



Design Research Seminar

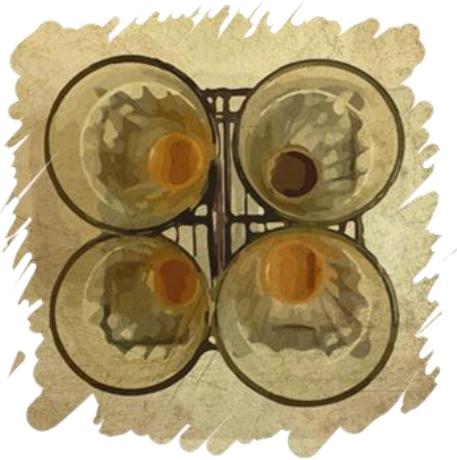
# ‘Stereotypical Character Design, in Indian Context’

## The Chai wala

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# Approval

Interaction Design Special Project 'Stereotypical Character Design, in Indian Context' by Sukanya Mudaliar M.Des. Interaction Design 2012-14 has been approved as partial fulfilment of requirement of post-graduate degree in Interaction Design.

Prof. Phani Tetali

[Project Guide]



## Declaration

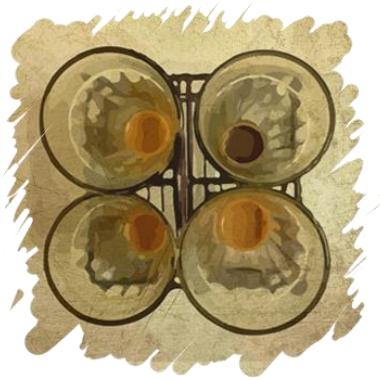
I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all the principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/ data/ fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature:

Name: Sukanya Mudaliar

Roll No.: 12630005

Date:



## Acknowledgement

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## Abstract

In a diverse country like India the humble tea vendor has silently made his way to gain a space in popular culture, mainstream cinema and has even come to be an icon in politics. Apart from such publicity, he is also a part of the daily lives of so many tea lovers in this country.

This project is an attempt to find a stereotype of his personality and translate it into illustrations.



# Introduction

What is a stereotype?

## Stereotypes

Stereotype is a thought that can be adopted about specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things. The perception of a group comprises of their characteristics, circumstances, values and beliefs. It may or may not be related to reality. The term stereotype is used for any impression of groups held by anybody regardless of whether the accuracy of that belief is disputed. Stereotypes are impressions of groups held by people. The accuracy of those beliefs may be important in its own right, but it should play no part in the definition of stereotypes (Judd, 1993)



There are three principles which guide the understanding of stereotypes in study of social psychology:

1. Stereotypes are aids to explanation:

A widely accepted view in social psychology stemming from the work of Tajfel (Tajfel, 1969) is that stereotyping is a subset of the categorization process. We cannot have an impression of a group unless we can tell the difference between that group and some other group. Categorization is the cognitive process by which we detect those differences and similarities.

Bruner (Bruner, 1957) argued that perception proceeded on the basis of the fit between category specifications and the readiness of the perceiver to use those categories. This argument is echoed in the stereotype formation literature: stereotype formation involves the perception or encoding of new information but it also enlists prior knowledge. It is rare that a stereotype is formed in a mind which has no prior knowledge of that group.

2. Stereotypes are energy-saving devices:

The most common answer in social psychology about stereotyping is that it aids explanation by saving time and effort. In particular, if we treat an individual as a part of a group then we can ignore all of the diverse and detailed information that is associated with individuals.

It can be explained as; individual people have limited capacities to perform cognitive tasks such as processing information. Since they exist in a complex, multifaceted world that places enormous demands on their limited cognitive capacity. This complexity results in overload of human information processing capacity which leads people to take shortcuts and to adopt biased and erroneous perceptions of the world. Stereotypes are

simply one example of the biases that can develop  
(McGarty, 1999)

3. Stereotypes are shared group beliefs

Stereotypes attract little attention when they are not shared by many people. If every individual had a very different stereotype of some group then those stereotypes would be of little interest. Shared stereotypes, for example, are useful for predicting and understanding the behavior of members of one group to another.

Thus, the most interesting way in which stereotypes can become shared belief relates to the argument that stereotypes are normative beliefs just like other beliefs. They are shared by members of groups not just through the coincidence of common experience or the existence of shared knowledge within society, but because the members of groups act to coordinate their behavior.

(McGarty, 1999)



# Why chaiwala?

The Chaiwala has daily interactions with his clients and sells a single unique product. There are very few professions which are so super specialised and have yet been in so much demand for such a long period of time.

This professional has been portrayed in mass media in a colourful and variegated manner. Thus there is bound to be a very interesting stereotype for this personality, in the minds of the general populace.

Moreover, as this stereotype been introduced in politics and cinema it has taken up an even more colourful status. I personally do not drink tea and had never been to a tea shop before. Thus, this subject seemed apt to capture stereotypical from the minds of those around, in an unbiased manner.



# Past portrayal and significance

The Chaiwala has been portrayed in the main stream cinema on an international level and in the following two movies the main protagonists have been chaiwalas.



Slumdog Millionaire



Hawaa Hawaai

# In politics

## Chaiwala my PM campaign

While campaigning for elections the beginnings of the now Prime minister Narendra Modi (NaMo) as chaiwala were first criticized by opposing parties and then widely celebrated by NaMo's party through the hangout 'Chai pe charcha'. The Indian chai wala has since

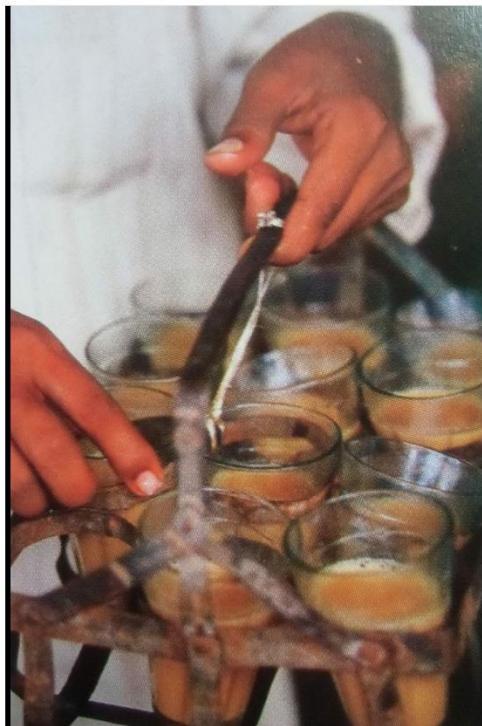


become even more popular than he already has been in his own right. At this juncture, the Chaiwala, my PM campaign was also a raging success.



## Moodboard of photographic representations of the chai wala.





# Primary Research

Interviewed people 5 users from Pune and Mumbai were interviewed. They were classified as tea drinkers and none tea drinkers. This was done to ensure that a stereo type and not a specific personality's descriptions are captured.

They were asked the following questions:

*What impression comes to your mind when I say chai wala? Don't really think much; just describe the first thing that comes to your mind.*

Further probes...

*Can you describe in terms of appearance?*

*What are they doing?*

*Any other thoughts that come to your mind?*

The interviews were recorded and then analyzed to extract, descriptions, traits and stories. An affinity was created to better understand all the data collected and the links across descriptions.

5 chaiwalas were interviewed to understand their point of view.



*“Chai ka koi  
bharosa nahi,  
bach gaya toh loss...  
Roj bachta hai....  
Aur baar baar  
banate hain ...”*



# Collecting the stereotype

## Interviewed tea drinkers and non-tea drinkers

### Tea Drinkers

No. Interviewees: 4

For people who regularly took tea from a chaiwala were interviewed. They gave detailed descriptions about their experiences with chaiwalas. Although their stories were rich with colourful descriptions, many confessed that they had unintentionally borne the image of a specific chaiwala while describing these details. Hence the next step would be to interview people who did not consume tea or interact with chaiwalas on a regular basis and capture their impression of the professional.

### Non-tea Drinkers

No. Interviewees: 4

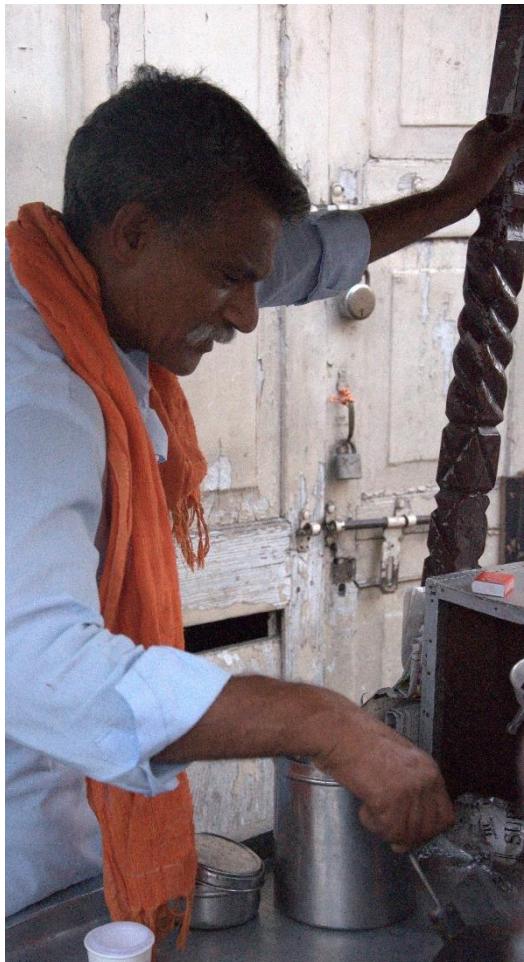
Non tea drinkers described their impressions of what chaiwalas looked like, their personality traits, attire, age, gender, and workspace.

### Chaiwalas

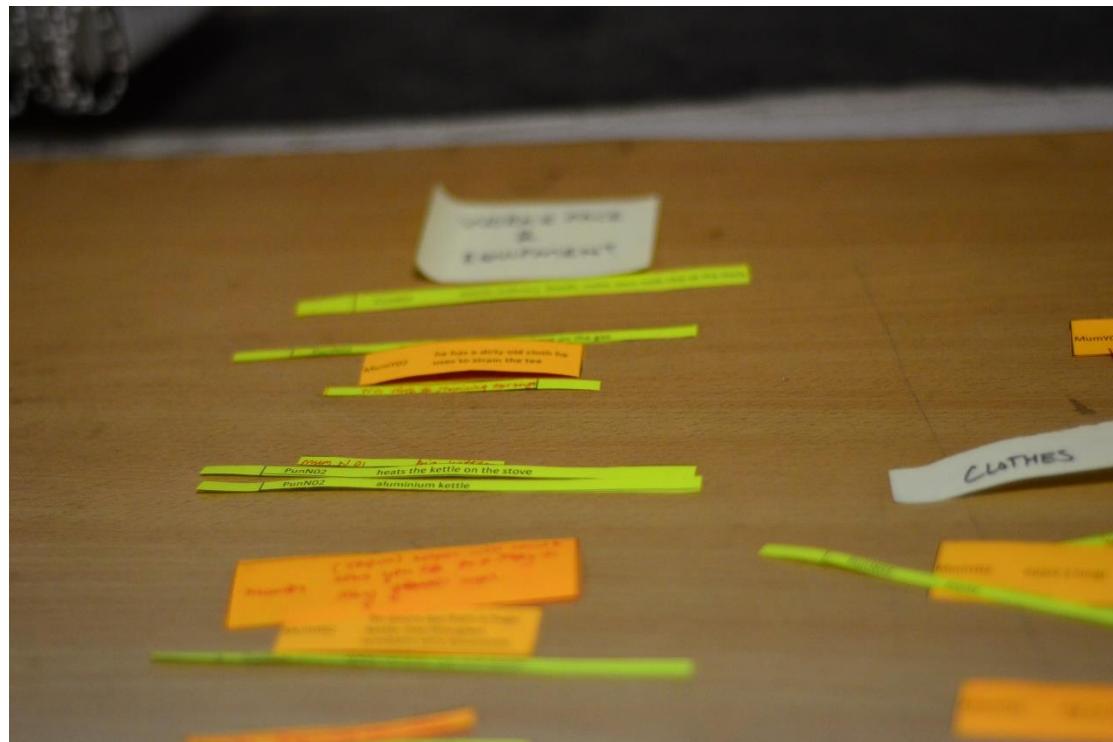
No. Interviewees: 4

After conducting this exercise, a direct contact was established with 4 chaiwalas. Photographs of their workspace. They were asked about their schedule (day-in-the-life), how they started out and their plans for the future.

The most common observation was that all the interviewees were friendly and approachable. They were jovial, cheerful and had an easy manner of conducting conversations. They possessed excellent people skills and made everyone feel welcome. Surprisingly a majority of them offered to serve tea to the interviewer, free of cost. This was the case, even though they were approached during peak hours of business. Chai seemed to be in constant demand throughout all the visits.



# Affinity mapping



"Affinity Diagramming is a very simple but powerful technique for grouping and understanding information.

In particular, affinity diagramming provides a good way to identify and analyze issues. There are several variations of the technique.

(infodesign.com, n.d.)

It is a method to gather all the data collected from various sources and to draw patterns and commonalities across the entire volume of available information.

The affinity mapping showed the following results



The Chaiwalas:

Their Nature:

The Chaiwalas are assumed to be friendly, talkative and warm in nature. They remain busy throughout their

working hours. They are popular and their patrons may call them by affectionate nicknames.

They are casual but their motions and actions are swift.

They know the specific preferences in tea for all their patrons. This among other things causes them to maintain strong, amicable bond with their patrons.

Appearance:

They have an unremarkable physique which is neither fat nor slim nor muscular, just average built; they tend to be on the shorter side. Their complexion is usually dark.

At this juncture there appeared a dichotomy in the description of the Chaiwala. This dichotomy was mainly based on the role of service played by the Chaiwala. It goes as follows:

- a) The tea maker – “Kaka”

Age: 40+ years old

Attire: Wears a Vest and a lungi.

Habits: He is generally less talkative and more focussed on making tea, yet he is aware of all the latest news and events in the neighbourhood.

He has a very poor sense of hygiene.

Workspace: He operates a thela which may be situated around the corner of a block or beneath the staircase of an office building. The thela is an austere space with wooden benches and a blue, plastic sheet that protects the stall and its patrons from extreme weather.

Equipment: He has a small kerosene stove, a big, aluminium tea kettle, a dirty straining cloth and many small tea glasses. Watching him pour tea from the bug kettle into the tiny glasses is very amusing.

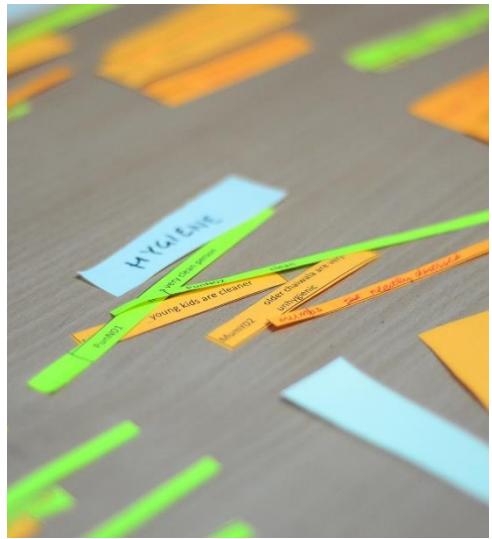
Also sells: samosas/bun maska/biscuits.

- b) The tea server – “Chhotu”

Age: 15-16 years old

Attire: Half sleeve shirt with breast- pockets and a full pant.

Habits: He is the more popular kind of Chaiwalas, this maybe so because he is relatable and happy-go-lucky. They also keep very busy all day and must keep walking swiftly from place to place in order to distribute or collect the glasses.



Equipment: He has a rag on his shoulder, in order to clean tables and dust benches. He carries a tea glass holder with tea glasses that may have full or empty glasses of tea.

Also sells: Sutta (cigarettes)

# Character design

Based on the above inputs the tea seller character was being developed. It was decided that the tea seller persona would be developed as it was the more popular and dynamic of the two.



## Expressions



Blank



Happy



Disappointed



Sad



Smug



Excited

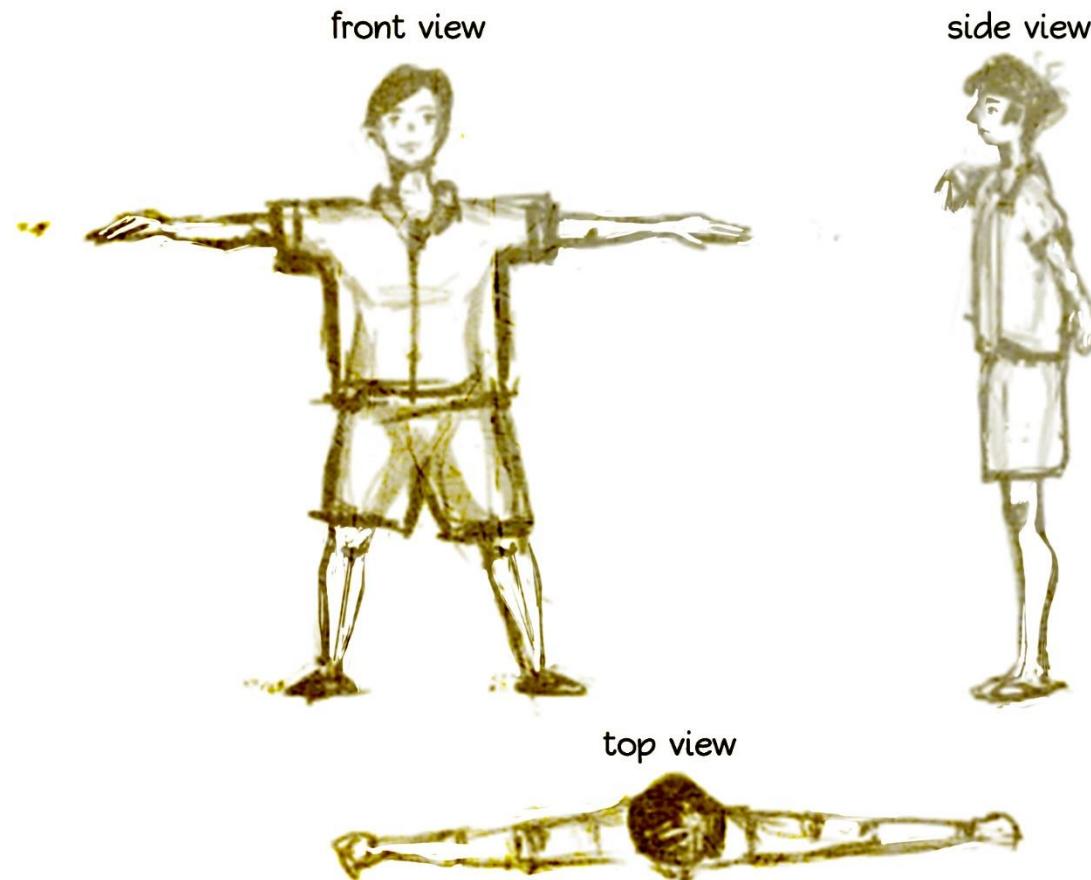


Angry

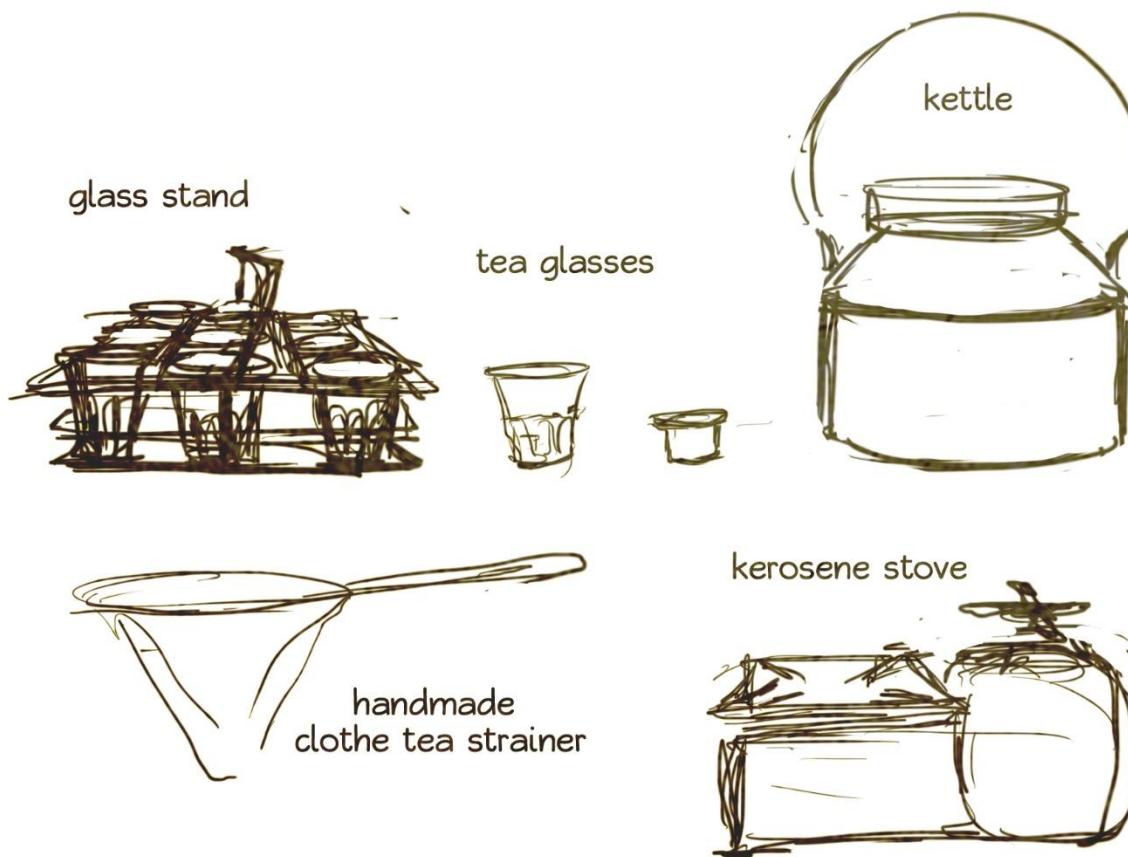


Attentive

## Posture and Physique



# Paraphernalia



## Workspace



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## Images

Hawaa hawaai

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