



WHAT IS AUTHENTICITY AND HOW DOES IT
AFFECT THE PROMOTION OF COCONUT CIDER
VINEGAR



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Abstract

Authenticity is being abandoned in modern society in order to have mass-produced goods and easy likes on Instagram's. During my time in Bangkok, Thailand, I explore the development and promotion of Authentic Coconut Cider Vinegar while working with the Chaipattana Foundation. In order to have something authentic, there needs to be a human connection to either ourselves or others. To find this connection it takes time and passion. Through research, I have found authentic and inauthentic examples in economics, people, and culture. This research has taught me what it means to be authentic. My attempt to make an authentic product has taught me to be an authentic person and therefore, I have been able to fulfill my need for esteem and self-actualization.

1. Introduction

After working on this project for 14 weeks, my group and I were wrapping up our final presentation. “Are there any questions?” After a few trivial questions that we all were able to answer, a woman raises her hand. “Why did you choose to make coconut cider vinegar?” We all looked at one another, looked at our advisors, looked at our sponsor, and didn’t really know what to say. The best response I could come up with in my head was, “because our sponsor told us to.”

I am a 22-year-old college student studying Mechanical Engineering and International Studies at a small tech school in New England. I spent most of my childhood in southern Maine. My father was the Assistant Naval Attaché to Brazil and we lived in Rio de Janeiro for a few years after I was born. I have followed in his footsteps and I will be commissioning into the United States Navy following Graduation. During my college experience, I have been very fortunate to have studied in Beijing, China for three months, and Bangkok, Thailand, for two months. I studied in Bangkok during the spring semester of 2018. Myself and six other Thai and American university students were assigned to develop and market Coconut Cider Vinegar. The project is described in the Abstract below.

“Poverty is affecting coconut farmers who are abandoning their farms and traditional practices to move to cities for lucrative jobs. The Chaipattana Foundation addresses this issue to improve farmers’ livelihoods by preserving and promoting coconut cider vinegar and other traditional products. Through research, interviews, surveys, and observations our team discovered that the more effective strategies used by a learning center, the better the overall experience for visitors. We formed recommendations to improve the coconut learning center and created and developed materials for coconut cider vinegar. The increased revenue from the coconut cider vinegar will allow coconut farmers to support their families and revitalize the coconut industry in Amphawa, Thailand.” (“IQP_Coconut_Final_Paper.pdf,” n.d.)

14 weeks before, my group and I sat down and asked ourselves what is coconut cider vinegar? So naturally, we Googled it. All we could find was a \$24 bottle of Coconut Vinegar. We then skyped our Thai partners to introduce ourselves. After saying hello we asked them if they knew anything about this product. They didn't. This should have been the first sign of what I was getting myself into but it didn't even phase me.

After we gave that woman a half answer, she continued to question us. "Why would you make a product like this when there is no need for it in Thai cooking?" She was right. Thai cooking is a very refined cuisine. There are the Thai classics like Pad Thai, Tom Yum Soup, Papaya Salad, and Sticky Rice and Mango and they are not going to change. But then you might ask about western cooking. Coconut Cider Vinegar could maybe be substituted for Apple Cider Vinegar, but think about how often Western cultures use that in cooking. So here I am, trying to defend a project for what reasons? Because I worked hard on it?

There were other signs that happened throughout my project that ignored. On our first meeting with our sponsor, we asked our sponsor what exactly was the product since we hadn't seen it yet. She handed us a bottle of a golden colored liquid. I removed the cover and took a sniff. It was vinegar. When I questioned her why they kept calling it Cider Vinegar, her response was "because Cider Vinegar sounds higher class." It then took me and my team a half hour to explain to our sponsor that vinegar and cider vinegar are two totally different products. It obviously didn't work because our final product was still Coconut Cider Vinegar.

Upon reflecting on this project and all the work that I put into it, I am disappointed. I believe in authenticity and that it should not be faked. But here I was for 14 weeks trying to develop a product and cater it to people who would never use it. We weren't even using the proper name for the product. So why is this project affecting me so much after the fact and not during the project?

There was something missing. I was asking myself so many questions. Why are we making this product? Why have we not heard about it before? Why does no one want to buy our product? I didn't find

the answer to these questions until fairly recently. We were missing authenticity. But what does it mean to be authentic?

Many others have also contemplated the true definition of authenticity. Some of the greatest philosophers and writers like Plato, Dostoevsky, Freud, and Baudrillard have attempted to understand the concept of authenticity in order to understand its meaning in people's lives. Van Leeuwen offered five different definitions of authenticity (Van Leeuwen, 2001). He believed that something is authentic because it is genuine, something is genuine because authorship is not in question and it is not a copy (Van Leeuwen, 2001). Authenticity can also be a faithful reconstruction of representation. Authentic could also mean having a genuine signature, stamp, or seal to prove that it is authorized. His last definition is to be authentic it needs to bear the true essence of its self. He explained this by "One such essence is the 'self', construed as a constant and unified 'character', which at best slowly 'evolves' and 'matures'" (Van Leeuwen, 2001). These definitions are generally accepted. Taylor discusses a similar definition regarding a person's 'true self' in authentic leadership (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). Authenticity has also attempted to be defined in regards to writing, speaking, even how people act, but there is no singular definition that is widely accepted and that is helpful. There needs to be a general definition that can be used in any case.

People strive every day to be around authentic products, people and experiences but there is no established reason for this. There is also no one definition that defines authenticity in a general term. Therefore, it cannot be understood why people want authenticity without knowing what it is. What does it mean to have an authentic product? What does it mean to be an authentic person? What does it mean to have an authentic experience? But most importantly, why do people seek authenticity? Because people do not understand authenticity or it is too difficult to achieve, they try to fake it. You see this mostly on social media, through people possessions, or just lying in general. Faking authenticity can be considered easy and can fool others. Why do people feel a need to fake authenticity?

I believe authenticity is a sense of human connection, in regards to ourselves or others. People want to have a deep understanding of who they are and others. But how do you find this human connection? To find authenticity it takes a person's time and a person's passion. In order to truly

understand someone's authentic self, you need to take the time to understand it and you truly have to want to do it.

In this paper, I am supporting this definition in regards to a more global idea, answering the questions that have been asked, and will show why the previous definitions of authenticity are inadequate. This paper will discuss authenticity in economics, people, and culture. It will also be supported by my own personal experience studying abroad but will most closely follow my Coconut Cider Vinegar project.

2. How the Economy affects Authenticity

What comes to mind when many people think of something authentic is a product, food, art, etc. As the world has entered a globalized and industrialized world, products are struggling more and more to be considered authentic. People's wants and needs for products are changing and the need for something real and authentic is based on if people have their basic needs to live. If this is true, having an authentic product is almost considered to be a status symbol.

The book "Trading Up" explains that after WWII there was a push on consumer goods (Silverstein, Fiske, & Butman, 2008). Silverstein and Fiske have a number of reasons why that is the case. An increased capacity to make things and a pent-up demand for things that could not be made during the war. However, one thing that came to mind that let people focus on, is being able to look for the quality item, the well-crafted purchase, and authentic real product. A man by the name of Maslow developed a pyramid called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). The idea is that as men meet the needs at one level they then move to the next level and pursue that physical or psychologic need.



Image 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)

Physiological needs are the needs necessary for a human's survival. If this is not met, people cannot live which leads to failure. This is considered the most important and the rest of the needs cannot be met without Physiological needs (Maslow, 1943). Once this is met, individuals can look for the next level, safety. There are different kinds of safety, physical safety, and economic safety. Individuals can be located in a place that is ultimately unsafe to their physical selves, i.e. War, natural disasters, and violence. Being economically unsafe includes job security, insurance policies, and banking difficulties (Maslow, 1943). Following safety is Social Belonging. The lack of Social Belonging can adversely affect an individual's ability to form and maintain emotionally important relationships. According to Maslow, humans need a feeling of acceptance into a social group, no matter the size. Peer pressure can have a large effect on Social Belonging, so much so that it can overcome physiological and safety need (Maslow, 1943). After Social Belonging, Esteem needs are egocentric and status to humans are very important. People have a need to be noticed and respected. There are two versions of esteem needs, a "lower" version and, a "higher" version. The "lower" version is to be respected by others. The "higher" version is the need to for self-respect. Self-Actualization comes next. "What a man can be, he must be." They are a humans search to find their full potential (Maslow, 1943).

The concept of people in search of "authenticity" fall into the level of Esteem and Self-actualization. They can survive and they are safe in their lives and now they can look for status and

respect from others. They feel that they can gain that respect with “things” that are of quality. The construction worker who makes \$50,000 a year but spends \$3,000 on the best golf clubs that can be made is an excellent example of Maslow’s theory. He is comfortable in his life. He can take care of himself but on the level of esteem, he seeks to impress those around him with his ability to play golf. This is an example of buying authenticity and therefore achieving a level of esteem. Self-actualization can be achieved through authenticity by making authentic stuff by using a person’s time and passion to make it authentic. He moves into that world by demonstrating his ownership and use of the best golf clubs made. I believe Maslow helps describe how people can move into the field to seek quality and authenticity.

The point about esteem and Maslow’s needs was to explain that people seek authenticity (craftsmanship, quality in products) because they can. They aren’t worried about their next meal. Can I keep the lights on? How can I care for my sick child? Once you are comfortable in meeting your needs and you feel safe when you look for the things that make you feel good about yourself. This is mostly found in WEIRD people, Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic people. The thoughts about Maslow were implied in the book on “Trading Up”. The intent is to show how people are comfortable in trading up (Silverstein et al., 2008) and explains why some things are used to create our identity. You can only start to fulfill your own self esteem once you have fulfilled the rest of Maslow’s pyramid. This is when Authenticity matters and can be pursued.

I first discussed Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs in an attempt to explain that people turn to the search for authenticity, quality, and craftsmanship when they have reached a point of being secure in the basic needs of life. They seek authenticity in their search for self-esteem. This leads to the need to address the means of production as it relates to meeting the need for self-esteem. Adam Smith addresses production as one of his points in “The Wealth of Nations” (Smith & Krueger, 2003).

One of the central themes in Smith’s work is that this productive capacity rests on the division of labor and the accumulation of capital that it makes possible (Smith & Krueger, 2003). Huge efficiencies can be gained by breaking production down into many small tasks, each undertaken by specialist hands. This leaves producers with a surplus that they can exchange with others, or use to invest in new and even

more efficient labor-saving machinery. This has been demonstrated recently in history, primarily shown by Henry Ford and his concept of the assembly line for the production of cars (Ford, 2007). This reinvestment of “surplus” in the investment of more efficient labor-saving machinery can be found well before the Model T. The creation of the “cotton-gin” drove the United States to the forefront of cotton production, feeding British textile mills, on the backs of slavery. John Deere’s creation of a harvesting machine turned the expanses of the Midwestern plains from grazing pastures to the wheat and corn belts that feed the world.

These efficiencies in labor and resources not only contributed to the accumulation of capital for further investment, but they also contributed to the ability to meet those needs for the first two levels of Maslow’s pyramid. At the end of World War II, the ability of the United States to produce the tools of war was at a level that had never been seen. Tanks, bombers, fighters, and ships rolled off of the assembly lines. When the war ended that capability did not dissolve but the focus needed to change. In addition to that, the rest of the world was struggling with their ability to make anything. The means of production was lost to the conflict. Not only was there a need to rebuild, but there was also pent-up demand for the items that sustained life. The production lines for tanks and planes started to produce refrigerators and televisions. The level of esteem was met with owning a refrigerator or washing machine, items that were extravagant to the parents of the World War II generation. Esteem was achieved by the ownership of something others did not have.

However, one aspect of production that is not addressed by Smith as a factor to be considered was time. Smith eludes to efficiencies gained through labor-saving devices (Smith & Krueger, 2003). As production lengths decreased through a chain of smaller tasks, the attention to detail or craftsmanship was lost to the masses. Once the consumer re-established their levels of self-preservation, they turned to re-establishing their esteem through their search for quality. Their need to display craftsmanship through authentically produced skills became a way of gaining esteem. Time became one of the measures of determining authenticity. Harley Davidson Motorcycles is a great example of time well spent to make something authentic.

After the turn of World War II, Japan was in need of producing cheap transportation for individual use and therefore entered the motorcycle industry (Baker, Baker, & Saren, 2010). Japan had been focusing on the lightweight portion of the industry while Harley Davidson was more interested in the super-heavyweight motorcycle market. Japanese companies like Honda, Yamaha, and Suzuki was so aggressively marketing to Americans that in the United States super-heavyweight bike that Harley Davidson makes fell from 75% in 1973 to less than 25% in 1980 (Baker et al., 2010). Harley Davidson was looking for anything that would keep their company from going under. What makes Harley Davidson unique from the Japanese companies is that each motorcycle is “handcrafted” by three men. The motorcycles are still massed produced but rather than being sent down an assembly line they are “handcrafted”. Between this and President Reagan raising tariffs on ‘heavyweight’ motorcycles began to be known as an authentic American Made Motorcycle (Baker et al., 2010). As discussed in this paper, authenticity is very appealing to people.

What really made Harley Davidson successful is the formation of the Harley Owners’ Group in 1983. It is better well known as HOG (Baker et al., 2010). These Harley Owners’ Groups gives new riders instant companionship with others who also enjoy riding. Membership includes a newsletter, reimbursement for motorcycle safety courses, and most importantly state, regional, national, and international rallies, where members can meet their fellow HOG riders. HOG’s are authentic American motorcycles because it takes time to build one and to be a member of HOG. But it has also given riders a platform to share their interested with others (Baker et al., 2010).

There are many treasured items in this world. Jewels, gold, silver, diamonds, and art are a few that come to mind; however, the most valuable entity for those who seek self-actualization is time. The owner of time has a fixed amount and it is spent continually at a fixed expenditure. It cannot be recovered or earned. The amount never increases. Time is a continual expenditure. It is therefore very precious. In turn that mass produced item that took a short period of time to make becomes less valuable than the device that was handcrafted through patience and skill. The handcrafted labored item retains a greater value because the time that was spent by the craftsman making their product was devoted to

me. This craftsman spent their precise time, time they cannot retrieve, making this item for me. This is important because you didn't spend your time making it. They made it and rather than keeping it for themselves you get it. Without spending any time making it. A person walks into Starbucks and orders a double-mocha-latte with a touch of cinnamon and a hint of nutmeg. The cost is five dollars.

With an increased demand for goods on a world stage, markets will seek the best product at the best price. Efforts must be focused on improving productivity to limit costs so that the cost of production can be kept in the range of the consumer. Cars were actually made before Henry Ford developed the concept of the assembly line. Each car was "crafted" by skilled laborers who took great pride in their work; however, with the advent of the assembly-line, craftsmen were not required. Simple laborers could perform one task multiple times (Ford, 2007). This increased productivity limited the cost; however, the auto-producing craftsman faded into obscurity. The same can be said of the women of China who make indigo dye.

As the world continues to grow, the appeal for education and jobs overshadows communities' interests in local products and traditions. According to Qin, in the ancient village of Dali, China, Dong Women who have been making indigo dye textiles for generations are being threatened by global production (Qin, 2017). In an era of "Fast Fashion," Dong women are still devoted to their tradition of making beautiful, dark glossy cloth. In recent decades, China's market has grown immensely; well-paying, consistent jobs, and education have become overwhelmingly appealing to the children of these skilled women. They question if they should continue the traditions of indigo dyeing through their family heritage or seek an education of a lucrative job in a more feasible part of China.

Their skills and talents have been surpassed by mass production. Granted, the quality of their product is most likely superior to their mechanical competitors, but at what cost? Is the consumer willing to pay a wage that will sustain their families? In a free and liberal market price will drive the demand and the craftsman's ability to produce is limited in scope compared to their mechanical production competitors. The craftsman needs to maintain a low price on their goods just to remain in the marketplace.

As highlighted in the piece about indigo-dying, the children of these skilled women watch their mothers struggle to contribute and survive. With the free movement of labor, articulated by Adam Smith, labor will flow freely to where there is a demand, and with that demand for labor, there will be a balance in compensation to meet the need (Smith & Krueger, 2003). These rural children ponder the decision of keeping their traditions alive through their family heritage or earn enough to meet the needs of their life and expand their world to improve the quality of life of their families. The same idea can be said for the Coconut industry in Amphawa.

For 14 weeks my team and I work on developing and marketing Coconut Cider Vinegar to tourists and the people of Amphawa. During our final presentation, a woman in the audience said “Why did you make this? Thai people have no use for this product.” And she was right. In no part of Thai cooking would this product be used. In western cooking, it could be used as a substitute for Apple Cider Vinegar, but even then, Apple Cider Vinegar is not used enough that a substitute was necessary. As Maslow pointed out, people have a need for authenticity. It is not necessary but it helps an individual’s self-esteem and in regard to products, esteem can be achieved with the ownership of something others do not have. Coconut Cider Vinegar is something nobody wanted and that is why it did not fulfill self-actualization. Some successful companies target self-actualization by using products that will enhance a person’s sense of identity and purpose in life. When you purchase a pair of TOMS shoes, TOMS “helps provide shoes, sight, water, safe birth and bullying prevention services to people in need” (TOMS, n.d.). TOMS is able to provide an individual with the fulfillment of self-actualization by their impact on the world and the positive message that is shown when buying a pair of shoes. As a consumer, you are connecting to your own values and connecting those you are supporting by buying a pair of shoes. It builds comradeship and it makes people more easily relate to one another and connect. This is why Harley Davidson Harley Owners’ Group was so well received by so many Americans. The HOG’s group fulfilled your own needs and you are able to connect those with the similar needs as you. This is why authenticity in objects and things are so important to people.

Yet, as the world begins to develop people rather have cheap, easily produced objects then having an authentic product in order to fulfill their basic needs more easily. People don't want their time wasted. "I want something and I want it right now." That is why when Ford introduced the assembly line it changed the definition of manufacturing (Ford, 2007). But it also caused products to lose their authentic touch. It caused craftsmen and women like the Indigo-dyeing women in China to lose their livelihood (Qin, 2017). Rather than these women making clothes, a machine can do it faster with no human error which causes these women to be obsolete. When something is mass produced there is no time behind the product and there is no passion contributed from a human being. There is no connection to anyone. People are willing to pay more money for something authentic because it takes a person time and energy, but it also leaves a lasting connection between the consumer and producer. So if these Chinese women are losing their authentic crafts, is it affecting their authentic selves?

3. How People are affected by Authenticity.

Most people would not associate authenticity with a human being, but we are all authentic individually. What does it mean to be an authentic person? Many would say that it means being "true to yourself" but how do you define being yourself?

Malcolm Gladwell popularized the concept of the "10,000 Hour Rule" in his book, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (Gladwell, 2011). He explains that greatness requires an enormous amount of time of solitude practice. Gladwell references The Beatles and Bill Gates are a classic example. The Beatles played over 1,200 times in Hamburg, Germany between 1960 and 1964, which ultimately lead to their 10,000 hours of practice (Gladwell, 2011). A Beatles' biographer, Philip Norman, claimed that "by the time they returned to England from Hamburg, Germany, they sounded like no one else. It was the making of them." Gates is also considered an expert in programming because of reaching the 10,000-hour rule. He was able to access a computer at his high school at age 13 in 1968, which pushed him to be one of the first people of this generation to reach 10,000 of programming (Gladwell, 2011). Gladwell continues to explain that reaching the 10,000 Hour Rule is considered the key to success in any field. It is simply a

matter of practice the same task over and over again. Many people struggle with this concept when it was initially published, especially Andres Ericsson.

Andres Ericsson, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Florida State University established the research that served as the basis of the 10,000-Hour Rule (Ericsson & Pool, 2017). Ericsson states in an interview that, ultimately Gladwell misinterpreted his research on being an authentic expert. Ericsson explains there is a difference between practice and purposeful and deliberate practice. In order for a practice to be deliberate practice, the practice must be the most efficient way that leads to growth. For practice to be purposeful, there must be a training task with a goal at the end. It must be repeated with immediate feedback. It must be repeated and reflected on how to improve it. Deliberate practice is purposeful practice but it needs to be supervised and guided (Ericsson & Pool, 2017).

The difference between Gladwell's idea of practice and Ericsson's is practice and learning must be guided. In essence, don't reinvent the wheel. In Ericsson's interview, he gives the example of playing tennis. When you are playing tennis with a friend and you miss the ball because your backhand is absolutely horrendous. What do you do? You move on and keep playing and you will probably miss again the next time you try to use your backhand. You can continue doing this for 10,000 hours but probably nothing will improve. What if you are playing with a coach instead of a friend? So when you do miss that backhand again, the coach pulls you aside and explains how to improve. You try it again and you're successful. Congratulations ("Anders Ericsson," n.d.)! This is deliberate practice and is an important quality in becoming an authentic expert.

Don't redesign the wheel. There is an opportunity to grow without making the mistakes someone else has made. Your coach struggled with their backhand and learned how to improve it and become successful, so rather you struggle with it as long as they did, you will spend more time improving and less time struggling. In the argument that authenticity takes time, imagine adding your 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to your coaches 10,000 hours of deliberate practice, now you have 20,000 hours of experience. This is how time affects the ability to be an authentic expert.

In the interview with Ericsson, he also explains how motivation plays a role in being an authentic expert. When an individual starts to be successful in what they are doing they tend to start to enjoy it (“Anders Ericsson,” n.d.). This passion is self-motivating which causes them to continue practicing. Recognition of small progress is also important when it comes to enjoyment. When a mentor, parent, friend recognizes an individual’s hard work and experience, it is motivating and validating to the point that it motivates the individual to continue to improve. To be an expert you need to have a connection with others. You can only learn with deliberate practice and deliberate practice comes from the knowledge of a leader or mentor. We now turn to consider how being a mentor and understanding ones “true self” can contribute to being an authentic leader.

In order to grow as an authentic expert, an individual needs to be guided by an authentic leader, which is explained in Ericsson’s description of the 10,000 hour rule. But what qualifies someone to be an authentic leader? Cooper, Scandura, and Schriesheim augured that there is no one definition for authentic leadership (Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005). Yet throughout authenticity literature, there are three themes that are recognized. Those themes are to be informed of ones ‘true self’, being self-aware, and being able to connect to moral leadership.

Erickson defines being ones ‘true self’ or authentic self as being ‘wholly by the laws of its own being’ (Erickson, 1995). ‘True self’ has been interpreted into many different theories such as humanistic, essentialist, or interactionist perspectives. But ultimately, what matters is the way a person’s ‘true self’ is expressed to others. Wilson proposed that inner-oriented experience of a person’s self is part of the ‘somatic self-processes.’ Which is how the body reacts to situations, such as when your stomach drop, hairs on the back of your neck stand up, or the inability to stop smiling. Maslow believes that being aware of these somatic events is the best way to understand ‘self-actualization’ and is very important to the growth of a person’s true self (Maslow, 1943). Many qualities can be used to understand a person’s true self, the language people use to talk about themselves, where a person is from and the facial expressions that occur when an individual reacts to a situation of news. All of these qualities are what people use to express ‘who they are’ which is key to understanding how authenticity affects people.

What is important to understand is that we as individuals cannot change or hide our true selves to others. Taylor suggests the body is more trustworthy in revealing a person's self (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). For example, many leadership studies have indicated that charisma and the way in which information is conveyed is more likely to be related to then the content of the information. Taylor gives the example of a military officer leading their troops into battle. The military officer is feeling fear, resolve a sense of duty, concern, and courage. Military officers know that if you want your men to follow you, you need to express the feelings of courage and resolve, and not the feelings of fear and anxiety. This leads to Taylor's theory of being an authentic leader (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010).

Taylor believes there are three themes that cause an individual to be an authentic leader, self-exposure, relation, and leaderly choices (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). Taylor uses the military officer example to explain self-exposure. Even though the military leader is feeling all kinds of different feelings, good and bad, he chooses to show the feelings that are most effective in a situation. This is a quality necessary to be a strong leader, being able to express your vulnerabilities to fully engage with your followers. Being able to show emotion allows followers to relate to their leader. It shows that these leaders are humans and they deal with emotion and situation just like everyone else. Lastly, a leader needs to embody the ideas of their followers or in other words have a human connection. They need to motivate the group and ultimately will be able to connect with the followers more naturally (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). Grint believes that a leader needs to be able to articulate a group's identity (Grint, 2001).

I believe that in order to be an authentic leader and to be able to connect with your people, it takes time and passion. Shamir and Eilman argue that the self is a subjective phenomenon (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). It is developed through an individual's life story and that who you are is conveyed to others and yourself through your life story. As your life builds and grows it makes you, you. Every interaction, experience, thought that crosses you in your life makes you your true self. There is also the notion of 'the dream'. Leader-like actions are caused by the motivations and the dream of an individual leading a group or organization. Authentic leaders may have dreams that are authentic to themselves but not for others in the organization. In this case, these leaders may find them being an authentic individual rather than an

authentic leader. In terms of leadership, it is important that the dreams and the values of the leader are also shared by the individuals in the group. An individual's life story and dreams are what makes them an authentic leader and this makes us 'who we are'. But as Taylor explained, you must be able to be related to in order to be a leader (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). In today's society one of the better platforms to find other's to relate to is social media.

In order to be an authentic expert or leader, validation and reassurance from others are very important. Social Media is one way to receive validation for an individual's experiences. Below are two pictures I took at the Forbidden City in Beijing, China. What are the differences?



Image 2 and Image 3: Two images were taken at the Forbidden City. Image 2 is edited and cropped. Image 3 is unedited.

The first image I posted on my Instagram. I wanted to show people how "beautiful" the Forbidden City really was. In order to make it "beautiful", I edited the color and cropped everyone out of the image and fulfills my own esteem. The second image was what I really saw at the Forbidden City and really fulfills my self-actualization need. I wanted to show my family and friends at home what the Forbidden City was like when really it was crowded and loud. I was willing to fake the authenticity of my trip in order to get validation from my friends at home that I was on a "cool" trip. I have even had people

approach me saying they want to study in Bangkok because of the photos I posted on Instagram. If this is the case, is my passion for travel as authentic as my Instagram shows it to be?

In September 2017, Instagram stated that they had 800 million monthly active users. This was an increase from 700 million in April 2017 (Boorstin, 2017). Instagram has made a huge effect on the consumer world but also has caused an effect on our family and “friends”. But why do we have this need to post our life stories on social media? A study by the New York Times Consumer Insight Group found five major reasons people choose to share their story on social media. One of the reasons was “self-expression”. 68% of respondents say that this is about showing others what they care about and whom they care (Boorstin, 2017). This is why people post on social media, but why do people post so much?

Researchers at UCLA Brain mapping Center found that when teens experience “likes” on social media apps the brains reward center because extremely active (Sherman, Payton, Hernandez, Greenfield, & Dapretto, 2016). “When teens learn that their own pictures have supposedly received a lot of “likes”, they show significantly greater activation in the parts of the brain’s reward circuitry,” says lead author Lauren Sherman. “This is the same group of regions responding when we see pictures of a person we love or when we win money” (Sherman et al., 2016). Researchers also found that the more “likes” an individual receive the more likely they are going to post again, and soon.

Through social media, individuals have found a platform to express themselves, and show people “this is who I am”. The more “likes” and responses individual get on their post the more validation they receive that they are living the best and most exciting life. One of the biggest hobbies that have taken over for Generation Z is traveling. Generation Zers are “open-minded, bucket list oriented & looking for off the beaten path locations.” 90% of those in Generation Z says that social media influences on where they plan to travel (“Generation Z,” 2018).

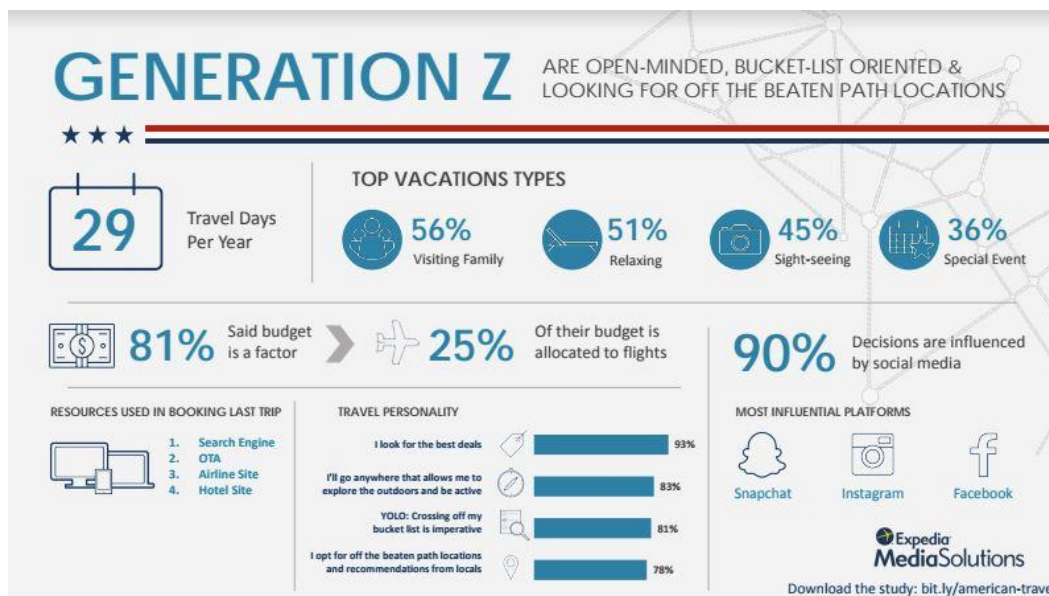


Image 4: Generation Z and their travel trends (“Generation Z,” 2018).

I have been to Seattle, Beijing, Shanghai, Xian, Bangkok, Phuket, Chang Mai, Bali, Bermuda, and San Diego all in the last year and a half. Traveling is something that I find to be important to me and a big part of my life and I have spent a lot of time traveling. Social Media how I show people and connect with others about my time I spent traveling. Why am I subconsciously unauthentic on Social Media? The ability to be authentic was a challenge my team struggled with throughout or project in Amphawa.

The sponsor of our project was the Chaipattana Foundation. His Majesty the King stated this in his royal speech, “The Chaipattana Foundation is a non-governmental organization. All committee members have the freedom to consider and initiate work activities. The King is the Honorary President of the Foundation. We are public-spirited developers joining to contribute to national and social development. Our joy comes when such progress is realized. That is truly ‘Chaipattana’ or the Victory of Development” (“The Chaipattana Foundation - About us - About us,” n.d.).

Our authentic selves have been defined in three regards, as an authentic expert, an authentic leader, and how we show that authenticity to the rest of the world. I believe the Chaipattana Foundation had good intentions and they wanted what was best for Amphawa. But what Amphawa needs is a leader in their own community. The Chaipattana Foundation is sponsored by the Royal Family and “The King is

the Honorary President of the Foundation” and that’s just it, it’s a foundation form around the Royal Families best intentions. Amphawa was built for the coconut industry, so those who have grown up there, spent their time and energy learning to grow and maintain the coconut industry should be leading with the support of the foundation. Not the other ways around. In order to be authentic, you need to have spent time learning the industry, you need to be able to relate to the society in order to lead, and a façade of authenticity. In regards to the coconut industry, the Chaipattana Foundation is not authentic enough to make a strong impact to Amphawa.

4. How Culture effects Authenticity.

Culture are customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, group of people, or just a social group. So what does it mean to be culturally authentic? As stated in the section above, 90% of Generation Z uses social media to decide where to travel next. Generation Z is looking for places no one has ever been before, places that escape the modern day, and truly show off the culture of a location. They are looking for authentic travel.

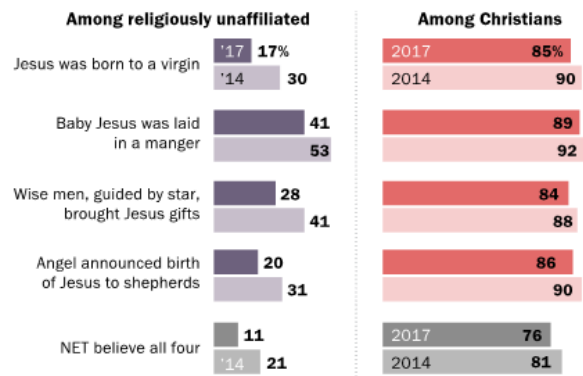
During my travels, I too looked for this. I want to go to places my friends and family have never been to and try food no one else was willing to try. If I was looking for authentic travel what was I looking for then? I was looking for national dishes, religious influence, handmade local art, I really just want to be a local. But how did I know if it was authentic or not?

My mother always complains when we were on our way to Christmas Mass that the church was always so crowded and we never get to sit in our usual seats. She would call those who filled the pews twice a year “CEC’s”, Christmas Easter Catholics because they would only ever come to Mass on those two days during the year. But through my mother’s complaints, she brings up a few valid points. Her biggest pet peeve is walking into Walmart at the beginning of October and the Christmas decorations are already out. She always asks me “Why do people celebrate Christmas when they don’t even believe in God or Jesus Christ?” I would always roll my eye because why would I know the answer to that? But she

does bring up a good point. Why do people celebrate religious holidays when they have no affiliation with the religion?

Belief in Christmas story declining among both 'nones' and Christians

% who believe ...



Note: Respondents were asked whether they believe in four elements of the Christmas story, including that "Jesus Christ was born to a virgin," that "an angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus," that "wise men were guided by a star and brought Jesus gold, frankincense and myrrh," and that "the newborn baby Jesus was laid in a manger."

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 4, 2017, among U.S. adults.

"Americans Say Religious Aspects of Christmas Are Declining in Public Life"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Image 5: Belief in Christmas story declining among both 'nones' and Christians (Stack, 2017).

In 2017, The Pew Research Center released data on how Americans celebration of Christmas is moving slowly toward the secular. They found the U.S. adults believe in the religious affiliation of Christmas less than in the past in American Society (Stack, 2017). Tom Krattenmaker, writes about religion in public life and is the author of

"Confessions of a Secular Jesus Follower", states that

"as more Americans drift away from religion in general and Christianity in particular, it stands to reason they would take a more secular approach to the holiday" (Kuruvilla, 2017). For some, the purpose of Christmas though is to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ who is born to the Virgin Mary. As seen in the graph below, even amongst Christians, people question the Birth of Jesus. Christmas in the United States is a huge part of American Culture, for those who believe in the story of Christ and for those who don't. Christmas in the United States is about physical objects, and food, and Christmas Songs that are about Reindeer. Those who value the celebration of Christmas has taken time to understand the story of Christ and the origin of the story. They spend time studying and learning about the journey he has taken but it's a story they are passionate about and want to share with their friends and family. As a Society, American's do not value the story of Christ. Those who have studied and care about the birth of Christ believe they authentically celebrate Christmas. This is how I view Christmas because this is how my parents taught me to value the holiday. But in the eyes of American Society, tacky decorations and cookies is an authentic celebration of Christmas because that is how their family has taught them to celebrate it. Celebrating a tacky Christmas is fulfilling self-esteem. To fulfill self-actualization there

needs to be that connection and time dedicated to others. For some, including my family, that is acknowledging the birth of Christ. For others, that is supporting those less fortunate and spending time with their family. Celebrating an authentic Christmas depends on how the individual chooses to fulfill self-actualization during the holidays.

The search of authenticity in tourism has also had effects on culture. There is a growing need for people to experience and have projects that are original and the real thing. As described above is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, people use authenticity for self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). There is a movement for self-actualization to search for a deeper meaning and a sense of self past a person's possessions. One way that people find this is through human connections to themselves and to others. People are looking for authenticity in products but also in experiences so that they can better themselves. Many people look for this in travel.

In today's society, consumers are better educated, more sophisticated, and traveled the world. This shows that people want to have a real experience rather than something fake. Yeoman has identified ten trends that have shaped authentic tourism into what it is now. Some of which are a *global network, the affluent consumer and the experience of the economy, trust in the past, individualism, time pressures and authenticity, and increased competition amongst tourism destinations*. These trends are described below.

As explained before, the majority of Generation Z finds their next travel location on social media ("Generation Z," 2018). The internet has brought a whole new way of looking at travel and it has allowed people with similar interests to come together and discuss and explore new ideas. Along with an increasing presence of social media, households also have more disposable income, three times as much between the 1950s and 2000. These disposable funds are being spent on holiday, improving health, and leisure activities. Because of the increase in wealth more and more people are looking to fulfill their self-esteem and self-actualization. They are doing so with travel and tourism products. This is shifting people's search to look for real experiences. Rather than looking for theme parks, they are looking for destinations that seem real to them. Even though Disneyworld is a theme park it is actually considered authentic in American society and culture. In "The Ethics of Authenticity", Taylor explains that consumers feel safer

with ideas of the past rather than the future (Taylor, 1992). He believes that authenticity is based on an idea of nostalgia because people define themselves by things that happen in the past and not by things to happen in the future. Disneyworld reflects American society with a post-modernist feel. Disneyland is an example of manufactured authenticity based on an idea and it shows that authenticity can be interpreted differently for different people depending on history or culture. Destinations filled with history are more likely to be considered authentic to people because it is considered to be true rather than manufactured.

As a continuation of the growing economy, people are in search to find individualism which is reflected when people are searching for their 'true self'. With the increase of social media and globalization, people are becoming more aware of new communities and different connections which ultimately helps people find their identity. Authenticity is part of a person's search for individualism and finding self-esteem or self-actualization. Part of finding yourself is defining how you are willing to spend your time. Economist Burns, coined the term *Gazinta* to describe a person who wants to most efficiently use their time (Burns & Burns, 1993). He believes that time is one of the most important things a person owns. The law of *Gazinta* states "that people are led to sample a range of activities and satisfaction rather than devote themselves to one or two"(Burns & Burns, 1993). What this means is that people want to do everything. Because of this, the tourism industry offers people a wide range of short burst activities. But now that people are looking for a more authentic real experience they are looking for longer, less hectic activities which are considered more leisurely.

Overall, authentic experiences should be ethical, natural, honest, simple, beautiful, rooted, and human. What authentic experience needs are a community. A community that can understand visitor's wants for an authentic process. But as Godin said "Authenticity: if you can fake that, the rest will take care of itself (Godin, 2009).

Globalization is "the process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale". Globalization affects all areas of life. As the world became more technology savvy, Thailand had to adhere to the accelerated pace of technical innovations, changing in economic status, and the supply and demand called for by the western part of the world. This

causes new ideas and values, which ultimately affects communities and their way of life. With interactions with the media and other cultures, the community's traditional values began to change. With a shift in traditional values, cultural heritage and identity can be lost and with it a loss of a sense of "self".

In a globalized world, can the craftsman survive? An example of a craftsman who has not only survived but now thrives in the global marketplace comes to mind. The Trappist Monks of Brasserie de Rochefort opened their brewery in 1595. Their Monastery and brewery are located in Rochefort Belgium. This is a small tourist village in the French-speaking south of Belgium. Their humble origins started with providing a locally brewed beer to their fellow Monks and then expanding to the surrounding village. Despite numerous wars, changes in governments and economic hardships, their brewery has survived and thrived. Recent production levels hover around 15,000 barrels of beer annually (400,000 gallons). Their survival is founded on retaining the quality of their product, focusing on their customer base, and maintaining a cost that is reasonable for the consumer.

This is a trend that extends beyond the borders of Belgium. Venture to Portland Maine and cruise the niche breweries that have grown into the city's infrastructure. One brewery that comes to mind was founded in a relatively abandoned industrial park. It was small and you had to know your way around the city to find it. They focused on quality while keeping the price reasonable by selling bottles in four packs rather than six. Allagash White is considered one of the best beers in the world (Delany, n.d.). They compete successfully on a global stage and they remain true to their Maine roots (brewed with all Maine-grown grains). Is it possible to retain the craftsman's touch and survive on the global stage? Yes, as demonstrated by very successful craftsmen. Coconut Cider Vinegar does not fit this model because unlike beer no one uses vinegar on a daily basis.

Amphawa has been affected by the evolving world. By the end of the 20th century, with the development of transportation, Amphawa's community was reduced. With the declining economy, values in the community became clouded (Peerapun, 2012). The younger generations are less interested in being a part of traditions and are moving away to pursue an education and explore the working world, causing increasing pressure to keep traditions alive (Fuller, 2012).

In 2003, the Thai Cultural Environment Project (TCEP) rehabilitated the traditional river market in Amphawa to make it a tourist destination (Suntikul, 2017). The goal of the TCEP was to serve as a pilot project to aid in the establishment of a comprehensive cultural and environmental conservation program in Thailand. The project lasted for 19 months and in August of 2004, the Municipality of Amphawa revitalized the afternoon floating market by request of the locals to promote tourism (Silapacharanan, 2010). The TCEP altered the lives of residents in Amphawa, an academic journal published a paper titled, “Nostalgia-motivated Thai domestic tourism at Amphawa, Thailand”, reports, “Since the start of the TCEP, many house owners have adapted their houses for homestays . . . homestays now account for 70% of the accommodation offerings in Amphawa” (Suntikul, 2017). Visitors surround the people of Amphawa and put the locals’ home life on display for tourism. Figure 2.4 displays the dramatic increase of tourists in Amphawa over the years. While the TCEP had success with businesses within the river-market, its cultural significance appears to be missing within the newfound industry in Amphawa. While there is an economic benefit from the initiative, tourism commercialized Amphawa’s charm. The Chaipattana Foundation is working to prevent a drastic alteration of traditions.

Going back to the original root of my question about authenticity, why Coconut Cider Vinegar? I learned that this is a very unauthentic product. It was something never really used during Thai cooking, people never heard of it, and people didn’t know what to do with it. The foundation wanted us to fake authenticity in order to “support the local Amphawa Community”. We were unable to do this because we did not have the time or the passion to do so but even if we had there is no human connection. My partners and I only had seven weeks to learn about, develop, and ultimately market a project that we knew nothing about. We also didn’t have a personal connection to the product and therefore found no need to put our heart and energy into making this product necessary to the general public. As stated above it takes time to develop an understanding for something just like religion. It takes years to appreciate the authentic culture and understand what is actually being celebrated. But also a history needs to build over time. Culture is more likely to be considered authentic if there is a history behind it. Lastly, there needs to be a community that supports the development of an authentic culture and in this case product. Rather than the

Chaipattana Foundation leading the push for Coconut Cider Vinegar, it should have been the locals who have been established in Amphawa and they know what is best for the community.

5. Conclusion

LADIES LOOK! 🍹👏 #iqp1 #coconutcidervinegar
#amphawachaipattananurak



It has now been seven months since I have completed my IQP and I saw this on my Facebook a few days ago. I saw this post and all I could think of was “wow, these people have no idea what they are buying.” I was happy because this was something I had spent so much time working on but at the same time, I felt bad. I felt like I had tricked people in to buy our coconut cider vinegar.

Authenticity is something that cannot be easily defined and it can be interpreted differently depending on the topic. What authenticity ultimately is, is the ability to connect to ourselves or others and is developed through a relationship of a person’s time and their passion. As seen in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, boosting a person’s self-esteem is something individuals strive for (Maslow, 1943). Part of a person’s self-esteem is validations for others. “Trading up” explains that status can be reflected through people’s personal belongings. The more seen the object is the more likely for people to buy higher end objects (Silverstein et al., 2008). For example, I own a Coach purse. I can’t really afford a Coach purse. So why do I have it? To tell people that this purse reflects who I am. This is fulfilling Maslow’s self-esteem need and is defining who am but really it is the fact that it is my mother’s purse that she has had for years and that she cared for this purse that makes it special to me. But it also why Harley Davidson Motorcycles became so well-known. Harley Davidson establishing the Harley Owners’ Group (HOG) created a following where people can relate to each other and grow from one another’s knowledge (Baker et al., 2010).

Ericson reexamined the 10,000-hour rule to explain that the only way to truly be an authentic expert is to grow from deliberate practice (Ericsson & Pool, 2017). Going back to the tennis example, rather than practicing over and over again with no instruction. The ability to have a mentor to help you grow and become better is what will make someone an authentic expert. “Don’t reinvent the wheel.” Someone else has learned how to master what you are learning. There is no point of learning it on your own. Time and passion are how to become an authentic expert along with support from an authentic leader. Taylor defines how to be an authentic leader as someone who can self-exposure themselves, related to others, and make leaderly choices (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). To be an authentic leader you need to be able to relate to your follows. The best way to do that is to use your own personal experiences, these experiences take a whole lifetime to develop. But you also need to care about the organization. If your ideas are different from those of the followers then you will not be a successful authentic leader. Going back to Maslow’s need to fulfill our self-esteem, validation from others is something everyone looks for (Maslow, 1943). People use social media as a platform to explain their “true selves” Social media is used to tell our friends and families that “this is who I am”. I personally consider travel to be a part of who I am. When in Thailand, I posted photos every week of me “doing all the cool things in Thailand”, petting elephants, climbing mountains, visiting the temples and going to the beach. What I didn’t show you were the trips to the doctor’s office, the lost baggage, and the phone calls I made to my mother twice a day. We all strive to be our authentic selves, but in today’s society, it is more difficult to be authentic. We are giving up authenticity for the ease of likes on Instagram.

A growing world is not only affecting our authentic selves but it is also affecting authenticity in culture. In modern day culture, Christmas is becoming less and less about to story of Christ birth and more and more about cheap presents from Target and who makes the best Christmas cookie. Understanding and appreciating religion takes time to develop, years even a whole lifetime and also have to have a vested interest. Religion is also fulfilling self-actualization by setting values for ourselves but also a connection to those who also value that same religion. During this time of increased economic security, people are looking to fulfill their self-esteem and self-actualization through authentic travel.

People are looking for real experiences and authentic destinations. People are more likely to consider a destination authentic if there is a history behind it. People are also more aware of their time, so when they travel they only want to experience real things. But as the world continues to develop and grow, culture is changing. People appreciate and want things that take time to make and experience. As much as we want something to come instantly, we also want something that is well thought out. But those who are attempting to fulfill their basic needs want this so quickly that they are willing to give up the quality for speed, which is ultimately affecting cultures all over the world.

I believe part of the loss of authenticity is the WPI Interdisciplinary Qualifying Project (IQP) experience. During WPI student's junior, students get so excited to travel abroad. But it is not your typical experience where you are taking five or six classes. When you go on IQP you work on a project specific to the location you are going with three other students in different major than yours. The hope is that you learn how to work with people with different backgrounds and a different education than your own. With the excitement that is IQP and traveling to another country, there is also an overwhelming amount of pressure that comes with that. I believe WPI students have created this pressure when in all honesty it is just another class, that you take in a different country, with a little more writing involved. There is this myth that when you go on IQP you can fulfill your need for self-actualization through an authentic experience. I felt the need to stress myself out on a project that I didn't believe in because of this pressure that WPI students have put on themselves during IQP.

Authenticity is the ability to connect with ourselves or others and is found through time and passion. Authenticity is different for when fulfilling self-esteem and self-actualization. Without both of these qualities, authenticity is not possible. This is why our Coconut Cider Vinegar project in Amphawa, Thailand, was not authentic. As a group, we only had 14 weeks to establish and build the product. We also had very little invested in the project. We knew we weren't going to change the world with Coconut Cider Vinegar and ultimately were working on the project to get a grade to fulfill our own self-esteem. But I really think the project wasn't successful because it didn't have the connection to others it needed to be successful. As the women explain during our final presentation, Coconut Cider Vinegar is not

something Thai or western cultures use to cook with. With a product like this, there needs to be a whole new idea of cooking in Thai culture and we just didn't have enough time to establish something like this. There was also no real leadership or experts on the matter. The Chaipattana Foundation had the best intentions for Amphawa but they do not have any experience of developing a product with Coconut Cider Vinegar. Just because a product is produced doesn't mean people want to buy it. The community was also not vested in the product. Many of those working at the Chaipattana Foundation did not even know what the product was. In order for something to be authentic, the connection to other established through time and passion needs to be involved. Authenticity can be faked but it takes time and passion to do so. A level of authenticity was missing from this project and that was why it was not successful.

I did learn a lot while I was in Thailand. I learned about another culture and language, I meet new people, and I learned how to work with people from different backgrounds. I also learned a lot about myself. I learned that I love to travel, that I struggle with working with people with different backgrounds, and that I truly care about authenticity. I think that I struggled with this project because it was trying to imitate authenticity. Authenticity is meant to fulfill Esteem and Self-actualization according to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Authentic products such as indigo dyed cloth, or a Harley Davidson Motorcycle fulfill Esteem. These authentic products are products that help defines an individual and show their passions and wants. By having these products, individuals connect to those who made them by appreciating their time and their passions. Authenticity in people and culture fulfills self-actualization. By being an authentic expert and an authentic leader it shows your character, what you care about, and who you are. The time and passion spent to be an expert or leader are all how others best relate to you. Authentic culture is one way people relate to one another. Celebrating culture lets people understand where others come from and define who we are. The celebration of culture comes from time, passion and celebrating with others. Self-actualization is the desire to become the most that one can be. Exploring authentic people and culture through time and passion allows individuals to reach self-actualization. Thailand has given me the opportunity to explore authentic products, people, and culture. On reflection, I

am on my way to fulfilling my own esteem and self-actualization, all because I was working on an unauthentic project.

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