SIGNAGE PROBLEMS

In airports, you need to be able to distinguish where you are going quickly because time is always the essence. As we observed the signs in the Nashville International Airport, that was not the case. There are many signs that are not aligned correctly, nor are they presenting information in a clear and cohesive manner. The signs blend in with the environment and can be difficult to read with so much information garnered in such a small area. In addition, there is not a color coding system to distinguish areas from one another, which can lead to a delayed absorption of information leading to misinformed travellers.

CONSPICUOUS

The color and light on the signs contrast with their background so they are easily detected from the sign's surroundings. Signs should also be located where users expect to find them.

CONCISE

Passengers are unlikely to spend more than a few seconds trying to extract information from a sign. Information presented at any one location should be selected in accordance with the destination hierarchy and provided on a need-to-know basis.

COMPREHENSIBLE

Although the meaning of a sign may be clear to the designer, it may not be clear to airport users. To ensure comprehension of a symbol and many text signs, evaluation with representative users is required. Signs have to be in wide use, yet poorly understood. For example, various arrow shapes are used in directions "straight ahead" versus "up one level" may be confused. Comprehension of map display signs is improved if they are oriented to be read from the same perspective as the viewer.

LEGIBLE

Signs should be legible at the distance at which the user is first likely to look for them. A user with 20/20 vision can barely resolve sign information at 58 feet away for each inch of letter height. A more reasonable expectation, given a range of visual capabilities and non-optimal contrasts or lighting, would be 40 feet for each inch of letter height. The MUTCD recommends using 30 feet of legibility distance for each inch of letter height as a design goal. To be comfortably legible, text needs to be much larger than this. For complex displays (e.g., terminal maps), the use of the sign by several users at once should be considered, so that the text is comfortably legible from the distance a user is likely to stand.

LOCATION

The various pathways to reach an area must be considered. There can be several entrance doors to a terminal and check-in counter information should be visible from each, with a minimum amount of walking and searching for it. Signs must be located at decision points where the user has the option of taking different paths. Signing on roadways is much more challenging because of the speed at which the user is moving. The same requirements discussed herein apply, but information load and location of signs is much more critical.

SIGNAGE SOLUTIONS

VISUALS

Creation of entirely new signage to give the area a modern flair yet sticking true to the country music/tourism of the Nashville area. Airport users have visual and cognitive limitations that impact the design of signs and should be considered to ensure signs are effective. Effective signs require human factors expertise in development and testing to meet the following requirements:

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AUTHORS

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Objective

The central objective of our team's project is to evaluate the current wayfinding and signage system used to navigate the Nashville International Airport (BNA) and to create solutions for the existing problems. Using characters and principles of successful Environmental Graphic Design (EGD), our team utilized both divergent and convergent thinking in the schematic planning phase, and then progressed to produce solutions that will be tested in virtual reality by a focus group (non-design majors) to gage the success of the project.

Environmental Graphic Design involves all aspects of wayfinding and visual communication, with the goal of connecting people and place. For our research, we studied photographs of Nashville International Airport's (BNA) current wayfinding signage system that were provided to the class. By analyzing that information, we were able to determine what problems existed, and create design solutions to those problems. Using divergent thinking skills we were able to apply BNA's existing signage system, making it a more easily navigable environment for its travelers. To fix the issue of hard-to-read, cluttered, dark signage, we selected new color schemes, type faces, and materials that would better suit BNA's vision for the future.

Design Problems/Solutions

COMMON PROBLEMS FOUND THROUGHOUT SIGNAGE

• no color coding system
• signage blends into environment
• unorganized
• too few icons
• too many font sizes
• inconsistent design
• does not utilize iconography

ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHIC DESIGN

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OVERVIEW OF THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR SIGNAGE PROBLEMS

There are two problems that are not only the common problems in the Nashville International Airport, but they are also “the-meat-and-potatoes” of environmental graphic design. Having an inconsistent design can lead to confusion and frustration as travelers navigate the space. Coupling the inconsistencies with no organization will only lead to more frustration and stress which will leave the user with complaints of a bad experience.

These two problems alone are what will make or break the effectiveness of a design. Since, the BNA is severely lacking in both areas in all of their signs guiding travelers to their destinations, it has only led to design flaws.

Researching Environmental Wayfinding Design at Nashville International Airport