

The Impact of Furniture Layout on the Architectural Experience of Visitors at Pet Cafés

Airin Dian Nagari*, Budi Sudarwanto, Siti Rukayah, Agung Budi Sardjono
Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia
Email: airin.nagari@gmail.com*, budisudarwanto@lecturer.undip.ac.id

ABSTRACT

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Public spaces and quasi-public spaces such as cafes serve not only as places of consumption, but also as spaces for social experience, interaction, and relaxation. This study analyzed the influence of furniture layout on the architectural experience of visitors at Lamiao Cat Café as a quasi-public space. The method used was qualitative research with an observational approach through behavior mapping techniques, including person-centered mapping and place-centered mapping. This approach is employed to examine the relationship between spatial configuration, visitor behavior patterns, and the spatial experience formed. The results show that furniture layout affects circulation patterns, intensity of space use, and visitor comfort levels. Architectural experiences are formed in layers and sequentially, ranging from perceptual experiences through spatial readability and orientation, bodily and movement experiences through ease of circulation, to emotional experiences related to comfort and privacy. The accumulation of these experiences shapes the meaning of space for visitors. This study confirms that furniture layout functions as a guide to architectural experience, not merely as a functional element of space.

INTRODUCTION

Public spaces and quasi-public spaces such as cafes serve not only as places of consumption, but also as spaces for social experience, interaction, and relaxation (Oldenburg, 1998; Susanto & Darmayanti, 2024). The development of the culture of hanging out and working informally encourages cafes to present the quality of space that is able to provide an experience to visitors that includes atmosphere, comfort, and the quality of the relationship between users and the space (Ramdhani et al., 2025). In this context, the experience of space is an important factor that influences the decision of visitors to linger and return to visit a café (Carmona, 2015).

To create a positive perception of coffee shops or cafes, making the experience a big challenge for the café (Meeprom & Kokkhangplu, 2025). Finally, there is a thematic café trend that emphasizes the experience of space as the main attraction, one of which is pet café. This concept adds a new dimension to the visitor experience as it presents emotional elements and non-human interactions in the context of semi-commercial public spaces. Research on pet-friendly cafes such as the study at Ben and Lou Coffee shows that the atmosphere of the space, circulation, texture, and light have an important role in the comfort and experience of the visitors' space (Susanto & Darmayanti, 2024). More precisely, interior layout including furniture, circulation, lighting, and other spatial elements in influencing the comfort, productivity and behavior patterns of users in public spaces (Eissa & El Zeini, 2025).

The layout of furniture in the café space is one of the components of interior design that greatly determines how users interact with the space physically and perceptually. The game of distance between tables, seat orientation, and the relationship between the server area and the leisure area can shape circulation patterns, interaction intensity, and the formation of a space atmosphere (Faridah & Dewi, 2024). The layout of the furniture not only functions ergonomically, but also plays a role in building the atmosphere of the space and directing visitor behavior indirectly. A good café interior design not only meets functional needs, but also supports the visual, social, and emotional experiences of users (Ramdhani et al., 2025).

However, studies that specifically discuss the layout of furniture and the architectural experience of visitors in the context of pet cafes are still limited. The research still focuses on visual, aesthetic, or thematic concepts, without examining in depth how furniture configuration affects sensory experiences, body movements in space, and the formation of the meaning of space experienced by visitors sequentially (Susanto & Darmayanti, 2024). In fact, the quality of the space experience is becoming increasingly complex and cannot be separated from the way users move, stop, and engage in activities in it.

The experience of architecture approach, according to Kabir, offers a relevant theoretical framework for reading the experience of space holistically. Kabir views architectural experience as a multi-layered phenomenon that includes perceptual experience, bodily and movement experience, emotional-psychological response, and the formation of spatial meaning (Pallasmaa, 2012; (Rasmussen, 1959). In this perspective, spatial experiences do not occur instantaneously, but rather are formed through a process of continuous interaction between users and the built environment (Kabir et al., 2020; Kabir et al., 2020b). This approach allows the visitor experience to be understood not only as a response to the physical form of the space, but as a series of experiences experienced in sequence.

Lamiao Cat Café in Semarang City is an example of a pet café that combines eating and drinking activities with interaction with cats in a specially designed interior space. However, the difference in the intensity of the use of space and furniture shows that there is a variation in the experience felt by visitors. This indicates that furniture layout has an important role in shaping architectural experiences (Dong et al., 2024).

The experience of space in the context of a thematic café does not happen instantaneously, but rather develops through a series of activities and movements of users from one zone to another. Therefore, in addition to being read through physical and behavioral aspects, architectural experience can also be understood as a sequential process that forms the flow of spatial experience. In architectural studies, the narrative approach is used as a tool to read the sequence of experiences through spatial sequencing, where space is understood as a series of events experienced by the user gradually (Coates, 2012); Tschumi, 1996). This approach is not positioned as the main theoretical framework, but as an analytical tool to clarify the dynamics of the process of spatial experience, particularly in interior spaces and semi-public spaces (Aguspriyanti et al., 2024).

The urgency of this research is based on three interrelated key gaps. First, practically, the phenomenon of pet cafés as thematic spaces that combine consumption with human-animal interaction has grown rapidly, but previous research has focused more on visual and thematic aspects without deeply examining how furniture configurations affect visitors' comfort, circulation, and emotional experiences—even though these factors determine visitor length of

stay and loyalty. Second, theoretically, although Kabir's experience of architecture approach—which encompasses perceptual, bodily and movement, emotional-psychological, and spatial meaning-making experiences—offers a holistic framework for interpreting spatial experiences, its application to thematic commercial spaces such as pet cafés is still very limited, resulting in interior design tending to be solely oriented towards function and aesthetics without considering how furniture layout shapes the narrative of a complete spatial experience. Third, methodologically, the evaluation of the quality of pet café space is still dominated by retrospective methods such as questionnaires and interviews that are less able to capture the dynamics of spatial experience in real-time and sequentially, whereas the spatial experience is formed through a series of activities and user movements from one zone to another, so that an observational approach such as behavior mapping is needed that is able to record circulation patterns, intensity of space use, and the relationship between physical configurations and visitors' behavioral responses simultaneously. Based on these three gaps, this research is urgent to be carried out because it provides a practical contribution in the form of a comprehensive understanding of the role of furniture layout in shaping the architectural experience of pet café visitors, a theoretical contribution in the form of enriching the application of the experience of architecture framework in thematic commercial spaces, and a methodological contribution in the form of integrating behavior mapping and a narrative approach to read the spatial experience in a layered and sequential manner.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the influence of furniture layout on the architectural experience of visitors at Lamiao Cat Café. Using the behavior mapping method and the experience of architecture framework, according to Kabir, this study seeks to read the visitor's space experience not only as a physical function, but as a layered experience that takes place narratively from the time the visitor enters the space until it leaves. The results of this research are expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the design of thematic café interiors that are oriented towards user experience.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative method with an observational approach to understand the relationship between furniture layout and the architectural experience of visitors at pet cafes. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on spatial experiences that are subjective, contextual, and formed through direct interaction between users and the built environment.

Data collection was carried out through behavior mapping techniques, which consisted of person-centered mapping and place-centered mapping. Person-centered mapping is used to record circulation patterns, direction of movement, and the order of activity of visitors from entering the space to leaving it (Haryadi & Setiawan, 2024); Sommer, 1983). This technique allows researchers to understand how furniture configuration affects body movements and visitor orientation within the space. Meanwhile, place-centered mapping is used to identify the intensity of use of certain areas and furniture elements, so that it can be identified that the areas are most often used, avoided, or simply passed through without activity.

The observation was carried out on September 27, 2025 in the range of 17.00–21.00 WIB, which is during café operating hours with the intensity of active visitor visits. The selection of afternoon to night time aims to capture the behavior patterns and experiences of

visitors' rooms under optimal space usage conditions. On the same date, a field survey was carried out in the form of measuring the dimensions of the space, recording the type and position of furniture, as well as making sketches of the layout of the café as the basis for behavior mapping and analysis of the relationship between the configuration of the space and the architectural experience of visitors.

This study involves two main variables, namely furniture layout as an independent variable and visitors' architectural experience as a dependent variable. Furniture layout is understood as a physical configuration that includes position, orientation, distance between elements, as well as their relationship to circulation lines and service areas. Meanwhile, the architectural experience of visitors is understood as an analytical dimension derived from the concept of experience of architecture according to Kabir, which includes perceptual experience, body and movement experience, emotional-psychological experience, and the formation of the meaning of space.

The narrative approach is used as an analytical tool in reading spatial experiences sequentially. The data from the behavior mapping results are interpreted based on the order of the visitor's experience, starting from the initial experience when entering the space, the orientation process and seat selection, interaction with the room and cats, to the final experience before leaving the café. This approach allows the experience of architecture to be understood as a layered and continuous process, in line with the framework of experience of architecture according to Kabir (Seamon, 2009).

Thus, this research methodology not only records user behavior empirically, but also interprets the experience of space as a series of experiences formed through the interaction between furniture layout, body movements, and the psychological response of visitors in the context of pet cafés.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Spatial Context and Characteristics of Research Objects

Lamiao Cat Café is located in an urban area with direct access from the neighborhood road (Figure 1), making it easy to reach by visitors from various backgrounds. Precisely located on Jl. Kusuma Wardani No. 8, Pelefusion, Kec. In front of the location or east there is a food court area (Figure 2 (a)). Meanwhile, the north of the location is bordered by Jl. Kusuma Wardani III and one of the facilities buildings owned by Bank Indonesia (Figure 2 (b)). On the south side, Lamiao Cat Cafe is adjacent to Lamiao Petshop & Pethotel which sells a wide variety of food and other necessities for pets (Figure 2 (c)).

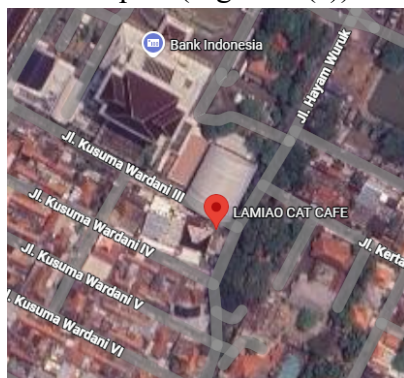


Figure 1. Lamiao Cat Café Location Map



Figure 2. Neighborhood Photos of Lamiao Cat Cafe (a) Food Courts (b) Bank Indonesia Facility Building (c) Petshop (d) Exterior of Lamiao Cat Cafe

The café's position in a semi-commercial area makes it a *quasi-public space*, where the space is open to the public but still has control of activities through rules and internal management. This condition affects the character of visitors who come not only for consumption purposes, but also to seek a relaxing and recreative space experience.

The environment around the café is relatively quiet in the afternoon until evening, the time when observations are made, allowing visitors to stay longer in the space. This environmental context contributes to the initial experience of visitors, especially in shaping the expectations of the atmosphere of the space before entering the interior of the café. Thus, the location and context around the café are the initial factors that affect the overall architectural experience.

Internally, the café space is divided into several main zones, namely the entry and transition areas, the ordering area, the visitor seating area, and the interaction area with cats. The division of this zone is not completely physically limited, but is formed through differences in furniture arrangement and spatial orientation. This configuration allows the space experience to evolve gradually as visitors move from one zone to another.

Space Layout and Furniture Elements

The interior layout of Lamiao Cat Café is dominated by furniture arrangements that form a non-linear circulation path. Tables and chairs are placed with varying distances and orientations, creating a seating area with different levels of openness and privacy. Some areas provide lesehan seating and low tables that allow for closer interaction with cats, while others use standard tables and chairs that tend to be more formal.

For more details, the layout of Lamiao Cat Café can be seen in figure 3. Just after the entrance, there is a transition area where visitors are required to change their footwear for the slippers already provided (Figure 4 (a)). This café implements a *counter service* system, so visitors are required to order directly at the order counter.

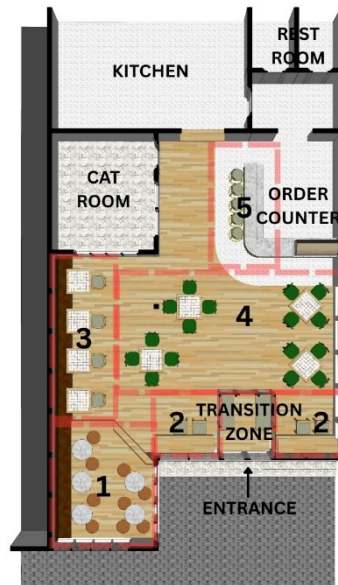


Figure 3. Lamiao Cat Café Location Map



Figure 4. Interior of Lamiao Cat Café (a) transition room (b) booking desk (c) bar table and chairs (area 4) (d) area 2 (e) area 3 (f) area 3 and 4 (g) cat room (h) area 1

This café has a visitor capacity of 43 people with 5 areas that can be chosen as desired by visitors. The layout of the café area can be seen in figure 3 and the details of the area are in table 1.

Table 1 Furniture placement

Name	Property Detail	Capacity of Each Property	Number of Properties	Total Capacity
Area 1	Area 1 is a low-top seating area with low tables and floor cushions.	2	5	10
Area 2	Area 2 features high-top bar stools with custom tables featuring 3D lettering.	2	2	4
Area 3	Area 3 has square tables with two seats at each table, a combination of chairs and benches.	2	4	8
Area 4	Area 4 has square tables with four chairs at each table.	4	4	16
Area 5	Area 5 is the ordering counter and bar with high-top bar stools.	1	5	5
Total	5 properties			43

Furniture placement plays a role as an element that shapes the experience of space, not just a complement to function. The distance between tables, the orientation of the seats, and the relationship between the seating area and the main circulation path affect the ease of movement and body comfort of visitors. Areas with looser spacing between furniture provide better flexibility of movement, while denser areas tend to restrict movement and reduce comfort.

In the context of architectural experience, this furniture configuration forms different stages of experience. In the early stages, furniture serves as a space marker that helps visitors understand the orientation and choice of seating area. In the next stage, furniture becomes a medium of body and movement engagement, where visitors begin to settle down, interact with the space, and adjust their body position to the surrounding environment. Thus, the layout of furniture contributes directly to the formation of perceptual experiences and visitors' bodily experiences.

Results of Behavior Mapping and Space Use Patterns

On **September 27, 2025** in the time range of **17.00–21.00 WIB**, the café has a total of 18 visitors. The circulation patterns and activities carried out by the visitors can be seen in figure 5.

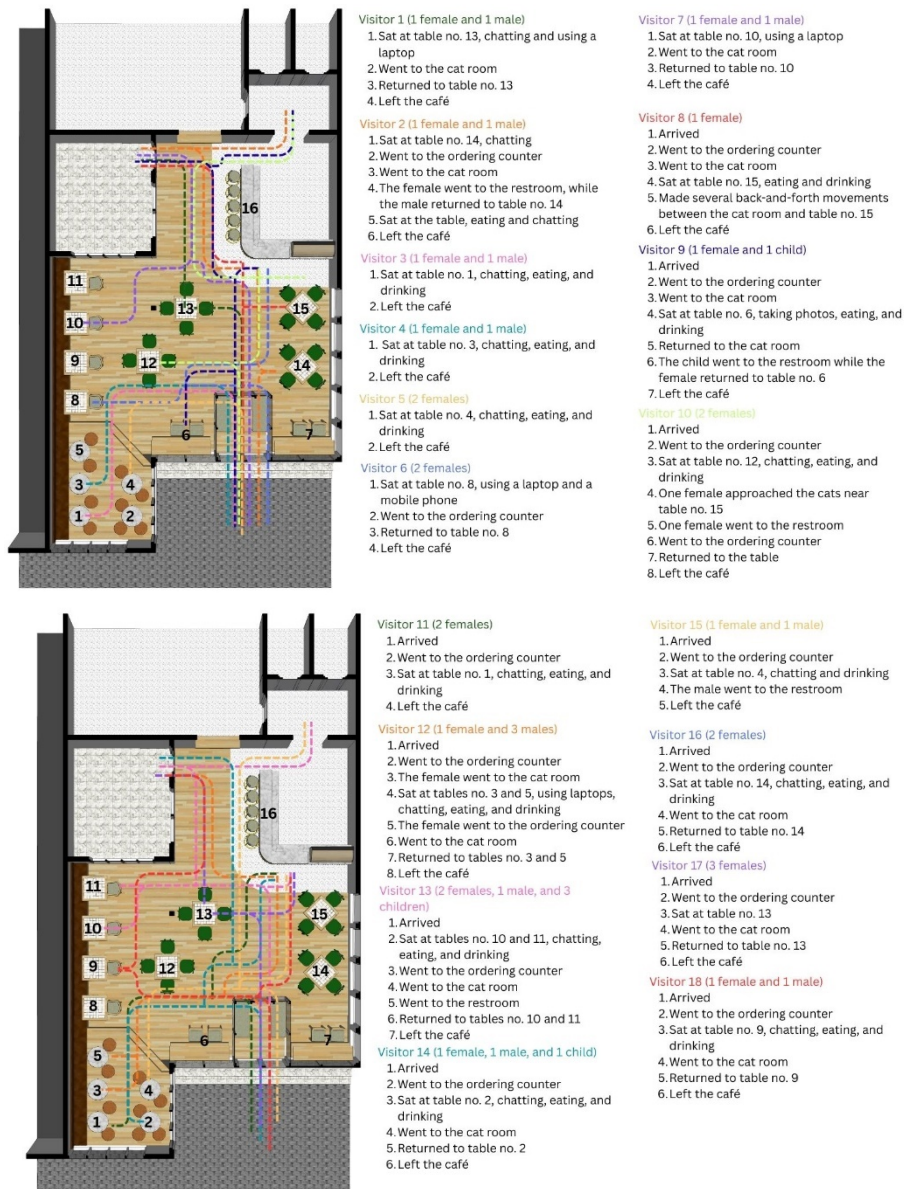


Figure 5. Observations at Lamiao Cat Café

The results of *person-centered mapping* (figure 6) show that the visitor circulation pattern forms a relatively consistent sequence of movements. Visitors generally enter the space through the main door, move towards the transition area, then towards the booking desk. After placing a booking, visitors tend to slow down and start exploring the space to choose a seating area before interacting with the cat. This pattern shows that the movement of visitors follows the flow of the space formed by the layout of the furniture and the zoning of the interior.

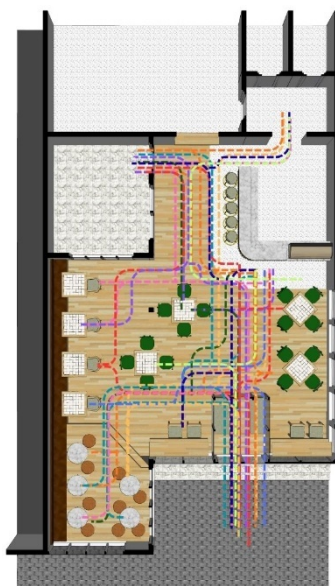


Figure 6. Person-centered mapping map showing visitor circulation patterns

Areas with visual and physical obstructions, such as narrowed paths due to furniture placement or areas obstructed by certain properties, exhibit lower circulation intensity. In contrast, paths with good spatial readability and an open view are more often used as the main path of movement. This confirms that the readability of space is an important factor in shaping the initial experience of visitors.

Table 2. Place-centered mapping table showing the intensity of furniture users and areas

Seat	Property (Area)	Visitor
1	1	2
2	1	1
3	1	2
4	1	2
5	1	1
6	2	1
8	3	1
9	3	1
10	3	2
11	3	1
12	4	1
13	4	2
14	4	2
15	4	1

Based on *place-centered mapping* (table 2), the lesehan area (area 1) and the seating area that have a distance from the ordering desk as well as the main circulation route (a combination of areas 3 and 4) show a higher intensity of use. Visitors tend to choose the area to stay longer and engage in interaction activities with cats. Area 2 has few visitors as the orientation of the property is more towards the wild views of the café, while many visitors interact with the area inside the café. Areas that are close to the service area (area 5) often function as transitional spaces and are rarely used as seating areas for long durations. These findings suggest that space

preferences are closely related to the need for comfort, privacy, and distance from activities of an operational nature.

Visitor Architectural Experience in the Perspective of Experience of Architecture

Based on the results of behavioural mapping and spatial layout analysis, the architectural experience of visitors at Lamiao Cat Café can be understood as a layered and sequential process. The space experience does not happen instantly, but rather evolves through continuous interaction between visitors, furniture configurations, and activities that take place within the space. This is in line with the concept *experience of architecture* according to (Kabir et al., 2022), which views the experience of space as an accumulation of perceptual, physical, emotional, and meaning-forming involvement. From entering the café, visitors begin to build an experience through visual perception, body movements, and emotional responses to the atmosphere of the space.

In the early stages, the perceptual experience is formed through the readability of the space, visual orientation, and first impressions of the interior of the café. The layout of the furniture allows for an open view and a clear visual path that makes it easy for visitors to understand the structure of the space and determine the direction of movement. On the other hand, areas with visual barriers due to tight furniture arrangements tend to be less desirable. These findings suggest that visual perception plays an important role in shaping the initial assessment of the quality of space, as affirmed by (Rasmussen, 1959) that architecture is experienced through what is perceived by the senses, as well as by (Pallasmaa, 2012) which emphasizes the multisensory nature of the architectural experience.

Along with the movement of visitors and the activity of choosing a seat, the experience of the body and movement (*embodied experience*) began to dominate. Results *person-centered mapping* indicates that the visitor's body naturally follows a path with minimal physical resistance and adequate space of movement. The rhythm of moving, stopping, and moving between areas forms a spatial experience that is not only functional, but also affects the physical comfort and engagement of visitors with the environment. (Seamon, 2024) explains that the experience of space is always rooted in the involvement of the body moving in the space, while (Montello, 2018) emphasizes that spatial understanding develops through first-hand experience of navigation. In this context, the layout of furniture acts as an element that indirectly directs the visitor's body experience.

In the next layer, the emotional and psychological experience is reflected in the visitor's preference for a particular area. Results *place-centered mapping* indicates that areas that are away from service activities and have lower levels of disruption tend to be used for longer. The area provides a sense of comfort, security, and privacy, which is an important factor in the context of a pet café as a space for casual interaction between humans and animals (Zumthor, 2006) states that the atmosphere of a space has the ability to shape the emotional response of the user, while contemporary research shows that the configuration of the interior and design elements of public spaces significantly affect the comfort, satisfaction, and user experience in the interior environment (Octaliana et al., 2024). This psychological comfort encourages visitors to settle in longer and build an emotional attachment to the space.

Through the repeated use of space and a consistent pattern of area choices, the meaning of space is then formed. Areas with high intensity of use not only serve as seating, but are

interpreted as spaces that support positive experiences and are worth revisiting. On the other hand, areas that are rarely used show the limitations of space in building meaningful experiences. (Seamon, 2024) explains that the meaning of place is formed through repeated experiences, while (Oldenburg, 1998) emphasizing the role of semi-public spaces as *third place* which supports a sense of comfort and social attachment. In this study, the meaning of space emerged as a result of the accumulation of perceptual, physical, and emotional experiences experienced by visitors on an ongoing basis.

Overall, the results of this study show that furniture layout plays a role as a guide to the architectural experience of visitors. Furniture not only regulates function and circulation, but also forms a narrative sequence of spatial experiences starting from initial orientation, the involvement of the body in movement, to the formation of the meaning of space which is in harmony with the concept *of experience of architecture*, according to Kabir. To clarify the relationship between the stages of spatial experience, empirical findings from observations, and layers of architectural experience, the results of the analysis are summarized narratively in Table 3.

Table 3. Visitor Space Experience Narrative Reading Table

Spatial Experience Level (Narrative)	Empirical Findings	Experience Layer	Implications of the Meaning of Space
Early impressions and onboarding	Visitors stop at the entrance area and transition room to understand the layout of the space	Perceptual experience	Space is judged by readability and visual clarity from the outset
Movement triggers	Circulation is concentrated on paths with minimal obstacles to the booking desk and cat room	Body and movement experience	Furniture layout directs the body and rhythm of movement
Exploration and venue selection	Leschan areas and areas far from services are more often chosen	Emotional-psychological experiences	Comfort and privacy are starting to be evaluated by visitors
Settle in and interact	High-intensity areas are used for longer durations	Emotional and social experiences	The space supports a sense of security, relaxation and interaction
Final impression and evaluation of the space	Certain areas become the most frequently used and remembered spaces	The formation of spatial meaning	Space is defined as comfortable or uncomfortable based on experience

CONCLUSION

This study proves that the layout of furniture has a significant influence on the architectural experience of visitors at pet cafes, especially in the context of Lamiao Cat Café as a quasi-public space with human-animal interaction activities. Through the behavior mapping approach and the framework of experience of architecture, according to Kabir, spatial experience is understood as a layered and sequential process, including perceptual experience, body and movement experience, emotional-psychological experience, and the formation of spatial meaning. The results of the analysis show that the readability of the space and the clarity of visual orientation in the early stages play an important role in shaping the first impression of visitors. The furniture layout that allows for open views and clear circulation paths facilitates orientation and encourages more natural movement. Furthermore, the furniture configuration

also directs the visitor's body experience and movement, where paths with minimal physical resistance and adequate movement space are used more often and provide better physical comfort. On the emotional and psychological layers, visitors' preference for more private areas and away from ministry activities indicates that comfort, a sense of security, and lack of distractions are the main factors in determining the duration of residence and emotional attachment to the space. Through repeated use of space and a consistent pattern of area choice, the meaning of space is then formed, where areas with high intensity of use are interpreted as spaces that are comfortable and support positive experiences, while areas that are rarely used show limitations in building meaningful experiences. The narrative approach used as an analytical tool allows spatial experiences to be read as a series of experiences that take place sequentially, without replacing the main theoretical framework. Overall, this study confirms that furniture layout not only functions as a regulator of activity and circulation, but also as a guide to the architectural experience of visitors holistically. These findings are expected to be a conceptual and practical reference in the interior design of pet cafes and other thematic commercial spaces that are oriented towards user experience.

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