

# Coffee house ethnography assignment



To approach these coffee subcultures, I simply walked into them and participated in their practices. Considering that these subcultures were not regarded as exclusive, it was quite easy to walk into them freely. To start with, in my study, I first engaged myself in the coffee shop practice. I would take with me a reading material into the ventures during differing periods of the day and sit at a strategic position at the table. This would give me an optimal perspective of what is going on in and outside the shop; while I studied I took time to survey the culture around me.

At a time, I could take a friend with me to the coffee shop, and scrutinize the subculture from a new perspective. At other times, I could walk into the coffee house with a novel and start reading, while sipping coffee leisurely, this would give me a different perspective of the subculture. I observed that it was easier to approach and talk to people, when I appeared as a student, rather than when I appeared as the one of their subculture, in casual wear and in the company of friends. In this survey, the coffee shop subculture is made up of different types of individuals at different periods of the day.

To maximize my observation during the study, I had divided the study session into two sessions a day: morning session that ran from opening hour until noon and the second session that covered time between noon and 5 pm. Although these sessions were not strictly defined given that the subculture tended to overlap between the two sessions. The ethnographic methods, applied in this study, were informal interviews and participant observation. I thought that interviewing customers who frequently attended these places would be of significant help in my study, since they were the most active individuals from the subculture.

My best bet to do this was to interact actively with the people in these subcultures that I noticed to be familiar with the coffee shops and their customers. My respondents were from different categories of people, though most of them were students. In particular, I interviewed group of workers from these coffee houses. During my interview with the workers, I avoided as much as I could to ask them questions related to official establishment of the shop, but directed my interviews towards their views as observers of the business environment, practices, and the customers.

Besides, the Effie and snacks expected to be found on the menu of such coffee houses, a variety of other resources entices individuals to hang around. Probably, the most significant resource for the consumer of any product, today, is the services of computer technology. Setting and Context One of the most common coffee shop and is well liked by people is Struck Coffee. It can be found in every city and would follow a standardized pattern in their interior designing.

Struck interiors were designed for the purpose of providing comfort to their customers. Consequently, their place is packed with a menu, a barista to serve, ND variety of coffee and pastries to address to customers from different age groups. The room is air-conditioned well. More often than not, its temperature is set too low that it makes one feel like it is winter. Perhaps it is a strategy of Struck or any coffee shop to make their customers buy a hot drink. Nonetheless, it serves as a good venue during the hot days.

Different tables were arranged accordingly to ensure it can accommodate numerous customers who had come to stay for a long period of time while

making it seem spacious. Some chairs have been placed outside as well to accommodate those who enjoy fresh air. Most of the time, those who would sit outside were those who were smokers. Inside, one can find a stack of magazines and the most recent issue of newspaper. I believe it accommodates those who wish to lounge and spend some time reading for current events or would like some peace and quiet like I had come for.

It would be a place for a sort-of-getaway from the busy life however, it can also be a place for comfort to aid one from their busy life by providing a venue to study or to do work. Several electricity outlets are stationed in different parts of the establishment for customers who wish to use their laptops. Normally, outlets are usually filled as there is a constant flow of people who come in to use their laptops. Chairs are also arranged around the fireplace to accommodate those who have come in to just read and do not have a lot of books or notebooks to write on. Each area provides for a specific purpose.

At Bold Bean Coffee Roasters, there are three laptop computers that offered at a fee for use within the premises, in addition to the Wi-Fi internet, signals are available to their customers for two dollars an hour. On the other hand, Struck offers free Wi-Fi. Another resource that is reviled by these establishments, although mostly assumed is the comfortable seating facilities. Apart from having comfortable seats, I observed that each of the coffee houses has enough number of seats available for customers. The way seats are designed and arranged is of particular interest.

For example, at Struck, though there are numerous seats that are available for customers to use, they are arranged in such a way that the distances from one seat to the other allow customers easy movement and prevent much interaction opportunity between the customers. On the other hand, the seating arrangement in Bold Bean is somehow different: here there are sufficiently enough seats for the customer, though arranged right next to each other allowing easy conversing among customers. Rather than having a bunch of seats, there are tables and two couches with seats surrounding them.

Although, this seating arrangement seems to be simple, it tends to bring people from different cultures altogether, while motivating conversation. The other seating arrangement that is common among the observed coffee houses is the aspect of outdoor seating. Florida is known for its beautiful landscape and weather, and coffee houses are not ignorant of this aspect. They provide outdoor seating facilities to lure potential customers to enjoy the atmosphere at their premises, while taking this advantageous opportunity for coffee.

Analysis This paper will be using the theory of Functionalism behind any thought, questions done during the field notes. I chose this theory because it seemed to be the most applicable to the present moreover, it seemed like a reaction to the outdated ideologies of other anthropologists. According to Bronchial Mammalians (1984), a well-known anthropologist and one of the first researchers to do ethnography, believed here is a difference between the views of the people within the society or whom Mammalians referred to as actors and the analysts.

He introduced analysis of society in a participant observation method. He stated that integrating all the details observed, the sociological blend of different relevant factors, is the role of the ethnographer. Each detail observed, as a result of culture response, serves a function to the attainment of man's basic needs. This is apparent in the idea behind why infrastructures and its design are developed according to their goal of attracting their clients by accommodating their needs. In this case, coffee shops establishments are developed in the most suited way possible to accommodate their customer's needs.

More outlets are made instead of the usual frequency you find at home to accommodate those who use a laptop moreover, free internet is provided to attract their customers. Another proof would be the aura that is provided by the coffee shop to be a venue suitable for studying, working or relaxing.

These aid the idea of Mammalians that the needs of individuals are satisfied by the social structure of their culture (Bernard and Spencer, 1996).

Likewise, customers as art of the society or culture within the area also play a part in providing for the needs of others.

Mammalians stated seven basic needs that humans have that should be provided by culture to be fully functional namely metabolism reproduction safety movement health bodily comforts and growth. A coffee shop is capable of providing for all of these. You can buy very good pastries and sometimes even delicacies in Struck or other coffee shops that will sustain your metabolism the closed space but equally wide area enables customers like us for safety and movement interior designing allows bodily comforts and so on.

The idea behind every coffee shop owner's strategy is not the coffee. It's to how to attract their customers inside their shop by providing amenities to suit their needs which will eventually lead them to buy their coffee. As a common practice, it is courteous to buy coffee to be able to use the services being provided by their shop. Rarely do we find people lounging inside without buying a coffee unless they do not have plans of staying long. The amenities serve as a function in culture to provide for the needs of the individual.

The focal point of this idea is the individual whilst the individual also contributes as a function to the society. Another observation that was interesting is how everything can be interconnected with another. When observing people inside the coffee shop as a group, it is apparent that everybody reacts in strong patterns although slightly in different means. People, as a form of respect to others, would communicate in soft voices so as not to disrupt the peacefulness of the place otherwise people react to the noise that they hear.

Customers go to their spots according to their needs such as a man with a laptop would go to a table nearby an outlet a customer who wishes to read a book would sit by the fireplace that did not have tables or, a student would go to an area with a spacious table to put his books and notebooks on. This is supported by the functionalist idea which states that one activity is connect to another while incorporating the known culture with the group in context (Garrison, 1983). Coffee is dominantly regarded as a morning drink; therefore, the morning hours are the busiest sessions of the day for these coffee houses.

The morning customers consisted of the individuals who were relaxing or those who were grabbing their coffee, while waiting for the bus. Though there are many businesses for coffee houses open in the morning hours, there are significantly few people who tend to hang around such places in the morning, so they pop in, grab their coffee and leave. Interviewing a certain couple, M and C, they said that they visit Struck every morning as a part of their daily exercise as they walk to and from the Coffee House.

Their daily visit to the shop allowed them a chance to read a daily newspaper, thus, saving extra dollars a day, while enjoying the beautiful environment. Commenting on the environment, surrounding Struck coffee shop, C said, " The coffee house is quiet, calm, and refreshing in the morning. " As time approaches to ten o'clock in the morning, the shop gets busier as more customers come for the tea break from the surrounding office parks. At eleven o'clock in the morning, people coming for lunch start arriving in the coffee houses. All the three coffee houses offer meals apart from teas, coffees, and other drinks.

This attracts customers during the lunchtime. However, this group does not hang around for a long, given that most of these individuals are out for the lunch breaks; therefore, there is not much of a normal subculture. A group of local workers takes advantage of the coffee house subculture over the lunch hour. At one incident, I interviewed a worker who said that he enjoyed having his lunch at the coffee shop establishments for their calmer atmosphere as compared to the food establishment. She added that the experience gave a chance to have a break from her office environment.



I observed the midday as the busiest part of the day in the coffee shops. This trend was also observed between two o'clock and five o'clock in the evening when students are out of classes. During this time of the day, one is likely to find many students in the coffee shops. The students are either in groups discussing, studying as individuals, or just hanging out and chatting. During the afternoon part of the day, there are groups of college students and adults, doing their assignment and discussing course work prior to the evening classes.

One adult student said that she enjoyed going to the Struck to do her homework, since the environment was calmer than at home, where her children would be bothering her. She added that, at Struck, the environment was relaxing giving her tranquil time to do her homework. Another female student, I interviewed at Bold Beans, said that she liked ongoing to the coffee house to catch up with her homework, since it was difficult doing it in her room, where her roommates may be listening loud music and making noise.

Together with this student, was her boyfriend who sat across the room facing the window to ensure they did not distract one another. Commenting on the same issue, a male student said that it was comfortable working there, because he could access the wireless internet service at Bold Beans at affordable cost. During these hours of the day, most of the students are in the coffee houses; in some instances, the same group of students would meet for the end day coffee. During the late midday, some individuals from the subculture that seemed to be self-employed would be seen hanging out at the coffee shops.

A man I observed coming into Bold Beans at four o'clock on few occasions had brought his computer and portfolios to the coffee house to work on it. In observing different caliber of customers at distinct times of the day, I noticed a basic trend in the type of customers that visited different coffee houses. I observed that the group customers at the Bold Beans tended to comprise of the locals and younger people, while at Struck, the customers were a mixture of both locals and tourists, most of whom were older people.

The group of customers at Bold Beans seemed to be more laid-back, while those at the Struck were seen to be formal. This gave an interesting comparison between the groups of people who form the coffee shop subculture of independent coffee shops as compared to those who enjoyed hanging around chain shops. Some workers from the two coffee houses confirmed my observation on this comparison. The employees at Bold Beans said that they liked serving the laid-back locals and the group of customers who frequently attended the shop. Commenting on the same topic, a worker from Struck informed their customers are usually formal.

He stated that most of these formal customers, hardly talk to the workers; "it is not that they are cold but just distant." One of the important aspects of the subculture is the language, and this is not an exception for the subculture in the coffee shops. When visiting these coffee houses frequently, there is a certain language one must use, when making an order for a cup of coffee or tea often unconsciously. This may not be possible to note until a stranger walks into the subculture and seems not to understand what is happening. Struck are known for their unique menu.

At first, when the business opened new branches at different places, people could not easily identify with what they were serving, because of the language used on the menu. The first confusion for the most customers at a Struck is the amount of the coffee they want since, in Struck, the language is not just “ small”, “ medium”, and “ large”, instead the menu reads, “ tall, grandee, and event. ” Therefore, unless the customer has knowledge of these sizes, it may not make any sense to them. Regrettably, for most people in this subculture, the knowledge, obtained by visiting one coffee house, may not be applicable to another coffee house.

An individual who is used to attend Bold Beans and is familiar with the language used in the menu, the lingo is totally different from the one who is used to attend Struck coffee house. It was quite interesting to me, when I wanted to know about certain dish on the menu, rather than explaining in terms of the ingredients, the server explained everything in Struck’ lingo. For example, when a customer asks for the description of “ Kong mocha granite,” rather than telling him or her it is a suture of iced Kong coffee and a mocha flavoring that is blended, the server said it is Just like mocha Frangipani from Struck.

This is of interest, that the server used the lingo of the subculture to explain its own lingo, rather than using non-technical language. This language problem is an example of an individual in a subculture who assumes that another person from another subculture understands his subculture. In conclusion, in my opinion startup culture is using a bunch of cliché@s to tell (mostly) young people that it’s k to invest an enormous amount of time and energy into something and then let it fail. Well, it’s not k. It’s bollocks.

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