



**coffee cup\***

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**“I’m a complete coffee snob. A couple of years ago, I went on a search for the perfect coffee cup. I wasn’t sure quite what that meant, but I knew that there were some things that made me really like certain cups, and things I definitely didn’t like. It’s kinda funny how the cup actually affected how much I enjoyed the coffee itself. It seems stupid, but it’s true.”**



**The coffee industry has quickly become one of the most profitable, fastest growing industries in North America, if not the world...**

**The goal of this process was to attain insight into the emotional responses, values and motivations associated with coffee cups. The aim is to better understand why individuals purchase, collect or gift coffee cups, and by doing so, to inform the development of marketing, design and brand strategy.**



## coffee cup as Identity\*

More than perhaps any other small household item, a coffee cup reflects the personality and identity of its owner. It tells about where we've been, what our interests are, even where we spent our last vacation. It reflects our background, profession, socioeconomic status, political views and decorating taste. Even cultural identification can be reflected in the cups we choose, whether it is a small cup containing Italian espresso or a fine porcelain cup set alongside an assortment of pastries, much can be gleaned about a person by what they are sipping from.

**For some, the choice of a coffee cup reflects a deliberate decision on the part of its owner to make themselves known. In doing so, it serves as a social ambassador of sorts, and therefore, careful consideration is taken in choosing the right cup depending upon its audience. A cup can be chosen to reinforce our authority, portray approachability, demonstrate our sense of humor, or encourage conversation.**



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**Our coffee cups can even reflect the many sides to our personalities, as we may have our ‘office’ cup, our ‘Saturday morning’ cup, our ‘company’s here’ cup, and our ‘my kids gave me this for Christmas’ cup. To switch between cups is to ‘change hats’ so to speak, and serves to ground us more deeply in each individual aspect of our identities.**



**In addition to communicating information about their owners to those around them, our cups serve as mirrors to ourselves. A coffee cup reminds us of who we are and where we have come from, thereby helping us to feel secure in our roles.**

**“Even when everyone else may seem to disagree, my cup still says I’m the World’s Best Dad”**





**“I never drank coffee before starting university. However, it wasn’t long before late nights “studying” made coffee a necessity. On one of her first visits to see me, my mom saw that I had started drinking coffee and bought me a coffee maker and cup from Wal-Mart. From that point on, whenever I would start studying, I’d make a pot of coffee and place that cup on my desk. I think it made me feel like a real student.”**



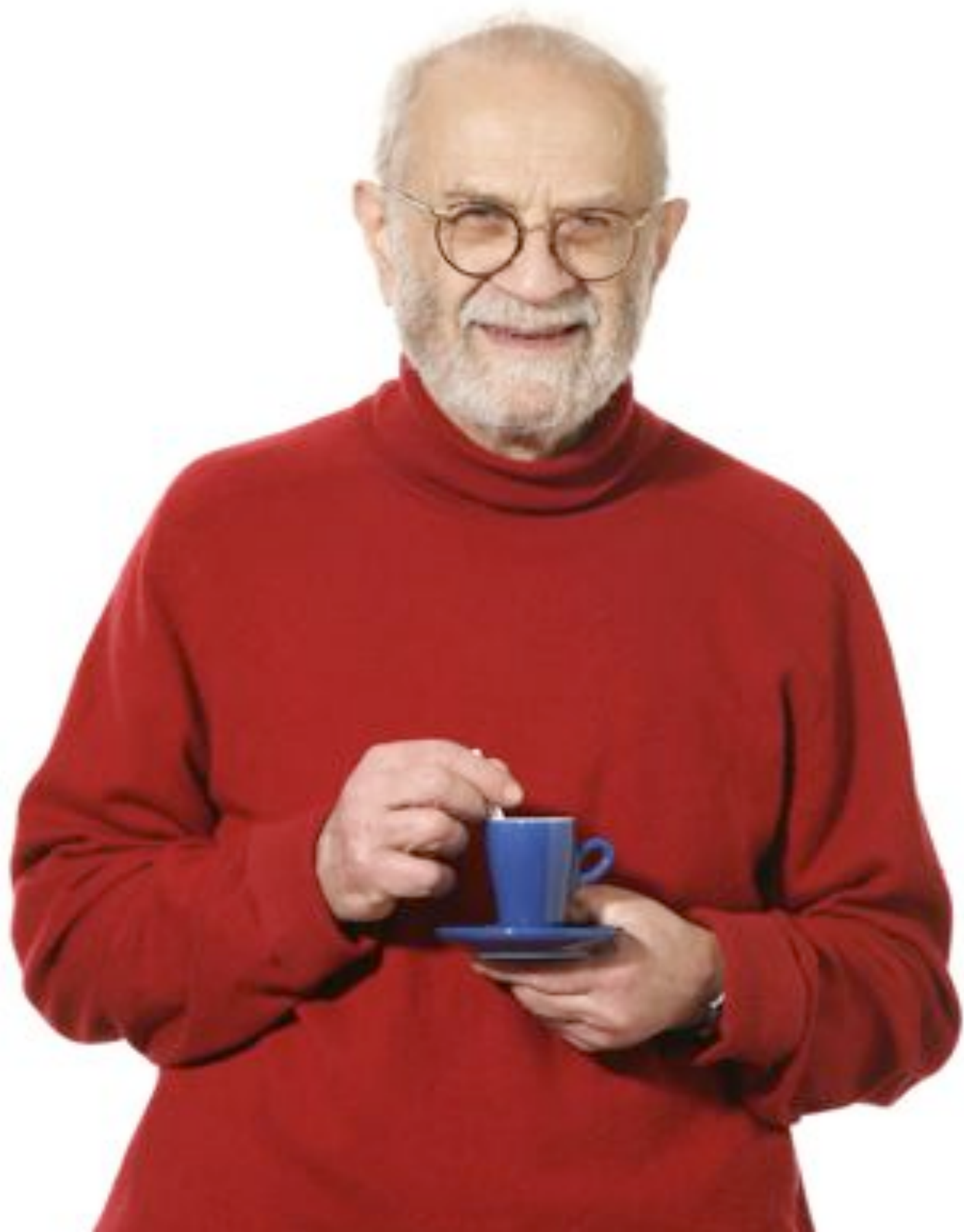
# Coffee Cup as Memory\*

Even the smallest of coffee cups can hold a lifetime of memories. Relationships are formed, romances bloom, plans are made, good and bad news is delivered, and important decisions are made, all over cups of coffee. These memories become captured in our cups, and thus become a permanent part of every sip thereafter. As time passes, relationships fade and loved ones pass on, a cup allows us to still feel connected to those times and those people, and to return to moments we cherish.

To drink from a cup serves as a memorial to the person who gifted it, a reminder of lessons learned, or a return to a time and place of adventure. Like an album of photographs, a cupboard full of cups and mugs contains a lifetime of travel, relationships, decisions and change.



**“I can still picture the assortment of porcelain cups that my grandmother had displayed in her dining room. As kids, we were threatened with certain death if we ever broke one of her cups. I still get a feeling of anxiety when I am served coffee or tea in a porcelain cup.”**



**“I was a third grade teacher for over 35 years. Every Christmas, at least a couple of my kids would give me coffee cups as gifts. I have more cups in my cupboard than I could ever use, but I can’t bring myself to get rid of any of them. After all, each one of them reminds of the little boy or girl that passed through my classroom.”**

## **Coffee Cup as Safety\***

**We take comfort in the familiar, and are made to feel safe through routine. For millions of people, there are fewer more cherished routines than having a morning cup of coffee, and our favorite cup is a welcome familiar face. Regardless of what the rest of the day may hold, that first cup provides at least a few moments of predictable, familiar comfort. It provides a safe first point of contact with our day, and serves as a secure launching pad for whatever might come next.**

**As the day progresses, we may return to this cup for moments of reprieve; timeouts from the chaos around us. Like the “base!” in a game of tag, time slows down, if only for a brief time. It provides a moment to regroup, collect our thoughts, refocus our attention, to then return to our task with renewed energy.**



**“We’ve laughed together, cried together, and shared some of our biggest secrets over a cup of coffee. Whenever I feel like there is no one else to turn to, my best friend’s always been there for me. For us ‘Let’s chat over coffee’ means your deepest thoughts will be safe with me.”**





**While it may seem trite, even the worst of times can be eased by a cup of coffee. We have all seen images of hurricane victims wrapped in blankets and huddled over the steaming Styrofoam cup in their hands; family members seated in a hospital waiting room anxiously await news while silently sip from their cups; a soldier clasping a metal cup while the sounds of battle echo in the distance. The simplicity, familiarity and solitude found in that cup provides comfort, reassurance and a sense of safety.**

**Essential to the comfort and safety associated with our favorite cup is the warmth it contains. To stay warm is to survive, and at a base level, we take comfort in being reminded of this. Similar to the comfort of a campfire, the warmth of a cup shelters us, and staves off the threat from the cold.**



**“About six years ago I went through a pretty rough time. I couldn’t find a job and didn’t have a place to live for almost two months. My morning paper and cup of coffee were the only thing I still had in common with my old life. It was the only time of the day that I felt like things could be good again.”**



## **Coffee Cup as Transition\***

**Coffee cups come to mark transitions in our lives; from adolescence to adulthood, student to professional, bachelor to spouse. As our roles change, our identities change, and so do our coffee cups. A new coffee cup serves to facilitate this change in identity, as well as comfort us by remaining familiar when all else seems new.**



**“Before I got married, I don’t think I ever drank coffee out of anything other than a paper cup. When my fiancée and I were registering for wedding gifts, she insisted on registering for “real” coffee cups. I knew then that my life was about to change significantly.”**



**Symbolic representations of transition are evident across cultures and communities. Diplomas are rewarded for academic advancement, stripes and stars ordain military uniforms, and tattoos mark young boys becoming men. These symbols serve to testify to our accomplishments, to reinforce our identification with our new role, and to pacify secret insecurities that remain. A coffee cup given in recognition of an accomplishment, a graduation, or a new job, serves to facilitate, as well as reward, those inevitable transitions we make as we journey through life.**



**“When I got my first job out of law school, my wife wanted to help personalize the closet that was to be my ‘office’ for the next couple of years. She got me a coffee cup with pictures of my family on it. To be honest, it was pretty tacky looking, but it really did make me think about how much my life had changed in a relatively short period of time. I had a new wife, a new child and a new career. I still have that cup sitting on the shelf of my, ‘fortunately’ much larger, office.”**

Ceramic,  
glass,  
paper,  
styrofoam,  
porcelain,  
metal,  
journey,  
personality,  
memory,  
symbol,  
reminder,  
identity,  
connection,  
humor,  
reflection,  
culture,  
warmth,  
communication,  
renewal,  
comfort,  
transition,  
safety,  
relationships,  
reassurance,  
progress,  
solitude,  
familiarity.

**Not a cup of coffee.  
This is a coffee cup.**

**Sigmund Consulting Group specializes in providing companies valuable insight into the emotional and motivational factors influencing their customers' attitudes and behaviour.**

**By getting at the deeper, less tangible influences on thinking and behaviour, they help companies understand themselves and their customers at a deeper, richer level, helping them do what they do even better.**

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