

Contextual Research Magazine

# *The Ideal Local Coffee Shop Experience*



Contextual Research Magazine



# *Contents*

**02**

Introduction

**05**

Framework

**06**

Our Values

**07**

"I Feel Uplifted"

**09**

"I Feel Uplifted through Contentment"

**11**

"I Feel Uplifted through Empowerment"

**14**

"I Feel Uplifted through Belonging"

**15**

It provides Community

**17**

It provides Agency



**20**

It provides  
Dynamism

**21**

It provides  
Comfort

**23**

It provides  
Consistency

**25**

It provides  
Delight

**28**

It provides  
Shared Values

**29**

It provides  
Inclusivity

**31**

It provides  
Human Exposure

**33**

Design Opportunities

**35**

Conclusion

**36**

Meet the Team

**37**

Acknowledgements

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# *Introduction*

Welcome to Team Cup-of-Coffee research magazine where we investigate the ideal local coffee shop experience. We are a group of graduate students at Savannah College of Art and Design conducting contextual research guided by Lextant methodology and our professor, Jeehoon Shin. Through this magazine, we dive into the customer's experience of a local coffee shop and the factors that create a personal connection between the two. We hope that the research summarized in this magazine helps local coffee shop owners identify opportunities both for existing coffee shops, as well as new ventures. The insight we have gained into the customers' minds and subconscious can help them identify unique design opportunities to create a memorable experience for their customers.

Through this magazine, we explored and gathered people's ideal emotions and desires when going to a local coffee shop.

This aided us in understanding various components that shape people's experiences at the shops. Hence, exploring the essence of local coffee shops, whether these components be physical or intangible.

We delve into the emotional connection that people form with their local coffee shops, and the comfort they associate with them. We were intrigued by the fact that coffee shop regulars often think of their preferred coffee shops as a home away from home. We further researched what stimulates tangible feelings and how it affects their behavior in these spaces.

*With that said, let's go ahead and spill the beans!*





## *Why...*

Visiting coffee shops has become second nature for many of us. Yet such a simple beverage has a way of inspiring and uniting us, regardless of who or where we are, and what we believe in.

We were intrigued by the context in which coffee is consumed, and as a team became captivated by the unique experience provided by local coffee shops. We wondered what stimulates people to visit and frequent these shops and wanted to understand the psychology behind this phenomenon.

## *Where...*

We distinguished our target audience between frequent exposure and their unique interaction with local coffee shops. We conducted screener interviews with customers across the previously mentioned coffee shops. Based on the results of the screener, we conducted detailed interviews with 12 participants, most of whom fall within the 24-35 age range. The interviewees were evenly distributed by gender, and largely Savannah locals.

To cover a broader range of demographic, we made a conscious effort to include a more diverse audience with our cultural probes and sensory cue kits. Through these methods, we were able to communicate with a wider age range, as well as coffee shop owners, employees, and non-local tourists.

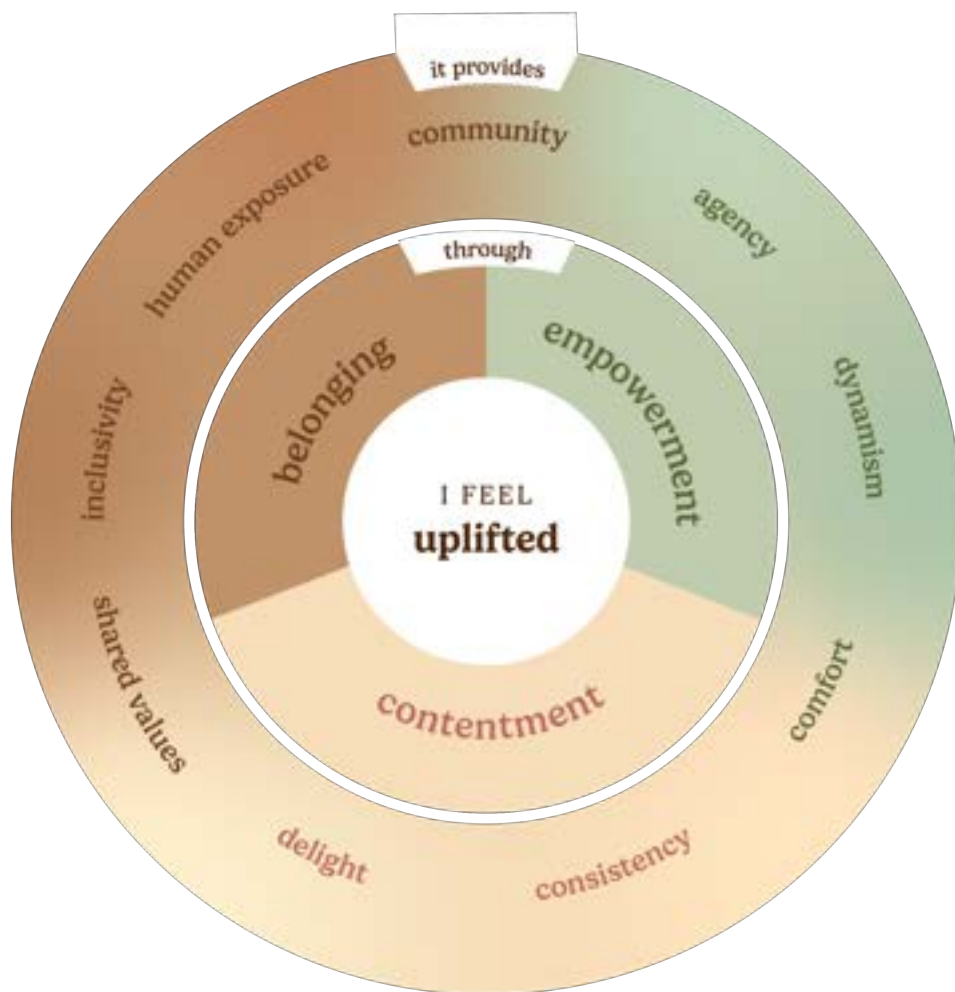
## *Who...*

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CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH

# Framework





# *Our Values*

## **COMMUNITY**

“Being a regular at a local coffee shop makes me feel like I’m a part of something bigger.”

## **AGENCY**

“I like the freedom to use the space in the way I need to, and operate in a way that suits me best.”

## **DYNAMISM**

“Flexibility and variety provide options that meet any of my potential needs.”

## **COMFORT**

“For me, local coffee shops are a home without them actually being a home.”

## **CONSISTENCY**

“I feel that I can rely on my local coffee shop.”

## **DELIGHT**

“Coffee is a treat for me as I associate good memories with it at my favorite Local Coffee Shop. ”

## **SHARED VALUES**

“I appreciate when coffee shops are mindful about the details, such as the sustainability aspect of their cups and packaging”

## **INCLUSIVITY**

“I like to see pride flags outside my local coffee shop”

## **HUMAN EXPOSURE**

“At local coffee shops I can sit alone but feel like part of a community.”



I feel  
**uplifted**



Visiting a local coffee shop is about more than just a caffeine fix, it is about connection, happiness, and the motivation to get things done. Local coffee shops foster a sense of community and togetherness through common purpose and familiar faces. We derive a sense of belonging and comfort from the fleeting but meaningful interactions within them. In addition to the social aspect, the aroma of coffee has mood-boosting effects. And the beverage itself provides the energy we need to get through the day and confront the tasks ahead.

Finally, the comfortable environment allows visitors to use the space in any way they need. In many ways, local coffee shops cater to our requirements and make us feel more confident and at ease. It's easier to let go of daily stresses when one feels relaxed and at ease. Local coffee shops cultivate an environment that allows us to become the version of ourselves that we aspire to at that moment.

# I feel uplifted through contentment

Contentment is a level of satisfaction where we feel comfortable in our skin. While contentment is similar to joy, its primary differentiator lies in its passive and laid-back nature. When we are comfortable, we achieve a state of well-being that relaxes our minds.

We tend to associate contentment with certain activities and places that transport us into this positive mindset. Local coffee shops are often a space we associate with contentment because they trigger a variety of positive memories and responses. We are comforted by the familiarity of the experience and take delight in our time at coffee shops. We feel a kinship with the people around us and take comfort in this harmony.







# I feel uplifted through empowerment

People have a deep-seated desire for certainty and control. We want to feel like we are in charge of our lives and are most fulfilled when we feel that we have some measure of control over our day. However the feeling of control is elusive, and so we tend to seek out and create small pockets of it where we can, in which we feel empowered to shape our time and actions.

Empowerment creates a positive feeling that pushes us to operate at our best. Coffee shops eliminate the distractions of our daily lives and allow us to focus on the tasks ahead. This, along with the flexibility they provide, encourages us to use the space in a meaningful and productive way.





# I feel uplifted through belonging

The search for belonging is a significant part of the human experience. Whether we know it or not, we are all looking for validation and acceptance of ourselves. These feelings enable the confidence we need to go about our lives and encourage us to pursue what we believe in. A sense of belonging also provides safety; a place that we know we can always return to, that affirms our humanity when we are feeling uncertain.

When we feel we belong somewhere, we develop an attachment to that place. It inspires us to keep coming back regularly and to do what we can to maintain and support it. This is why a sense of belonging is so crucial to the local coffee shop experience. The customers' desire to keep coming back provides enough business to keep up with franchised coffee shops; it's a mutually beneficial relationship.



# It provides **community**

THROUGH BELONGING AND EMPOWERMENT

“I value coffee shops where I feel welcome  
to stay over long periods of time”





We have a tendency to yearn to gravitate toward like-minded people. Being surrounded by such people provides a sense of belonging, making us feel more comfortable in acknowledging and accepting ourselves. We feel kinship and also confidence in our beliefs and values.

Local coffee shops create spaces for customers to have interactions with each other as well as with baristas.

They provide a space for us to form casual relationships; serving as a connection point for the community. The goal of going to a local coffee shop to work or socialize gives us a point of commonality to connect with other customers who are there for the same reasons and makes it easier to approach them. They play an essential role in society by incorporating sustainable practices and anthropological considerations to create a space where people can enjoy and connect.



# It provides agency

THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

**“I like the freedom to use the space in the way I need to, and operate in a way that suits me best.”**

As humans, we like to be in control of our circumstances, rather than being controlled by them. Having things in order gives us a sense of stability that makes our goals seem within reach. Local coffee shops have the unique ability to manufacture moments of command for us. In our choice of local coffee shops, we can pick the exact environment we feel is most conducive to our purposes.

Once we are at the coffee shop, we make micro-decisions, such as our choice of table and our food or drink order that make us feel like we have agency over the time we are spending there. For example, by choosing a small table by an outlet, we are creating an environment where we feel empowered to work on the tasks we planned to accomplish. By choosing an outdoor community table, we create a space where we feel best about socializing. While the individual factors and choices may vary based on the person in question, the fact remains that the agency we feel while making these choices results in a feeling of empowerment







# It provides dynamism

THROUGH EMPOWERMENT

**“Flexibility and variety provide options that meet any of my potential needs.”**

Humans are creatures of habit, yet we thrive on variety and feel stimulated when new ideas come our way. Introducing slight variations to our routines keeps our interest alive and so we add diversity to our days wherever possible. This is what drives us to break the monotony of our day and go to a local coffee shop.

Changing our environment and being able to pick from the various idiosyncratic layouts offered by local coffee shops puts us in a positive head space and we feel empowered to go about our mundane tasks. Within the coffee shop, we are also offered variety in menu, seating, and opportunities for socialization. This flexibility empowers us and inspires a burst of energy through the dynamism offered by local coffee shops.





It provides  
**comfort**

THROUGH EMPOWERMENT AND CONTENTMENT

**“For me, local coffee shops are a home  
without them actually being a home.”**



Before we can achieve the things we set out to accomplish, we must find a way to release ourselves of the stress and busyness of our lives. These overwhelming feelings distract us from the task at hand, and keep us from truly relaxing when it's time to rest.

The first step in eliminating these distractions is to physically rest our bodies into a state of comfort. This is often achieved by just sitting down. The relief we feel as we get off our feet and lean against the backrest is paired with a mental reset to the present; exempt from the past and future.

Many people refer to this relief as a feeling of 'home'. It is essential for local coffee shops to provide a warm, welcoming, and reliable environment for their customers. With comfort, visitors are free to not only sit back and relax with friends but also sit up straight and focus on projects or work.

# It provides **consistency**

THROUGH CONTENTMENT

**“I feel that I can rely on my  
local coffee shop.”**



Having consistently good experiences sets us at ease and helps us create routines we can rely on. In stressful times, consistency can give us a sense of safety which helps us to relax. Predictability is soothing to us because we come to know and expect a consistent level of stimulation and interaction.

Knowing what to expect from our favorite coffee shop draws us back to it when we have a difficult task ahead, or even when we're looking for a guaranteed good time. We internalize the smells and sounds of the coffee shop and look forward to them each time we visit. Seeing the same faces and hearing familiar voices provides reassurance, and creates a feeling of closeness and belonging in the space.



# It provides delight

THROUGH CONTENTMENT

**“Coffee is a treat for me as I associate good memories with it at my favorite Local Coffee Shop. ”**

Certain places are close to our hearts because we associate them with happy memories. Going to these places feels like a treat, and a break from our otherwise monotonous days and routines. We consciously strive to take a break to relax and unwind. We seek delightful and positive energy in our lives.

People commonly associate delight with local coffee shops for a variety of reasons. Locally owned coffee shops have unique personalities and features which inspire delight in customers because they are drawn into an alternate world. These features can range from themes to artwork to layouts and specialty menus. These little details add up to a memorable experience for customers which they seek to recreate with every visit. Some coffee shops have added elements such as art corners, event nights, board games, books, animals, etc that enhance the experience.







# It provides shared values

THROUGH CONTENTMENT AND BELONGING

**“I appreciate when coffee shops are mindful about the details, such as the sustainability aspect of their cups and packaging”**

We are defined by our beliefs and value systems to naturally gravitate towards people and places which share in them. Seeing ourselves reflected puts us at ease and we feel comfortable being ourselves. Such mutual respect has the ability to deepen the connection we form with a place. Furthermore, it makes us feel like a part of a like-minded community.

Local coffee shops are by definition very human and personal. The experience is carefully curated to reflect the ownership as well as the locality it exists in. This is why local coffee shops often showcase and sell locally produced products that empower local artists and crafts persons. We feel content in the knowledge that any profits made stay local. We also feel connected to the stories and history of our local coffee shops. Similarly, when a local coffee shop promotes sustainability, it shares in our personal as well as community values that we define ourselves by.

# It provides inclusivity

THROUGH BELONGING

**“I like to see pride flags outside my local coffee shop.”**

Each of us has had a unique life that has shaped us into distinctive individuals with varying personalities, needs, and wants. Despite how different we are, we want to feel included and appreciated when there is thought put into catering to the communities we identify with. Being catered to enables us to feel free and confident.

Inclusivity in local coffee shops refers to acknowledgment and respect towards a diverse customer base. They consciously serve as a hub for people of diverse cultures and ethnicities to come together to form a community. They offer a wide range of food options that cater to people with different dietary habits and make people of all genders feel welcome. Additionally, local coffee shops create an atmosphere of respect and inclusivity by making accommodations for various cultures in their touch points.







It provides  
**human exposure**

THROUGH BELONGING

**“At local coffee shops, I can sit alone but  
feel like part of a community.”**



In an increasingly digital world, it is becoming more difficult to have real human connections, even though they are hugely important to our mental health. People have differing needs for social interactions, and local coffee shops are able to cater to them all with their design and operational strategies. Local coffee shops are successful in creating a judgment and expectation-free zone.

At local coffee shops, we are able to immerse ourselves in conversations, or sit alone and feel comforted by the presence of others in the same physical space. For some, human exposure means idly watching people go about their business nearby, appreciate the bustling cityscape outside the window, or make friendly eye contact. Simple acts such as petting a dog or smiling at a baby can also add up to what we call human exposure.





# Proposed design opportunity

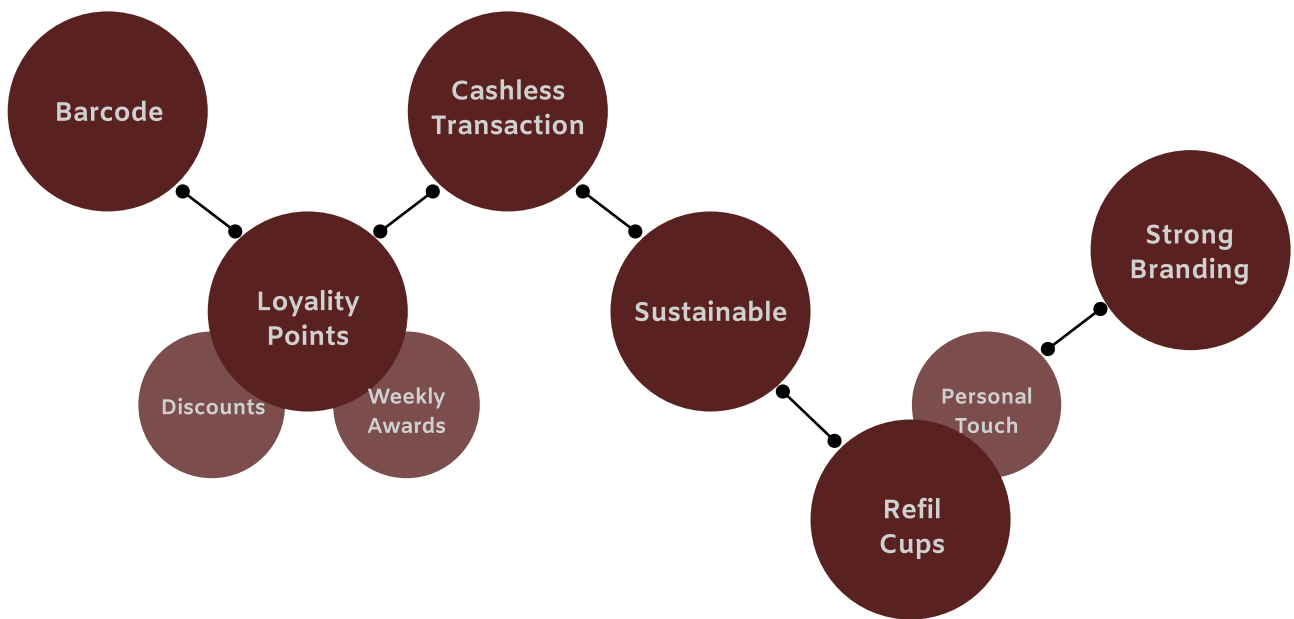
Coffee shops are not just places to grab a cup of coffee; they are places to build communities and connections. Our research has shown that people want more than just a good cup of coffee; they want to feel connected to their community and be a part of something bigger.

To address these desires, we propose a solution that connects local coffee shops through their customers and creates an ecosystem. By promoting the use of a sustainable coffee travel cup. This cup encourages people to visit local coffee shops, earn points through credit points, get rewards, and contribute to social responsibility.

Additionally, the the travelling cups will have a unique barcode much like in a credit or debit card. This will encourage cashless transactions at the counters as a scan on the cup can contribute to a transaction.

We believe that by empowering a community of coffee drinkers who are committed to sustainability and social responsibility, we can create a positive impact on both the environment and the local economy. Our solution will not only benefit the coffee shops by increasing customer loyalty, but also the customers by providing a fulfilling and rewarding coffee shop experience.







# conclusion

In this study, we summarize the insights and results obtained and mention ways in which local coffee shop owners and designers can utilize them. The research showed that local coffee shops are spaces that can meet various customer needs while forming a personal connection. It is a place beyond just a cup of coffee.

To meet customers' desires, both the physical and emotional components of coffee shops must be considered to allow visitors to feel comfortable, secure and delightful in the surroundings. Additionally, our research team emphasized the importance of contentment that local coffee shops provide to their customers. Customers can relax in local coffee shops while staying connected with each other.

Therefore, local coffee shop owners should consider ways to harmoniously combine space and technological elements, taking into account these dynamic behavioral patterns. Lastly, we emphasized the sense of belonging that local coffee shops highlight. Customers feel inclusive in the local community provided by their local coffee shop, finding opportunities for communication.

Local coffee shop owners should seek ways for their space to interact with the local community and make efforts to develop these relationships. In conclusion, our research team has investigated various aspects of the unique charm and importance of local coffee shops, and we hope to provide inspiration to local coffee shop owners and designers.

MEET THE TEAM OF

# *“Cup-Of-Coffee”*



**GRANT GIVEN**  
M.F.A INDUSTRIAL DESIGN



**LIA HUR**  
M.A DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY



**NEETHI LAIJU**  
M.A INDUSTRIAL DESIGN



**PRAACHI ZAVERI**  
M.A GRAPHIC DESIGN



**SHRAVYA DESWAL**  
M.A DESIGN MANAGEMENT



**VEDIKA DESHMUKH**  
M.A DESIGN MANAGEMENT



# acknowledgments

We would like to express gratitude to Lexant for providing us with valuable tools and training that enabled us to achieve research proficiency.

We also want to extend sincere thanks to the participants who generously gave their time and shared their emotions and stories with us. Without their support and involvement, this research would not have been possible. They have played an essential role in the success of this project, and we are deeply appreciative of their contribution.

We would also like to acknowledge the guidance and support of our professor, Jeehoon Shin. His mentorship, advice and support at every stage of this research project have been instrumental in our success. We are grateful for his continuous challenge to strive for excellence.

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We want to express our thanks to the Savannah local cafes Blends, Gallery Espresso, Foxy Loxy, Fox and Fig and Sentient Bean for providing us with a resourceful environment to conduct our observations and surveys. We appreciate their willingness to accommodate our needs.



HOT		ICED	
2.44	espresso	2.77	
2.44	americano		
3.00	macchiato		
3.00	cortado		
3.24	cappuccino	4.02	
3.70	Latte	4.50	
4.25	mocha latte	4.50	
4.25	carAMEL latte	4.50	
4.16	vanilla sugar latte	4.50	
3.24	hot chocolate	3.70	

HOT	
varies	
3.70	
3.70	
3.00	
earl grey	
ceviche	
want	
jasmine	
moro	

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