

Wayfinding as an Embodied Experience



What is Wayfinding

"Wayfinding is the cognitive, social and corporeal process and experience of locating, following or discovering a route through and to a given space" ([Symonds et al. 2016](#))

Introduction



Isn't the body assumed already to be used as we wayfind?

Research on wayfinding has traditionally been defined as being a means of **getting from A to B**, with most studies always focusing on the concept that wayfinding is about using the quickest or shortest possible route.

Present classifications lack a focus on the embodied experience of wayfinding. Most studies also focus on seeing wayfinding as a linear homogeneous activity and give little attention to it as being a socio-cultural process.

Benefits of the research will be:

- Help stakeholders to see wayfinding as an embodied experience. Users may wayfind easily but did they enjoy it and would they return?
- To help planners better understand the embodied needs of users of all abilities. Bodily safety rather than speed for example or a positive rather than stressful journey for a disabled traveller. Wayfinding needs to be better seen from the real needs of real users.

"Absent presence of the living body in social thought" (2-209)



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HS2 - £50 Billion investment to save 32 minutes between London and Birmingham. Is it about time or embodied experience? Or both?

Objective

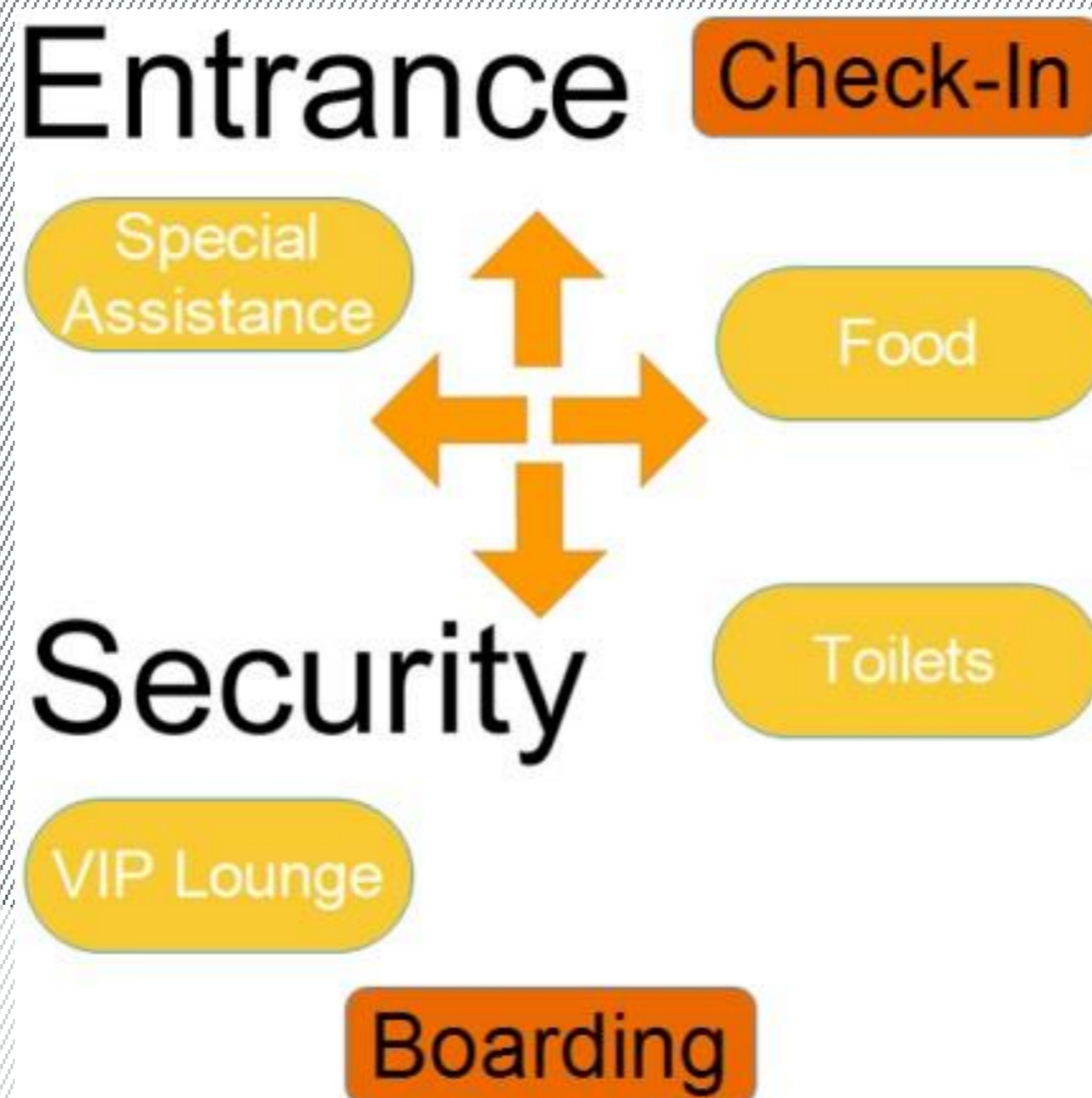
To Investigate the role of the body in wayfinding and its impact.

Airport Case Study

The route through an airport is very rarely a direct one. It might involve:

- The stress of connecting flights
- The user being blind, disabled, elderly, travelling with children.
- We need to satisfy bodily demands.
- We may have access to VIP areas i.e. areas and routes other do not.
- Different users have different social and cultural capital.

Our bodies affect how we wayfind.



How we wayfind indirect routes for the body.

Theories Used

Concepts from Pierre Bourdieu's 'The Logic of Practice' and from Erving Goffman's theory concerning 'symbolic interaction' are both used as sensitizing concepts' within this thesis in order to frame the research. Chris Shilling's work on embodiment is also drawn upon, to present the connection and importance of embodiment in wayfinding.



Methodology

- Using an interpretivist ontological approach, the research involved a number of in-depth qualitative interviews, in order to investigate and understand the individual and very different embodied wayfinding experiences, as they move from A to B, in what were purposefully chosen interviewees. Interviewees included a:
 - Professional Football League manager
 - Caver
 - Wilderness Expert
 - Business Traveller
 - Disabled traveller
 - Naturalist
 - Cruise Ship worker
 - Family group
- The second stage of the research involved the use observations and surrounding the embodied experience of wayfinding.

Conclusion

- The body is central to wayfinding.
- Wayfinding is rarely a direct route because of the body.
- Further research is needed in the future.



Contact

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