



## Analysis of Visitors' Spatial Experience in an Automotive-Themed Café: A Case Study of Montero Café

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### ABSTRACT

*Spatial experience frequently plays a pivotal role in establishing comfort within a setting, particularly in cafés designed with a thematic approach. Montero Café distinguishes itself by implementing an automotive-themed architectural design, thereby establishing a strong visual identity to attract visitors. This phenomenon posits the question of the extent to which the implementation of an automotive theme in spatial design truly impacts visitors' spatial experience and their emotional attachment to the place. This research aims to explore the extent to which the automotive theme applied in Montero Café's design influences visitors' spatial experience, both visually and emotionally, based on the Sense of Place theory. The study employs a descriptive qualitative method, with data collected through a series of observations and interviews with café visitors. The primary focus of this research is to identify the perceptions and impressions formed by visitors while spending time inside Montero Café. The findings indicate that the application of the automotive theme in Montero Café fosters visitors' emotional attachment, leading to a high interest in revisit intention. Place Meaning emerges as the most influential aspect through its strong visual identity and memorable atmosphere, although certain aspects remain open for further enhancement.*

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, cafés have undergone a significant functional evolution. Transcending their initial utility as mere dining venues, cafés have transformed into social spaces and integral components of spatial experiences capable of delivering distinct impressions to visitors. Consequently, business operators and designers are compelled to prioritize the creation of atmosphere and spatial identity through design. One prevalent strategy involves the adoption of specific thematic designs to create a café atmosphere that is both compelling and distinct from competitors.

As a thematic establishment, *Montero Café* positions the automotive concept as its central visual identity. Beyond providing culinary services, the café offers added value in the form of a distinctive and characterful spatial experience for its visitors. According to (Schmitt, 1999), the experiential marketing perspective emphasizes that consumption behavior is not solely driven by the need for products or services, but by the desire to obtain a holistic experience. Experiences that stimulate sensory, emotional, and cognitive aspects subsequently develop into meaningful memories for consumers.

While the concept regarding the importance of experience in a consumption space has been established, the primary factor in shaping such experience is the design of the space itself. (Winata, 2022) posits that the physical environment specifically ambiance, layout, and facility aesthetics has a positive and significant influence on consumers' impressions and emotional reactions in contemporary coffee shops. However, the majority of existing literature tends to focus on mainstream café styles and often limits analysis to interior decoration elements alone. Few studies have specifically examined how non-mainstream specific themes, such as automotive, are integrated holistically ranging from architectural facades to multisensory elements to form a strong place identity. This gap constitutes the urgency of this research, which aims to offer a new perspective on how an automotive thematic design approach impacts not only visual aesthetics but also profoundly influences spatial experience and visitors' emotional attachment through the lens of Sense of Place.

The automotive-themed café design approach offers a novel perspective in architecture, not only by shaping aesthetics and spatial experience but also by creating a sense of place namely, the emotional attachment, identity perception, and personal meaning felt by visitors toward the space they inhabit. The concept of sense of place comprises three main elements proposed by (Canter, 1977): activity, physical form, and place meaning. This study focuses on the issue of how the application of an automotive theme in café design influences visitors' spatial experience. The objective of this article is to investigate the extent of the role of automotive theme implementation in shaping aesthetics and spatial experience, including visitors' perceptions and emotional connectedness to the space.

Table 1. Variables Forming a Sense of Place

No	Variable	Parameter
1	User Activity	Activites or Events
2	Form	Visual Beauty, Physical Quality of Space, Environmental Characteristics, Use of Materials and Color
3	Place Meaning	Place Identity, Forming Elements, Place Representation

Source: Author, 2025

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies a descriptive qualitative method as the primary approach to comprehensively examine the spatial experience perceived by visitors. The research focus is directed at analyzing the influence of automotive theme implementation in spatial design on visitors' visual perceptions and emotional responses. This approach was selected due to its relevance in exploring subjective meanings and spatial interactions that cannot be measured solely through quantitative approaches.



Figure 1. Montero Café Location  
(Source: Author, 2025)

**Location and Object of Study** The research was conducted at Montero Café, located in Purworejo, Tanen, Pakem, Yogyakarta, Special Region of Yogyakarta. The selection of this location was based on the urgency of the object of study, which represents a typology of a thematic café with a consistent application of automotive visual identity, rendering it a representative case for Sense of Place studies.

**Data Collection Techniques** Data collection procedures were carried out systematically through two main techniques: field observation and in-depth interviews.

1. **Field Observation:** Observations were conducted twice on different Saturdays, considering that weekends represent peak hours for visitation. Observations were divided into two time segments: 16.00–17.00 WIB and 20.00–21.00 WIB. This time division aimed to compare visitor interactions with spatial design elements under two different atmospheric conditions (natural lighting in the afternoon and artificial lighting in the evening) and to observe the activity patterns formed therein.
2. **Structured Interviews:** Verbal data collection was conducted through structured interviews with two respondents selected using a purposive sampling technique. The respondents consisted of one general visitor and one member of an automotive community. This selection was based on a user-centric research orientation. The differentiation in respondents' backgrounds aimed to obtain data validity through a comparison of perceptions between lay visitors and visitors with special interests regarding the same space.

**Data Analysis** The collected data were analyzed descriptively to interpret how physical spatial elements stimulate visual and emotional experiences, which were then synthesized to answer the research problem formulation.

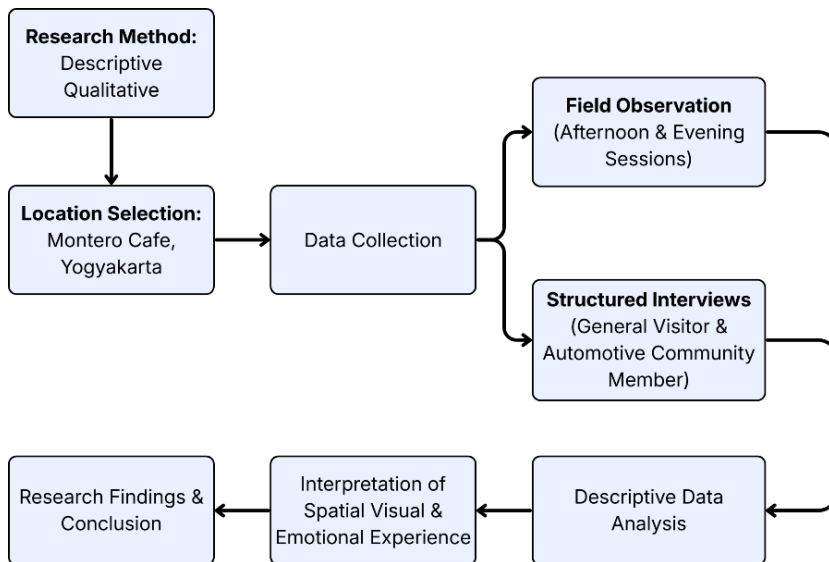


Figure 2. Research Methods and Stages Graph  
(Source: Author, 2025)

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic design in cafés has emerged as a frequently implemented strategy aimed at creating unique experiences for visitors. By presenting a specific design theme, a café can function as a space for interaction and visual expression. Theoretically, the aspect of "interaction space" is supported by findings that spatial layout and furniture arrangement can directly influence user behavior and encourage social interaction (Eissa & Zeini, 2025). Meanwhile, the aspect of "visual expression" is closely related to *emotional design*. The visual aesthetics of a theme are designed to evoke emotional responses through the use of relevant symbols (Rui & Firzan, 2025). When such design is successful, visitors establish an *emotional bond* with the space, which in turn serves to provide identity and emotional satisfaction (Sulistyawati et al., 2024).

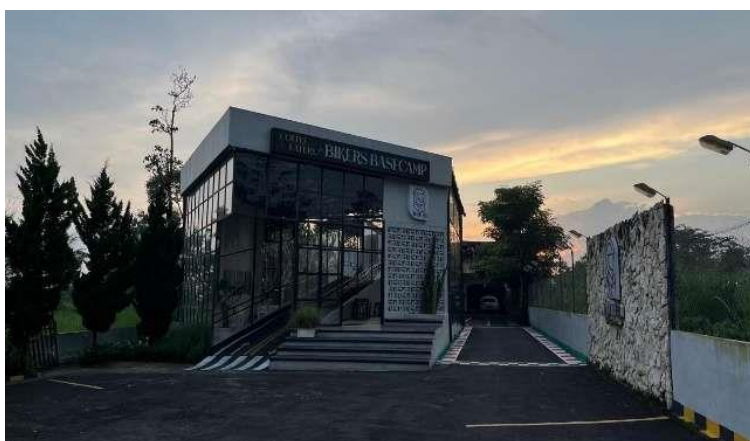


Figure 3. Montero Kafe.  
(Source: Author, 2025)

Montero Café is one establishment that applies an automotive theme. This concept aims to create a strong spatial identity and build a distinct attraction for visitors, particularly the automotive community. In this discussion, visitor experience at Montero Café is analyzed through the *Sense of Place* approach, referring to the three main elements forming a place according to (Canter, 1977): activity, physical form, and place meaning. These three elements are utilized to understand how the space is perceived, utilized, and interpreted by visitors.

### **3.1 User Activity**

Regarding function, cafés are generally utilized for relaxation, dining, and drinking. However, at Montero Café, user activities extend beyond these basic functions to include community gatherings. During the second observation, it was noted that Montero Café is also utilized as a rest area for community members engaged in long-distance touring. The function of Montero Café aligns with (Ferreira et al., 2021), who state that as third places, cafés now play an increasingly crucial role in urban areas, functioning not merely as places to relax and meet, but as vital venues for building social networks spaces for sociality where individuals can build connections and community potential. Data indicates that visitor perceptions of Montero Café's function have expanded beyond the general function of a café.

Visitors spend varying durations of time depending on their activities; for community gatherings, visitors may spend between 2 to 5 hours at Montero Café. According to (Aulia et al., 2024), the unwillingness to move, demonstrated through long visit durations, is a primary indicator of place dependence. This effort to stay behavior signifies that the physical and social facilities of the place are deemed capable of meeting specific visitor needs that cannot be easily replaced by other locations. This demonstrates that visit duration plays an important role in shaping a sense of belonging, comfort, and attachment to the café.

In addition to visit duration, another interesting aspect within the activity variable is the formation of territorial behavior among community visitor groups. Observations reveal that community groups tend to select semi-indoor seating areas with linear arrangements or outdoor areas with direct visual access to their motorcycle parking. This zone selection is intentional; they attempt to create a temporary "territory" where they can monitor their vehicles while interacting freely without disturbance from other visitors. Frequently, behavior involving the modification of furniture arrangements is observed, such as combining several tables into one long communal table to facilitate group discussions. This activity creates a fluid and non-rigid spatial dynamic. Conversely, general visitors or couples tend to select corner areas that are more private and rarely rearrange chairs. This difference in spatial occupancy patterns indicates that Montero Café successfully accommodates diverse 'activity scenarios' within a single architectural container.

Based on interviews, all respondents expressed an intention to revisit Montero Café. This evidences the formation of strong place attachment. As explained by (Choi et al., 2025), place attachment functions as a psychological mechanism linking visitors' perception of place authenticity with their behavioral intentions. The stronger the emotional bond felt by visitors toward the atmosphere and identity of the place, the higher their psychological drive to undertake revisit intention as a form of loyalty to the space.

### **3.2 Form**

(Edward Relph, 1976), in his book *Place and Placelessness*, states that sense of place is formed from direct experience of a place, influenced by visual, symbolic, and personal involvement aspects.

The analysis of physical form begins with the arrival experience or the sequence of entering the space. From the exterior, Montero Café's façade displays a bold character with the use of exposed frame structures, providing a masculine industrial impression upon first view from the main road. The absence of massive fences covering the building creates a welcoming and transparent nature, seemingly inviting passing riders to stop by. Upon entering the transition area, visitors are immediately presented with clear visual orientation. The entrance access is designed with a ramp and wide stairs, facilitating accessibility for visitors wearing boots or riding gear. This circulation flow intuitively directs the visitor's gaze toward the main focal point the motorcycle display area before finally dispersing to the

seating areas. This sequential arrangement is not only functional but also builds a gradual visual narrative, ranging from identity introduction on the exterior to an immersive experience inside.

Regarding the interior form context, the visual quality is rated quite highly by visitors, as obtained from interview results. The majority of visitors stated that the most attention grabbing interior element is the motorcycle rack displayed in the front area of Montero Café. Additionally, the rear motorcycle parking area, commonly used to display high-capacity motorcycles (high CC), serves as a distinct attraction reinforcing the specific impression of this place. In this context, visual interior elements such as motorcycle racks and large motorcycles act as triggers for the formation of place impression and identity for visitors.



Figure 4. Rear Parking  
(Source: Author, 2025)



Figure 5. Motorcycle Rack  
(Source: Author, 2025)

Regarding the physical quality of the space, several points are of concern: lighting, ventilation, cleanliness, and seating comfort. Based on interviews and observations, visitors did not specifically mention any area or spot as the most comfortable in terms of physical quality. This is due to the environmental conditions and building design which generally support such comfort.

Beyond visual aspects, the physical quality of the space at Montero Café was also analyzed through a multisensory approach encompassing thermal and auditory aspects. In terms of ventilation, the café's location in a highland area provides the advantage of cool natural air

circulation. This thermal condition is functionally crucial, especially for the motorcycle community segment who often wear thick and enclosed riding gear. The availability of cool natural air supports their physical comfort to stay for extended periods without feeling overheated. This is relevant to the study by (Duncan & Khamdevi, 2023), which emphasizes that achieving thermal comfort in café buildings in tropical climates whether through natural or artificial ventilation is a fundamental factor determining whether visitors feel at home in the space. Furthermore, regarding the auditory aspect, an interesting phenomenon exists where the sound of vehicle engines entering and exiting the area is not considered noise, but rather an element supporting the atmosphere. For automotive enthusiasts, these sounds reinforce the masculine and lively impression of "automotive." The synergy between thermal comfort and auditory stimuli forms a distinct café atmosphere. (Wicaksono et al., 2023) asserted that a café atmosphere constructed holistically involving physical and sensory elements has a significant positive influence on consumer satisfaction. Thus, the physical form of Montero Café successfully facilitates a complete embodied experience for its visitors.

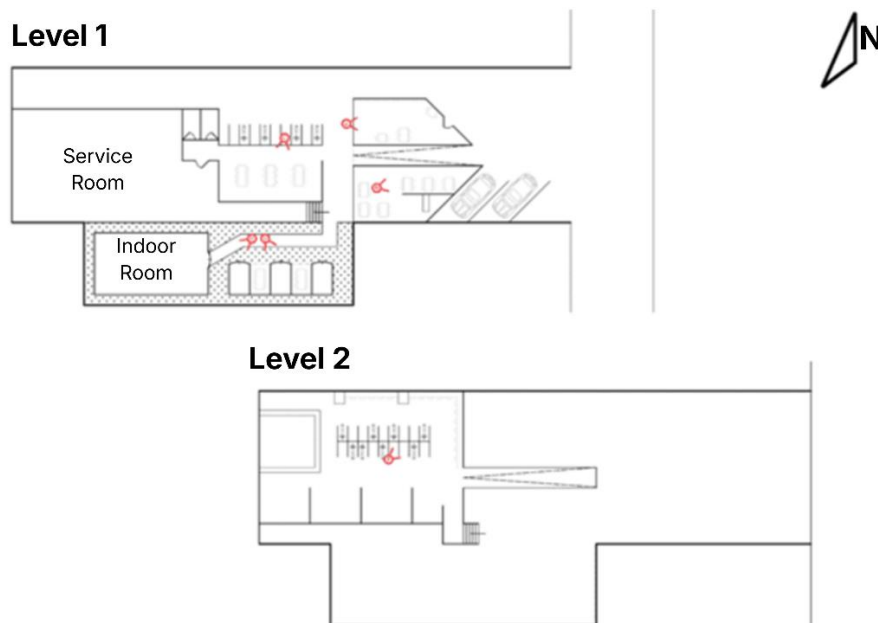


Figure 6. Montero Kafe Floor Plan  
(Source: Author, 2025)

**Area Semi-Indoor**



Figure 7. Seating Area Semi - Indoor  
(Source: Author, 2025)

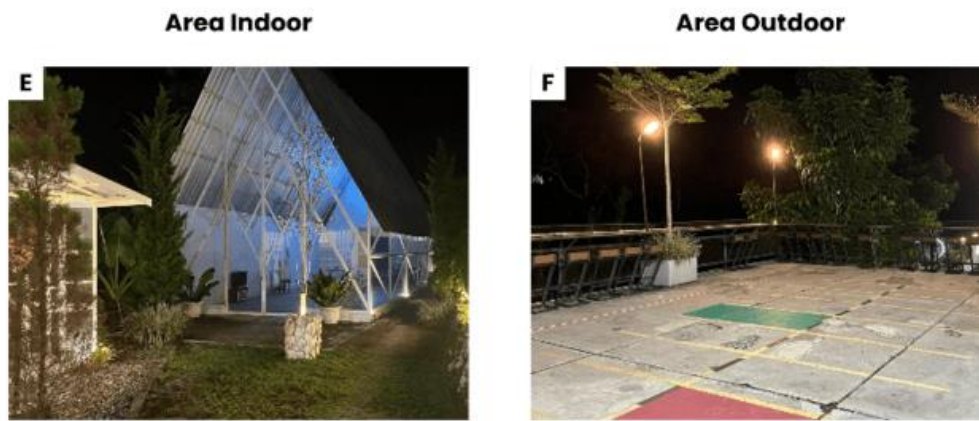


Figure 8. Seating Area Indoor and Outdoor  
(Source: Author, 2025)

The most fundamental aspect of a thematic café is the success in conveying the adopted theme to visitors. This aligns with findings by (Herdiansyah, 2024), stating that *theme suitability* and visual comfort are dominant factors influencing visitors' non-verbal perception of a space. When interior elements such as color and lighting are designed in harmony with the constructed identity, it creates deep individual visual comfort. Conversely, design inconsistency can weaken the space's aesthetic appeal. (Islam et al., 2023) emphasize that the *aesthetic appeal* of interior design has a strong positive correlation with consumer satisfaction; designs that are uninnovative or inconsistent risk failing to create a profound impression. Failure to manage this physical atmosphere, such as uncomfortable room temperature or poor layout, is proven to directly contribute to negative visitor experiences and reduce interest in returning (Antonius & Facrureza, 2024).

In the context of this case study, Montero Café is assessed as having successfully achieved such congruency. Based on interview results, the theme is conveyed clearly, with most visitors acknowledging a strong automotive nuance. This success is supported by coherent interior elements, such as the use of automotive parts (exhausts, motorcycle gears, etc.) as ornaments, and the existence of the motorcycle rack as the focal point of the overall interior appearance.



Figure 9. Interior Montero Kafe  
(Source: Author, 2025)



Figure 10. Interior Montero Kafe  
(Source: Author, 2025)

However, field findings indicate that while decorative elements like motorcycle racks are prominent, there is a gap in basic architectural elements, namely material and color. Some visitors assessed these aspects as neutral and not explicitly supporting the automotive theme narrative. In fact, the integration between interior design and a strong spatial atmosphere has been proven to be a determining factor in building customer loyalty and emotional attachment to the café (Lynette Antonia, 2022) This condition can be analyzed deeper as a design decision with dual implications for spatial experience. On one hand, the use of neutral materials and colors (such as plain wall paint or standard ceramic floors) creates a passive background. This allows the main exhibition objects the motorcycle display collection to become an undistracted focal point. On the other hand, this neutrality results in a missed opportunity to create a more comprehensive atmosphere. This aligns with (Lestari et al., 2025), who state that aesthetic interior design with visual appeal contributes significantly to shaping visitor satisfaction and experience. The absence of material elements with "workshop" or "circuit" characteristics makes the space feel too "clean" for an automotive thematic concept. Whereas, a complete spatial experience is captured not only through viewed objects but also through the atmosphere felt via the spatial envelope. Referring to (Fritz Steele, 1981) Sense of Place theory, aesthetic aspects including color, texture, and lighting are fundamental variables in reinforcing place identity. In Montero Café's case, the absence of specific automotive material textures causes the building's visual character to rely solely on attached ornaments, rather than the building's intrinsic character.

### 3.3 Place Meaning

According to (Choi et al., 2025), place attachment is defined as a multidimensional construct consisting of emotional bonds and identity, where individuals feel a deep psychological connection to the extent of regarding the place as part of their lives. The study also emphasizes that consumers with high attachment levels tend to base their relationship on emotional memories and nostalgic connections rather than mere physical elements. Based on the data obtained, visitors feel an emotional attachment to Montero Café, particularly among automotive enthusiasts. This reflects the formation of sense of place in individuals a feeling of closeness and attachment to a place that is emotionally or personally relevant.

Beyond emotional attachment, another crucial aspect is the extent to which Montero Café successfully establishes its identity as an automotive-themed café. Findings indicate that the majority of visitors state the café has successfully built this identity. However, this identity has not fully developed to make Montero Café a widely known landmark in the surrounding region.

According to (Edward Relph, 1976), memory of spatial elements such as building form and materials indicates emotional aspects and attachment to place, as part of place identity in the individual's mind. This is evidenced by the impressions left on visitors, who are able to recall various distinct ornaments at Montero Café, such as the motorcycle rack considered highly memorable, and the use of automotive components. Visually, the vertical configuration of motorcycle arrangements plays a strategic role in shaping spatial character. Objects originally functioning as transportation tools undergo a transformation into aesthetically valuable visuals through spotlighting techniques and placement on high racks. This aligns with (Ari Fathoni et al., 2022), stating that unique visual interior elements significantly influence positive visitor responses. Thus, this installation is not merely a display but becomes a focal point transforming the café atmosphere into a space of visual appreciation.

Beyond aesthetics, this element also serves as an emotional stimulus. The presence of specific motorcycle collections is capable of evoking collective memory and nostalgia, creating personal relevance between visitors and the space. As explained by (Elisabet & Constancia Indrani, 2023) in vintage-themed cafés, interior elements capable of expressing a specific style or past era prove effective in building positive perception and comfort. This emotional response subsequently reinforces place attachment.

Furthermore, the place meaning formed at Montero Café is also related to the representation of social status or prestige. For the automotive community, the café's existence is not merely a hangout spot, but a stage to demonstrate existence. Large-capacity motorcycles displayed or parked neatly in special areas function as symbols of cultural capital among automotive enthusiasts. By being in the space, visitors feel part of an exclusive social class or hobby group. This reinforces place identity, where the place becomes a mirror of the user's self-identity.

Moreover, the motorcycle rack element acts as the primary differentiator for Montero Café. In the current café business competition, a distinct atmosphere is key. (Sudjarwadi et al., 2024) emphasize that a well-constructed café atmosphere has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Therefore, the motorcycle rack fulfills not only a decorative function but serves as a strategic instrument in building long-term visitor memory. This is reflected in visitor acknowledgments, where Montero Café becomes the top of mind establishment when hearing the term "automotive café."

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The application of the automotive theme in Montero Café's design has proven to significantly influence visitors' spatial experience, both visually and emotionally. This theme succeeds in creating a strong visual identity and a distinct atmosphere; this transformation elevates Montero Café's function beyond a mere dining venue, evolving it into a vital space for socialization and identity expression, particularly for the automotive community.

Through the *sense of place* approach encompassing activity, form, and place meaning elements, it is found that visitors feel emotionally connected to Montero Café. Visual elements such as motorcycle racks and automotive ornaments reinforce the thematic impression, while the physical quality of the space supports comfort. Among these three aspects, Place Meaning emerges as the most influential element as it encompasses place identity, visual impression, and strong emotional attachment, as reflected in visitors' memories of distinct ornaments and the identification of Montero as a primary automotive café. However, aspects of material and building color remain neutral and require further exploration to match the strength of the ornaments.

This is further reflected in the high interest of visitors to return, as well as the deep impression of distinct design elements. Thus, the automotive theme is capable of shaping a meaningful spatial experience and building visitors' emotional attachment to the place.

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