

Khaled Haq

Professor Julie Pesano

EWRT 1AH

October 24, 2017

The Growing Necessity of Coffee Shops

Coffee is a monumental part of the world's food industry and has created a culture closely tied with the fast-paced lives we lead. Coffee as we know it today, can most commonly be found at the nearest Starbucks, Philz, or local cafe. Yet while coffee shops make that hyper psycho-active substance that should probably be classified as a federal schedule 1-type drug, it also provides us with a productive, immersive, and dynamic environment that counteracts the hectic world around us. The modern day coffee shop has become a refuge for anyone looking to escape the reality of their frenzied lives, it promotes an environment that benefits anyone from a college student looking to relax and get some work done, to a local group of PTA mothers planning their next fundraiser, or for a young couple on a simple coffee date. Whether you go there to study, drink a latte, converse with friends, or just enjoy the vibrant atmosphere, there are three main elements that truly make the coffee shop experience, the sounds, the interior design, and a damn good cup of coffee.

Be it a noisy steamer, some good jazz, the low hum of an oven, or the soft chatter of cafe guests, one cannot deny the importance of sound in the coffee shop atmosphere. It's that demonic hiss and growl we always hear in the background of a cafe, as if the barista is summoning the devil from the mere 2 cups of milk he/she has poured in the latte pitcher. It is such an iconic noise, specific to the coffee shop atmosphere, yet it corroborates our mental alibi

of being in that space. Cue the soft jazz in the background, the light snare, the plucking of a cello, and some wily trumpet singing an incoherent melody. The jazz distorts reality and creates a plane in which cafe-goers feel at ease. It allows them to talk and chat while also providing studious folk a productive realm to work in. All the while a young couple in the background take advantage of the fertile atmosphere and trade their childhood memories, funny stories, and possibly their contact information for the next date and those to follow. The cafe fosters this activity with its so-called “white noise” that aids in blocking off the outside world. Today’s humans seem to increasingly need this newfound source of electricity as it maintains the level of energy that is constantly around us in our daily lives. Loud music, bustling streets, buzzing electronics, and noise-invasive airliners all contribute to the necessity of energy and movement around us. For many, a complete disconnect is detrimental to their growth, success, and productivity. Thus, it is the reason why coffee shops are seen as a shelter, a hide-out, or a safe-haven we must reside in to rejuvenate and nourish our souls after a long day’s work as well as maintain an energy with which we can work with. It is a place to slow down and think without background sounds like these we likely wouldn’t have an environment that fosters focus, facilitates conversations with friends, and promotes the iconic coffee shop experience.

While a sound barrier is essential in striking the perfect balance between connected and not, interior design aids the average cafe-goer in feeling at ease, and allows for a social yet productive atmosphere. A local neighborhood cafe may have a plush, visibly-used, leather sofa; an aged hardwood floor with coffee stains that have yet to be cleaned; and a simple, neat, relaxing color scheme, all of which allows us to indulge in tranquility. There is some beauty in imperfection, the tear and wear of a normal coffee shop allows us to forget about all the little

imperfections that surround our daily lives. It pushes us to completely relax and do what we desire. It rids us of our developed OCD and allows us to refill our lazy-o-meter. The growing demand for the environment a coffee shop provides is related to the lives we lead and the fast paced American work-force. Top fortune 500 companies have also started to take notice, and have thus implemented sleeping and relaxing spaces. Facebook for example, has multiple rooms in different locations across their campuses to allow their workforce to rest and rebuild the energy they need to be productive later on. Yet interior design is just one piece of the puzzle, and while all these places may implement an environment such as that of a coffee shop, nothing will ever be able to beat the real thing.

Finally, a lip-smackin, pupil-dilating, imagination-sparking, neuronal activity-inducing shot of caffeine. Be it your fancy latte, a cold brew, some regular coffee; or hell, even an espresso topped with a scoop of cold ice cream- formerly known as an affogato- every coffee shop must have a pretty damn good cup of joe. According to Time magazine, the most popular starbucks beverage in the San Francisco area is the Soy Latte, and it's not too hard to understand why. It all has to do with that smooth, micro bubble foam, that gently graces the tip of your lips as you sip the smooth coffee underneath. Being a barista myself, I have great appreciation for a perfectly made espresso-based coffee beverage. It is simply constitutes a certain amount of espresso shots, usually 2-3, and some milk that is perfectly steamed to 135 degrees fahrenheit and strategically poured based on both customer preferences and the drink itself. It took me a long while to truly perfect the art of steaming milk so as to create the right ratio of foam to liquid and size of bubbles. The caveats of coffee making can go on and on, but it is the end product, a simple, lightly sugared, typically hot, beverage that draws so many back for more. It is the reason

why the coffee industry rakes in 5.18 billion in retail sales in the U.S alone, according to statista.com. However, most importantly, without it, there would be no such thing as a coffee shop in the first place and the whole culture and idea surrounding coffee shops would have never existed.

It is clear to most 21st century folks, that a coffee shop is truly the place to be. It has the ability to relax us, detach us from the real world, and it provides us with the most important beverage in the American workforce. Everyone has a good reason to go and enjoy the atmosphere, whether it be studying for an exam, going on a coffee date, or meeting for an interview. In today's fast paced, rushed world we need to take refuge in an open yet closed space, an attached yet detached atmosphere. It seems people these days have delegated the coffee shop as being the sole proprietor of the correct balance between such worlds, and thus, has provided folks with peace and tranquility while being the center of attention. Coffee shops are usually always busy, and while it does allow people to disconnect, it does not isolate us fully. Our demand for such a particular environment most likely stems from the commonly arising insecurity of not being around people 24/7, yet whatever the reason may be, nothing will ever beat a good ol' coffee shop.

