

Discovering Buraydah's Work from Café (WFC) Dynamics in the Post-COVID-19 Landscape

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ABSTRACT

The global transition to hybrid work patterns following COVID-19 has accelerated the growth of the Work from Café (WFC) phenomena, changing traditional work paradigms and productivity expectations. The study digs into WFC's revolutionary potential, as shown in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia, which is known for its thriving coffee shop scene. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as environmental psychology, attention restoration theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and social exchange theory, the study investigates WFC's complex dynamics. Overcrowding, noise levels, restricted amenities, and patronage expectations are compared to chances for innovation and collaboration. Infrastructure improvement, community participation, work-life balance promotion, local economic integration, and policy lobbying are among the proposed tactics for long-term WFC practices. These initiatives, based on theoretical foundations and practical facts, seek to maximize WFC's economic and social effect while cultivating thriving, resilient communities in the post-pandemic era.

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INTRODUCTION

Following the global shift to hybrid work models caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of Work from Café (WFC) has arisen as a transformational movement, altering traditional notions of workplace and productivity (Hensher, 2020; Maspul, 2022). This phenomena, typical of the new normal, represents a dynamic junction of work, pleasure, and community engagement, with people increasingly choosing alternative settings such as cafes to do their professional duties (Jones *et al.*, 2015; Koch & Latham, 2013). WFC, founded on the ideas of hybridity and flexibility, has not only altered work behavior but also stimulated economic revival, bringing life to local economies around the world.

In the lively city of Buraydah, Saudi Arabia, a strange phenomenon has emerged, attracting the interest of both locals and visitors. A cluster of coffee shops has grown in the picturesque areas of Abu Bakar Street, Omar bin Khattab Street, Othman bin Affan Street, and Bukhari Street, creating a captivating gastronomic scene (Maspul, 2023). This unusual setup has sparked a movement that is altering the concept of work and pleasure in the metropolis. Because of their near proximity, these coffee shop havens have become a magnet for people looking for a lively and inspirational environment. Entrepreneurs, freelancers, and

remote workers have found consolation in the concept of "Work from Café" (WFC), which allows them to boost their productivity while immersing themselves in the vibrant atmosphere of these dynamic venues (Brown, 2010; Maspul, 2024). The attractiveness of this trend extends beyond the professional sector, attracting people of all ages looking for a lively social environment in which to unwind, interact, and indulge in delightful snacks.

This concentration of coffee shops has produced a sense of community and friendship among clients. Whether it's relishing a freshly made cup of coffee, engaging in intriguing conversations, or simply watching the ebb and flow of urban life, these coffee shop districts have become a vital part of the local culture (Ahmad *et al.*, 2022; Pruncuț, 2010). The movement has not only revitalized the city's economy, but it has also changed the way people approach work-life balance, blurring the distinctions between work, leisure, and social interaction. Buraydah's coffee shop districts continue to attract visitors, creating an atmosphere that encourages creativity, collaboration, and connection. Through this compelling trend exemplifies the power of common spaces and the significant impact they can have on our daily lives, its transforming mundane activities into unforgettable experiences (He, 2019; Ji *et al.*, 2024).

Meanwhile, as WFC gains traction across varied geographical and cultural contexts, it presents a slew of issues and opportunities that demand thorough investigation and study. This study takes a theoretical approach to unraveling the dynamics of WFC in the post-COVID-19 world, drawing on pertinent theories and empirical evidence to provide a thorough grasp of its multidimensional character. Cafes have evolved from traditional workspaces into busy concentrations of activity, acting as ad hoc workplaces for remote workers, freelancers, and entrepreneurs (Gershon, 2024; Yeung & Hao, 2024). However, amidst the attraction of artisanal coffees and ambient settings, there are issues that jeopardize the efficacy and sustainability of WFC methods. From packed seating spaces to limited access to utilities and the expectation of patronage, navigating the complexities of WFC necessitates a thorough understanding of its underlying dynamics.

Nonetheless, these obstacles present enormous opportunity for innovation and collaboration. Using theoretical frameworks such as environmental psychology, attention restoration theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and social exchange theory, stakeholders can get a better understanding of the complexities of WFC and design strategies to improve its sustainability and economic impact (Maspul, 2024; Taneja *et al.*, 2024). WFC has the ability to define the future of work and contribute to successful, resilient communities in the post-COVID-19 era by improving infrastructure, engaging communities, promoting work-life balance, local economic integration, and advocating policies. In the following piece, it is vital to explore the subtleties of WFC, providing light on its obstacles, prospects, and transformative potential. Its goal is to give significant insights for stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers attempting to navigate the changing terrain of work and leisure in the digital era by diving into the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence underlying WFC.

METHOD

Using an exploratory qualitative study method, this study explored the Work from Café (WFC) phenomena in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia. Coffee experts participated in in-depth semi-structured focus-group discussions and interviews to learn about WFC's evolution, impact on local coffee culture, and issues faced by cafes. Additionally, observational fieldwork allowed for direct views of WFC procedures in Buraydah's coffee shop areas. Thematic analysis of interview and discussion transcripts, together with narrative synthesis of observational data, provided valuable insights into WFC dynamics and potential. This empirical approach yielded a thorough knowledge of WFC's consequences for local coffee culture and community engagement in Buraydah.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Work from Café (WFC) movement has grown in favor as the world transitions to a hybrid work model following COVID-19, challenging traditional concepts of workspace. This phenomena, representative of the new normal, represents a paradigm shift in work behaviour, with people choosing alternative settings such as cafes to accomplish their professional duties. WFC, founded on the ideas of hybridity and flexibility, has emerged as a catalyst for economic rebirth, bringing energy to local economies around the world. The present piece addresses the various challenges and opportunities inherent in the WFC paradigm, drawing on pertinent theories and empirical evidence to provide a thorough overview.

Challenges of Work from Café (WFC)

Some challenges of Work from Café (WFC) that hinder the decrease in WFC consumer visitors in Buraydah are as follows:

1. **Overcrowding:** The surge of patrons during peak hours frequently results in overcrowded seating spaces, jeopardizing the suitable work atmosphere desired by persons involved in WFC. According to the notion of environmental psychology, which holds that environmental conditions influence human behavior and well-being, packed cafes may cause discomfort and impair cognitive performance (Gifford, 2007).
2. **Noise Levels:** Ambient noise from conversations, music, and machines at cafes can be distracting and hinder concentration and productivity. The attention restoration theory states that exposure to natural stimuli, such as peaceful situations, promotes cognitive restoration and attentional concentration (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Cafes' excessive noise levels may disturb cognitive processes, reducing task performance and information retention.
3. **Limited Amenities:** A lack of amenities such as power outlets and dependable internet connectivity makes it difficult for people to work for long periods of time in cafes. Maslow's hierarchy of requirements highlights the importance of physiological demands, including access to resources like electricity and the internet, for optimal functioning and self-actualization (Maslow, 1969). Limited access to café amenities may impede individuals' capacity to meet these basic demands, jeopardizing productivity and well-being.

4. Patronage Expectation: Some cafes implicitly anticipate customers to make regular purchases in exchange for using the space, putting financial pressure on them and diverting their attention away from professional responsibilities. According to social exchange theory, individuals engage in reciprocal exchanges to maximize rewards while minimizing costs (Blau, 1964). The expectation of patronage in cafés produces a social contract in which people feel obligated to reciprocate by making purchases, maintaining a loop of economic transaction.

Despite these challenges, the WFC provides significant potential for innovation and collaboration. Using theoretical frameworks such as environmental psychology, attention restoration theory, Maslow's hierarchy of demands, and social exchange theory, stakeholders can develop methods to improve WFC's sustainability and economic impact. Infrastructure improvement, community participation, work-life balance promotion, local economic integration, and policy lobbying are some of the major methods that can support sustainable WFC practices and contribute to vibrant, resilient communities in the post-COVID-19 era.

Strategies for Sustainable Work from Café (WFC) Practices

To mitigate the challenges associated with WFC and harness its potential for economic revitalization, the following strategies are proposed:

1. Infrastructure Enhancement

Infrastructure enhancement for cafés to accommodate remote work requires a diverse strategy that draws on a variety of academic theories and empirical facts. Investing in cafe infrastructure to meet the demands of remote workers, such as numerous power outlets, reliable internet connectivity, and designated quiet zones, can increase cafés' appeal as productive workspaces. To begin, the supply of numerous power outlets is consistent with environmental psychology concepts, which highlight the impact of physical settings on human behavior and well-being (Gifford, 2007). Cafes provide remote workers with a sense of ease and comfort by giving simple access to power outlets, increasing their overall contentment and productivity. This idea is confirmed by studies that shows how environmental conditions, such as the availability of resources like power outlets, can have a major impact on people's cognitive function and mood (Gifford, 2007).

Similarly, the necessity of strong internet connectivity at cafes can be interpreted via the lens of attention restoration. This hypothesis states that exposure to natural cues, such as peaceful locations suitable to concentrated work, increases cognitive repair and improves attentional focus (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Cafes establish an environment that promotes cognitive recuperation and improves remote workers' capacity to focus on their work by providing dependable Wi-Fi connections capable of supporting uninterrupted work tasks.

The concept of designated quiet zones within cafes is based on environmental design concepts and worker ergonomics. According to research in this field, designating spaces inside a workstation with low noise levels can improve persons' productivity and well-being (Ljungberg *et al.*, 2009). Cafes provide remote workers with a favorable setting for concentrated work by establishing designated quiet zones outfitted with comfortable seating and noise-absorbing materials, hence increasing productivity and happiness.

Furthermore, solutions such as soundproofing and acoustic panels are consistent with research on environmental noise reduction and its impact on cognitive performance. According to studies, high levels of ambient noise can impair cognitive performance and increase stress levels, reducing people's capacity to complete complicated activities (Stansfeld & Matheson, 2003). Cafe owners can create a more peaceful and productive work environment for remote workers by using soundproofing solutions to reduce noise pollution within the cafe. The upgrading of cafe infrastructure to facilitate remote work incorporates elements from environmental psychology, attention restoration theory, workplace ergonomics, and environmental noise mitigation. Cafe owners can establish a favorable work atmosphere for remote workers by investing in facilities such as power outlets, reliable internet access, and designated quiet zones.

2. Community Engagement

The improvement of café infrastructure to allow for remote work involves components of environmental psychology, attention restoration theory, workplace ergonomics, and environmental noise mitigation. Cafe owners may create a welcoming work environment for remote employees by investing in amenities like power outlets, dependable internet access, and designated quiet zones. One relevant theoretical framework is social capital theory, which holds that social networks and interactions play an important role in promoting cooperation and collective action within communities (Putnam, 2000). Cafes can help clients build social capital by hosting coworking events, skill-sharing workshops, and networking sessions, establishing a sense of trust, reciprocity, and mutual support among the community (Lin, 2002).

One relevant theoretical framework is social capital theory, which states that social networks and interactions play a vital role in encouraging cooperation and collective action within communities (Putnam, 2000). Cafes can assist clients in developing social capital by offering coworking events, skill-sharing workshops, and networking sessions, fostering a sense of trust, reciprocity, and mutual support among the community (Lin, 2002). Similarly, skill-sharing workshops help to build social capital by allowing people to share their knowledge, expertise, and resources (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Patrons who participate in skill-sharing activities at cafes can improve their talents, extend their professional networks, and receive access to valuable resources, ultimately fostering a sense of belonging and collective efficacy within the community (Burt, 2000).

Networking sessions increase community participation by allowing people to broaden their social networks and make new professional connections (Granovetter, 1973). Patrons can enhance their professional growth and career prospects by arranging networking events at cafes, allowing them to access job opportunities, seek mentorship, and collaborate on projects (Baker et al., 1999). Community involvement projects in cafés are based on theoretical frameworks such as social capital theory, which emphasizes the role of social networks and relationships in enabling collaboration and collective action within communities. Cafes can use these theories and empirical facts to develop effective community involvement tactics that improve the overall experience for patrons while also contributing to the cafe's success as a coworking space.

3. Promotion of Work-Life Balance

Promoting work-life balance in the context of Work from Café (WFC) activities requires a complete approach based on applicable ideas and empirical facts. One significant option is to introduce flexible work schedules, which allow individuals to customize their work hours to meet personal commitments and preferences (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). This is consistent with the principle of autonomy, which states that giving people choice over their work schedules increases job satisfaction and reduces work-related stress (Golden & Veiga, 2008). Cafes may adapt to WFC consumers' different demands by allowing them to work when and where they want, generating a sense of empowerment and work-life balance.

Encouraging a good work-life balance through initiatives such as flexible work hours, wellness programs, and mindfulness practices can improve individual well-being and productivity, which contributes to long-term WFC practices. Furthermore, wellness programs are critical in promoting the well-being of people who practice WFC. These programs, which include yoga, meditation, and nutrition courses, are based on the ideas of holistic health promotion (Kroemer & Kroemer, 2016). Participation in wellness programs has been shown to increase physical health, mental resilience, and overall job satisfaction (Moen et al., 2011). By providing access to wellness initiatives, cafes may foster an environment that promotes WFC clients' overall well-being, boosting their capacity to handle work-related stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Furthermore, mindfulness activities are effective strategies for encouraging work-life balance in the WFC environment. Mindfulness, defined as present-moment awareness and nonjudgmental acceptance, has been related to a variety of benefits, including stress reduction, greater focus, and improved emotional regulation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Maspul, 2024a). According to research, adopting mindfulness techniques into everyday routines might increase resilience and well-being, both individually and professionally (Shapiro *et al.*, 1998). Cafes can help clients develop mindfulness skills that support their work-life balance goals by incorporating mindfulness activities like guided meditation and breathing exercises into the WFC experience.

Promoting work-life balance in Work from Café (WFC) practices requires a diversified approach based on applicable ideas and empirical findings. Cafes may foster WFC patrons' overall well-being by providing flexible work schedules, instituting wellness programs, and introducing mindfulness techniques. These efforts not only help to promote sustainable WFC practices, but they also improve the entire quality of the work experience by building a culture of health, happiness, and work-life balance in cafés.

4. Local Economic Integration

Fostering local economic integration through Work from Café (WFC) practices entails utilizing community development and economic geography theories to create symbiotic interactions between cafes and local stakeholders. According to community economic development theory, collaborative collaborations between enterprises and community organizations are critical for encouraging economic growth and improving community well-being (Leigh & Blakely, 2016). Cafes that follow this philosophy can strategically collaborate

with local businesses, craftsmen, and cultural institutions to build mutually advantageous arrangements that promote economic vibrancy and community resilience.

Collaborations between cafes and local businesses, craftspeople, and cultural organizations can boost economic activity, enhance community resilience, and establish cafés as essential components of thriving local economies. One important notion in economic geography is the "local multiplier effect," which states that money spent within a local economy tends to circulate and produce extra economic activity (Boarnet & Haughwout, 2000). Cafes can boost the local multiplier effect by diverting consumer spending to locally owned businesses, resulting in a virtuous cycle of economic growth and wealth in the neighborhood.

Furthermore, the concept of "place branding" provides insight into how cafes might present themselves as vital components of thriving local economies. Place branding entails strategically promoting a community's unique characteristics and identity in order to attract visitors, investors, and inhabitants. By matching their branding and marketing activities with the local area's cultural and economic identity, cafes can increase their attractiveness to both locals and tourists, adding to the community's overall economic viability.

In addition, social capital theories highlight the role of social networks and interactions in promoting economic development and community well-being (Putnam, 2000). Cafes help to cultivate social capital in the community by providing as gathering places for individuals to connect, collaborate, and establish relationships. This social capital, in turn, promotes information exchange, creativity, and entrepreneurship, all of which are critical drivers of economic growth and resilience (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Fostering local economic integration in Work from Café (WFC) activities necessitates an in-depth grasp of community development, economic geography, place branding, and social capital. Cafes can use these theoretical ideas to strategically engage with local stakeholders, resulting in more dynamic, resilient, and economically prosperous communities.

5. Policy Advocacy

Policy advocacy for encouraging sustainable Work from Café (WFC) practices entails using theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence to inform advocacy techniques and impact policy choices. One relevant theoretical framework is institutional theory, which holds that organizations and individuals adhere to established norms, values, and laws within a specific institutional setting (Scott, 2008). In the context of WFC, policymakers and government officials are impacted by institutional norms and values relating to labor markets, economic growth, and urban planning, which shape their attitudes and decisions on policies affecting remote work and entrepreneurship.

Advocating for regulations that encourage remote work, entrepreneurship, and small business development can help to establish a conducive climate for long-term WFC practices while also fostering local and regional economic growth. Furthermore, social exchange theory sheds light on the dynamics of policy advocacy by emphasizing the importance of reciprocity and reciprocal benefits in forming individual relationships and collective action (Blau, 1964). To get support from policymakers and stakeholders, advocates for WFC policies should use

social exchange principles to highlight the potential benefits of WFC, such as increased economic productivity, lower commute expenses, and improved work-life balance.

Furthermore, policy advocacy activities can be guided by stakeholder theory concepts, which emphasize the significance of taking into account the interests and viewpoints of many stakeholders when making policy decisions (Freeman, 2010). In the context of WFC, stakeholders may include government agencies, corporate associations, labor unions, community organizations, and advocacy groups, each with their own set of interests and concerns about remote work policies. Advocates can boost the likelihood of success for WFC-friendly policies by engaging with stakeholders collaboratively and inclusively.

In addition, policy advocacy can benefit from insights gained from implementation science, which studies the factors that influence the successful implementation of policies and programs in real-world contexts (Damschroder et al., 2009). Advocates for WFC policies can use implementation science principles to evaluate the feasibility, acceptability, and sustainability of proposed policy interventions, identify potential barriers and facilitators of implementation, and develop effective strategies for addressing implementation challenges.

In terms of empirical data, research studies have documented the economic, social, and environmental benefits of remote and flexible work arrangements, giving empirical support for policy advocacy efforts (Bloom et al., 2015; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). For example, studies have indicated that remote work can boost employee productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational performance while also lowering carbon emissions from travel and transportation. By mentioning these empirical findings in advocacy materials and policy papers, supporters may strengthen their case for WFC-friendly laws and highlight the potential benefits to individuals, businesses, and communities.

Policy advocacy for sustainability Work from Café (WFC) practices can benefit from theoretical ideas from institutional theory, social exchange theory, stakeholder theory, and implementation science, as well as empirical research on the advantages of distant and flexible work arrangements. Advocates can improve the effectiveness of their advocacy activities by incorporating theoretical frameworks and empirical data into their strategies, as well as contributing to the adoption of policies that support WFC and promote economic growth and development.

Sustaining Local and Global Tourism Through Work from Café (WFC) Practices

The advent of Work from Café (WFC) practices not only transforms typical work environments, but also has far-reaching ramifications for the local and worldwide tourism industries. This section dives into the complicated ways in which WFC promotes and sustains both local and global tourism, illuminating the underlying mechanisms and dynamics using pertinent theories and empirical data. WFC approaches encourage local tourism by transforming cafés into vibrant hubs of activity that attract both residents and visitors. Cafes impart local culture and ambience, attracting travellers seeking authentic experiences (Hosany & Witham, 2010). For example, in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia, the development of coffee enclaves along attractive streets such as Abu Bakar Street and Omar bin Khattab Street has increased the city's appeal as a tourist destination. Tourists go to these locations not just

to drink artisanal coffee, but also to immerse themselves in the vibrant atmosphere and rich cultural patchwork.

Furthermore, WFC practices help to improve destination image by establishing impressions of cities as vibrant, inventive, and welcoming to both business and leisure. According to destination image theory, tourists are impacted by their views of a destination's qualities, amenities, and ambiance (Gartner, 1994). Cafes that adopt WFC methods convey a sense of modernity and cosmopolitanism, attracting tourists looking for diverse experiences. For example, Buraydah's coffee shop districts have received recognition for their integration of work, pleasure, and social interaction, establishing the city as an appealing destination for both business and leisure travellers. WFC strategies encourage community engagement and social capital, which strengthens the fabric of local tourism ecosystems. Cafes create active communities that attract travellers looking for authentic connections and cultural immersion through initiatives like coworking events, skill-sharing workshops, and networking sessions (Lin, 2002). For example, coffee shops in Buraydah hold cultural events and artisanal markets, allowing travellers to interact with local artisans and businesses while boosting their vacation experiences.

In addition to helping local tourism, WFC policies help cities integrate into the global tourism environment by creating links with international travelers and digital nomads. The rise of remote work and digital nomadism has spurred the growing trend of "workations," in which people combine work and leisure travel (Cook, 2020). Cafes that provide pleasant work settings and reliable amenities attract digital nomads looking for temporary workstations while traveling. For example, well-known coffee shops in Tokyo, Berlin, and New York have become popular locations for digital nomads, adding to the global movement of tourists and knowledge workers.

WFC practices promote cultural interchange and knowledge transmission, which enhances the tourism experience for both residents and visitors. According to social exchange theory, encounters between people from various backgrounds promote mutual understanding and cooperation (Blau, 2017). Cafes act as cultural melting pots, bringing together tourists and residents to exchange ideas and form significant connections. For example, expatriate groups frequently convene at cafés in cosmopolitan cities to stimulate cross-cultural discourse and global citizenship.

WFC practices also help to promote responsible consumerism and community empowerment, which contributes to long-term tourism growth. Sustainable tourism ideas emphasize the need of reducing environmental effect, protecting cultural heritage, and fostering socioeconomic growth (Hall, 2008). Cafes that use locally sourced ingredients, practice eco-friendliness, and support community projects help to promote sustainable tourism. Coffee shops in places such as Portland and Amsterdam, for example, promote sustainability by collaborating with local growers, implementing waste reduction measures, and supporting social entrepreneurs, all of which are consistent with the ideals of Sustainable Tourism.

Work from Café (WFC) practices play a varied role in promoting and sustaining both local and global tourism. Cafes contribute to the tourism ecosystem by establishing dynamic

local communities, increasing destination appeal, encouraging cultural interchange, and supporting sustainable practices. Theoretical frameworks such as place attachment, destination image, social exchange, and sustainable tourism shed light on the mechanisms that underpin the synergy between WFC activities and tourism. Cities may use the transformative potential of WFC through strategic initiatives and alliances to boost tourism competitiveness and generate inclusive, sustainable growth.

CONCLUSION

The Work from Café (WFC) phenomena, particularly in Buraydah, Saudi Arabia, a gourmet hotspot, symbolizes a dynamic convergence of work, leisure, and community engagement, bringing a range of difficulties and opportunities for both individuals and enterprises. Using theoretical frameworks such as environmental psychology, attention restoration theory, Maslow's hierarchy of demands, and social exchange theory, stakeholders can acquire a better understanding of the intricate dynamics of WFC. This understanding lays the path for the development of focused strategies to increase its sustainability and economic benefit. It is vital to continue to investigate, develop, and adapt so that stakeholders may unlock WFC's revolutionary power, impacting the future of work and contributing to the creation of flourishing, resilient communities in the post-COVID-19 era. To fully realize the promise of WFC in the future, stakeholders have to promote collaboration, stimulate innovation, and prioritize holistic well-being. To boost economic activity and increase community resilience, recommendations include building ties between cafes and local companies, craftspeople, and cultural institutions. Advocating for regulations that encourage remote work, entrepreneurship, and small business development can also help to establish an enabling environment for long-term WFC practices, promoting local and regional economic growth. Future research might look at the intricacies of WFC in different cultural contexts, the effectiveness of various community engagement programs, and the long-term influence of WFC on local economies and social dynamics.

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