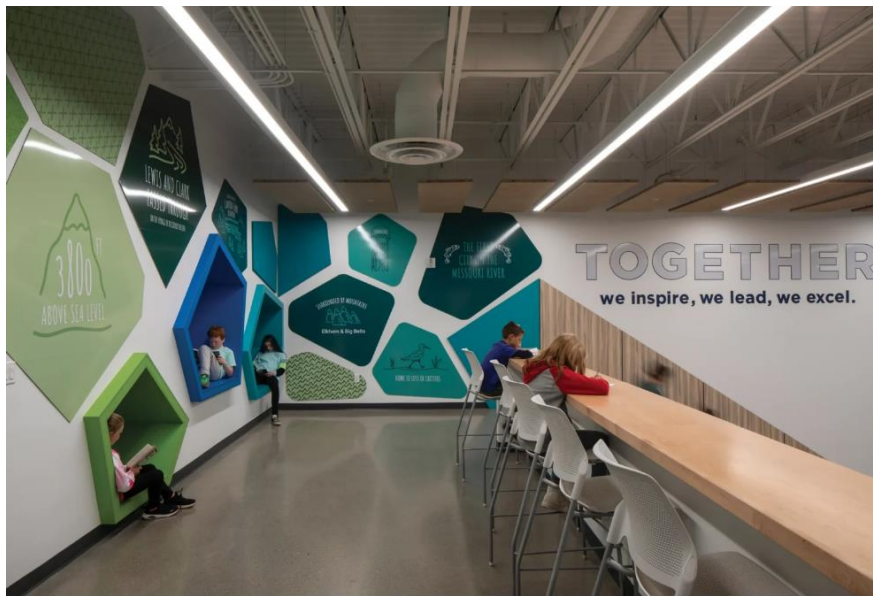


Image n. (1): School experiential graphic design⁵

- 2- **Retail stores, entertainment venues, and hospitality destinations:**

These spaces often use experiential design to create immersive brand experiences. For instance, the Apple Stores, with their interactive product displays and minimalist design aesthetic, offer a distinctive retail experience.



Image n. (2): Apple store experiential graphic design⁶

3- Transportation centers:

Airports and subway stations, like the Stockholm Subway art installations, use experiential design to make navigation intuitive and engaging, transforming mundane travel experiences into visual journeys.



Image n. (3): Stockholm Subway experiential graphic design⁷

4- Hospitals, museums, and public spaces: These institutions use experiential graphic design to aid in wayfinding and to create calming, informative environments, like the signage and interactive displays that enhance visitor experience.



Image n. (4): Experiential graphic design at hospital⁸

- 5- **Themed or branded spaces:** Exhibitions and events often incorporate experiential design to captivate audiences, such as the immersive Van Gogh exhibitions, which use projections to create an enveloping experience.



Image n. (5): Van Gogh exhibitions⁹

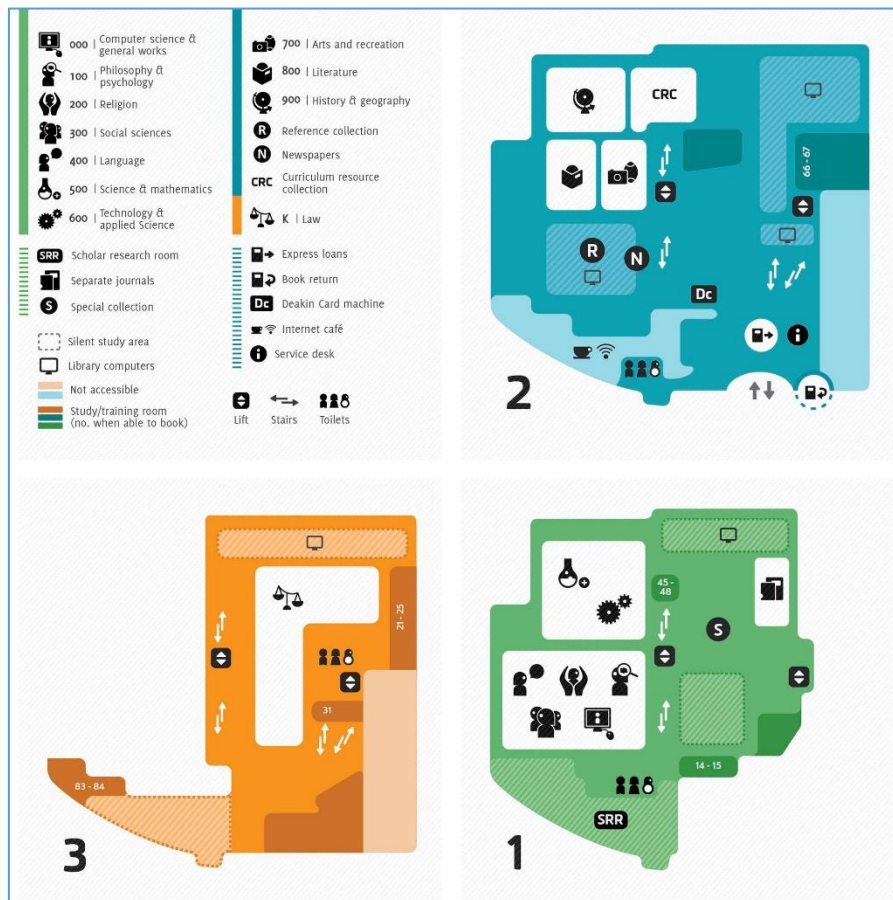
- 6- **Sports facilities and parks:** Focuses on creating immersive and meaningful experiences for visitors through the use of visual elements that go beyond traditional signage. This design discipline blends architecture, landscape, branding, and information design to enhance navigation, identity, and engagement within these public spaces.



Image n. (6): Stadium experiential graphic design ¹⁰

Functions of Experiential Graphic Design (XGD):

- 1- **Wayfinding:** Information systems that guide people through a physical environment & enhance their understanding & experience of the space. Such as information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space. As architectural environments become more complicated, people need visual cues such as maps, directions, and symbols to help guide them to their destinations. Wayfinding systems can help reduce their stress by providing easy-to-follow signage and legible directions to their destinations. In some settings, reliance on text-based messaging is minimized and systems rely heavily on non-text cues such as colors and symbols.

Image n. (7): Directional map¹¹

- 2- **Placemaking & Identity:** Creating the look & feel of a place. Identity design creates a strong sense of “you are here” by differentiating a place from others through the use of graphic elements such as type, color, pattern, video and motion.



Image n. (8): Place making and identity¹²

3- **Interpretation:** Telling a story about a site, explaining the contents of a place in an inspiring meaningful way for the audience.¹³



Image n. (9): Using graphic design in storytelling¹⁴

Factors must be considered while designing experiential graphic design:

1- Design Context:

- Environments already contain different elements (buildings-landscape-roads).
- Design must be appropriate to the type of environment and activity the audience performs in it.
- Social & Environmental responsibility towards the environments and people that live in them.

2- Ergonomics:

Ergonomics is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human well-being and overall system performance.” So, it’s basically about the relationship between the viewer and the design elements which are the angle of viewing the design, distance between the viewer and the design-legibility and the movement of audience within the environment.

3- Scale:

Depending on type and size of environment & the information that needs to be communicated (stadium, Hotel).¹⁵

Experiential Graphic Design and Sustainability:

Sustainability refers to the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs—while ensuring the long-term health and safety.¹⁶ As for upgrading the quality of life for all people and their welfare is a main goal of sustainability. Experiential Graphic Design plays a unique and evolving role in advancing sustainability by shaping how people interact with their environment in ways that support ecological, social, and economic well-being. By combining storytelling, spatial design, and visual communication, XGD creates immersive experiences that can educate, influence behavior, and promote sustainable values within built environments.

Experiential Graphic Design plays a critical role in shaping how people perceive, navigate, and connect with physical spaces. By combining elements of architecture, interior design, wayfinding, branding, and storytelling, XGD creates meaningful, user-centered experiences in environments such as parks, stadiums, hospitals, campuses, transportation hubs, and cultural institutions. When done thoughtfully, experiential graphic design becomes a bridge between sustainable intent and everyday human experience. It helps transform abstract environmental goals into tangible, visible, and relatable actions—ultimately fostering spaces that are not just visually appealing but also responsible, inclusive, and future-focused.

Analytical study of number of experiential graphic design:**1- Way-Finding:**

- 1.1- Image n. (10) represents an orientation sign. The board contains a map and identification signs. It helps the visitor understand where they are in the environment what they are surrounded with and what are the different options that they can visit within the environment.



Image n. (10): Orientation map¹⁷

- 1.2- Image n. (11) represents an identification sign in a parking zone that uses the elements of the environment in the design such as the walls and pillars to create the sign with no need to build or establish a separate physical sign.



Image n. (11): Identification sign¹⁸

2- Place making & Identity:

2.1- As shown in image n. (12) this sculpture arranged at Chicago Nike Town, the installation is actually a heap of gold-plated statue wearing sneakers-shaped slabs, hanging from the ceiling and placed in order to represent Michael Jordan from his Air Jordan logo. A fabulous sculpture created by American artist Michael Murphy, reflects the sports identity of the brand and distinguishes the place making it different and memorable.



Image n. (12): Sculptured installation ¹⁹

2.2- Image n. (13) presents Experiential Graphic Design of Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne which shows the unique identity of the place by weaving together nature-inspired visuals, playful art installations, and interactive features. The hospital expresses the meaning of being welcoming to reduce anxiety, make the children feel safe as well as supporting navigation.



Image n. (13): Experiential Graphic Design of Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne²⁰

3- Interpretation:

3.1- This work represents Vikings Team Museum which is centered around storytelling. It combines physical artifacts and displays with interactive technology which, through audio and video responsive to touch, bring the team's stories to life in an engaging manner.



Image n. (14): Story telling at Vikings Team Museum²¹

3.2- As shown in image n. (15) the design presents a story telling of the Egyptian Ancient civilization. Using experiential graphic design to interpret the details about a place or a monument is an attractive way for visitors.

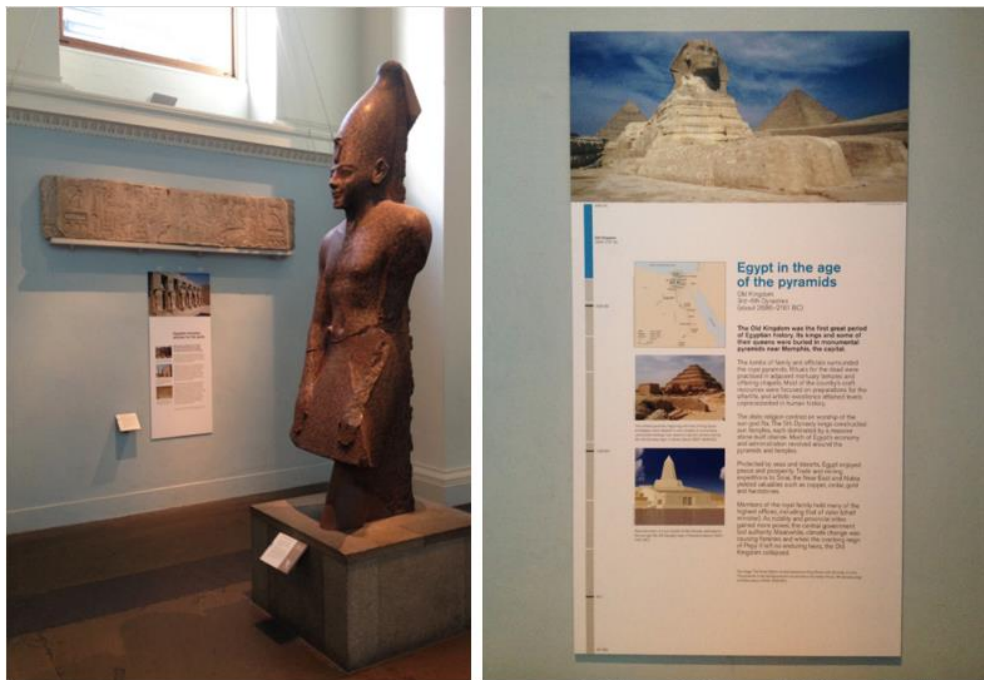


Image n. (15): Story telling at the Egyptian Museum

Conclusion:

Experiential Graphic Design is much more than decoration—it's a strategic design discipline that bridges people, places, and purpose. It enhances functionality, reinforces identity, and creates environments that are not only easy to use but also inspiring, meaningful, and socially responsive.

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