

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to design a contemporary teashop for a selected site deriving design inspiration from traditional teahouses of the southern region of China. Blacksburg, Virginia, a university town, is selected as the proposed site for developing plans for this contemporary teashop. This study evolved in three phases: data collection, design concept development, and design presentation.

#### Phase 1. Data collection

To better understand the Chinese tea culture, in particular that of the southern region of China, numerous resources were examined. The design and services of historic and newly built Chinese teahouses were documented. All these data were collected by searching for, reviewing, and analyzing the following materials:

- Drawings, pictures, and plans of historic and newly built Chinese teahouse designs.

Their exterior and interior design elements, such as the building forms, the interior layouts, interior furnishings, furniture, decorative patterns, motifs, materials, and specific accessories were recorded and analyzed.

- A potential site was identified and relevant information was recorded, including:
  1. Measurements of the interior space, interior elements, and exterior façade.
  2. Photographs of the existing conditions of both the exterior and interior.
- Four local American coffee shops were observed

Since this contemporary teashop will be built in a university town, the target customer will be students and faculty. Observation surveys of practices and design features of four local American coffee shops were completed. The four coffee shops are: *Easy Chair*, *Bollo's*, *Espresso Corner*, and *Mill Mountain Coffee & Tea*. Information collected included:

1. User activities in the coffee shops.
2. Services provided by the coffee shops.
3. Signage design.
4. Interior space layout.

Information collected from observing four coffee shops were recorded on a form designed for this study (see Appendix B). The form is organized into four sections to collect

information on store signage design; user activities and the time spent on certain activities, such as individual/ two person/ group eating and drinking, individual/ two person/ group reading or writing while drink; the food, services, and types of seats provided by the store; and the interior design features, which include the interior layout and lighting design. The information collected was to better understand the target clientele and also help to make design decisions on the services that might be provided and requirements for functional spaces in the proposed teashop.

Each coffee shop was observed for three two-hour periods on one day. The observation time was scheduled during 9AM to 11 AM, 2PM to 4PM, and 8PM to 10PM during the weekdays. The observation times were limited, but provided a snapshot of how each space functioned and what customer activities were supported. Types of activities and the time spent on certain activities were recorded on the observation sheet and analyzed.

#### Phase 2. Schematic design and design development

This phase involved in development of a creative design concept for a contemporary teashop, based on traditional Chinese architecture, for a selected site in the university town of Blacksburg, VA. Steps included the following:

1. Developing a design concept.
2. Developing program requirements.
3. Developing a teahouse visual identity for the exterior façade and signage drawing inspiration from historic Chinese teahouse design.
4. Designing the interior space, which included:
  - Space planning to meet program requirements.
  - Selection of materials, lighting, furniture, and accessories.
  - Verification of code compliance

#### Phase 3. Design presentation

The final design solution was presented by using graphic presentation techniques and supported by a verbal presentation. This included the following:

1. Plans, sections, elevations, and detail drawings.
2. Selection of interior materials, furnishings, and accessories.
3. Perspective of key interior spaces.
4. Rendered store façade and signage design.