



The good,  
the bad,  
and the  
geotag. 

# SENTIENCE

# SENTIENCE

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Kayla Kingsley

Multi-Disciplinary Design,  
University of Utah

DES 3520-001  
Design Product Studio 2

Spring 2021

In partnership with the  
Bureau of Land Management

**MDDxBLM**

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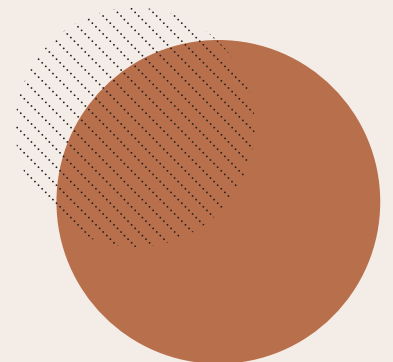
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Design opportunity  
Product research

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Impact



# PHASE 1 PROJECT BRIEF

Partnering with the Bureau of Land Management, the Multi-Disciplinary Design students were tasked to consider the current state of Bears Ears National Monument, located in southeast Utah, to find a point of interest, research, ideate, and consider a design intervention for or inspired by the monument.



**PHASE 1**  
**INITIAL**  
**RESEARCH**

# PROBLEM AREA

## UNEDUCATED VISITORS

# 923,236

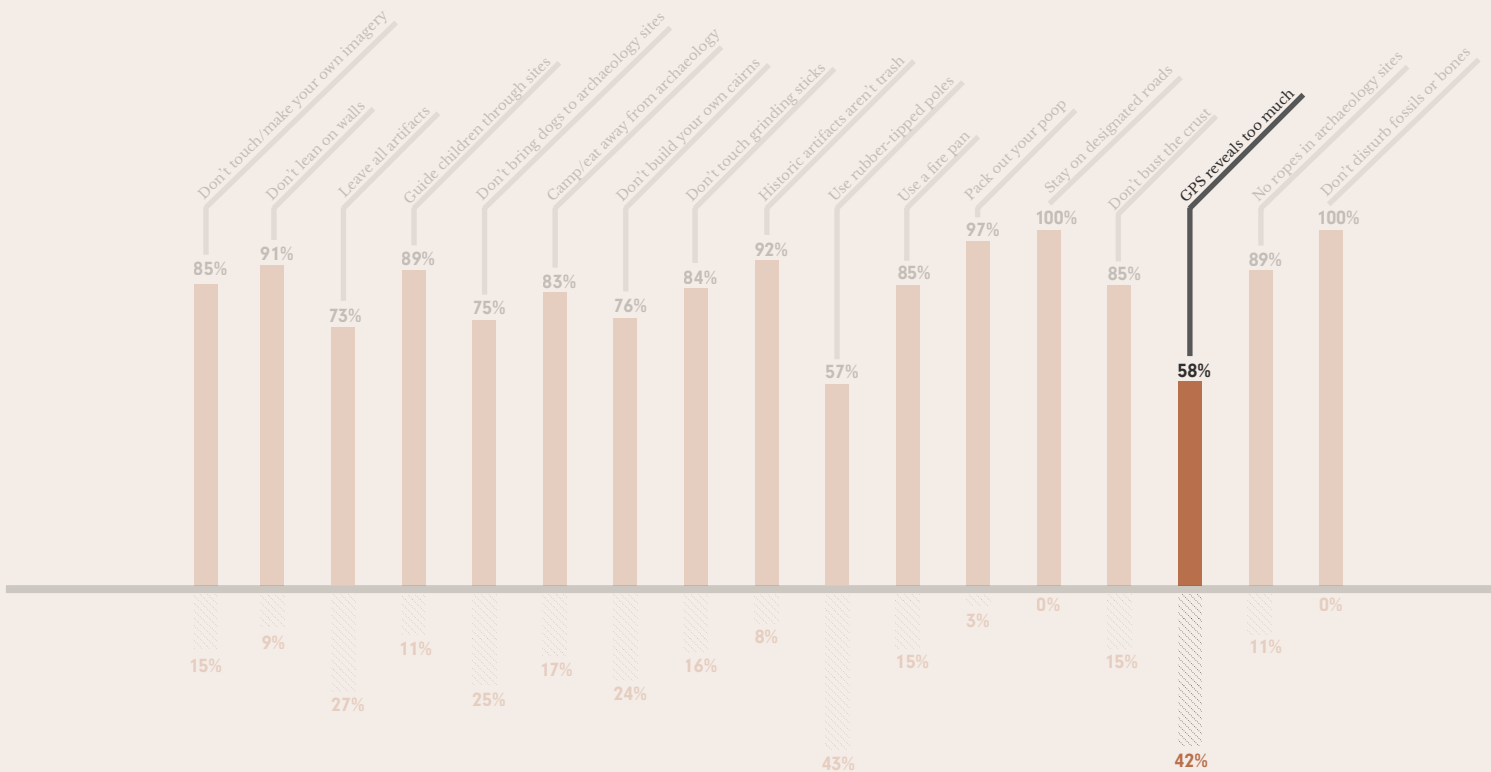
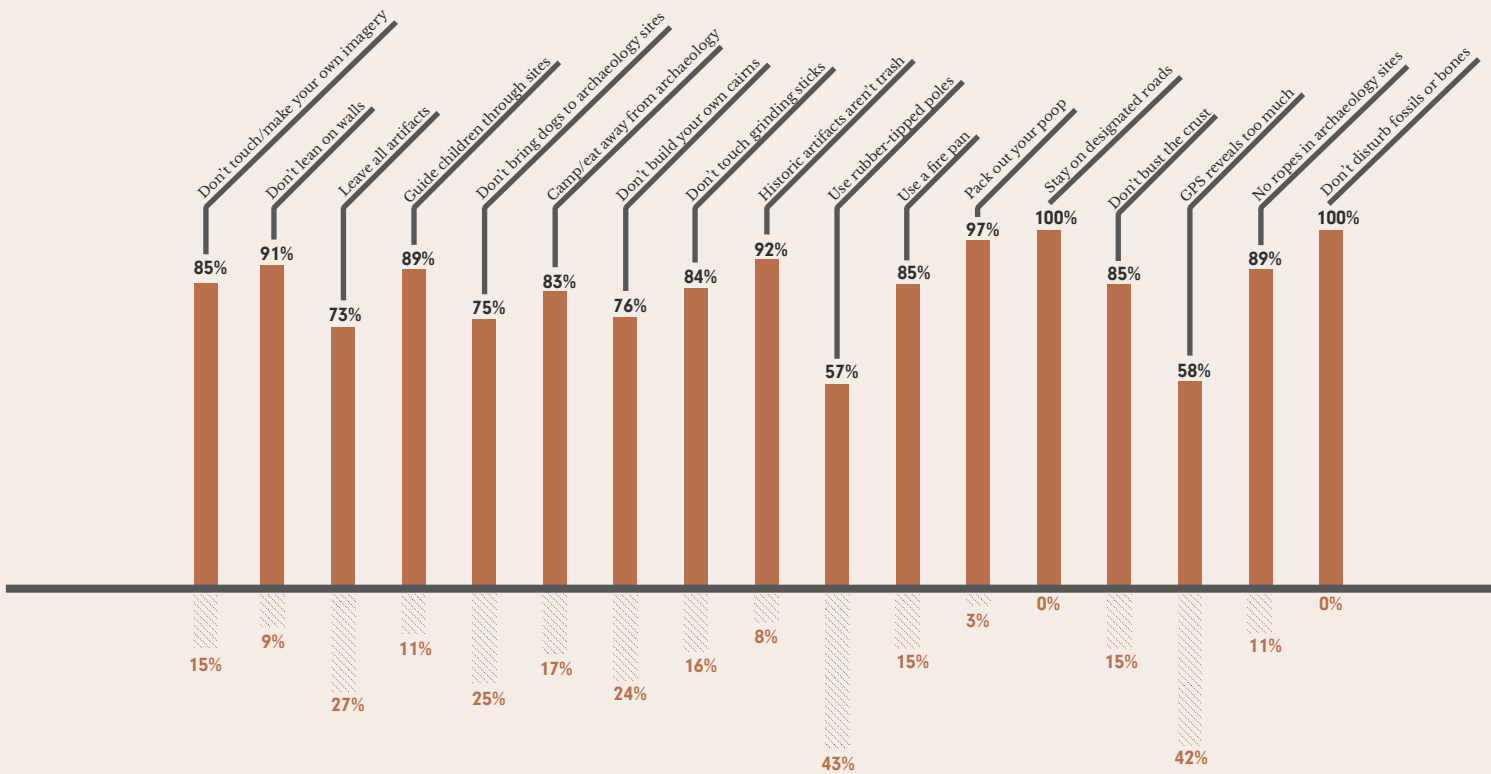
people visited the Bears Ears/ Grand Staircase Escalante region in 2016. This number has continued to grow throughout the years, but the Bureau of Land Management does not have the infrastructure to protect and maintain the monument from the rising numbers of visitation, especially with the reduction in the national monument's boundaries under the Trump administration. The effects of uneducated visitation have greatly disturbed and disrupted the landscape and pose a great threat to the future of the monument and the ancestral importance that it represents for the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and Ute Indian Tribe amongst other indigenous communities.

*Many believe they aren't hurting anyone by taking home a pot sherd to remember their trip by – after all what's one pot sherd?*

*However, the cumulative impacts are great: many of our sacred sites are disappearing one building stone, one ancient corncob, one pot sherd at a time. The more visitors are educated, the better off Bears Ears will be. Education and resources for management will help protect archaeological sites and save the past — and the future — of Bears Ears.*

**- Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition**

Uneducated visitation stems from a lack of knowledge of the principles that exist in the outdoors. I conducted a survey to see the levels of awareness that each “Visit with Respect” principle had. I saw that the principle “GPS reveals too much” was nearly split in half. Based on this information I wanted to see the possible implications that being unaware of this principle might lead to.



# THE GEOTAG DEBATE

## ANTAGONISTS VS SUPPORTERS

The geotag feature was added to social media in 2012. The debate about the geotag began when overcrowding started to become a problem in places such as Yellowstone and Jackson Hole. These places started asking people to tag their photos with tags such as “Keep Jackson Hole wild” and “Tag Responsibly” rather than the actual location, believing that the surge in visitation was largely correlated to the rise in geotag popularity.

### SUPPORTERS

Geotags make the outdoors more accessible and can be a tool to empower the next generation of outdoor advocates. Removing them is an act of gatekeeping.

### ANTAGONISTS

Tagged photos are inspiring more people to visit public lands than ever before, leading to the overcrowding and destruction of fragile places.





# SUPPORTERS

## GEOTAGS AND GATEKEEPING

**Gatekeeping** is the activity of controlling, and usually limiting, general access to something. The argument here is that gatekeeping occurs when you remove the geotag, because then communities and people who only have access to places through geotagging, would be stripped of that access on social media.

*“I grew up canoeing with my dad, I was lucky enough to have that access and knowledge readily available to me. And not everyone has that. So providing someone with information like, ‘Hey, look at this beautiful lake I’m at, and by the way, here’s the name of the lake so you can visit, too’—it’s actually creating a more welcoming and inclusive outdoors.”*

**Danielle Williams,**  
Senior editor of Melanin Base Camp

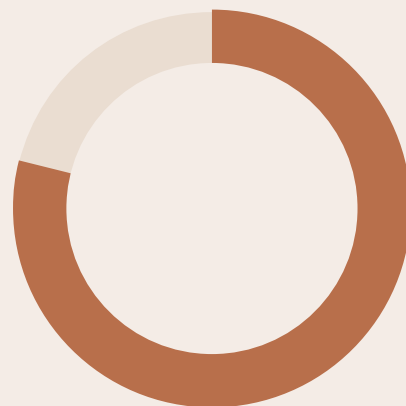


# ANTAGONISTS

## WHY USE THE GEOTAG?

Antagonists against geotagging believe that geotagging on social media is one of the main culprits for the increase in visitation in many outdoor areas. The reason for the avid use in geotagging though, is due to it's ability to boost a post's engagement on a platform.

79%



more engagement occurs on social media posts with a geotag than posts without in a 2014 study by Sprout Social.

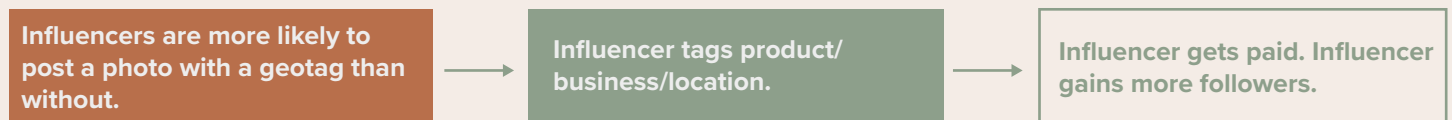


# ANTAGONISTS

## THE POWER OF INFLUENCERS

The use of the geotag feature along side often unrealistic photos of outdoor locations posted by “influencers” or verified accounts (10,000 followers+) is assumed to be the culprit of the widespread increases in visitation.

### PROCESS OF INFLUENCING



### PSYCHOLOGY OF WHY IT WORKS

#### SOCIAL PROOF

If everyone is doing something then I should probably be doing it too.

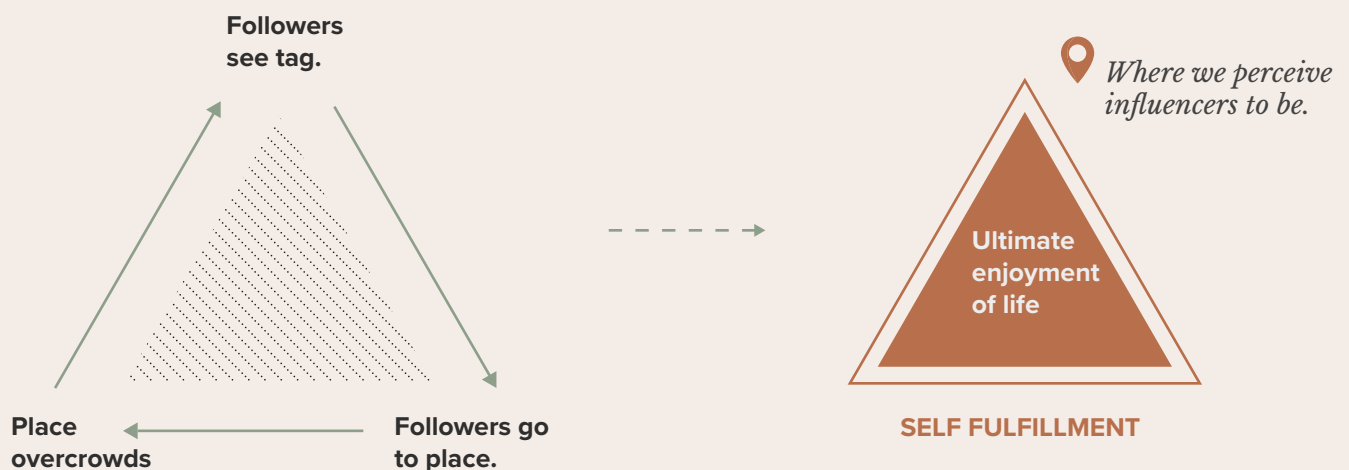
#### AUTHORITY

If an expert is telling me to do something then it must be the right thing to do, without question.

#### LIKING

Someone I idealize recommends doing this, and I want to be like them so I'll do it too.

### VALUE OF SELF-FULFILLMENT



# ANTAGONISTS

## INFLUENCING TRAVEL

Surveys conducted by Expedite Travel show statistically that there is a lot of influence in travel based on social media posts, especially in younger generations.

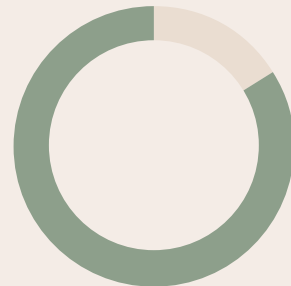
77%


of millennial participants and another



84%

of Gen Z participants said they were influenced by friends' or influencers' travel pictures on social media.



A person with a backpack stands on a rocky cliff overlooking a river canyon. The river is a vibrant blue-green color, winding through the canyon. The rock formations are layered and textured, with warm, golden light illuminating the scene. The person is seen from behind, looking out over the vast landscape.

“Social media is the number one driver.  
People don’t come here for solitude.  
They are looking for the iconic photo.”

Maschelle Zia,  
Manager of Horseshoe Bend

# INFLUENCERS

## DAMAGING NATURAL PLACES

An example of the power that influencers and social media holds is in the story of the Superbloom in Elsinore, California, in 2019.

Late February, early March brought extreme amounts of rain, leading to an early and beautiful bloom of thousands of poppies at Lake Elsinore. This bloom was short-lived, after being found and exploited by social media influencers.



By the middle of March, Elsinore was over-run with tourists, leading to what journalists called “The Superbloom Apocalypse.”

The small town of Elsinore had to shut down access to the canyon leading to the poppies on March 17th. Reporters said “Disneyland sized crowds” were flocking to the lake, and carelessly destroying the poppies as quickly as they’d bloomed.

This is just an example of how damaging social media influence can be to our sacred natural places.



# BEARS EARS

## AND GEOTAGGING

Currently, the BLM running Bears Ears National Monument are asking people to abide by the principles of *Leave No Trace* and *Visit with Respect*, their stance being to avoid geotagging in areas that don't have the infrastructure to support the tourism. When too many people visit a site and there aren't enough people to watch/educate visitation, it can result in damages that can never be reversed.



*19th century Navajo Hogan, destroyed in 2012 by campers who used the structure for firewood.*



*Vandalism by unsupervised visitors at a 1500 year-old rock art site.*

Posts that inspire people to re-create photos rather than learn about the place can often result in this reckless visitation. It's important to know the status of the place you're traveling to before you visit in order to avoid disrespectful visitation practices.

*"GPS points often lead uneducated visitors to sensitive sites. When posting online about your trip, remove all references to location."*

**Friends of Cedar Mesa**





**PHASE 2**  
**DESIGN**  
**OPPORTUNITY**

# SOCIAL MEDIA

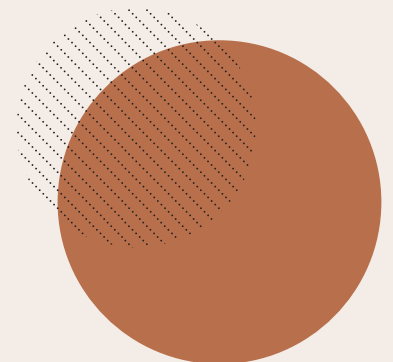
## INFLUENCER REGULATION

The rise in social media fame and influencing has grown exponentially and remained unregulated by social media services due to the relationship between advertisers and influencers. People active on social media without influencer or verification status don't have the following to create as major of an impact on the land as influencers do.

Taking away the geotag feature is not an option. It is a tool that opens up knowledge for those who might have not otherwise been aware of places they can go and enjoy outdoors. But it is also a tool that aids in advertising the location that influencers post in videos and photographs leading to unwanted surges in visitation.

There is opportunity for intervention in what influencers post and what users see. By regulating the post itself, being a video or photograph, there is opportunity to change the conversation from "where" to more importantly, "why."

To shift from where one was located geographically, to where one was located emotionally.



**PHASE 2**

# **PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

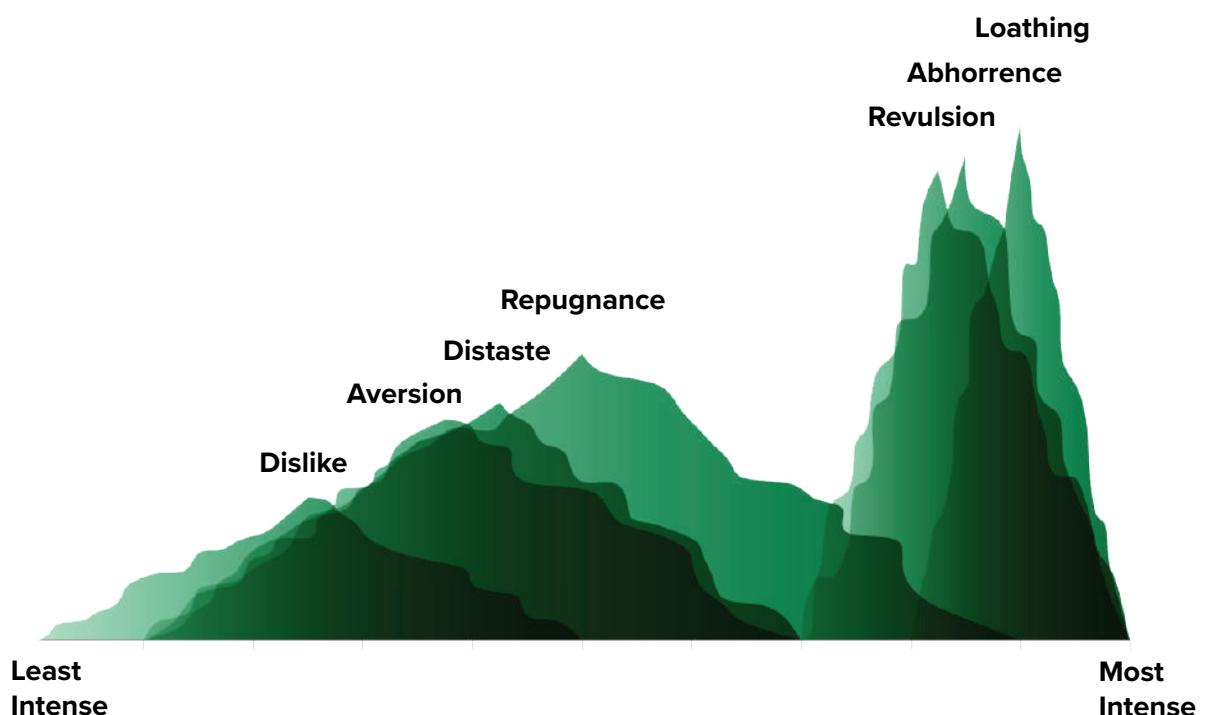
# SHAPES & EMOTION

## HOW THEY AFFECT OUR PSYCHOLOGY

Based on the *Ekman's Atlas of Emotions*, there are five different emotional states: fear, anger, sadness, disgust, and enjoyment. Designers from Hi.Stamen used this Atlas and mathematical projections to create animations made out of shapes and colors to represent the steps and intensities of an emotion. These animations were designed to create “an intuitive sense of a feeling.”

### DISGUST

Triangles typically represent stability, balance, and movement. They're commonly defined as energetic and dynamic shapes, used to represent motion and direction. Disgust is represented with triangles, the left and right base corners of the triangles representing the minimum and maximum intensities of an emotion, and the height of the shape representing the average intensity of the emotion. Disgust is shown to have uncomfortable and uneven edges.



# COLOR & EMOTION

## HOW THEY AFFECT OUR PSYCHOLOGY

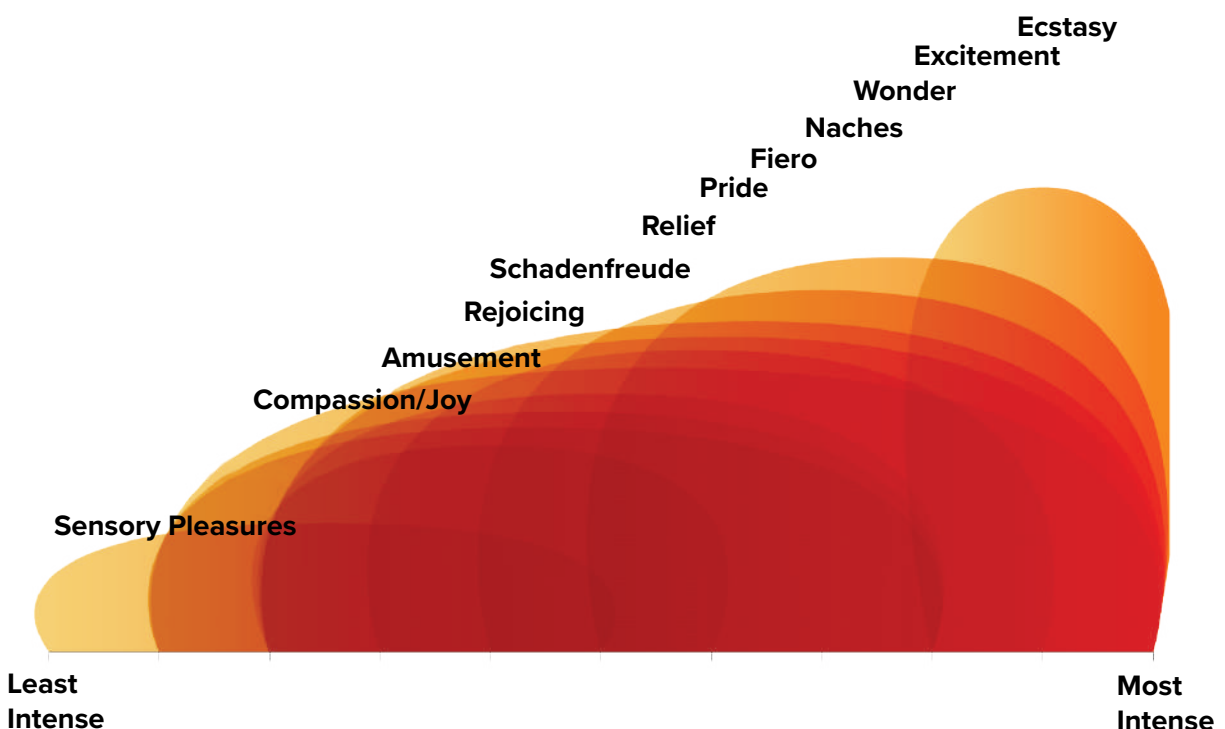
Warm colors like red, orange and yellow are next to each other on the wheel and often evoke feelings of happiness, optimism and energy.

Cool colors include green, blue, and purple. Cool colors are usually calming and soothing but can also express sadness.

## ENJOYMENT

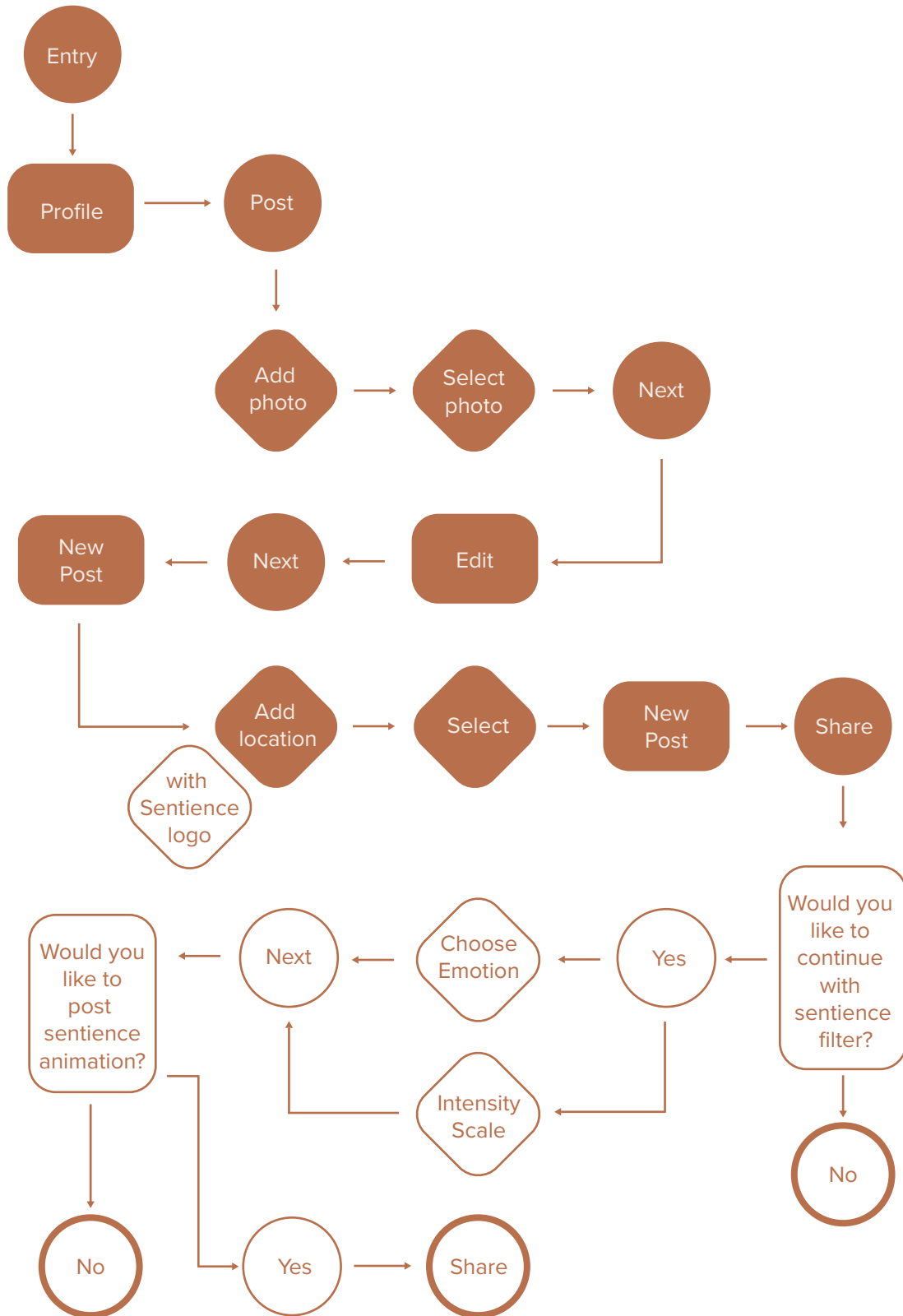
Circles and circular shapes like ovals and ellipses, unlike other geometric shapes, don't have angles. This makes circles feel softer, milder, and friendlier than others shapes. Commonly they represent both unity and protection due to their sense of completeness.

Enjoyment was designed to show many states of happiness overlapping each other, and can be hard to define due to the big, bulbous shapes.



# IG USER FLOW

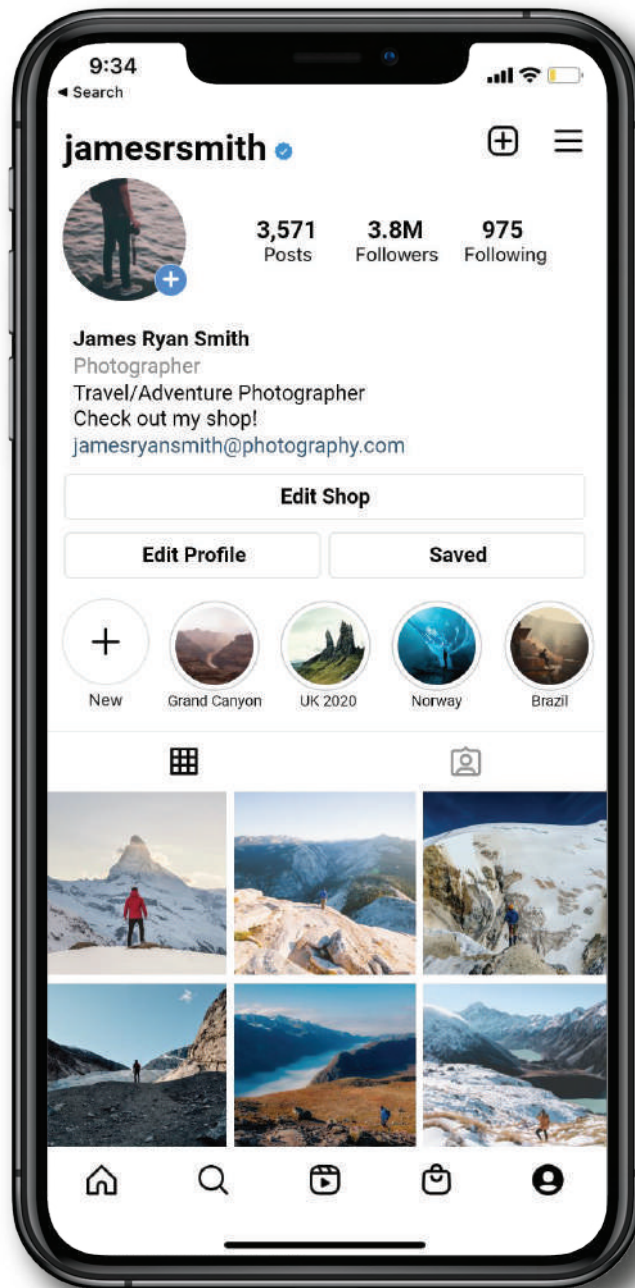
## POSTING WITH THE SENTIENCE FILTER



The background of the entire page is a close-up, vertical view of a wood grain. The grain lines are wavy and run from the top-left towards the bottom-right, creating a sense of movement and texture. The color palette is a range of warm browns, from light tan and beige to deep, rich chocolate and near-black tones, highlighting the natural patterns and knots of the wood.

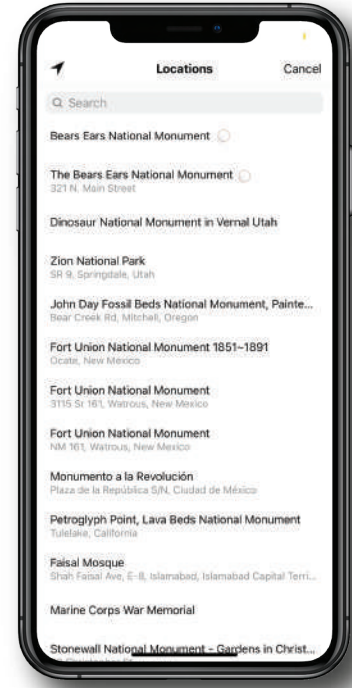
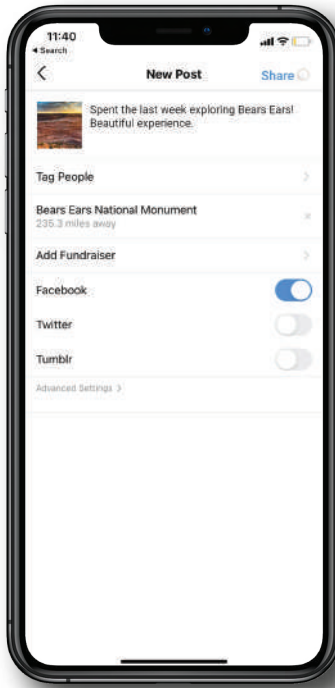
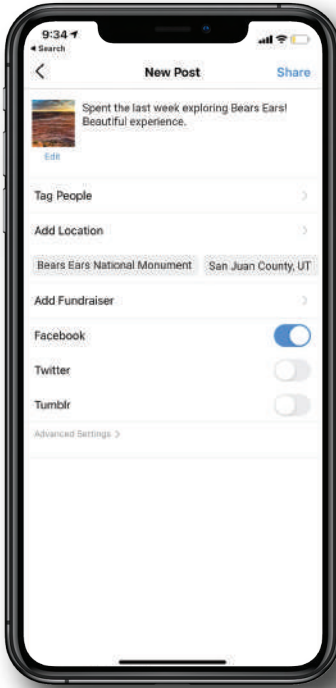
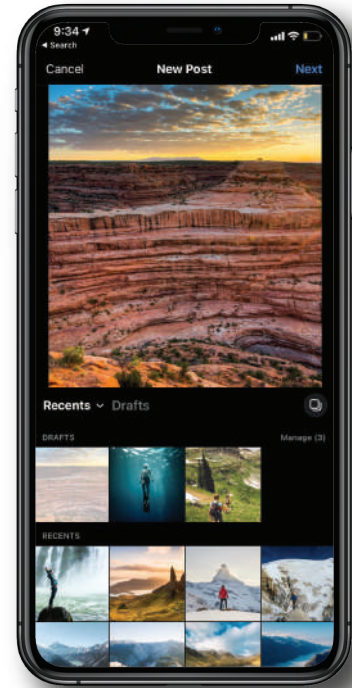
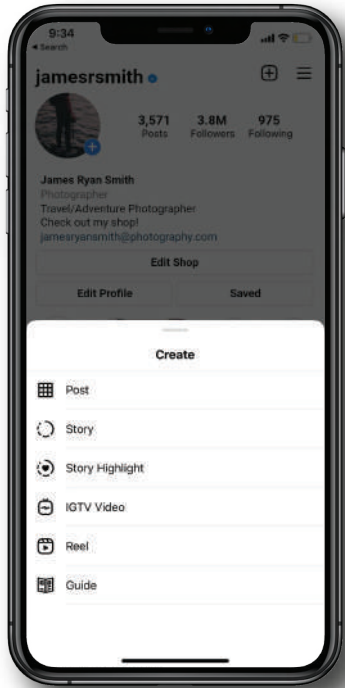
**PHASE 3**  
**FINAL**  
**PRODUCT**

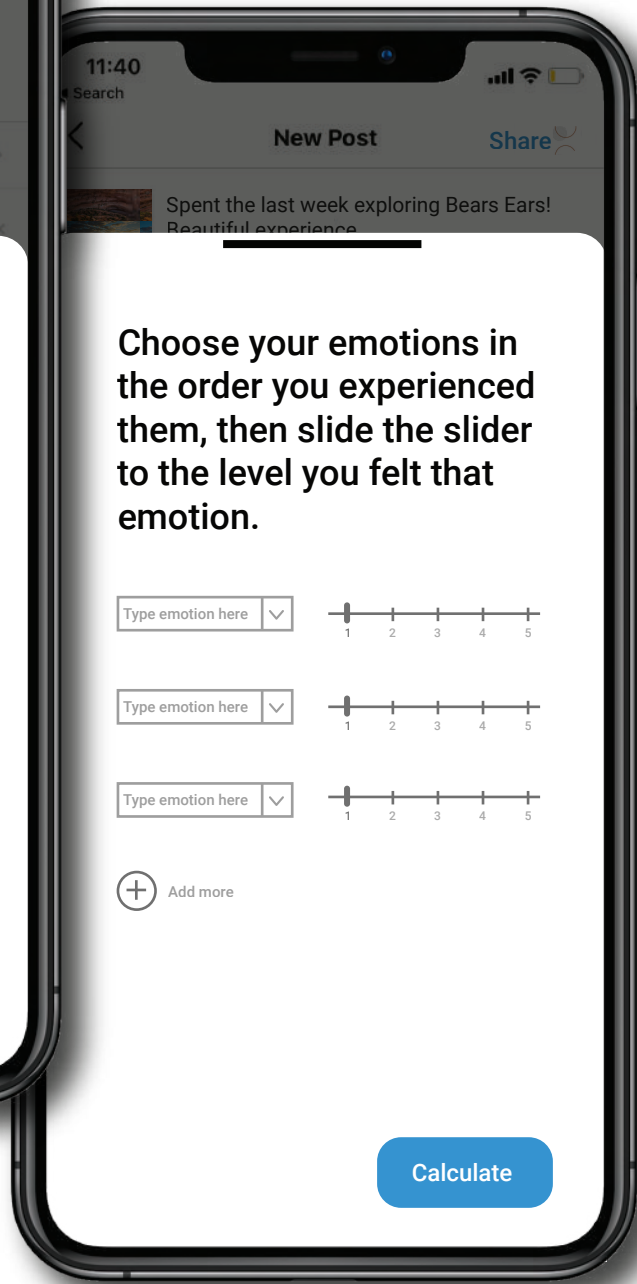
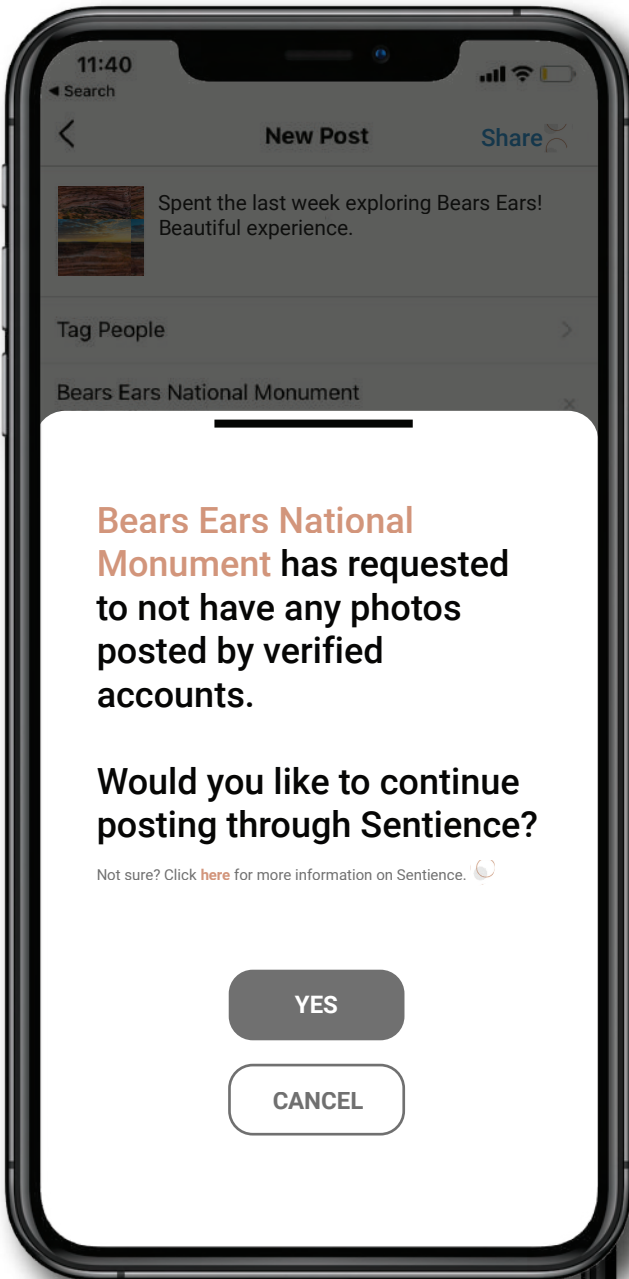
**James R. Smith  
is a verified  
Instagram user.**





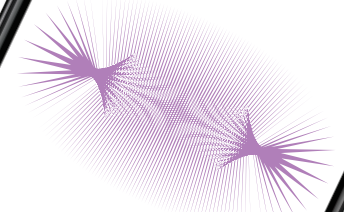
He wants to post a photo from his recent trip to Bears Ears.







Spent the last week exploring Bears Ears!  
This animation correlates to how you ranked your experience in Bears Ears National Monument.

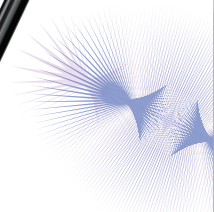


Stress

Cancel

Next

This a to how experie National

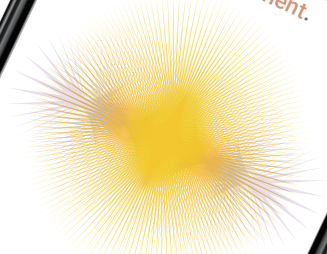


Relief

Cancel

Next

Spent the last week exploring Bears Ears!  
This animation correlates to how you ranked your experience in Bears Ears National Monument.

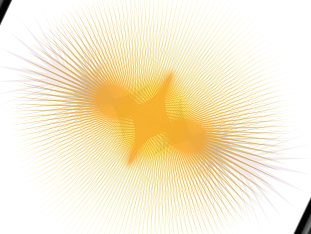


Peaceful

Cancel

Next

Spent the last week exploring Bears Ears!  
This animation correlates to how you ranked your experience in Bears Ears National Monument.

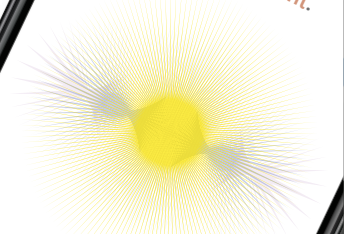


Calm

Cancel

Next

Spent the last week exploring Bears Ears!  
This animation correlates to how you ranked your experience in Bears Ears National Monument.

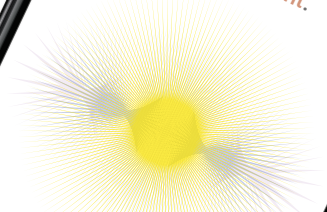


Wonder

Cancel

Next

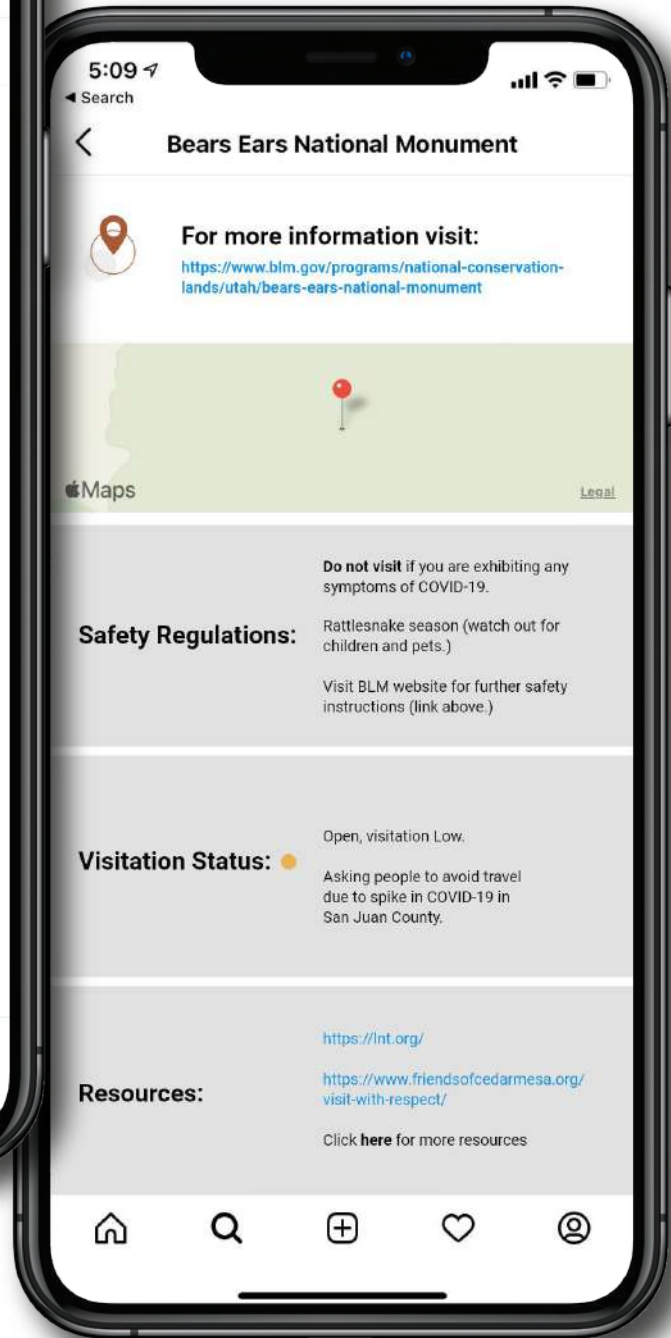
Spent the last week exploring Bears Ears!  
This animation correlates to how you ranked your experience in Bears Ears National Monument.



Spent the last week exploring Bears Ears!  
This animation correlates to how you ranked your experience in Bears Ears National Monument.



Spent the last week exploring Bears Ears!  
This animation correlates to how you ranked your experience in Bears Ears National Monument.





**PHASE 3**  
**IMPACT**

When the ability to see a photograph of a place changes, inevitably so will the outcome of visitation to these places. The geotag may allow people easy access to finding a place, but the photograph is the bait. Without it, there is nothing for the follower to compare their own experience to. If they choose to visit the place, it will be for their own novel experience, not to replicate one they've already seen.

Sentience asks the person posting to consider the experience they had- to recall the importance of where they were located emotionally, rather than geographically during their visit. What would begin to happen if people paid more mindfulness to their emotions and feelings rather than on capturing the perfect photograph?



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## Special thanks to:

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## View Sentience at

<https://xd.adobe.com/view/9fac8c36-d8f2-40c1-83dd-912db0897220-caff/>