The Walking Stick: Technical Communication on the Journey of Creating Genuine Travel

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Technical Communication on the Journey of Creating Genuine Travel

by

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Abstract

The Walking Stick project is intended to create a community for people who want to travel; experience authentic, local cultures; and share their journeys and discoveries of what the world has to offer with the motive of inspiring others to also experience “genuine” travel (that is, not just snapping selfies at tourist trap destinations). Through this methodology document the explanation of how technical communication tools were used to create a community will be viewed. The inspiration of the project covers personal travels and how the travels inspired the mission statement, and a code of ethics for the specific community that focuses on authentic travel. The literature review analyzes the history of walking, and how walking affects people today. The literature then goes through important design aspects of creating visuals that communicate to a specific audience. These communications go through creating social networks appropriately for the audience to want to feel as if they belong and have a purpose in the community. The research comes together to help guide the creation of a product for a community to be able to connect with other members through a website, social media, and unique visual symbol that encourages the members to travel in an authentic way. The research and creation will answer a question of why it is important for travelers to have a goal to remain as a genuine traveler with the help from visual designs intended for the specific community. Once the intended project is reviewed the plans for the future of the project is introduce to create excitement of a new and unique community.

Keywords: technical communication, literature review, community
Introduction

The methodology document will go through the steps taken to create the Walking Stick Project. A narration of stories will be reviewed in detail to show how certain choices to create this project was approached. These choices include the decision of creating a social, online community for people to be able to communicate their travels with other members, and also includes the steps taken to create a visual aspect for others to be introduced to the community. Extensive research was done to help show why certain aspects of travel, more specifically walking, is so important to a community of travelers. The research then helps create a solid community whose goal is to travel to authentic places, and promote to others how to travel authentically and an approach to be genuine.

Inquiry Questions

How do I support genuine, culturally rich travel to less visited places without ruining or exposing these places to over tourism, with the help from the knowledge of visual design in the technical communication field?

Project Summary

Walking sticks have helped empower countless people to travel and discover what the world has to offer throughout history despite their simplicity. The Walking Stick project, extends from the walking legacy by designing and creating a logo, a website, and a biodegradable sticker to support my concept for a community.

People can participate the Walking Stick website to post travel stories and photos and view other’s experiences as well. The website for this community includes a mission statement and a code of ethics to help guide travelers on how to successfully be a Walking Stick member.
Through this website, members will be able to share their travel stories and encourage others to experience different cultures around the world. Users can help promote the Walking Stick community and the genuine type of travel using a biodegradable sticker that includes a QR code that redirects them to the community homepage with mobile devices.

The methods of creating the project was to travel myself, take note of my travels, and notice how I would like to be approached as a traveler trying to experience the world in a genuine way. I did research on people’s own outlook on traveling and walking, design elements that would be appealing to the traveling niche, and create a product a traveler would want to use to see what other travelers may be experiencing on the goal of a genuine trip.

**Design Inspiration**

The Walking Stick community is for travelers who seek rich, intercultural communication — direct engagement with local people, places, and cultural experiences around the world. The key to this community’s success is to adhere to the mission and ethics statement described on the website — that is, to be a mindful traveler in the midst of rich intercultural experiences. In order to inspire and promote more genuine travel without ruining or overexposing these places to tourism the Walking Stick community understand and respects the principles and ethics of intercultural communication. To experience these places to the fullest it has been observed that walking creates the best memories and creates the best understanding of places. The community is not about the “I did this.” The community is about discovering what cultures the world has to offer. Stories about a places’ religion, food, music, or art are the stories that represent the community.
This project truly started taking form when I was in Spain and Portugal with my sister following an El Camino, which is a walk from one holy city to another within a specific region. I thought that when on this trip I would be backpacking through unmapped territory and through old villas, and though I was for most of the trip, I truly found out how difficult it is to stay away from the tourist traps and attractions, especially when the final destinations were such well-known, popular places. I realized even though these popular places were rich in history and were still breathtaking, these places had little to offer for a genuine experience because of the over tourism of the specific destinations such as Santiago del Compostela, Spain. I realized I wanted an experience few others would have and posing in front of the Santiago Cathedral was not the genuine experience I was looking for. I wanted to create a community that would share the same outlook of wanting to discover the genuine, cultural places and who realized traveling is about witnessing the less traveled to places and understanding memories can be made at these places. I also wanted to ensure this community shared the values and mindset of mindful intercultural communication, so that the authentic cultures would remain preserved for others to experience.

Despite the drastic evolution of transportation over the past thousands of years, walking has remained an essential part of individuals’ travels. An El Camino is a great example of the importance of walking in someone’s life. Saint James created this specific El Camino when he went up the coast of Portugal and Spain teaching people about the Christian faith. The Santiago del Compostela Cathedral is the most popular tourist destination in Santiago, Spain, and people were always going in and out of the church in groups, waiting in lines to see the tombs and holy relics. The Cathedral is a reward to the walkers who are walking for weeks to reach this destination. I realized tourist shops and restaurants took advantage of the El Camino walkers and that is the reason Santiago is now a tourist trap.
Once my sister and I got further away from the cathedral area, we discovered some older and less-visited churches. They were smaller and not as well kept, but these towns still had very rich history due to early people settling there instead of the cities. Evidence of old churches and other old buildings showed the rich history of how the country was built. These churches were the ones people went to before the main cathedral was built. The pattern of getting further away from the main tourist attractions led us to what seemed to be the true essence of the Spanish and Portuguese cultures. Once we got out of the bigger cities, we came upon the small villas; and I realized the true authenticity of the culture was in these places. The everyday lives of people in these places, such as sending boats out to get fish for the market every morning, was very rich in culture and authenticity.

The small, fishing town’s goal was not to be a tourist attraction. It was just a town people living their lives. I was able to witness these people and their lives rich in the culture of where they were from, such as a coastal town of Portugal. I was not there trying to get a picture of myself in front of all the boats or workers, yet I let the world show me what these other places entail.

Another example of when I realized the idea of genuine travel and a community such as Walking Stick was important occurred this past summer when I visited California, the most visited state in the United States, for a week (Lock, 2019). One of my destinations was Yosemite National Park. Many people know Yosemite for the famous Half Dome hike, which people need to apply for a permit a year in advance to climb. The need for permits on many of the hikes creates an overpopulation of people who opt to simply drive through the park instead, saying they were at Yosemite. Technically, yes, these people were at Yosemite, but did they truly get the authentic Yosemite experience? I was only in Yosemite for one day and went for a single
hike: a ten-mile hike to Upper Yosemite Falls overlooking the whole park. Though I was still on a hiking trail, it was one of the less traveled trails and an 8 out of 10 difficulty. So, not as many people complete this hike. I realized I enjoyed the hike a lot more than I did driving through the whole park and seeing all the major known sites of Yosemite. I did not enjoy the known places such as El Capitan, and the Yosemite Dome was the sites had an overwhelming amount of people getting on and off buses to take pictures and then go to the next destination in the park. I realized I was not experiencing Yosemite in a genuine way because so many other people were there experiencing the same thing. Yosemite, like other tourist places have amazing views and experiences to offer, but when approached the concept is more of a I did this then realizing and discovering the existence of the place.

My third experience of genuine travel that further inspired the project occurred on the same California trip, although this time I was in a small town called Sonora about 45 minutes Southwest of Yosemite National Park. Sonora is a small tourist town and has great history and uniqueness as one of the first mining towns in California. I visited some of the tourist hot spots here, but my friend also took me to a lesser known place. First, she took me to a famous bank/hotel diner, which was busy and crowded. People filled each table, with shopping bags at their sides, and ate the famous and overpriced ice cream sundaes. However, this was not our final destination. She took me down an old staircase below the hotel to a bookstore with dusty secondhand books. The “bookstore” was built right into the old mining walls and bank vaults of the building. The place was more interesting and exciting than the upstairs because it was unique and captured the essence of what the town was by displaying old forgotten books and Victorian furniture that people can read while amid a forgotten library. For this place I went “off the beaten
path” and took the time to experience what a place truly has to offer. Meaning the culture and history of the bookstore.

Literature Review

In this section, I discuss walking in historical and contemporary contexts with special attention to media and technology. Ultimately, the review of literature demonstrates that walking historically correlates with my understanding of authentic travel. Also, drawing from contemporary studies of technical communication, virtual communities can reclaim and extend the tradition of travel. Walking is an art form and through walking people can discover not only what the world has to offer, but what the world has shaped them to be as people.

History of Walking

To understand why walking still holds important ties of where people came from, Honore De Balzac writes “Isn’t it really quite extraordinary to see that, since man took his first step, no one has asked himself why he walks, how he walks, if he has ever walked, if he could walk better, what he achieves in walking...questions that would be tied to all the philosophical, psychological, and political systems which preoccupy the world.” (pg. 5) Balzac raised a valid point about walking, no one asks why people walk, especially today; we just walk, because we can. Walking is a part of our human nature.

Rebecca Solnit in her book Wanderlust: A History of Walking explores the history of walking and the walking culture. Though walking seems mundane too many people today, Solnit dove into what walking truly is on a philosophical level. Solnit continues the book with looking towards the Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato. When these philosophers were teaching the young men of the time, it was not in a classroom we use today. The philosophers
walked around the pavilion or the city talking, teaching, debating while their students followed. Solnit even said, “What a better time to think then when walking (pg. 31),” Solnit has observed through studying the habits of great philosophers who walk frequently and observing of her own patterns when walking. Walking stimulates a time to be free of everything else, to allow thoughts and great ideas conceived. Walking is a time to meditate, to use our bodies for what it was naturally made for.

After completing one of the many walks, Solnit noted, “Walking I realized is how the body measures itself against the earth.” (pg.33) Walking, more than any other transportation, shows how vast the earth really is. The miles of plains, mountains, rolling hills and rivers all seem bigger when traveling and discovering them on foot, perhaps because of the amount of time spent to get from one place to the next. An average person can walk three miles in an hour this is not taking in all the different variables though. Elevation gain, weather, and terrain are all variables one might consider. For example, the hike to Upper Yosemite Falls is three-and-a-half miles, is 8 out of 10 for difficulty of the hike, and on average takes six to eight hours to complete round trip. John Napier, a mathematician during the 16th century observed and wrote,

Human walking is a unique activity during which the body, step by step, teeters on the edge of catastrophe.... Man’s bipedal mode of walking seems potentially catastrophic because only the rhythmic forward movement of first one leg and then the other keeps him from falling flat on his face. (pg.33)

The science and history of walking is outstanding. We use the rhythm of walking to create journeys, to synchronized to a sort of meditation. There are many meditative walks and journeys that are very historical and famous. Most of which people still walk today. One of the most famous is the El Camino walk from Lisbon, Portugal to Santiago de Compostela, Spain.
The walk was a pilgrimage, the path that Saint James walked to teach people about Jesus and the Christian faith. Every year thousands of people walk this trail, 382 miles to be exact, coming upon places such as Fatima, Portugal and small towns, and villas. During the time when walking, there is not much else to do besides think when walking miles upon miles every day. Walking an El Camino takes an abundant amount of focus drive and willingness to be on such a trek, it is not for everyone. Nancy Frey, an avid hiker and El Camino pilgrim wrote,

When pilgrims begin walking several things usually begin to happen to their perception of the world which continues over the course of the journey: they develop a changing sense of time, a heightening of the senses, and a new awareness of their bodies and the landscaping. (pg. 31)

Frey also met a German man who was walking the pilgrimage and he said, “In the experience of walking, each step is a thought. You can’t escape yourself.” How true is this statement!? To the extent that once old enough people do not think of how to walk anymore, people think of everything else in their lives. Walking in today’s world is no longer the average person’s first choice of transportation. Walking has become a way of releasing stress, of marinating the thoughts, a recreational activity for enjoyment and exercise. (Solnit, 2001)

Walking leads to exploring the world. Exploring leads to uncharted areas which create ideas to be reached by hiking and climbing. “The first man to climb a mountain for its own sake and enjoy the view from the top.” (pg.134) The poet Petrarch, who had a passion for hiking and climbing wrote this in his journal. It is a curious thought to think of who the first man was to climb a mountain just to see the view. Not to go after an animal for food, or find a new place to live, but to climb just for the sake of climbing and seeing what is out there. “Climbing is the only time my mind doesn’t wander.” (pg.134) Though mountaineering is a bit different, the climb is
still an adventure. Clark also mentioned, nature has been imagined as scenery, and scenery is what is seen at a certain distance. Nature, untouched is what people look for and expect when hiking in National Parks. Landscapes have always been a factor of beauty. Natures is a creation so grand that needs to be seen by the person, because pictures do not do justice, no matter how good the picture is. (Solnit, 2001)

Walking raises suspicion if it's not in a normal walking community or culture. Usually when people see someone else walking, they think hitchhiker, poor or maybe even a little weird. Especially when seen walking to farther places. With the availability to quicker transportation, walking almost seems impossible, or barbaric. Carl Moritz, a German minister who walked across England in 1782 was turned away by many innkeepers because the stereotype of someone walking a long, distance made him seem out of place and unusual. He said, “A traveler on foot in this country seems to be considered as a sort of wild man, or an out-of-the-way-being, who is stared at, pitied, suspected, and shunned by everyone that meets him.” (Solnit, 2001)

Walking is very cultural for many places around the world, even more so in the East because of how old the countries and culture is, more specifically their religion. A monk by the name of Thich That Hanh, relates walking to be closer to his religious beliefs. He explains that walking is a way of thinking, of being at complete peace. He wrote a poem that said,

Take my hand. We will walk. We will enjoy our walk without thinking of arriving anywhere. Walk peacefully. Walk happily. Our walk is a peace walk. Our walk is a happiness walk.” (Thich, 2019)

People who walk do not have a final destination in mind specifically. Most walk to clear their heads, and to get away from the hustle and bustle of everything.
Another man who has been on countless walks in his life mentioned how he saunters. Sauntering is derived from, “Idle people who round about the country in the Middle Ages and alike.” People who were walking to La Sainte Terre to the Holy Land were called out as Sainte-Terre’s or Saunters by the children watching the walk through the towns. Sainte Terre means, without land or home (Solnit, 2001). David Thoreau goes on to say no one can buy a good walk. People can buy nice cars, bikes, and other forms of transportation, but for a walk people literally just must start somewhere and most likely they will enjoy themselves. Walking came straight from God, the freedom, leisure and ability to do it. Being able to walk whenever and wherever is complete freedom. Thoreau goes on to say the true endurance is not in walking, but in staying in an office all day instead out walking and exploring. Sitting at a desk all day could be more draining and strenuous because of the anxiety of wanting to naturally get up and do something more active. It’s the adventure of walking and wanting to discover what's out there that is exciting. Even if it's already been “discovered” being able to see things and experience things with the senses for yourself is outstanding, especially when it is done with your own ability such as walking (Thoreau, 1862).

Walking Today: Planes, Cars, and Vehicles

Purposefully walking and travel do not always go together anymore in today’s society. People travel by car and plane mostly to get to the sights of the world. Once they arrive, they seek out the famous landmarks that are recognizable to everyone around the world. Walking has also become a stand or support towards different events. Examples of walking to support something may be walks against different cancers, diseases, protests which links to social media and showing the world they walk to support something or protest something. People want to be
linked to these events through social media to show their followers what they are walking for. Using hashtags to link them to other walking events, protests, fundraisers, etc.

With these pictures of famous places and of popular travel destinations appearing on every social media platform, tourism has gone up significantly. In some places people must make reservations years in advance to see these specific spots. Hiking Half Dome in Yosemite National Park is one of these places which requires a reservation. There are other places such as Trolltunga, Norway where not many people were visiting 10 years ago but since the creation of Instagram and other social medias there now is a limit of how many people can go and take a picture at this famous spot. People wait in line for hours then it comes their time to get the notable picture of them being there and then leave. Social media has caused an over population of tourism for many places, social media has also helped other places get out of an economic crash. One specific place is Wanaka, New Zealand. Because of social media Wanaka went up 14 percent in tourism, which is its main income. (Make Time to Travel the World, 2019)

Highways were created for people in a hurry, but walking is for the people who want to experience more of the world in detail and at a slower pace. For instance, hiking. Especially on hard hikes, such as the hike mentioned before, the hike to Upper Yosemite Falls. The hike is rated a difficult hike, and it earned this rating, especially when the sun is beating down with little to no shade on long, tedious switchbacks. Once a hiker gets to the very top, experiencing the vastness and the complete 360 panoramic views cannot compare to a photograph or even a video of the place. Experiences in the moment and being there is worth the hard work of the walk. Thoreau explained the experience in Nature perfectly, especially when walking in Nature. Nature has not only outlined “her” work on a larger scale but has painted the whole picture with brighter and more costly colors then used in a detailing and beautifying the Old World. Old
World being a time when people walking was the most typical way for anyone to get from place to place. He goes on to say many poets throughout time have written about walking. Though poets write about many things, some poets’ best work, or most popular work is about walking. Robert Frost, Wordsworth…etc. Poetry highlights and exaggerates walking; people want to experience those feelings when walking.

When driving, people look to the roads, landmarks, the relations to what would be on maps, and noticeable places, but with walking people slow down and notice even more. Throughout history, there were many villages around the world, and for many people to get to another village to trade and meet for other social events they had to walk. The people walking had to notice everything about the land around them to better equip themselves for survival in every matter. (Augustine, 2016)

**Social Media and Technology Affecting Walking Today**

According to Carrie Millie, a journalist who writes about social media affecting travel, the millennial generation and younger do not travel to experience the culture of the place, or to just travel in general, to walk around and experience the new place, but to get the Instagram and social media worthy picture to show people they were there. Forty percent of people 33 and younger prioritize going somewhere by the Instagrammability. Sightseeing scored the lowest for millennials for reasons of traveling. Even though sightseeing scored the lowest, hundreds of people wait in line for that famous, known photograph a person wants to be able to get. These people also find ways to show themselves as being the only ones there, making it look secluded and less “discovered”. For example, turn outs and places to pull over were created to get amazing pictures in National Parks. Many people pull over and get the perfect, unbelievable shot without
really walking anywhere or having to “work” for the picture. Which is interesting because the word travel’s origin is travail which means work.

Is social media ruining travel? There is an article that goes through how Instagram has an algorithm to push the idea of travel towards people (Hollister, Smith, 2019). When searching specific things on Instagram the popular pictures go to the top, of famous people going to these places, or of outstanding “views”. The Instagram feed on a person’s account also depends on what and who people follow, but through advertising, individualistic purchases, unique hashtags, and views of certain items related to travel, the algorithm will push notifications that eventually appear onto a person’s social media. When people use specific hashtags, more related pictures and topics towards the person using the hashtag will appear on their feed.

Many people drive to go and see these fantastic wonders is from social media and the sense of doing something or going somewhere no one else has gone, but because of overpopulation of these places and the push from others and social media to go see these places, it has created these wonders of the world to be mundane and “overrated.” However, the opposite effect is happening in some social circles, such as wanting to be lost, wanting to explore the “undiscovered.” Apps such as the Derive App, Serendiptor, Random GPS, and Broken City App are examples of how to get lost and discover a new, exciting place. These apps were created to help people discover new places by giving random directions or a random selected GPS coordinate and the person is supposed to follow these directions or coordinates to discover a less popular place. These apps became very popular among people in the city who want a different scene (Schiller, 2014). One man, Daniel Belasco Rogers carried a GPS and related his own experiences of taking his “own” routes to different places. Walking can facilitate the construction of new, more personalized maps. “If at the end of your life, you could look at the shapes your
wanderings over the earth have made, what patterns would you see? What words may be formed that take a human lifetime to write.” (Wright & Sites, 2005)

Cities were built, and mapped out to the point that engineers design routes today to make it easier for walkers. In all honesty, most places in the world are “discovered,” but the key is finding the hidden jewels that are less popular, the places that will hold more of a memory for people, creating a deeper thought then a cliché pose in front of the Eiffel Tower. “In every city we will set up a Tourist Misinformation Office - to tell the truth about the city... to invite our visitors to re-make the city rather than consume it - we will stop tidying ruins and lighting the night sky, we will encourage public art to be made by the public.” (Wright & Sites, 2005)

The walker could be an artist, a writer of a city, or a child who takes the long way home from school. Walkers discover things again and again and appreciate something for a bit longer. They notice more and see more. Signs riddle the world where only walkers have the time to read, to understand, to comprehend, to see. For example, on the path to Santiago del Compostela, Spain, yellow arrows lead the way when a walker comes to a fork in the road or a right/left turn. In bigger cities, yellow arrows are replaced by a yellow seashell, which is a symbol for the city of Santiago. When walking to Fatima, Portugal from Santiago, Spain blue arrows are used and a silhouette of the famous church in Fatima to mark the path to the holy city. Parts of these paths to the famous cities are on roads throughout the country side. When traveling by bus these arrows pass by unnoticed by the passengers. Sometimes as a walker these arrows are missed and the walker needs to pay close attention to rural areas an arrow may be lackadaisically painted on a rock or an old stone wall. Even though many people from around the world are walking these trails, the trails and pathways are secluded from the everyday lifestyle of wi-fi, social media and
“famous” wonders of the world. Without being said, discoveries can be made of culturally rich places, ones that will perhaps create more of a traveling memory in the end.

The website Make Time to Visit the World (2019) goes through Off the Beaten Path Places to visit. The article describes interviews from travelers who look for places that are “off the beaten path”. The contributions from different travels take people from tropical islands, to Europe, Asia, and the Americas. These places are less known, such as the island of Vanuatu, small forgotten cities such as Olomouc, Czech Republic, and plains and mountains stretching across the Middle East. Though these places sound outstanding and seem to be the perfect places for vacation, the reason they are considered off the beaten path is because these places are generally more difficult to get to and do not have some of the more tourist friendly sites and accommodations. For example, the Solomon Islands only welcome 25,000 tourist a year, and wi-fi and service is non-existent. In places in the middle east, the places “worth” seeing require long, hiking treks with only tents to stay in and no wi-fi or much service. Once there though, the views of the mountainous country of Tajikistan are worth going off the beaten path. The people who have traveled to such places all have in common of experiencing more of the culture, local friendliness, and less of the tourist traps. Capturing more of the true culture of the countries. (Make Time to Travel the World, 2019)

Creating Symbols

When trying to create symbols, semiotics and other creations that relate to walking, many people need to think what symbols or signs people would be able to relate to without having to think about it too hard. For instance, the crosswalk blinking, white light sign to signify to walkers in the city that it is safe to walk. Traffic must stop, and the pedestrians get the right of
way. It takes a second for people to recognize the walking sign and walk across the street. Same
also goes for hiking signs on trails. A silhouette of a person with a square backpack and a
walking stick is a quick relation to a hiker and people can relate they are on the right path to
continue their hike. Christoph Niemann, a cover artist for the New Yorker, explains how the
simplicity of pictures create a sense of understanding, but also strike excitement into people
because they can relate to the picture. In an original Netflix series titled Abstract, there is an
hour-long episode that follows Niemann's own process of creating simplistic pictures people can
relate to, they can be excited about their relations to understanding the picture. Niemann explains
as an artist trying to relate to the everyday person an artist cannot be too abstract because no one
will get the point, but an artist can also not be to real otherwise people will get weirded out or
overwhelmed, that it is too much to take in all at once. An example Niemann used was a beating
heart with an arrow through it. Make it too abstract and it’s just a black line through a red square.
If he used an animated beating heart, bleeding with a war arrow through it people become
creeped out. Make it a nice cute shaped heart with a Cupid’s arrow through the heart, people can
relate to this image and want to see more of the similar style of design. He did this with raindrops
on a taxi window, the subway, Japanese caution blooms during a hurricane in Japan that
destroyed a nuclear factory and he did this all by making the images a bit abstract but still
relatable to people by their own experiences. The process includes using color, shapes and the
knowledge of what people can already relate to. He also tries and be creative at the same time,
trying things no one has ever tried before, for example using an avocado as a symbol of a glove
for a person about to catch a ball or some bananas when placed just right, creates an image as the
back end of a horse. He tries to stay creative to get people excited for art and seeing new signs
and semiotics.
Design that People Can Recognize

Creating a picture, a design, or a song that will create emotion takes time an immense amount of time. (Bang, 2016) Molly Bang discusses how a grade school teacher and artist go through a social experiment of how to relate to the third graders in her class and create a picture book that was abstract but could still create feelings and be understood no matter the abstractness of it. She created a picture book about Little Red Riding Hood, and she uses construction paper for the material to create the pictures. She goes though how simple shapes can have context, along with how the colors chosen for the subjects affect a reader's reaction and feeling towards the story. She used a red triangle to symbolize Little Red Riding Hood and because of the red and maybe the relation to a pointed hood people could identify with the specific element of the picture. Size of the shapes plays a large part in people's reaction because size can create feeling of being overwhelmed, sublimity, powerful, just by the size of a shape. Using color goes about the same concept. Some colors make a person feel calm but paired with another color such as black or red, the color feels less calm. The teacher explained when she was constructing the wolf and she used red for the wolf’s tongue and eye, and how compared to Little Red Riding Hood was scarier and frightening instead of strong and independent which was the reaction to Little Red Riding Hood. There were times where the teacher had to scrap her designs and start from the beginning because some people did not understand the picture and it led to confusion and eventually anger. When creating pictures exaggeration and positive elements bring all the elements together because these characteristics in a picture are what people enjoy seeing and look forward to when viewing art. People see pictures as extension of the real world.

How to Communicate Through Symbols
From the beginning of time, the tendency of humans is to communicate through visuals, and symbols. Cave drawings drawn by people discovered in France dating back millions of years is proof of how people relate to visuals. Even before a written language, people were drawing images.

“Sight is swift, comprehensive simultaneously analytic and synthetic. It requires so little energy to function, as it does, at the speed of light, that it permits our minds to receive and hold an infinite number of items of information in a fraction of a second.”

This was said by Caleb Gattengo, the author of Towards a Visual Culture. Sight for humans is everything. Signs are placed everywhere for people to relate them to their lives and communicate with each other. We tend to be drawn to images no matter if we tried not to be. When first viewing an image we ask ourselves, “What is it?” or “What does it mean?” Images help explain science, physics, etc. These subjects are so rich in information and wordage that being able to show what is truly going on in an image helps people relate and actually see what is going on. Such as anatomy, example of the laws of physics. Not only does it show people the natural world without words to explain it, but images can be shared and understood worldwide without confusion. For example, airports. Signs need to be universal in such a place because there are so many people who speak different languages and who have a different alphabet, that symbols and semiotics need to be globally related, so everyone can understand where places are and what things mean. Some relatable images around the world are places such as certain terminals, bathrooms, charging areas, etc. Designing pictures, semiotics and visuals have their challenging parts too. Visuals create an easy way to understand things in society today, thus people have certain expectations of the visuals. If they are not eye catching, simple, yet creative people will pass them by. For example, diagrams, and pictures in manuals. Pictures are easier to follow in
manuals, especially when there are steps to go along with the pictures. However, if they pictures are dull, too simple and do not make sense with the steps to go with it then frustration will set in and perhaps even a complaint on the product. “A picture is more than a two-dimensional marked surface. It reflects the creator’s intent and signifies there is information to be communicated.” Though most pictures are two dimensional, they are just as powerful of creating a point, of capturing a person’s attention because... people are visual.

Creating a Social, Online Community

In the book Design to Thrive by Tharon Howard, he describes how anyone can make a website, make a social media group. The real challenge is to get people to follow the social media, to go to the website. Social media sites are creating different ways for people to communicate. He talks about people being a part of communities and wanting to belong to the community, even more so today an “online” community. To be successful, people need to participate and be a part of said community. The community may only have ten people, and still may be a successful community for someone who wants a more intimate and smaller group. For someone who is trying to create a traveling community for people who travel around the world, a small intimate community would work. If someone wants to reach all corners of the earth, the community will have to be larger and go through the steps Howard writes about for a successful community to bloom. The questions he asks is what makes people join? What makes them keep coming back? Online communities require people to think out of the box because there is so much noise when people go online. People are being blasted by advertising, articles, emails, etc. every day so the key is how to catch a person's eye to join their group/community and why is it important. He using the steps called RIBS, to be as creative as possible and to be different from others so people will want to return and be a part of the community. The “RIBS” are the steps
of how to create any community. Remuneration, Influence Belonging, and Significance are the said steps. Remuneration is understanding why individuals return to certain websites, social medias and mobile groups. The reason so, is because people believe they will be getting something out of the experience of the website, social media, etc. Influence is letting the members believe they can create their own experience, that they have control over what they are seeing and what they specifically want, and perhaps even influencing others to join the specific community. Belonging is how members feel they are a part of the community. It may be discounts, a gift, a shout out to the person, just to show they have been accepted into the community. Significance is showing the person in the community they are important. Exclusivity is a way of showing a person’s value. Meaning the person doesn’t want to just be another follower, they want to be a specific face amongst everyone else, a specific person amongst even a smaller group within the group. This may be shown by only allowing certain followers to be able to shop for a said product. Obama allowed certain members of his website certain, “exclusive” information, which is a perfect example of exclusivity. With these four steps, applied thoroughly, thoughtfully and with practice anyone’s community can become a noticeable one in time. (Howard, 2010)

The Role of Instagram in Creating a Community

In the book *Instagram Marketing: What the Top Influencers and Brands Know that You Don’t About the Hottest Social Media* by Mark Hollister and Susan Smith, goes through how to create a well-known Instagram that eventually becomes the advertising and marketing for that said company. Today Instagram is the leading social media platform with 800 million users. It is an app that became famous because of how easy mobile photography has become. It has also been rated one of the best platforms that anyone can use to reach a new audience. When creating
a market on Instagram there are many key things to pay attention to when trying to reach a large 
audience. A notable username, logo, and bio are three of the most important parts of an

Instagram account. These three things can make or break a successful market for any company's
brand. The name for the account needs to be simple and related to the brand, though simple it
needs to be clever and easy to understand. The logo is a company's branding, so the logo needs
to be clear, neat and eye catching. (Hollister, 2019)

Walking like everything else can be marketed. Walking is important to people’s culture
because walking is how people found the different places to harvest, hunt, and eventually settle.
Why and where a group of people walked defined a person’s culture. Today people walk to get
to a place if it is more accessible to do so. These places include tourist sites; however, walking
seems archaic and yet simple minded. Going off the beaten path to travel to less tourist like
places can be encouraged through different elements of design and media. Walking is its own
community and overall actually creates communities.
Process of Products

Placement of Sticker

The Walking Sticker is the main symbol of the Walking Stick community. People within the community will be able to leave behind a unique sticker I created so others will be able to research and understand what the Walking Stick community is. People can leave this sticker at genuine places of travel. If someone comes by the same place, they can scan the QR code that was designed and printed on the sticker, and it will bring them to the website that explains what the Walking Stick project is.

When hiking in Yosemite, I considered where I would place my Walking Sticker if they had already been printed. I could not count the number of trees, cliffs, and rocks passed when hiking could not be counted. I could easily place the sticker on any of these surfaces out in the wilderness. To have a better possibility for the sticker to be seen and have more of an effect on people, I would have placed it at the Upper Yosemite Falls overlook on the railing where other stickers have been noticeably placed. Because other stickers were already placed here I believed ethically it would be acceptable to place another sticker here. It was not intrusive to any wildlife in the park, and if need be could be removed from the railing at any time. Here people would be able to take a picture with the sticker easily, have a story to go with seeing the sticker and would be able to scan the QR code easily. For the old bookstore/library I would place the sticker on one of the bookcases with permission. The owner may not want a sticker on a bookcase; if so this still promotes a Walking Stick memory because I am promoting to experience places without the concept of “I did this”.
Logo Design

I knew I would need a logo that was unique and would catch people’s eye right away to promote the Walking Stick community. I needed to stay in a realm of realism that would make sense to people and make them interested in investigating what the logo meant. My original thought was to intertwine a person walking with the actual word “walking” (Figure 1). A concept I also wanted to apply to the word “stick”. I wanted to spell out the words in the shape of a person walking and his stick to spell out “stick”. Though clever and different, the design was hard to decipher at first glance and did not look very professional. I was going for more organic and playful, yet the design lacked a complete understanding of what I was trying to market and communicate to travelers.
After meeting with my board, they were fond of my font choice. The font I used was Trattatella (Figure 3), which was more organic, not forceful, yet strong. The font flowed well from letter to letter and reflected the outdoors. I decided to use this font for the title of the project. With this choice of font, I still wanted a walking person included, so I worked through the process of placing the walking person in a clever manner with the font. I also took a picture of a broken limb of an aspen tree, and it looked perfect for a model walking stick (Figure 2). I took a picture of the stick and drew it in Adobe Illustrator. I placed the stick in the walking persons hand and placed the person below the Walking Stick title. The walking stick in the persons hand then became the “I” in Walking Stick. The process of coming up with a great logo was frustrating because I wanted the logo to be clever but still be easily read.

![Figure 3. Examples of typography for logo](image)
Choosing the color was difficult. For my original logo, I chose orange for the person and brown for the stick with a black outline. Orange is a positive color, symbolizing creativity and joy. However, I eventually change the color to black. Black is a strong color and is easily seen when used on my website and on a sticker, black ink is any easy color to see (Figure 5).

I decided to put my design on a wooden material for my sticker because it goes well with the whole theme of “Walking Stick” and serves a dual purpose of being biodegradable. People can place the sticker anywhere, including the outdoors on trees or rocks. The material will not harm the environment, but with the process of fading and disappearing, it shows and holds the true idea of an “off the beaten path”, genuine place. The sticker became known as the Walking Sticker.
Figure 5. Final logo for Walking Stick Community

Figure 6. Walking Sticker for the travelers to place.
Website

A community needs a place to meet and come together to express who they are. I chose to create a website as a community outlet for my project. The reason for choosing a website as the community’s outlet is because a website is specifically created for one niche. The website is a place for travelers to understand what the Walking Stick community symbolizes. I used the Remuneration, Influence, Belonging, and Significance (RIBS) process from the book *Design to Thrive* by Tharon Howard. The book discusses the RIBS process and how to make someone feel welcomed and important to the community and leave them with the feeling that they want to return. The website community is directed towards mindful people who love to travel, and more so, people who want to see more than just the popular tourist destinations.

Remuneration is what people seek from a social experience, or what is unique about the community. The Walking Stick community is directed towards people who like to travel and to experience genuine places. This is especially helpful to “new” travelers by providing an authentic traveling community to help them discover destinations off the beaten path.

Influence helps members feel like they have control over significant choices about the environment and community of the social network. The community is able to decide where to place Walking Sticker and influence others to join the Walking Stick community. Though the members have the freedom to place the sticker where they want to, there is a Code of Ethics to help guide the members of the right vs wrong values when being a Walking Sticker. For example, there are certain places not to place a Walking Sticker.

Belonging is when a member of the community truly feels they became a part of the group. Making someone feel they belong is the responsibility of the leaders and creators of a
community. In the case of the Walking Stick, allowing people to share their stories of the world with a hashtag when they discover a Walking Sticker, along with the ability to place a walking sticker will allow people to feel they belong in the community. I had to consider how to make people feel they belonged because if people did not feel they were a part of the community in the Walking Stick community they would not return or not learn about the mindful traveling I am trying to promote.

Significance is when someone decides that the community is important enough to continue to come back to it. The Walking Stick community is a fun way to explore and experience adventures that exist on and off of the beaten paths. The Walking Stick community is a completely different way of playing “I Spy”, meaning people can find the stickers and place the stickers for others to find.

The pages on my website include the Home page, a Missions Statement, a Code of Ethics, a page to Share Stories, and an About page. I wanted to keep the website simple while still portraying the vision and idea articulated to people. The site is especially designed for travelers who do not want to work through a complicated website when they travel around the world, even more so if the traveler is using their phone to get to the website. The mission statement is essentially the abstract of the whole project. The mission statement is the guidance to get off the beaten path, away from the basic “selfie” sharing commonly done when people travel anywhere. The mission statement states what is the true purpose behind this project.

The color, design and style of any website plays a factor in whether someone will come back to the website. The colors I chose for my website are organic, free spirited and are the colors people would see when walking outside in nature, for example, the green of trees, the tan of a pathway or a beach, the blue of the darkening sky.
Ethics

Across the world exist countless numbers of different cultures that each include their own set of ethics. Traveling around the world, or even just the US, people will be presented with these different cultures, and it is important to know how to respect each of the cultures and ethics. Ethical values of each culture hold many different types of questionable actions towards other visiting cultures and ethical principles. When visiting other places, respecting the culture of the place is important to remember, and the Walking Stick project is trying to keep the traveling/experiences and personal vendettas separate. A simple code of ethics for travelers and the mission statement make traveling less complicated and more enjoyable.

The need for an ethics codes is important because ethics create a community. These are the laws and rules to which the members are set. If ethical values are not followed, then these members truly members of this community? Ethics help guide the people to truly belong to the community. The need for the specific ethics used by the Walking Stick is because as members travel, the many different cultural lines can become blurred, and people can forget about the differences that exist. People get caught up in themselves and the overall excitement of a society and tend to forget they are visitors. When people forget they are visitors this may lead to pictures being taken of a place that may not allow photographs or insulting a culture because of the ignorance of being a visitor with no knowledge of the culture.

Social Media

Though Facebook is the leading platform for social media and the specific outlet would promote the Walking Stick community even more, I think having a Facebook will take attention away from the website and the Mission Statement as a whole. A Facebook account page is not as authentic and may create a narcissistic idea for the website instead of creating a community of
sharing what the world has to offer. Though I do have an Instagram account linked to my website, the encouragement is for members to post about the “found” Walking Sticker, or to post about the authentic place, and people, not about themselves. Instagram seems to have less noise. Meaning, Instagram is media that just shows pictures and is not as overwhelming as other social mediums. Instagram is also easily linked to the Walking Stick project and website, and people will be able to go to the website quickly and learn about the project and mission of the Walking Stick at the website.

Facebook would get more traffic and connect more people to the Walking Stick; however, with a QR code on the sticker for people to scan and then go directly to the specific website the need for a Facebook is not pressing. Not only is there a QR code on the sticker that leads to the Walking Stick community, but there is a hashtag on the sticker that is also mentioned on Instagram. The hashtag, #stickspath, helps members relate to the project and community anywhere they travel. The decision on the choice of hashtag was difficult because of the technicality of hashtags. They cannot have any relation to other subjects, companies, or organizations because this would be infringement of copyright. Not only that, but if I were to use the same hashtag as a place that promotes physical walking sticks then people would get very confused and not be led to my specific Walking Stick webpage or Instagram. People would not be able to find other pictures or posts related to the Walking Stick project. The hashtag name needed to be short, catchy and still have reference to my project. The hashtag #walkingsticker was already taken for a sight that sold stickers for hiking and the outdoors. This was also the case for #walkingstick, where the hashtag led to a site and Instagram that promoted physical walking sticks. Other names were suggested and considered, but #stickspath seemed to not only be catchy but short and simple enough tag that was not tedious to type out, and still had relevance to the
A stick’s path shows the metaphorical and literal journey a person takes to get to their authentic Walking Stick destination.

**Authentic/Genuine Travel**

Many people will ask what authentic or genuine travel is. How authentic travel is defined is very important to understand because many people have their own definition of what authentic means to them, especially when it comes to traveling. Authentic means to be one of a kind, to show your true self. The concept may be confusing because everyone experiences travel differently or wants to go to their own chosen places. Though the Eiffel Tower may not be Walking Stick authentic, the place may be authentic to the specific person because they have never have been to the Eiffel Tower. After reading articles about authentic travel and what this can mean from person to person, I chose to change and redefine the way of addressing the type of travel people in the Walking Stick community should be promoting. When someone becomes a member of the community, the person should promote genuine travel, a genuine experience. Genuine is defined as really being what it is said to be; actually, coming for the alleged source of origin. It is real, true, not counterfeit; it means to be sincere and frank, honest and forthright. Though many could argue genuine could fall in the same category as authentic travel, and everyone could have their own personal definition of what genuine is, genuine seems to correlate with what I am trying to promote people to do. To experience destinations without having other people completely affecting the choice. Instead of going to a known place, genuine travel is defined as leaving the comfortable path of society and experiencing a forthright, honest place because it was not completely planned out, it was whimsical and happened upon. The trip was not cliché, candid or a complete itinerary based trip.
Correlate and Discuss

To understand why walking is such an important factor in life today and to understand why the title The Walking Stick is relevant, I read many articles about walking and why walking is still prevalent in world that prefers alternate transportation. Walking is important to different cultures across the world, and the aspect of cultures is important to understand because throughout time walking has changed. The physical act of walking has not changed, but the reason for why people walk has. For most people today, walking can be bypassed. Walking is a form of exercise, a form of transportation, or an extracurricular activity. When walking, there are so many more possibilities, such as noticing the minute details of a place, discovering forgotten places, and thinking and clearing the head.

*The History of Walking* by Rebecca Solnit refers to Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers and discusses the reasons for why they walked. These philosophers believed that when they walked, their thoughts were the clearest, and walking was when they had their best ideas. There are perhaps two viewpoints on walking. First, walking can be used as a positive way of generating the thought process of ideas. Second, walking also tends to be a sign of poverty, being dirty, or a hermit. I needed to pay close attention to this because I wanted to reintroduce walking as a good thing, an activity that can be used more than to just get from one place to another. I want people to understand how important walking truly is especially when traveling and experiencing a different place. Solnit also mentioned how the perspective of time and the distance between places changes. The walking culture was also shown in an essay called *Walking* by Henry David Thoreau. In this essay, he addressed what walking meant to him. Walking through bustling cities to get to one place to another is second nature, but if he broke it down, the act of walking and the thoughts that come when walking, are very philosophical and...
intuitive. Transportation is very important today. Planes, trains, and bicycles, allow people to get to their destination quicker and with less hassle. However, over the thousands of years that transportation has evolved, walking has remained an essential part of an individual’s travels. Walking helps people experience a place without the feeling of being hurried or rushed. Walking tends to help people notice more details of a place.
Recommendations

The beginning of this project first needs travelers to become members and then it will take root. Sixty stickers were ordered and the selection of who will get these stickers is a process of knowing what type of travel the first generation of Walking Stick members will have done or will do. The people chosen to be the first members will be people who already have a sense of genuine travel, people who travel to experience the world because it is a great place and holds treasures that should be shared. These people will be the first Walking Stick advocates. With these people, I will suggest them posting on Instagram, sharing the Instagram page, using the hashtag frequently on their genuine travels, and submitting stories to the website.

The future of the project has amazing potential. Once the community gets started and has a decent number of members, my hope is to create a second wave of Walking Stick members. I will create more stickers and possibly change the design some. However, I would not make to dramatic of changes to the design, otherwise people would not recognize it as the Walking Stick logo. Instead of changing the design, I might consider just changing the color of the ink on the sticker to signify the new generation of members. For people to receive a sticker, I would hope someone would have seen the first generation of the sticker and use the QR code to bring them to my website and see what the community is trying to do. If the person came across my website by a friend or by the Instagram page, I would also send them a sticker. Another consideration would be to have people go out and have a genuine travel experience, and I would encourage them to share the story to the website and to continue on the genuine pathway of travel. Then I would send them a sticker after the experiences, to encourage them to keep on going out and creating genuine experiences, to share what this world has to offer.
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