

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Raising the Social Bar: Effects of the Physical and Ambient Environment on Social Interaction in Bar Environments

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This paper reflects a research study concerned with effects of the physical and ambient environment on social interaction in bar establishments. According to a 2018 report titled *Beer Serves America*, “the beer industry contributes \$328.4 billion in economic output,” “generates more than 2.1 million jobs,” and “nearly \$59 billion in state, federal, and local taxes” (John Dunham & Associates, 2019, cover). Bars are a lucrative business, and strategic design strategies can help to facilitate their success. Social interaction is an important contributor, leading to a feeling of belonging and the desire to return. Expanding on Oldenburg’s (1989) concept of the third place and previous studies about servicescape environments (Bitner, 1992; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy, 2002), this study examines how the design of a bar can help to foster social interaction. For years, designers and bar owners have been designing bar environments for functional and aesthetic value. Very important; but is it enough? Using four local tap rooms located in the Pacific Northwest as case studies, findings indicate attention to factors such as overall size, layout, seating options, amenities, background noise, color, and lighting help create a thriving and social bar environment.