

To Stay or Leave?: The Answer Luna Cafe Portrays

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered what made a specific context a favorite to be in? Imagine the context(s) that make you most comfortable and are considered to be a favorite to visit.

Unbeknownst to many, the chosen context is often a favorite because of the perceptual dimensions the environment provides the individual. Coffee shops are a good example of how different contexts can influence the perception of environment and consequently the length of stay or likelihood of returning. The warm and comfortable environment of Luna Cafe creates space where customers feel at ease staying or leaving. Customers also utilize the space as if it were their own, private setting, rather than the public territory that it is. Understanding the perception of an environment along with the way individuals interact and perceive the space is done through observing the appearance, arrangement and structure of a space and the parameters it implies in terms of territoriality and interactions.

Environment & Perceptual Dimensions

The mission to portray a warm and comfortable environment begins with the exterior appearance of Luna Cafe. The exterior of Luna was renovated from a bright yellow awning covering the entrance to a new sign made of metal. The sign is black and curved, with the curve moving outwards toward the middle of the sidewalk. The blue lettering that spells out Luna Cafe matches the interior calm, blue coloring of the walls. The switch from a bright, attention grabbing awning to the new sign with a calmer color scheme continues to invite customers in, but with the intent of extending the interior environment expectations. The exterior wall is painted two shades of warm, red tones, which is an additional aspect that adds to predictions of interior environmental warmth. Another observation before entering the building are the many flyers displayed to show what events are happening in the community. The flyers are an example

of Luna Cafe's mission to serve as an environment where all feel welcome to join in the atmosphere. The overall outward appearance of Luna allows an individual to begin to make predictions and create expectations for the environment within the coffee shop. The expression of warmth and serenity from the color choices—the warm, red tones and calm, blue—creates a higher chance to enter the cafe, as a result of the portrayal of colors (Knapp, Hall, Horgan, 2007).

The interior of Luna Cafe consists of environmental factors that influence an individual's perceptions and expectations. Three major factors that impact the environment include lighting, material used in the structure of the building, and the colors used within the cafe. A combination of natural and artificial, soft lighting is implemented inside the cafe. Lighting choice is important, as it impacts how people will choose to interact with each other (Knapp, Hall, Horgan, 2007, p. 113). The front wall of Luna is two-thirds window with a third of wood paneling. This design allows the front seating area to be lit with natural lighting when weather permits, but also has artificial lighting when natural lighting is dark. Luna is mainly lit with artificial, soft lighting that gives a dimly lit feeling, which allows customers to feel relaxed and more likely to partake in intimate conversation (Knapp, Hall, Horgan, 2007, p. 113).

Material used in the interior of Luna continues the impact of warmth and comfortability. A majority of the walls are made of red brick, with some accent walls of light, grayish blue. The material of brick—paired with the coloring of red—is characterized as warm (Eunsoo, Choo, Lee, 2018). The brick material is an aspect that lends to an individual's comfortability with staying or leaving when combined with the environmental factor of light. When brick is seen within bright natural or artificial light it can be perceived as cold, but when seen in soft, dim lighting, a warm response is perceived. A majority of wall space in the cafe is brick, which

allows customers to feel both cold and warmth from the environment. Sitting closer to the entrance, an individual may feel more comfortable leaving, as the bright natural light gives the brick an industrial, cold feeling. However, an individual sitting further into the space may feel comfortable staying. The dim, soft lighting paired with the warm, red brick walls creates a feeling of intimacy, therefore inviting a longer stay.

A defining characteristic of the interior environment is color. Luna's environmental colors consist of warm, red tones from the brick and soft, calm blue colors from accent walls. As previously mentioned, the brick material creates a warm feeling, but the added red color of the material is perceived to be warmer and more stimulating than other colors according to Eunsoo, Choo, and Lee (2018). The accent walls are equally important as they allow a break in the red color of the brick, while also correlating with the warm, comfortable scheme of the environment. According to Knapp, Hall, and Horgan, the color blue can be associated with feelings of calm and serenity (2007, p.109). This break in color is important as it allows for a break in the stimulation from the red brick wall to experience a sense of calmness, while continuing to maintain the overall perception of warmth and comfortability.

Density and Crowding Leading to Limitations

The impressions made by the environment, specifically the space Luna Cafe provides, can be seen in the customers' interactions and their use of territory. One environmental factor that caters to how people interact with one another is density. Density refers to the amount of people in one area or unit of space (Knapp, Hall, and Horgan, 2007, pg. 130). With the smaller space of Luna, it is quite normal to have a higher density of people and bodies in the limited space than most likely preferred. In these higher density environments, it is more likely for

people to feel encroached upon as there are more people in a restricted area. Intrusion and goal blocking are more common interpersonal disturbances, or encroachments, when in a high room density which lead to both stress and interpersonal coping responses (Sundstrom, 1975, pg. 652). In the setting of Luna encroachment may be felt often and will spur decisions on whether to stay or go.

One such example of encroachment is called intrusion. Intrusions are unwanted social inputs or invasions of space (Sundstrom, 1975, p. 646). This behavior was seen at Luna Cafe when a woman went against expectations and sat in a cushioned chair that intruded on the interactional territory of a group of men sharing a table. The group of men had been using body posture by spreading out limbs and keeping chairs pushed back to prevent anyone from intruding in their space. After this violation occurred the response of the men was almost instantaneous. They withdrew from their previous preventative positions to adapt into a more closed off, slightly smaller interactional territory around the table, effectively shoring up their space and excluding the woman from their conversation. This intrusion came at a time when there was a low density of people in Luna, making the experience that much more intriguing. The woman could have read and respected the prevention signs that were being given off, but instead she broke the expectancy and encroached on an interactive territory.

Another form of encroachment is called goal blocking which can be seen consistently throughout the day at Luna when the line for coffee and pastries gets long. Goal blocking is the interference of ongoing activities caused by people or aspects of the environment (Sundstrom, 1975, p. 646). People seeing the line have to decide if they still go for their goal, some really great coffee, or if they withdraw somehow into their seat, conversation or even perhaps another

coffee shop. This can also happen, especially in Luna, when looking for a place to sit as tables fill up quickly and you may not get your preferred spot. A young woman experienced this when coming into Luna to meet for a job interview and only having the option of one table to sit at because of the density of people. This encroached on her goal to have an interpersonal conversation and possible interview because of the noise level, density and tight space the table was situated in. This also blocks her goal of having a more private space for conversation and creates a slightly stressful situation as there are two full tables sandwiching her on each side. These two tables remained comfortable while sipping their coffee, doing work, or having a conversation because the density did not seem to encroach on their space or the territory they hoped to create.

What is possibly even more interesting is that the two tables this woman was sandwiched between while waiting were tables occupied by men. In an experimental study done on the social effects of crowding, men and women have different reactions to high density areas (Baird Jr., 1976, p. 183). Men and women are also shown to want different distances when interacting. While usually women in single sex dyads generally feel more comfortable conversing closer together, in this case the woman was waiting for a higher status female, someone that was potentially interviewing her for a position, creating the desire for a slightly larger interactional territory (Baird Jr., 1976, p. 183). With this status interaction in mind, the woman picking the table probably wanted more room around the table to make it a more comfortable, formal space. Therefore, when this goal was made unattainable she became uncomfortable and possibly annoyed at having to pick the table she did. This goal blocking encroachment made her debate leaving, seen when her eyes flickered to the door multiple times, or standing and waiting for

another spot to open up, expressed as she scanned the room. Her final decision was to take the spot given to her and mark her territory with her purse to make it as large as possible for comfort. The understanding of how gender and status affects interactional and public space is an important one to note as the woman may have reacted differently if meeting just a friend or being between two tables with mixed or female groups instead of only male.

Conclusion

It is important to note that whatever gender one identifies as, the different environmental aspects we experience in public spaces influence our decisions and reactions. The initial impression of a space, specifically Luna Cafe, is formulated by the lighting, material structure, and colors used to create the interior atmosphere and environment. While Luna's environment naturally pulls people in and makes them feel comfortable, the structure and limited space, especially the sparse seating options may hinder customer's desired space and interactions. This gives them an excuse to leave as they may experience encroachment such as intrusion and goal blocking in the high density interior. These many factors play a part in the message Luna sends to its customers and in their reactions to the coffee shop, whether they choose to stay or to go.

References

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