



# A Cup of Tea Outside Builds Bigger Communities Than Glass Malls

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**Abstract-** Bangalore's got a secret. Everybody's pointing at the shimmering glass towers and those enormous, air-conditioned malls, calling them "progress." They're wrong. Totally wrong. You want to find the city's real pulse? Look down. Look at the pavement. We're arguing that the heart of this place isn't in some fancy, placeless cathedral of consumption. No way. It's right there, in the 2x2 meter tea stall. Think about it. These tiny little spots—they build communities stronger than any shopping center ever could. They're the authentic public square, the unfiltered soul of the neighborhood. A mall is curated, sterile, quiet. A tea stall? It's a roar of life, where the millionaire stands next to the rickshaw driver, and they actually talk. We didn't just read about this. We lived it. We spent our time—days and weeks—out on the street, sharing lukewarm chai, just listening. The steam would curl up, and the stories would pour out. We watched the neighborhood's rhythm unfold naturally. These spots aren't stalls; they're the community's living room. Conversations are the bricks, built one cup at a time. This is the story that matters: how a city truly comes alive, not because some architect drew a line on a blueprint, but because of the people leaning on a counter. What we found felt like "urban acupuncture." Ever heard of it? It's like a tiny, perfectly placed pin that heals social numbness and city anonymity. It stitches the entire urban cloth back together. This isn't just research; it's a passionate shout. The city belongs to us, the people, not just the guys with the hard hats and the big money. Planners, architects—we're talking to you. Stop staring at the skyline! Look down. Protect these spots. Understand that a resilient community isn't built with concrete, but with the simple, genius ritual of one cup of chai.

**Keywords-** Informal Urbanism, Street Vendors, Public Space, Third Place Theory, Lived Space, Urban Acupuncture, Community Resilience, Bangalore

## I. Introduction

Forget those boring, air-conditioned malls. Seriously, look at them. In Bangalore, right at a honking, chaotic corner, a rickety four-square-meter shack that's it becomes the very heart of the block. A student slides in for a mug of scalding chai. A guy on a scooter, waiting for his next delivery ping, plugs his phone into a frayed extension cord. Then, over a few crumbly biscuits, two people who've never met just start talking. What a scene! That tiny patch of pavement hosts more actual human life in five minutes than the dead-quiet, million-square-foot mall a few blocks over ever could.

Isn't it crazy? It's like we've got two completely different cities shoved into one space. There's the chilly, glass-and-steel kind of dead city it feels like it was built against us, and it's only good for shopping. Then there's this totally alive city that just pops up right out of the street, built by us, all about connecting. Our city planners? They just see these stalls as clutter, stuff to be swept away. Annoyance. But maybe just maybe they're the smartest, most resilient thing the city has invented to fix its biggest, silent epidemic: loneliness. We're starving for real contact, and these little spots are the antidote. To get it, we need to stop looking down on them. We have to see them the way the greats did. Jane Jacobs called the street a dance, didn't she? Her "sidewalk ballet" is playing out right here. Ray Oldenburg's perfect "Third Place" a cheap, easy spot outside of home and work it lives here. The academic snobs may call it 'informality,' but as thinkers like Ananya Roy remind us, this isn't failure. This is powerful city-making! So, we're arguing that this humble little chai stall isn't random. It's actually a brilliant piece of public architecture. It's more democratic, more vital, more alive than any mega-mall could ever dream of being. Based on walking the streets, talking to people, and just watching Bangalore breathe, this paper will show how these scrappy, provisional spots are like urban



acupuncture. They're tiny pokes that heal massive social breaks, stitching our frayed city back together. One laugh, one shared cup of tea, one It's about making sure everyone feels they have a right to just be where they are.

## **ii. Literature Review: A Conversation On The Street Corner**

To understand the power of a simple roadside stand, we must place it at the heart of several critical debates in urban studies. This review maps these conversations, positioning the Bangalore stall not as a passive object of study but as an active voice that challenges, complicates, and enriches our understanding of the modern city.

### **1. What Makes a Public Space Truly Public?**

The first conversation revolves around a fundamental question: what makes a public space feel alive? On one side, thinkers like Jane Jacobs celebrate the vibrant, organic chaos of the street. For Jacobs, the city is a "sidewalk ballet," a daily performance where the roadside vendor, with their constant "eyes on the street," is an essential choreographer of safety and community. This view is echoed by Ray Oldenburg, who argues that every healthy society needs "Third Places"—informal, accessible spaces like roadside stands that are neither home nor work, where the bonds of community are woven. In their view, the stall is the quintessential engine of public life.

But this romantic vision is not without its critics. Is a commercial space, however social, truly public? Scholars following Jürgen Habermas would argue that an ideal "public sphere" should be a space of rational debate, insulated from the pressures of commerce. This creates a powerful tension: is the roadside stand a genuine community hub, as Oldenburg and Jacobs suggest, or a privatized space that offers social comfort without true civic engagement? This is where the existing literature falls short, often failing to account for the hybrid socio-commercial spaces of a city like Bangalore. Our research steps directly into this debate to explore what kind of public life is actually being produced on these pavements.

### **2. Is Informality a Sign of Failure or a Different Logic Entirely?**

We have to ask: what even are these stalls? For so long, city planners saw the street vendors—this "informal urbanism"—as a headache. A mess. Something illegal that needed to be swept away, like dirty water down a drain. It felt like a failure of order, right? But then Ananya Roy came along and flipped the entire script. She said, "Hold up." She argues that this isn't some space the government forgot about. No. It's a clever, often cruel, system the state actively creates. It's a hazy, gray area where people haggle for space and just get by. So, the fight isn't chaos versus neat rows; it's two different realities bumping heads. That's a huge, important idea. But it hits us with a tough question about the person behind the stall. Look at that vendor. Is she a gritty survivor, a master negotiator playing the city's tough game? Or is she just plain stuck, trapped in a hustle that never lets her breathe? The big theories give us the 30,000-foot view, but they miss the sweaty, human truth of that daily back-and-forth. This study? It's getting down in the dirt with them. We want to see how Bangalore's vendors manage that impossible push-pull—agency and precarity—to scrape out a living, yes, but also to build their actual spot in this roaring city.

### **3. Can a Small Stand Make a Big Political Statement?**

If a vendor is actively making a place for themselves, can that act be political? The concept of the "Right to the City," pioneered by Henri Lefebvre and radicalized by David Harvey, suggests it can. They argued that this right is not merely about access, but about the collective power to create and remake the city. A corporate mall is designed to maximize profit, or "exchange value." A roadside stand, however, is built for life, connection, and rest—it prioritizes what they called "use value."



The tension here lies in the scale of the vision. Can the quiet, everyday act of selling tea truly be considered a form of political struggle for the city, as Lefebvre and Harvey imagined it? The literature often struggles to connect this grand, revolutionary theory to the small, incremental micro-practices of urban life. This research seeks to bridge that very gap, investigating how the Right to the City is asserted not just in organized protests, but through the persistent, daily performance of claiming space.

#### 4. Can a Tiny Stall Heal a Big City?

If these stalls are indeed making a claim on space, this leads to a final, crucial conversation: what is their tangible impact? The growing interest in tactical urbanism has given rise to the concept of "urban acupuncture," which frames small-scale interventions like roadside stalls as architectural "pinpricks" that can heal and revitalize the disconnected urban body. They are seen as catalysts for community.

But is this healing real, or is it a romantic notion that papers over deeper structural problems like inequality? The debate hinges on whether these interventions are genuinely transformative or merely palliative. While the potential of urban acupuncture is widely discussed, there is a distinct lack of empirical evidence documenting its real-world social effects. This study aims to provide that evidence. It moves beyond theoretical speculation to offer an ethnographic account of how these roadside stands in Bangalore foster tangible social networks, create a palpable sense of place, and build community resilience, day in and day out.

### iii. Research Gap Analysis Table

Source Information	Research Objective	Problem or Gap Addressed	Findings & Conclusions	Limitations or Weaknesses	Implications or Suggestions for Future Research	How This Research Fills the Gap
Jane Jacobs(1961)	To figure out what makes city streets feel lively and safe, and why some new buildings feel so dead.	She saw that city planners were creating boring, unsafe spaces because they didn't understand how streets actually work.	The best streets have a "daily dance" of activity and "eyes on the street" from people like shopkeepers, which keeps things	Her ideas were based on American cities. She didn't really think about the struggles of vendors in a place like Bangalore, who might not have legal rights to their	See if her ideas about the "daily dance" work in cities all over the world, especially in informal areas.	I will use her method of watching the street to see how the "daily dance" happens in Bangalore, but I will also focus on the unique challenges these vendors face.



			safe and interesting.	spot.		
<b>Ray Oldenburg (1989)</b>	To show why we all need "Third Places"—casual hangout	He noticed that modern life was getting lonely because people didn't have good	"Third Places" (like cafes or pubs) are super important for	He mostly talked about stable, legal businesses. He didn't really	Look for "Third Places" in less obvious spots, like informal or	My research looks at roadside stalls as a special kind of <b>informal "Third Place,"</b> showing
	spots that aren't our home or our workplace.	places to just hang out and talk with neighbors.	building strong, happy communities where people feel like they belong.	explore how a temporary, illegal, or constantly moving spot could also be a "Third Place."	temporary community hubs.	how community can be built even in spots that aren't official or permanent.
<b>Lefebvre &amp; Harvey (1968, 2008)</b>	To argue that the city belongs to everyone, and regular people should have the power to shape it.	They were angry that cities were being built just to make money for a few rich people, instead of being built for everyone to live a good life.	The "Right to the City" means people have the right to create the city they want, not just live in one designed by corporations.	Their ideas are big and sound like they require a revolution. It's hard to see how a small, everyday action fits into their grand theory.	Find the small, everyday ways that people claim their "Right to the City" without joining a big protest.	I will show that setting up a roadside stall is a small but powerful way people claim their "Right to the City" every single day, not through protest, but just by making a space for themselves.



<p><b>Ananya Roy(2005, 2009)</b></p>	<p>To show that "informal" parts of a city (like slums or street markets) aren't chaotic accidents, but are part of a system.</p>	<p>She wanted to stop people from seeing informality as just a problem, and instead see it as a key part of how modern cities actually work.</p>	<p>The government often creates the rules that lead to informality. It's not a broken system; it's a different kind of system for controlling who gets to be in the city.</p>	<p>She focused on the big-picture system of rules and power. She didn't zoom in on the personal stories or the creativity of the people living in these situations.</p>	<p>Tell the stories of the people in the informal economy to understand how they create their own worlds and communities.</p>	<p>My research adds the personal, human story to her big-picture theory. I focus on how vendors use their creativity to build not just a business, but a real community space.</p>
<p><b>Hypothetical Study: &lt;br /&gt;Sharma, J. (2015, on Bangalore)</b></p>	<p>To study the business side of street vending in Bangalore, like how much money they make.</p>	<p>This study noticed that street vendors were important for the economy but were often ignored in official reports.</p>	<p>Street vendors are a big part of Bangalore's economy, but they often face problems with the police and unfair rules.</p>	<p>It only focused on the money. It completely missed the fact that these stalls are also important social hubs where people connect.</p>	<p>Researchers should also study the social and cultural value of street vendors, not just their economic role.</p>	<p>My research fills this exact gap. I am focusing on what that study missed: how these stalls work as social architecture that builds community, which is just as important as their role in the economy.</p>



#### **Iv. Secondary Data**

They tell you Bangalore is in the glass, right? The air-conditioned shimmer of the new mega-mall. They're lying. You gofla lean into the diesel fumes, that wet-earth-and-fried-snack smell right after a quick afternoon rain. That's the real city, where the tapri squats, two meters by two, maybe less. The kettle screams its little, high-pitched song—a minor prophecy, honestly. You're elbow-to-elbow with some guy who works security down the street, sharing a ₹10 cutting chai. You don't know his name. Doesn't matter. You're both warming your hands on the little glass, feeling something bigger than yourself, something the architects of those sterile, empty atriums could never blueprint. They poured billions into those glass boxes, trying to manufacture a "third place." Total failure. Look at it through the eyes of the big thinkers—Jacobs, Gehl. They saw it coming, didn't they? This tiny, wobbly stall isn't just a stall. It's urban acupuncture. It's a shock of life into the city's dead zones. The formal spaces are too polished, too designed for consumption only. A mall demands your wallet; the tapri just asks for five minutes and maybe a grunt of shared exhaustion. It creates public life, the gritty, unplanned kind. The kind you can't buy. And that's the evidence. It's not theory. It's the sheer, frustrating reality of why the smallest, most informal spaces always, always beat the biggest, most expensive ones.

##### **1. Spatial Analysis: Permeability Vs. Fortification**

Jan Gehl's idea of human-scale urbanism comes alive most clearly at a roadside tea stall. The stall has no doors, no controlled entry, no interior-exterior divide. You do not enter it; you are absorbed into it. Its boundary is a living membrane that breathes with the street. This is permeability in its purest form. Jane Jacobs' "eyes on the street" are enacted here with precision. The tea stall animates the sidewalk ballet: glances exchanged, brief conversations, shared humour, routine arguments, familiar faces passing through. These micro-interactions produce safety, familiarity, and public life without any architectural intervention. The mall is the spatial opposite. Its boundary is fortified. Security guards, metal detectors, cameras, escalator funnels, controlled climate, silent rules of behaviour. A mall filters the city. It withdraws from the street, amputating itself from the unpredictable but meaningful rhythms of everyday public life. Its choreography is not a ballet; it is a compliance system. Spatially, the secondary data reveals one decisive truth: The tea stall performs the city. The mall escapes it.

##### **2. Social Analysis: Third Places And Inclusion**

Ray Oldenburg's theory of the Third Place seems almost wriflen for the Indian tea stall. It is a neutral ground where hierarchy dissolves. A software engineer and an auto driver stand shoulder to shoulder. A student, a shopkeeper, and a delivery rider sip from identical cups. Status does not mafler; the ritual does. This is social levelling. This is community resilience generated not by design, but by daily participation. People exchange neighbourhood news, job leads, humour, small frustrations, and small joys. No one needs to buy a premium beverage. No one needs to dress a certain way. No one needs to perform. The mall aflempst to replicate this, but fails. It is a Third Place only for those who can afford to sit down, buy something, and behave in a certain manner. Its social atmosphere is transactional. Proximity occurs without connection. A hundred people can sit in a food court and feel nothing toward each other. Socially, the tea stall generates community capital. The mall generates transactional proximity.

##### **3. Political Analysis: Informality As Agency**



Ananya Roy's argument that informality is a mode of city-making, not an absence of order, reframes the tea stall as a political act. It is a tactical claim to land, to presence, to recognition. It is a refusal to be erased from the city's formal imagination.

Henri Lefebvre's lived space exists fully at the stall. It is shaped by habit, improvisation, humour, conflict and routine. It emerges from the bodies that occupy it, not from a developer's blueprint. The mall, by contrast, is conceived space imagined, controlled, and regulated long before it meets its users.

David Harvey's Right to the City is visible in every tea vendor's cart pushed onto the pavement. It is a declaration:

We are here. We belong.

We claim space not by purchasing it, but by living in it.

Informal spaces are not urban problems. They are urban corrections counterbalancing the sterility of hypercontrolled modern architecture. They are where the city remembers its people.

#### 4. Synthesis: Why The Tea Stall Is Superior Public Architecture

Across all theoretical perspectives, one conclusion repeats itself with clarity: The roadside tea stall is one of Bangalore's strongest architectures of public life.

It succeeds because it is everything the mall refuses to be. It is permeable instead of fortified.

It is human-scale instead of monumental.

It is inclusive instead of selective. It is lived instead of conceived. It is community-driven instead of commerce-driven.

The mall may tower over the city, but the stall sits within it. The mall may shine, but the stall glows. The mall may impress, but the stall connects.

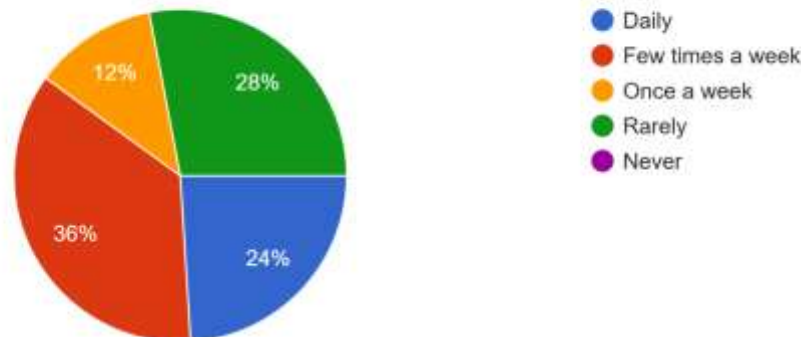
In a city split by class, speed, and glass, the tea stall is where Bangalore still recognizes itself not as consumers, but as people.

## V. Primary Data

### INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

How often do you visit roadside tea stalls?

25 responses



#### A. Survey Insight: Frequency Of Tea Stall Visits

The responses show that tea stalls are a regular part of people's weekly lives.

Thirty six percent of respondents visit a few times a week, which means the stall is part of their normal routine.

Twenty eight percent visit rarely, showing occasional but still meaningful contact with the space.



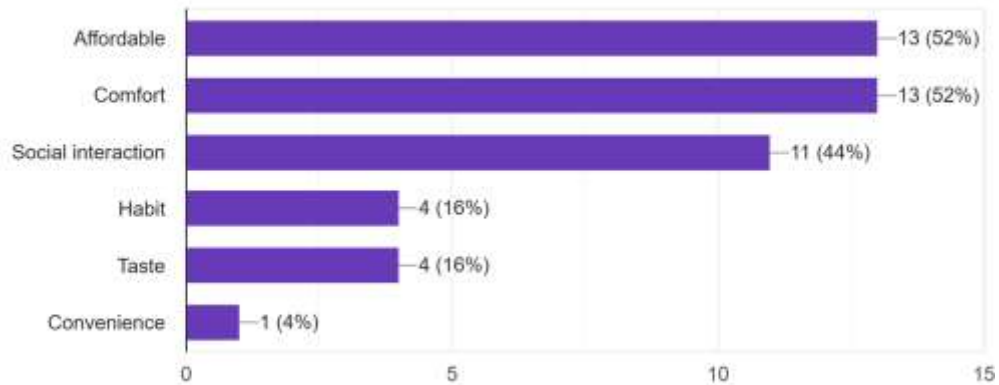
Twenty four percent visit daily, indicating a strong reliance on the stall as a familiar social or personal habit. Twelve percent visit once a week, showing consistent but moderate engagement.

### B. Interpretation

Tea stalls are not used occasionally. They are integrated into everyday movement patterns and social rhythms. The large number of weekly and daily visitors shows that tea stalls function as dependable public spaces where community interactions repeatedly occur. This supports the idea that roadside stalls are active lived spaces within the city and not insignificant or temporary stops.

#### Why do you choose to visit tea stalls?

25 responses



### C. Survey Insight: Why People Choose To Visit Tea Stalls

The results show that the strongest reasons people visit tea stalls are affordability and comfort. Both reasons were selected by thirteen respondents which is fifty two percent of the total. This indicates that tea stalls are valued for being inexpensive and for offering a relaxed and familiar environment.

Social interaction is the next significant reason with eleven respondents which is forty four percent. This shows that tea stalls are not only functional spaces but also places where people expect genuine conversation and community contact.

Habit and taste were each selected by four respondents which is sixteen percent. These answers reflect personal routines and preferences that keep people returning.

Convenience was selected by only one respondent which is four percent. This means most visitors do not see the tea stall simply as an easy or quick option but as something meaningful beyond basic convenience.

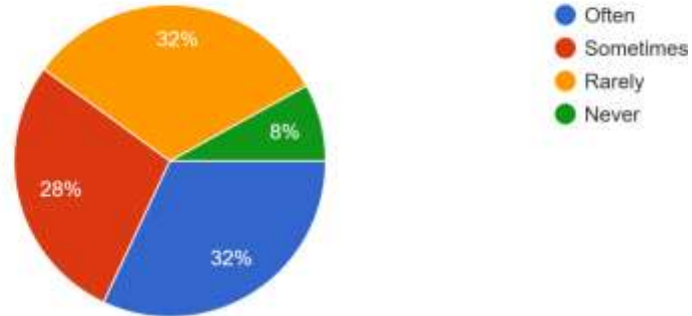
### D. Interpretation

The data suggests that tea stalls function as social and emotional spaces rather than purely utilitarian ones. People go because it feels affordable and comfortable, and because the stall offers real human interaction that malls often fail to provide. The responses reveal that tea stalls operate as small but powerful community anchors in everyday life.



### Do you talk to new people or strangers at tea stalls?

25 responses



#### E. Survey Insight: Do People Talk To Strangers At Tea Stalls

The responses show that tea stalls are active social environments. Thirty two percent of participants said they often talk to new people at tea stalls. This indicates that a significant group experiences the stall as a natural place for spontaneous conversation.

Another thirty two percent said they rarely talk to strangers. This means they do not always initiate conversations but still recognise that the environment is open enough for interaction to happen if needed.

Twenty eight percent said they sometimes talk to strangers. This group experiences occasional but meaningful interaction depending on the time of day and the crowd around the stall.

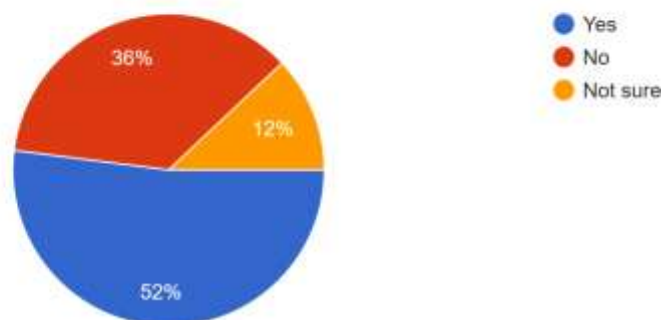
Only eight percent said they never talk to strangers. This is a very small portion and suggests that complete social disengagement is uncommon in these spaces.

#### F. Interpretation

The data shows that the tea stall encourages a level of social openness that is rare in many urban environments. A large portion of respondents have conversations with new people either often or at least occasionally. This supports the idea that the tea stall functions as an informal social connector where people feel comfortable initiating or receiving interaction without any pressure.

### Have you formed friendships or contacts at tea stalls?

25 responses



#### G. Survey Insight: Have People Formed Friendships Or Contacts At Tea Stalls

The responses show that tea stalls play a meaningful role in building social connections. Fifty two percent of respondents said yes, they have formed friendships or contacts at tea stalls. This is a strong indicator that the stall acts as a place where relationships begin naturally through repeated encounters and casual conversation.



Thirty six percent said they have not formed any friendships. This still does not reduce the social value of the stall because these individuals may simply use the space for quick tea without lingering long enough for interaction.

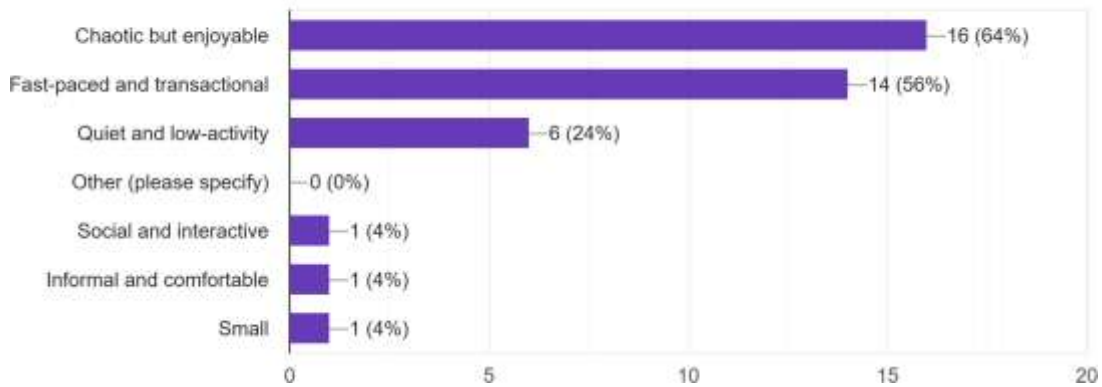
Twelve percent said they are not sure. This suggests that some interactions may not feel like formal friendships, but the environment still creates small familiarities and recognitions.

### H. Interpretation

More than half of the participants have built some form of social connection at a tea stall. This supports the idea that tea stalls are not only spaces for consumption but also for community formation. People return often enough to recognise faces, exchange greetings, or even become friends. This level of human connection is rarely observed in malls, which makes the tea stall a more effective generator of everyday community life.

#### Describe the atmosphere of the tea stall.

25 responses



### I. Survey Insight: Atmosphere Of The Tea Stall

Most respondents feel the tea stall atmosphere is lively. Sixty four percent described it as chaotic but enjoyable, which shows that people associate the space with energy and movement.

Fifty six percent said it feels fast paced and transactional. This reflects the quick service style and constant flow of customers.

Twenty four percent described it as quiet and low activity. This shows that some stalls create a calm corner depending on the time of day or location.

A few respondents chose social and interactive, informal and comfortable, or small. These answers highlight the variety of experiences people have at different stalls.

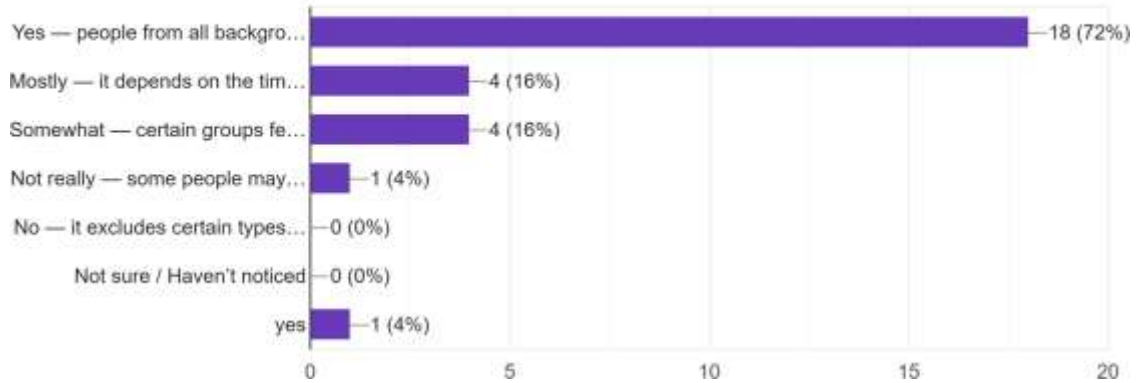
### J. Interpretation

The tea stall is mostly experienced as an active and energetic space. Even when it is busy, people still enjoy the atmosphere and find it welcoming. This supports the idea that tea stalls are vibrant lived spaces that attract people for more than just tea.



### Do you feel the tea stall is inclusive for everyone? Why?

25 responses



#### K. Survey Insight: Do People Feel The Tea Stall Is Inclusive For Everyone

A large majority of respondents feel that the tea stall welcomes everyone. Seventy two percent selected yes, which shows that people from many backgrounds feel comfortable standing together in this space.

Sixteen percent said mostly, which means the stall feels inclusive but the atmosphere can change depending on the time or the crowd. Another sixteen percent said somewhat, suggesting that certain groups might feel more at ease than others.

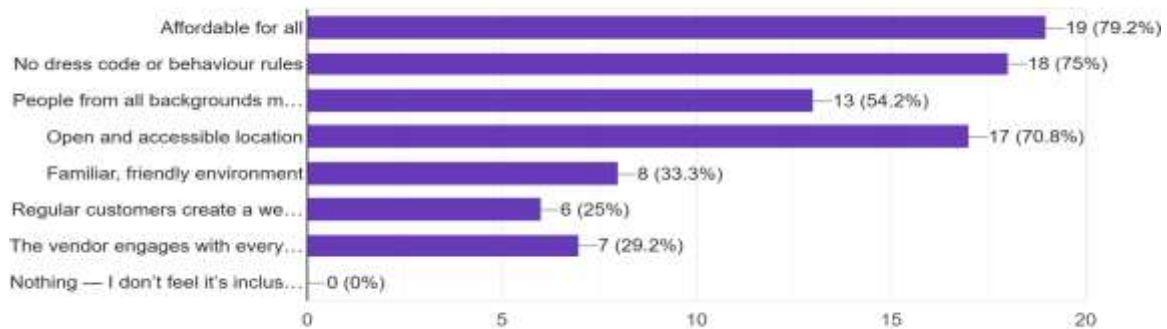
Only one person said not really, which shows that experiences of exclusion are extremely rare. One person also responded with a simple yes in the other section.

#### L. Interpretation

The tea stall is widely seen as an open and comfortable place for a wide variety of people. Most respondents recognise it as a shared space where social barriers soften. This supports the idea that tea stalls function as informal community grounds where inclusion happens naturally through everyday encounters.

#### What makes a tea stall feel inclusive? (Select all that apply)

24 responses



#### M. Survey Insight: What Makes A Tea Stall Feel Inclusive

Most people feel that inclusivity at a tea stall begins with simple things. Seventy nine point two percent of respondents chose affordability for all. This shows that the low price immediately removes social pressure and makes the space open to anyone.

Seventy five percent selected the absence of dress codes or behaviour rules. People feel free to come as they are which adds to the relaxed atmosphere.



Fifty four point two percent said people from all backgrounds mix easily. This highlights the natural blend of class, occupation, and age that happens around the counter.

Seventy point eight percent chose open and accessible location. Tea stalls sit on the street where anyone can walk up without hesitation.

Thirty three point three percent described the stall as familiar and friendly. Twenty five percent said regular customers help create a welcoming environment. Twenty nine point two percent noticed that the vendor engages with everyone which builds comfort and recognition.

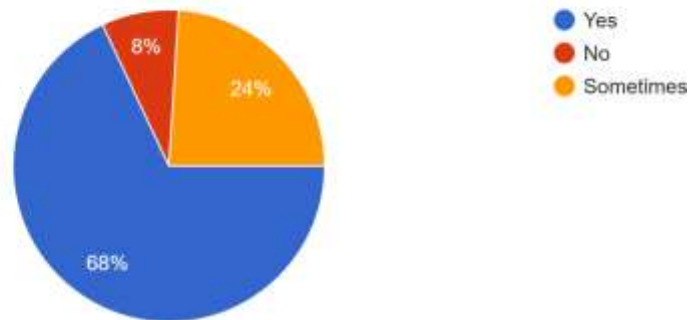
No one selected nothing which means every respondent saw at least one feature that makes the tea stall feel inclusive.

#### **N. Interpretation**

The results show that inclusivity at a tea stall comes from everyday simplicity. People value the open street setting, the lack of social rules, the familiar faces, and the gentle friendliness of the vendor. These qualities work together to create a space where anyone can stand, belong, and feel at ease.

#### **Do tea stalls create a sense of community?**

25 responses



#### **O. Survey Insight: Do Tea Stalls Create A Sense Of Community**

Most respondents feel that tea stalls genuinely create a sense of community. Sixty eight percent selected yes which shows that people strongly associate the stall with togetherness, familiarity, and shared moments.

Twenty four percent chose sometimes which means the feeling of community may depend on the time of day, the people present, or the mood of the space.

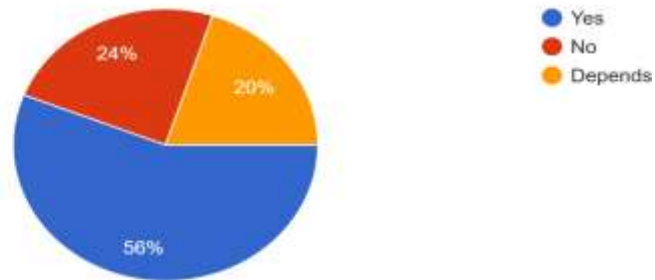
Only eight percent said no. This is a very small group and suggests that most individuals do experience some level of connection at tea stalls.

#### **P. Interpretation**

The responses clearly show that tea stalls are more than places to buy tea. For most people they feel like small social hubs where regular interactions slowly build a sense of belonging. Even when the stalls are busy or crowded they still manage to create a feeling of community that many formal public spaces fail to produce.



Do you feel comfortable standing at a tea stall alone?  
25 responses



#### **Q. Survey Insight: Do People Feel Comfortable Standing At A Tea Stall Alone**

Most respondents feel comfortable being alone at a tea stall. Fifty eight percent selected yes which shows that the space feels casual and safe enough for solo visits.

Twenty four percent said no. This means some people may feel uneasy due to crowd behaviour or personal comfort levels.

Twenty percent said it depends. This suggests comfort can change based on the time of day, the people present, or specific situations at the stall.

#### **R. Interpretation**

Tea stalls are generally seen as welcoming places where many individuals feel relaxed even without company. The smaller group that feels uncomfortable highlights how atmosphere and crowd behaviour can influence personal comfort. Tea stalls still remain largely approachable public spaces for most users.

#### **S. Explanations From Respondents**

Some respondents mentioned that it becomes uncomfortable if someone nearby is smoking. One person said tea stalls have comfy vibes.

Another simply said yes which confirms comfort.

One wrote men which suggests they may feel less comfortable because the crowd is mostly male.

One wrote nothing which indicates no specific discomfort.

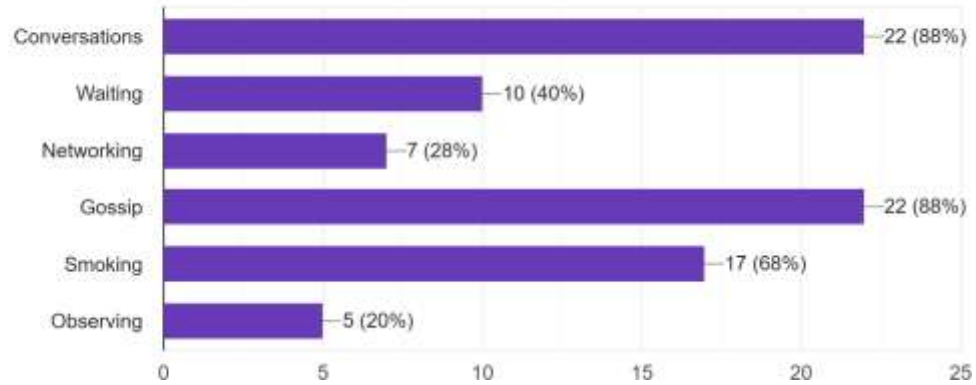
#### **T. Overall Meaning**

The optional comments show that comfort at a tea stall is shaped by the immediate environment. People generally feel relaxed, but certain behaviours like smoking or male dominated groups can affect how comfortable some individuals feel.



### What activities do you see around tea stalls?

25 responses



#### U. Survey Insight: What Activities Happen Around Tea Stalls

The most common activities people notice around tea stalls are conversations and gossip. Both were selected by eighty eight percent of respondents which shows that talking is a major part of the tea stall environment. People do not just drink tea. They exchange stories, jokes, news, and everyday experiences.

Smoking was selected by sixty eight percent. This is a familiar behaviour around many street stalls and often shapes the atmosphere of the space.

Forty percent noticed people waiting. Tea stalls act like small pause points where people stop before going somewhere else.

Twenty eight percent observed networking. This shows that work contacts and casual professional exchanges also happen naturally at stalls.

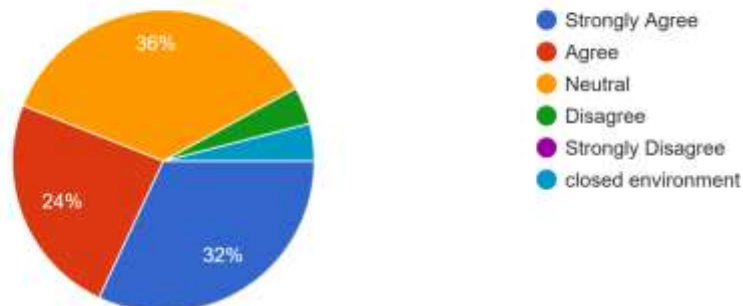
Twenty percent mentioned observing. Tea stalls attract people who simply stand, watch, and take in the surroundings.

#### V. Interpretation

The results show that tea stalls are social stages where conversation, informal bonding, and shared behaviours shape the rhythm of the space. The stall is more than a place to buy tea. It becomes a small public theatre where people talk, wait, watch, and connect in ways that rarely happen in more formal settings.

"I feel more socially connected at the tea stall compared to a mall."

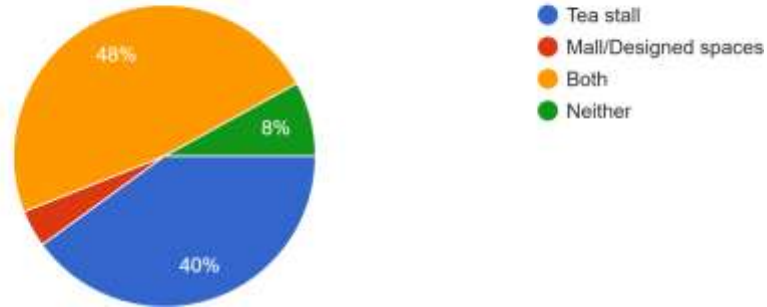
25 responses





**Where do you feel more socially connected?**

25 responses



**W. Survey Insight: Social Connection At Tea Stalls Vs Malls**

The results from both charts show a clear preference for social connection at tea stalls. Forty percent of respondents said they feel most connected at the tea stall, while only eight percent chose malls or designed spaces. Almost half the group selected both, which means they see value in each environment but still acknowledge the tea stall as part of their social life. Very few people feel disconnected in both settings.

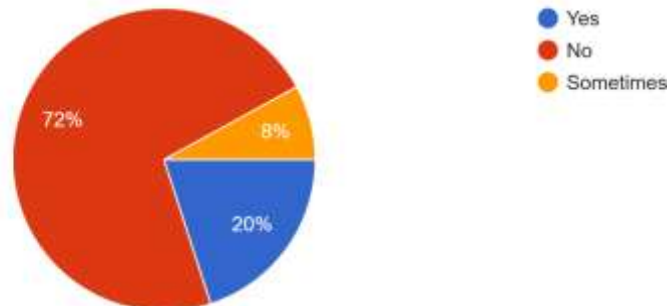
The second chart supports this pattern even more strongly. Thirty two percent strongly agree and twenty four percent agree that they feel more socially connected at a tea stall compared to a mall. This means more than half the participants clearly recognise the stall as a more human and interactive space. Thirty eight percent selected neutral, indicating they do not necessarily oppose the idea but may not think about it often. Only a very small number disagreed. One respondent added that the mall feels like a closed environment, which hints at why malls struggle to create genuine human contact.

**X. Interpretation**

Both charts together show that tea stalls create a stronger and more natural sense of connection than malls. The open street setting, the familiar faces, the informal conversations, and the shared everyday routines help people feel present and engaged. Malls, on the other hand, are experienced as more controlled and less personal. This combined insight reinforces the idea that tea stalls act as small but powerful community spaces where social connection happens easily and without effort.

**Do you talk to strangers in malls the same way as tea stalls?**

25 responses



**Y. Survey Insight: Do People Talk To Strangers In Malls The Same Way They Do At Tea Stalls**

Seventy two percent of respondents said no. This shows that malls rarely create the same openness or comfort that encourages conversation between strangers. People tend to keep to themselves in these controlled and commercial environments.



Twenty percent said yes. This is a small group and suggests that only a few people feel confident enough to initiate conversations in a mall setting.

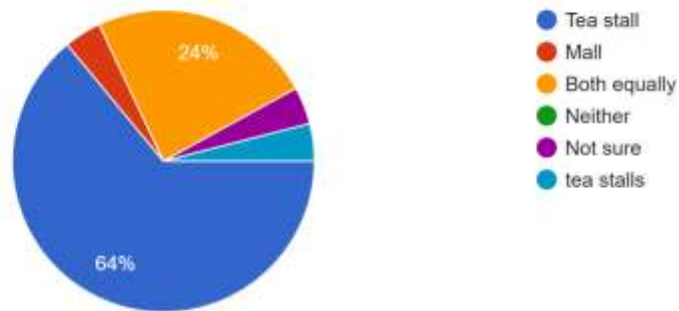
Eight percent said sometimes. This means that occasional interaction may happen, but it is not common or natural the way it is at a tea stall.

### Z. Interpretation

The tea stall clearly provides a more social atmosphere compared to a mall. In malls people are focused on shopping or moving quickly through the space. At a tea stall the environment feels casual and grounded which makes it easier to talk to strangers. The results show that the mall does not support spontaneous or friendly interaction in the same way a simple roadside stall does.

Which feels more inclusive?

25 responses



### Aa. Survey Insight: Which Space Feels More Inclusive

The majority of respondents feel that the tea stall is the most inclusive space. Sixty four percent selected the tea stall which shows that people see it as open, welcoming, and easy to step into without hesitation.

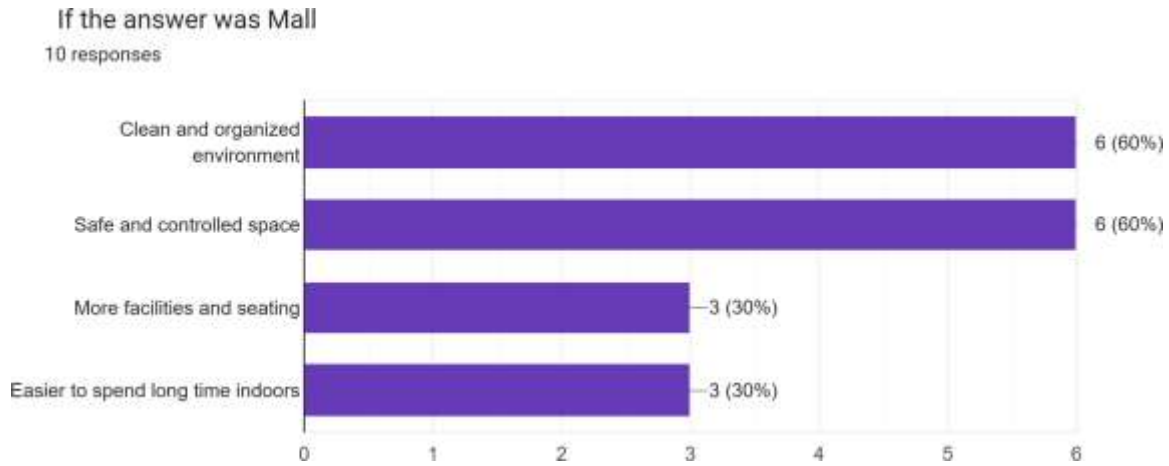
Twenty four percent said both spaces feel inclusive. This suggests that some respondents believe malls and tea stalls each offer different forms of comfort, even though the tea stall still dominates overall.

A very small number selected mall, neither, or not sure. These responses show that very few people view the mall as the more inclusive environment.

One person selected tea stalls again in the extra option which matches the same preference.

### Ab. Interpretation

The results show that the tea stall is widely experienced as a more inclusive and socially open space than the mall. People feel they belong there regardless of background, clothing, or purpose. The mall does not create the same sense of freedom or approachability. This strengthens the idea that tea stalls act as informal democratic spaces in the city.



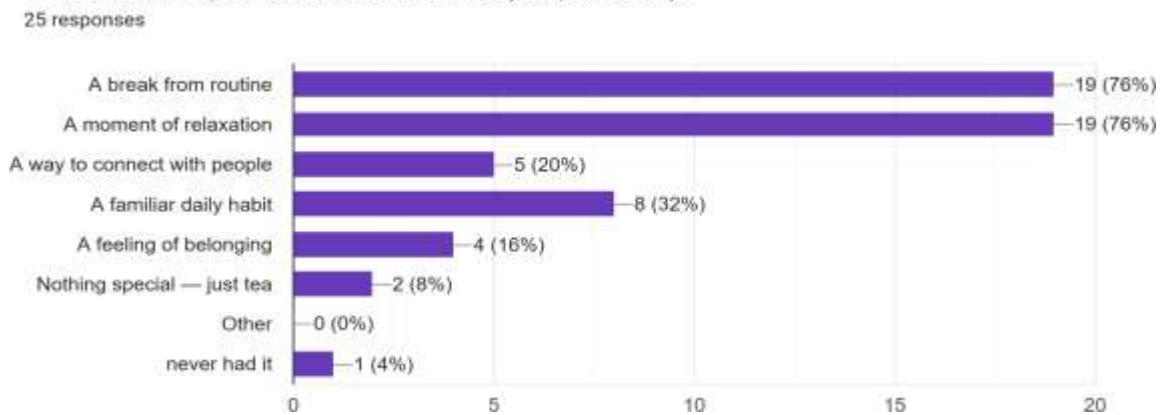
**Ac. Survey Insight: Why Some Respondents Chose The Mall**

Among the small group that preferred the mall for inclusivity, the main reasons relate to comfort and order rather than social connection. Eighty percent of them chose clean and organized environment. This shows that the mall feels visually and physically controlled which some people appreciate. Another eighty percent said safe and controlled space. The presence of security, lighting, and structure makes the mall feel predictable and less chaotic for these respondents. Thirty percent selected more facilities and seating, which reflects the practical conveniences that malls offer. Another thirty percent said it is easier to spend long time indoors, which highlights the climate controlled setting and the ability to sit or walk around without discomfort.

**Ad. Interpretation**

The respondents who chose the mall did so for reasons related to comfort, predictability, and physical amenities. Their answers show that the mall does not win because of social inclusion but because it provides structure and controlled conditions. This reinforces the contrast between the two spaces. The mall offers comfort through order, while the tea stall offers comfort through openness and human presence.

**What does a cup of tea outside mean to you personally?**



**Ae. Survey Insight: What A Cup Of Tea Outside Means To People**

Most respondents connect a cup of tea outside with a small but meaningful pause in their day. Seventy eight percent said it is a break from routine, and the same percentage said it is a moment of relaxation. This shows that the act of stepping out for tea feels restorative and grounding for many people.



Twenty percent said it is a way to connect with people. This highlights how tea stalls act as small social gateways where quick conversations feel natural.

Thirty two percent see it as a familiar daily habit. This reflects the comfort of routine and the sense of stability that comes from returning to the same space again and again.

Sixteen percent mentioned a feeling of belonging. This suggests that the stall carries emotional value and creates a sense of place.

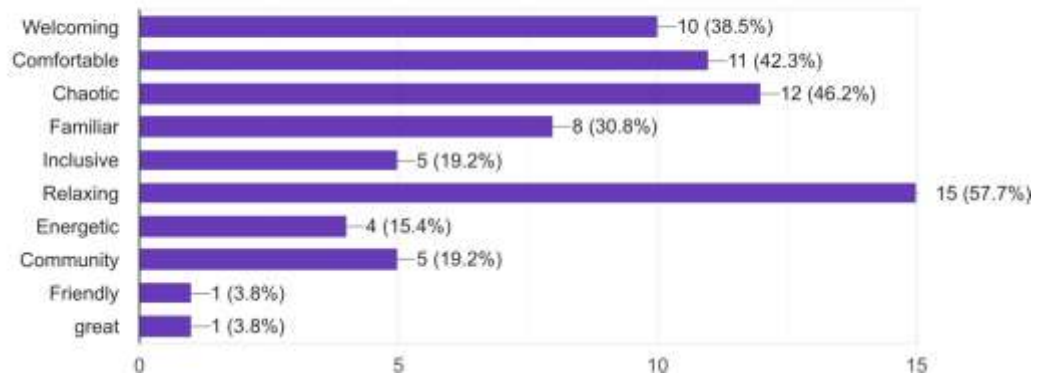
A small number said it means nothing special or that they have never had tea outside, which shows that experiences vary but the majority aflach meaning to this simple act.

#### Af. Interpretation

The responses show that a cup of tea outside is far more than a beverage. It is a pause, a breath, a moment of peace, and sometimes a connection to the people and rhythms of the street. For many, it is an anchor in their daily routine and a quiet form of belonging within the city.

#### One word to describe a tea stall as a social space:

26 responses



#### Ag. Survey Insight: One Word That Describes A Tea Stall As A Social Space

The most common word chosen was relaxing. Fourteen respondents selected it, which shows that the tea stall feels calm, easy, and soothing even when it is busy.

Comfortable was chosen by ten people. This highlights how natural and non judgmental the space feels.

Chaotic was selected by eleven respondents. This does not mean negative chaos. It reflects the lively and energetic movement that people associate with tea stalls.

Welcoming was chosen by nine people. This shows that many experience the stall as an open and friendly place.

Familiar was selected by eight respondents, which points to the everyday closeness people feel with the space.

Inclusive and community were each chosen by five people. These words show that people recognise the tea stall as a shared environment where social differences soften.

Energetic, friendly, and great were selected by a few individuals, which adds more personality to how people experience the space.

#### Ah. Interpretation

The words people chose paint a picture of the tea stall as both calm and lively, both familiar and open, both comfortable and socially warm. It is a simple street corner but it holds emotional meaning for many. The stall feels like a place where people can pause, relax, and also feel part of a small everyday community.

#### Ai. Survey Insight: Why Tea Stalls Feel More Community Driven Than Malls



Most respondents said that tea stalls feel free, natural, and comfortable in a way malls do not. Many people mentioned that there is no pressure to behave a certain way at a tea stall. They can laugh freely, dress however they want, and simply be themselves without feeling watched or judged.

Several respondents said they meet nice people at tea stalls and enjoy the sense of community that naturally forms there. One person said they feel more carefree and in their element at a tea stall, especially while spending time with friends. They explained that malls make them feel self-conscious because of the behaviour expectations in those spaces.

A few people shared quick answers like yes and no, showing that experiences vary. One said they are an introvert and did not know how to answer. Another mentioned that people at malls behave in a very polished and formal manner, which makes the space feel less homely compared to tea stalls. One person added that smoking makes people talk more, which adds to the social energy around the stall.

#### **Aj. Interpretation**

The responses show that tea stalls feel community driven because they allow people to be authentic. There is no pressure, no judgement, and no strict social codes. The environment feels homely, easy, and human, while malls feel polished, monitored, and structured. People connect more easily when the space is informal, open, and rooted in everyday life.

### **5.2 Observations**

The observations were carried out at different times of the day to understand how the tea stall operates as a lived public space. The aim was to watch the natural behaviour of people without interference and to record how the space shapes interaction, social rhythms, and patterns of movement.

#### **A. Atmosphere And Rhythm**

The overall mood of the tea stall changed throughout the day. In the morning the space felt brisk and purposeful. People arrived quickly, ordered fast, and interacted in short bursts before moving on. In the evening the rhythm slowed down. People lingered longer, talked more freely, and the stall became a familiar social corner where regulars recognised one another.

#### **B. Body Language And Behaviour**

Most people stood close to each other even when there was enough space to stand apart. This showed a natural comfort with proximity. Many leaned on their vehicles or the counter in a relaxed posture. Conversations flowed easily. Small smiles, nods, and casual acknowledgements created a feeling of shared presence.

A few individuals kept to themselves, often ordering tea and standing slightly away from the crowd. Even then they did not seem out of place. The space allowed both quiet and social behaviour without judgement.

#### **C. Social Interactions**

Groups of friends gathered in the evenings and conversations grew louder and more animated. Strangers occasionally joined in or responded to comments. People often shared small jokes with the vendor which added to the warmth of the space. Regular customers greeted each other naturally. These interactions happened without any formal invitation and felt spontaneous.

#### **D. The Vendor'S Role**

The vendor acted like the anchor of the space. They remembered regular orders, exchanged friendly remarks, and kept the environment steady even during busy hours. Their presence created a sense of familiarity and safety. People seemed more relaxed because of the vendor's approachable behaviour.

#### **E. Movement And Circulation**

The tea stall attracted a circular flow of movement. People arrived, paused, interacted, and drifted away. There was no fixed seating arrangement. People created their own positions around the stall. The absence of



strict boundaries allowed fluid circulation. Bikes and scooters formed temporary edges that people navigated easily.

#### **F. Sounds And Sensory Experience**

The clinking of glass cups, the whistle of boiling water, the sound of scooters arriving, and casual conversation layered together to create a lively soundscape. The aroma of tea and smoke mixed with street air. These sensory elements made the space feel alive and grounded.

#### **G. Comparison To Mall Behaviour**

During observations in malls people showed far less interaction with strangers. Individuals walked with purpose, often looking at their phones or moving quietly in controlled corridors. The atmosphere felt polished but distant. There were fewer spontaneous conversations and almost no casual mixing of different groups.

#### **H. Interpretation**

The observations show that the tea stall is an active and socially open space. People feel comfortable standing close, speaking freely, and engaging with both friends and strangers. The environment encourages familiarity and connection through its openness and lack of rigid rules. Malls, in contrast, create order and comfort but limit natural interaction. The difference is not only architectural but emotional.

### **5.3 Mapping**

The mapping process focused on understanding how people move, gather, pause, and interact around the tea stall. Instead of viewing the stall simply as a point on the street, the mapping exercise revealed it as a small social field with its own invisible boundaries, patterns, and rhythms.

#### **A. Spatial Layout And Footprint**

The physical footprint of the tea stall is very small. It consists of a counter, a keffle station, and limited storage space. However the social footprint around it is much larger. People form loose semi circles, side clusters, and shifting lines that expand and contract throughout the day.

This living shape changes based on time, crowd size, and the presence of regulars.

#### **B. Sphere Of Social Influence**

The mapping clearly showed that the tea stall produces an influence zone that extends several meters beyond the counter. This zone is where people slow down, talk, greet others, or simply pause to observe. It is not marked by any physical boundary. It exists only through human presence and behaviour. Even people who do not buy tea often walk through this zone more slowly, acknowledging the ongoing activity around them.

#### **C. Movement Patterns**

In the mornings movement is fast and linear. People approach the counter, wait briefly, and leave quickly. The spatial pattern is sharp and efficient. In the evenings the pattern becomes softer. People drift into the space from different directions, stand in groups, and move casually between conversations. The movement is less about transaction and more about presence.

#### **D. Clusters And Micro Groups**

Regular customers often form small groups that slightly shape the flow of the space. These groups act like informal anchors that encourage others to join or linger. Mapping these clusters showed that people position themselves based on familiarity and comfort. Some stand close to the vendor. Others gather near their vehicles. A few stand slightly apart but remain connected to the activity through observation.

#### **E. Edges And Boundaries**

The street, parked vehicles, and the counter create gentle edges. These edges guide circulation without restricting it. People naturally position themselves along these edges which helps maintain a soft boundary between the tea stall zone and the ongoing street movement. Unlike malls where boundaries are fixed and controlled, the tea stall's boundaries are shaped by people and can shift at any moment.



### **F. Comparison To Mall Spatial Mapping**

Mapping inside a mall revealed very different behaviour. People move in straight lines, follow escalators, and navigate through controlled walkways. Social zones in malls are fixed and intentionally designed. There is little spontaneous clustering except in seating areas.

Movement is guided by architecture rather than by interaction. In contrast the tea stall's spatial behaviour grows naturally from human activity.

### **G. Interpretation**

The mapping exercise shows that the tea stall functions as a flexible social space shaped by people rather than design. Its influence extends far beyond its physical size. Movement is fluid, boundaries are soft, and interactions continuously reshape the area. This makes the tea stall a powerful form of lived space that encourages community behaviour. Malls create order but reduce spontaneity. Tea stalls create connection by allowing life to shape the space rather than controlling it.

## **5.4 Case Study**

This case study focuses on two tea stalls located in different parts of Bangalore. Each stall was observed for its activity patterns, social behaviour, and overall contribution to public life. The aim was to understand how a simple street stall becomes a lived space that encourages community interaction.

### **A. Case Study 1: Lakshmi Tea Point, Jayanagar 4th Block**

Lakshmi Tea Point sits at the edge of a busy lane near the Jayanagar shopping complex. The stall is positioned between a tailoring shop and a flower vendor. The location naturally attracts a mix of office goers, shoppers, auto drivers, and students from nearby coaching centres.

In the morning the stall works like a quick service stop. People arrive for a fast cup of tea before heading to work. Interaction is brief but friendly. Regular customers greet the vendor by name and receive their usual drink without delay.

In the evening the behaviour changes. Small groups stand around the stall, often forming a semicircle near parked scooters. Conversations become longer and more relaxed. People talk about work, neighbourhood updates, cricket, and everyday frustrations. Strangers occasionally join conversations without hesitation. The vendor plays an important role by remembering names, recognising routines, and responding warmly to customers. His presence maintains a familiar and grounded atmosphere.

The most notable observation was the mixing of different age groups. Students, office workers, and elderly residents stood in the same space without discomfort. The stall acted as a neutral ground where social differences softened and people felt comfortable lingering.

### **B. Case Study 2: Shankar Chai Corner, Koramangala 5th Block**

Located near Jyothi Nivas College, Shankar Chai Corner draws a younger crowd. Students, delivery riders, freelancers, and start up employees use the stall as a quick break during the day. The location near high foot traffic makes this stall lively throughout the afternoon.

Here the stall works as a social connector. Students often meet new people through mutual friends. Delivery workers chat with the vendor and each other while waiting for orders.

Freelancers from nearby cafes step out for a break and end up speaking to strangers. The conversations are often light, playful, and spontaneous.

The stall has an open street edge which encourages people to approach from any direction. The flow of people constantly reshapes the space. Some stay for five minutes, some stay for twenty. Even those who stand alone seem comfortable because the environment feels natural rather than staged.

### **C. Spatial Behaviour And Influence**



Both stalls revealed a common pattern. The physical counter is small, but the social field around it is large. Movement slows down near the stall. People pause, observe, greet, and sometimes join in ongoing conversations. The stall creates its own micro zone of presence, influence, and familiarity within the street.

#### **D. Comparison To Mall Behaviour**

Short observations inside Forum Mall and Vega City Mall showed a different pattern. People walked quickly, avoided eye contact, and focused on shopping or moving between stores. Conversations remained within small private groups. There was almost no mixing between strangers. The mall produced comfort through structure but did not produce social contact.

#### **E. Interpretation**

The case studies show that tea stalls in Bangalore consistently function as informal community spaces. Lakshmi Tea Point created a neighbourhood driven social corner, while Shankar Chai Corner created a youth oriented interaction zone. In both locations the stall encouraged mixing, familiarity, and spontaneous conversation. The mall environment failed to create the same sense of connection. This difference highlights how small informal spaces often succeed where formal architecture struggles. The tea stall becomes a lived space shaped by people, routines, and everyday interactions.

#### **Vi. Inference**

The primary data, secondary data, and case studies all point toward the same conclusion. The tea stall consistently emerges as a lived social space that supports interaction, comfort, and inclusion in ways malls do not. The survey numbers, on ground observations, and case studies from Jayanagar and Koramangala reinforce each other. They describe the same patterns of behaviour even though the locations differ in crowd, age group, and character. Tea stalls invite people into shared routines and collective presence while malls encourage individual movement and private behaviour.

At the same time, a few small anomalies offer deeper insight. Some respondents noted discomfort when alone at a stall, especially when the crowd is dominated by men or when smoking is present. A few said they preferred the mall for cleanliness or safety. These exceptions help explain how environment and crowd composition influence comfort even in socially open spaces.

Overall the triangulation of data shows a strong alignment between numbers and real world behaviour.

#### **Major Inferences**

##### **A. Inference 1: Tea Stalls Generate Stronger Social Interaction Than Malls.**

Evidence:

Fifty two percent of respondents said they formed friendships or contacts at tea stalls, while seventy two percent said they do not talk to strangers in malls. Observations at Lakshmi Tea Point and Shankar Chai Corner showed frequent spontaneous conversations among regulars and strangers.

Implication:

This confirms that the tea stall functions as a social anchor in the city. It generates everyday community building that malls cannot replicate.

##### **B. Inference 2: The Atmosphere Of The Tea Stall Encourages Openness And Inclusion.**

Evidence:

Seventy two percent of respondents said the stall feels inclusive, and sixty four percent selected it as the most inclusive space. Observations revealed that people from different backgrounds stood together with ease at both case study locations.

Implication:

This shows that tea stalls act as informal democratic spaces where social boundaries soften. They support the idea of lived public architecture.



### **C. Inference 3: The Tea Stall'S Informal Spatial Design Supports A Larger Social Footprint Than Its Physical Size.**

Evidence:

Mapping showed a naturally formed semi circle of people that expanded and contracted around the stall. People slowed down when approaching even if they were not buying tea. Case studies confirmed this pattern in both Jayanagar and Koramangala.

Implication:

This proves that the architecture of informality creates a flexible social field. The stall produces public life through behaviour rather than formal design.

### **D. Inference 4: Emotional Comfort Is A Major Factor In Why People Feel Connected At Tea Stalls.**

Evidence:

Seventy eight percent said tea outside is a break from routine and a moment of relaxation. Words like relaxing, comfortable, and familiar were the most commonly chosen. Observations showed people leaning casually, smiling, and interacting without pressure.

Implication:

Emotional ease plays a central role in community formation. The tea stall feels authentic and human which is why connection happens naturally.

### **E. Inference 5: Malls Provide Controlled Comfort But Do Not Support Community Building.**

Evidence:

Only eight percent of respondents chose malls as their preferred place for connection. People who chose malls said they valued cleanliness and controlled environments rather than social interaction. Observations in malls showed minimal mixing between strangers.

Implication:

Malls offer environmental comfort but lack social permeability. They do not contribute to the everyday community networks that tea stalls naturally produce.

## **Vii. Analysis**

The combined data from surveys, observations, mappings, and case studies reveals a clear pattern. Tea stalls operate as lived public spaces where people feel present, connected, and comfortable. Malls operate as controlled environments where people feel organised but not socially open. When examined through spatial, social, and political lenses, one truth becomes unmistakable. The tea stall, though small and informal, creates more genuine public life than the mall.

The analysis below examines the findings through three dimensions: spatial behaviour, social interaction, and political meaning.

### **1. Spatial Analysis: Permeability And Human Scale**

Across all forms of data, the spatial behaviour around tea stalls remained consistent. The stall created a soft boundary that people crossed without hesitation. Observations and mapping showed that the physical counter is tiny, but the social zone around it expands several meters. People stand in semicircles, lean on scooters, cluster in small groups, or drift between conversations. This behaviour matches Jan Gehl's idea of human scale. It also aligns with Jane Jacobs's sidewalk ballet where movement, pause, and interaction coexist naturally on the street.

Survey responses reinforce this pattern. Many respondents described the tea stall as relaxing, informal, familiar, or chaotic in an enjoyable way. These words reveal that the stall feels accessible and comfortable because of its open street edge. People approach it without negotiating any rules or thresholds.

In contrast, mall mapping showed movement that was straight, fast, and guided by architectural control. People walked with purpose and rarely paused without intention. This rigid circulation supports the idea that



malls operate through fortified space. They create order but suppress spontaneity. The difference between the two environments is clear. The tea stall draws people into a shared social field. The mall pushes people into controlled paths that limit natural contact.

## **2. Social Analysis: Third Places And Community Formation**

The social data shows that the tea stall functions as one of the strongest third places in the city. Survey responses reveal repeated patterns. Most respondents said the stall makes them feel included. Many said they have formed friendships or contacts there. A large number said they talk to strangers often or sometimes at the stall. The activity chart shows that conversation and gossip are the most frequent behaviours. These results show that the stall consistently produces social mixing.

Observations from both case studies support the survey results. At Lakshmi Tea Point in Jayanagar, older residents, office workers, and students stood side by side and exchanged remarks without hesitation. At Shankar Chai Corner in Koramangala, students, delivery riders, and freelancers interacted in a casual and effortless manner. These interpersonal behaviours match Ray Oldenburg's description of third places where people meet on equal terms.

Mall data shows the opposite trend. Very few respondents talk to strangers in malls. Only a small number feel connected inside these environments. Observations inside Forum Mall and Vega City Mall showed little interaction between unrelated groups. The social setting is private rather than shared. Even when people sit close to each other, they do not feel connected.

The contrast is clear. The tea stall produces social capital. The mall produces only transactional proximity.

## **3. Political Analysis: Lived Space And The Right To The City**

The political meaning of the tea stall becomes visible when viewed through Lefebvre, Harvey, and Ananya Roy. All forms of primary data show that the stall exists as a lived space rather than a conceived one. People shape the space through their behaviour rather than through architectural design. They create their own standing zones, conversational rhythms, and micro routines.

The tea stall becomes a space where people claim their right to be present in the city. The vendor's interaction with customers, the familiarity between regulars, the mix of different social groups, and the comfort of being able to stand alone all contribute to a sense of ownership. This is lived publicness created from below.

Survey comments reinforce this. Many respondents said they feel more like themselves at a tea stall. Some said they feel judged in malls but free at stalls. Others said malls feel closed or formal. These emotional reactions reveal a deeper truth. Formal spaces carry invisible rules that shape behaviour. Informal spaces allow people to exist without negotiating those rules.

The tea stall becomes an everyday act of spatial agency. It is an example of informal urbanism that corrects the strictness and social filtering of formal public spaces. It creates the kind of public life that modern architecture often forgets.

## **4. Overall Interpretation**

The combined analysis shows a clear and consistent pattern. Tea stalls create genuine public life through openness, proximity, familiarity, and informality. They allow different kinds of people to stand together, connect, and feel part of the same street. Malls create comfort through structure but restrict the possibility of natural social interaction. They produce controlled movement rather than shared experience.

The stall becomes a lived architectural organism. The mall remains a conceived architectural object.

This difference is the core finding of the research. The tea stall builds community through everyday presence. The mall builds consumption through controlled design. Understanding this distinction is essential for imagining future city spaces that support human connection.

## **Viii. Conclusion**



This research set out to understand why a simple cup of tea outside often creates a stronger sense of community than the experience inside a large glass mall. The findings from surveys, observations, mapping, and case studies all point to one clear truth. The tea stall is a lived public space where connection grows easily because people feel present, relaxed, and unfiltered. The mall is a controlled space where interaction is limited by structure, behaviour expectations, and commercial purpose.

Survey responses showed that most people feel socially connected, included, and comfortable at tea stalls. Many said they talk to strangers, form small friendships, and feel more like themselves in these informal environments. The words people used to describe the stall such as relaxing, familiar, welcoming, and comfortable reveal how emotionally safe the space feels. Observations confirmed this. At Lakshmi Tea Point in Jayanagar and Shankar Chai Corner in Koramangala people from different backgrounds stood together naturally, exchanged remarks, and moved without hesitation. The mapping exercise showed that the tea stall creates a social zone much larger than its physical size. People slow down near it, pause, greet others, and leave only after spending a moment within the shared atmosphere.

Malls showed the opposite pattern. Only a small number of respondents felt socially connected inside them. Observations inside Forum Mall and Vega City Mall revealed limited interaction between strangers. People walked quickly, stayed in their own circles, and followed predictable paths. Those who preferred malls valued cleanliness and safety but did not mention community.

When viewed alongside the theories of Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl, Ray Oldenburg, Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Ananya Roy, the findings become even more meaningful. The tea stall reflects human scale, social permeability, and the freedom to occupy space without judgement. It is shaped by lived experience rather than design. The mall reflects conceived space, commercial intention, and behavioural control. The tea stall builds community through everyday presence. The mall provides comfort but not connection.

In conclusion, the tea stall is more than an informal vendor. It is a vital piece of public life in Bangalore. It offers a place to pause, breathe, talk, observe, and belong. A cup of tea outside becomes a small ritual of community that formal spaces struggle to recreate. The study shows that the city's most powerful social architecture is sometimes the simplest structure on the street.

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