

# CAN A SIDEWALK'S COLOR NUDGE TOURISTS TO WALK ALONG CITY STREETSAPES?

**An experimental study examines how social priming and sidewalk color design strategies nudge tourists along city streetscapes, motivating them to engage in healthy walking behavior as they explore a destination.**

These streets are made for walking, and that's just what tourists will do. Given the right nudge. As sedentary lifestyles proliferate, fitting exercise into busy schedules is more important than ever. A new experimental study from Purdue University's White Lodging-J.W. Marriott, Jr. School of Hospitality and Tourism Management shows streetscapes can be part of the solution.

Dr. Xinran Lehto and her HTM colleagues along with Dr. Mark Lehto of Purdue's School of Industrial Engineering, examined sidewalk color and social norm priming bridging the walkability gap, nudging travelers as they explored cities. The researchers already knew color had psychological and physiological impacts.

Streetscape scenarios with blue, red or plain sidewalks were presented to 1,984 participants, who were also primed by statements about walk intention when traveling or through images of sneakers. The findings were significant, as tourists seeing blue or red sidewalks had a 33% or 32% increase, respectively, for walking verses plain sidewalks. Similar percentages occurred with social norms priming, with sneaker image priming adding an additional approximately 20%.

The starting point according to Dr. Lehto, was the timely health-related question "how can we get people to walk more?" The study provides cities opportunities to give curious tourists in unfamiliar environments a navigational tool as "a way to get lost but still find their way," especially around lesser-known sites. Further, Dr. Lehto suggests that a city can strategically combine color and design to orchestrate a cohesive city brand that reflects its overall essence, such as Boston's miles long Freedom Trail through historic sites. Locals benefit from such efforts too, she said, adding "life can be more interesting if you live in a vibrant neighborhood."

The findings are a brand-new box of ideas. Are you ready, tourists? Start walking!

## MAJOR TAKEAWAYS:

- Sedentary lifestyles on the rise globally.
- Encouraging people to participate in moderate-intensity physical activity is a public health priority.
- Redesigning urban landscapes through sidewalk color can encourage travelers to engage in healthy walking behavior while exploring a destination.
- Red or Blue coloring on sidewalks and social norms priming increase walk intention by 31% - 33%
- Priming through images of sneakers add an additional 20%
- Can be woven into overall tourism brand strategies linking historic sites and districts

## WHO NEEDS TO KNOW:

- Tourists
- Urban planners
- Neighborhood Associations
- DMOs and CVBs
- Travel wellness enthusiasts
- Business Development Groups/Business Improvement Districts
- Local residents

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