



GOOD SHOW

Defining, Implementing, and Guarding Immersion in Theme Parks

Guest Experience in Theme Parks | Research Project

Thesis

What this presentation covers



This paper explains how the concept of Good Show is defined, implemented, and maintained in theme parks, and explores its relationship to how guests perceive the value of their visit.



DEFINED

What Good Show means, and where it began



IMPLEMENTED

How training and theming put it into practice



MAINTAINED

How parks guard it against decay

Defining Good Show

Origins: Walt Disney and Marty Sklar



- Walt Disney originated the idea as Disneyland took shape: every part of the park must stay true to its story
- Sklar (2013): a photographer's car parked in Frontierland — a 1960s vehicle in an 1860s story world — “had violated a key story principle with our very visible contradiction” (p. 66)
- “Poor maintenance is poor show” — Mickey’s Ten Commandments (Sklar, 2013, p. 324)

Good Show = the consistent maintenance of theming, employee conduct, and operational detail that sustains guest immersion.

Defining Good Show

Guest research and Disney's own standards

4.69

Cleanliness

4.65

Friendly, Courteous Staff

4.55

Staff Knowledge

Milman (2009) surveyed 608 theme park visitors on the importance of experience attributes (scale of 1–5)



Disney's Five Keys: Safety, Courtesy, Show, Efficiency, Inclusion — Show is explicitly prioritized above Efficiency (D'Amaro, 2021)

Implementing Good Show

Channel 1: Employee training and conduct

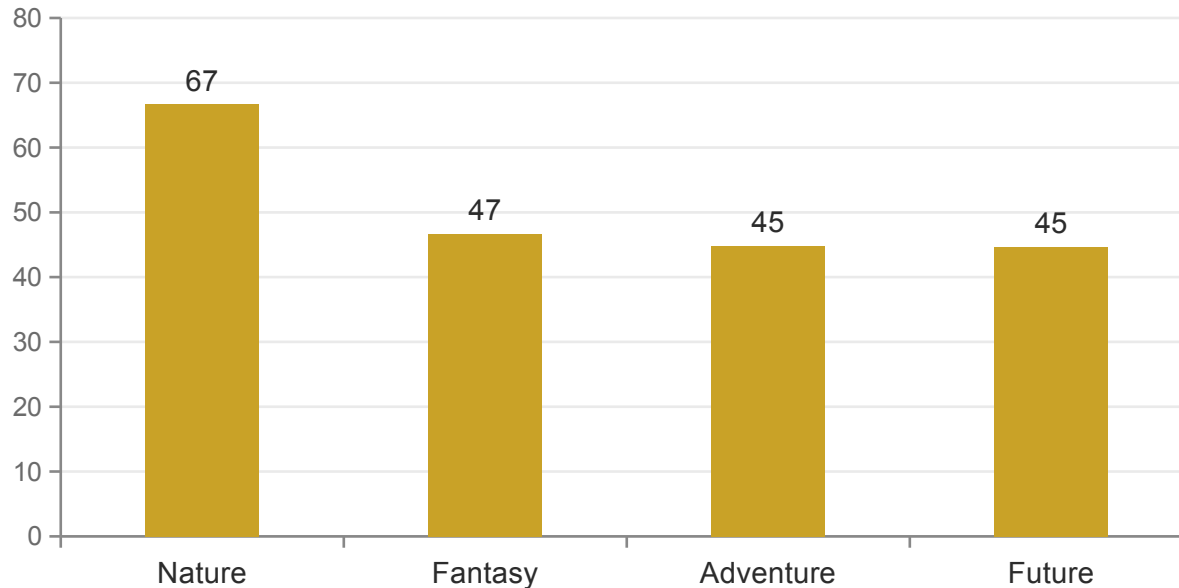


- Universal Parks & Resorts: even a restroom attendant listing includes guest assistance and cleanliness duties
- Disney Traditions: a 4–8 hour orientation introducing the Five Keys and framing the job as culture, not just tasks (Watson, 2022)
- Silverwood Theme Park (non-Disney) uses the term “Cast Member” and requires staff to go “beyond good service, to outstanding service” (2023, p. 21)
- Cast members are trained to say “Guest,” “costume,” and “role” instead of customer, uniform, job (Kinni, 2011)

Implementing Good Show

Channel 2: Theming and design

Guest Theme Preference — Wong & Cheung (1999), n=105



Immersion is “a state of mind or form of reception” (*Anton Clavé et al., 2022, p. 114*)

A theme invites guests to participate by engaging the senses, being believable, and being interactive (*p. 115*)

Kokai & Robson (2025): guests are not passive viewers of the show — they are participants and actors within it.

Guarding Good Show

The standard doesn't maintain itself



Even Walt Disney was corrected. Dick Nunis had to enforce the no-smoking-onstage rule against Walt himself — who “scoffed” at first, then recognized he was part of the show and never smoked onstage again (*Nunis, 2022, pp. 51-52*)

Guarding backstage from guests, too. A YouTube vlogger who repeatedly filmed backstage / closed-off areas was banned for life — later lifted once Disney recognized the power of social media (*Kokai & Robson, 2025, p. 31*)

Show ranks below Safety and Courtesy among Disney's own Five Keys — yet it is guarded this closely.

Good Show & Guest Perception of Value

Why the pieces matter together, not separately



- Guests experience Good Show as one seamless environment — not as separate training, theming, and upkeep
- Bitner (1992): the physical and social environment (servicescape) shapes how customers evaluate an experience, not just how they feel in the moment
- Kokai & Robson (2025): guests are active participants — the “tourist as actor” — which deepens perceived value beyond passive spectatorship
- Anton Clavé et al. (2022): immersion includes bodily affect — guests don't just see Good Show, they feel it



Conclusion

A family notices the music, the clean path, the friendly greeting — all at once, without separating them. That seamlessness is Good Show, and it is why guests leave feeling their time and money were well spent.

Defined. Implemented. Guarded. Perceived.