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Public Awareness and Perceptions of Heritage Buildings in Arizona, USA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine public awareness of heritage properties in Arizona, USA. Data for this study were collected from a random sample of 1238 general public in Arizona using a telephone survey. The study proposes a four-cell matrix based on heritage awareness and visitation to historic buildings. The four cells represent: 1) aware/visited, 2) aware/not visited, 3) unaware/visited, and 4) unaware/not visited. When four types of residents were compared on demographic variables, attitudes toward preservation, preservation criteria, and importance of feature and facilities, most of these variables were significant. The findings of this study provide important information for heritage preservation managers and policy makers. Unlike heritage preservationists' view, opening heritage sites to the public and tourists can help to create awareness.

INTRODUCTION

There are many uses of heritage and many reasons the past is conserved, but one of the primary aims of heritage conservation is to enhance the historic environment and its continuity, thereby contributing to a desirable place to live and connecting individuals with the place and the culture (Ashworth and Graham 2005; MaGuire, 1982). Heritage and its preservation have become paramount in all parts of the world. In the developing world, the past is preserved primarily as a tool for generating income through tourism; in most cases, saving heritage for other reasons is of little concern to the public or to public agencies and is sometimes seen as the antithesis of development or modernization (Timothy and Nyaupane 2009). In the developed portions of the world, however, the past is preserved and conserved for a variety of reasons, including tourism, esthetic value, enhancing a location's sense of place, educational and scientific purposes, and creating livable communities (Graham et al. 2000). Despite the importance of heritage, there has not been much research on heritage awareness among community residents, who are the ultimate guardians of the heritage product. A few exceptions include Yan and Morrison's (2007) study of visitors' awareness of a site's World Heritage status. In another study, Poria, Butler and Airey (2003) evaluated heritage tourists based on their awareness of, and motivations for visiting, historic sites. With an increase in knowledge about public empowerment, participatory development, and grassroots planning in all aspects of socio-economic life, it is well understood that local interests and benefits cannot be ignored while planning and managing heritage sites (Aas et al. 2005; Feilden, 1982; Marc et al. 1994).

This study aims to examine public awareness of heritage properties in Arizona, USA. The study proposes a four-cell matrix based on heritage awareness and visitation to historic buildings and other heritage sites. The four cells, representing Arizona residents

are: 1) aware/visited, 2) aware/not visited, 3) unaware/visited, and 4) unaware/not visited. In this study, awareness is measured by two criteria: knowledge and behavior. Knowledge is measured by whether or not people know of any historic buildings that have been demolished or otherwise lost, and behavior is defined by whether or not they have visited historic buildings. The four groups of people are compared against several variables, including demographic, attitudes toward historic preservation, functions of historic preservation, their perceived role of government in historic preservation, preservation criteria, and the importance of certain features and facilities.

Heritage Awareness

Awareness is often defined as having knowledge or cognizance of one's surrounding environment (Tuan 2001), awareness being influenced and formed cognitively by individual experiences and social environmental conditions (Murphy and Zajonc 1993; Poria et al. 2006). Awareness has received considerable academic attention in the contexts of environment and place, education, emotions, interpersonal relationships, and health care, with an overwhelming suggestion that people have different levels of awareness and that a wide range of stimuli, included personal experience with people, places and events, are critical in the formation of individual, cognitive awareness.

Environmental awareness can be viewed from several perspectives. One perspective is cognizance of environmental problems and concerns for a sustainable environment. Another perspective is people's awareness of the place where they live, their everyday environment and its interactive components (Grob 1995; Heiskanen 2005; Palmer et al. 1999; Tuan 2001). This could certainly be extended into the realm of heritage places—places visited by tourists, local residents, school groups and other heritage consumers.

In the context of heritage places, few statements have been made and very little is known about public awareness of the management, importance, or designation of historic sites. Kuijper (2003) notes the growing global awareness of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites, largely through the educational and informative efforts of UNESCO. Other observers have noted a general lack of awareness of the significance of World Heritage designation among tourists at select sites in the UK (Smith 2002) and heritage site administrators and tourists in the United States (Timothy and Boyd 2006) and New Zealand (Hall and Piggitt 2002). Moscardo's (1996; 1999) work focuses on these issues of unawareness, which she refers to as mindlessness, or lack of awareness and perceptiveness regarding the sites being visited. Despite these examples, there is evidence to suggest that more and more heritage visitors are becoming more cognizant of the heritage value of places they visit and these places' designation as World Heritage Sites or other protected labels (Fyall and Rakic 2006; Yan and Morrison 2007).

Notwithstanding the growing heritage awareness in a general sense but an evident lack of awareness regarding heritage value among individual visitors, the core of heritage identification, listing, and preservation has been and continues to be heritage awareness, or a knowledge and recognition of the value of conservable elements of the past (Bessière 1998; Nora 1997). The heritage identification and protection process cannot succeed without a certain level of heritage awareness and acceptance among visitors and community residents (Munjeri 2004). Likewise, a widespread recognition of the importance of keeping a desired past from disappearing is an essential part of the basis

for developing public policies regarding heritage protection (Poirrier 2003). Heritage awareness campaigns, therefore, are not uncommon as a way of garnering community support for the protection of a location's patrimony (de Camargo 2007; Timothy 2000).

Context and Background

Arizona lies in the southwestern United States and is home to some 6.3 million people and hundreds of historic sites recognized by national, state, county, and municipal governments. Built and living heritage contribute significantly to the social fabric and economy of Arizona. Living heritage is best demonstrated among the Native Americans, including but not exclusively, the Navajo, Hopi, Apache, Havasupai, Hualapai, Tohono O'odham, Pima, and Paiute tribes. There is also a vibrant Mexican-American culture around Phoenix and Tucson, and along the Mexican border. Most heritage sites in the state commemorate the history of indigenous people, frontier settlement, mining, cattle ranching and agriculture, and Spanish missions. The most common sites are forts, schools, churches, missions, ranches, Indian ruins and archeological sites (including petroglyphs), historic homes, bridges, mines and mining towns, national and state parks, and a host of other structures that have played a salient role in the history of Arizona and the United States. As of April 2009, there were 1,286 places, sites or structures in Arizona listed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Park Service 2009), which is administered by the US National Park Service (NPS) and aims to spotlight and preserve America's heritage. Some of these historic places are part of the National Park Service system (e.g. National Monuments, National Battlefields, etc), but the majority is comprised of individual buildings or sites that have been nominated and justified by community groups and accepted onto the list by the NPS simply as buildings and places worthy of preservation.

As this contextual section demonstrates, heritage sites play an important role in the social and economic milieu of Arizona, and many properties have been designated heritage sites. Therefore, it is important to understand the public's awareness and perceptions of historic buildings and sites as a way of justifying their designation and preservation. The following sections present the findings from a study conducted in 2008 that aimed to understand Arizona residents' awareness of historic preservation and its various dynamics.

RESEARCH METHODS

Data for this study were collected using a state-wide telephone survey with the general public in Arizona, USA, in July and August, 2006. A Random-Digit Dialing (RDD) sample was selected using Genesys. A total of 12,429 calls were made; telephone numbers that remained unanswered, such as calls with no answer, answering machines/voice mail, or hang ups received at least ten attempts. This was done to secure responses but also to assure that the numbers were valid. If a respondent was not available or the time that the person was reached was inconvenient, a callback was scheduled. Respondents 18 years or older were randomly selected asking whose birthday was the most recent in the household. Calls were made Monday through Thursday from 4pm to 8pm, Saturday from 10am to 2pm, and Sunday from 12pm to 4pm. The sample yielded a total of 1,238 completed interviews, or a 32.3% response rate. Respondents were asked about their awareness, attitudes, priorities, and views about the importance of

various heritage locations, their perceptions of the functions of heritage preservation and preservation criteria, number of visits to historic preservation sites, the role government and the public sector in heritage conservation and management, issues related to heritage preservation, and a variety of demographic questions including their age, gender, income, education, race, ethnicity, type of residence, and how long they have lived in the state. Prior to the survey, the instrument was pre-tested with 30 respondents for understandability and effectiveness. This exercise resulted in the revision and rewording of a few questions.

To measure heritage awareness, residents were asked if they were cognizant of any property they considered to have heritage importance but which had recently been lost (e.g. via demolition or fire). Further, they were asked to categorize the type of property (e.g. residential property, commercial property, archeological site, or public building) that had been lost. To measure visitation, participants were asked whether or not they had visited historic preservation sites or buildings during the past 12 months. Questions related to attitude toward different types of historic preservation, functions of historic preservation, and the public sector role in historic preservation were measured by means of a 5-point Likert-type scales, 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree. Among the five attitude items, three represented positive and two represented negative. Positive items included “heritage preservation saves the past”, “heritage preservation preserves a better future”, and “heritage preservation rehabilitates old buildings for new uses.” Items that pertained to the negative role of historic preservation included “historic preservation prevents change” and “historic preservation obstructs progress.” Residents were asked about seven items related to the functions of heritage conservation, and five items on what role government has to play in conservation, including identifying historic properties, giving tax incentives and grants to owners of historic properties, regulating historic properties, educating the public about historic properties, and preserving historic properties.

To assess perceptions of heritage preservation, six criteria were provided on a 5-point Likert-type scale from least important (1) to most important (5). These criteria included beauty of the building, historical or cultural importance, a sense of place or atmosphere, economic potential of the property, architectural merit, and age of the building. Using the same importance scale, residents were asked, “when you visit a historic site, how do you rate the importance of the following feature/facilities”, including age, materials used to rehabilitate the building, historic and cultural importance, architecture of the building, information display, guided tours, literature and brochures, souvenirs/gifts/cards, catering facilities around the site, access to visitors with special needs, and attractive settings and atmosphere.

RESULTS

A four-cell matrix was developed based on awareness of historic preservation and visits to historic sites within the last 12 months. The first cell of the matrix represents residents (n=74) who are aware and have visited an historic site within the last 12 months. The second cell includes residents (n=14) who are aware of historic preservation, but have not visited any historic sites and building. The third cell represents residents (n=305) who are unaware of historic preservation, but have visited a historic site or building. The final cell encompasses people (n =295) who are both unaware and who

have not visited a site or building. The matrix demonstrates that only 15% of Arizona's residents are aware of heritage preservation, and 64% have visited at least a historic site or heritage building within the last 12 months. Chi-square tests ($\chi^2 = 17.25, p < .001$) show that participants who visited historic sites and buildings were more likely to be aware than those who did not. Among the buildings of historic importance that were lost or torn down, 29.6% were residential buildings, 25.9% commercial buildings, 22.2% were public buildings and 13% were archeological sites.

Using Chi-square and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the four groups of people were compared based on demographic variables and attitudes toward heritage conservation, functions of historic preservation, role of the public sector in heritage conservation, preservation criteria, and the importance of features and facilities. All demographic variables demonstrated relationships between these groups with income, education, age, and years lived in Arizona. In terms of income, approximately 77% of the aware/visited group had \$50,000 or higher income, while only 50% of the aware/not visited group, 65% of the unaware/visited, and 45% of unaware/not visited group had the income \$50,000 or higher. This reveals that the higher income group tends to be more aware and more likely to visit historic sites, which supports similar findings in past research on heritage visitors (Hovinen 2002; Kerstetter et al. 2001; Prentice 1989). Similar trend emerged while these groups were compared with education level. About 50% of the aware/visited group had a bachelor's degree or higher level education, whereas only 29% of aware/not visited, 40% of unaware/visited, and 30% of unaware/not visited group fell into this category. Comparison of different age categories with the four groups showed that 47% of the aware/visited group are between 46yrs and 60yrs, whereas 46% of the older age group (older than 60) tend to fall into aware/not visited group. Residents were asked how many years they lived in Arizona, which were further categorized into four groups, 0-10 yrs, 11-20 yrs, 21-30 yrs, and 31 and more yrs. The cross-tab and chi-square test showed that 64% of the aware/visited group lived in Arizona 21 years or more, where as only 57% of the aware/not visited, 47% of unaware/visited, and 45% of unaware/not visited group lived in Arizona for 21 year or more. This result indicated that longer someone lives in a place more likely the person to be aware/visited.

For the comparison of the four groups of residents with the attitude toward historic preservation, the functions of historic preservation, the role of government on historic preservation, and the preservation criteria, a series of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted. Comparison of these groups in terms of their attitude toward historic preservation showed that the aware/visited group had the highest positive mean score ($M=4.55$), followed by the unaware/visited ($M=4.47$), aware/not visited ($M=4.24$), and the unaware/not visited group ($M=4.14$). Although all of the groups have high mean scores (over 4.00 on a scale of 1 to 5), Scheffe, a post-hoc test, showed that the aware/visited group and unaware/visited group had significantly higher positive mean scores than unaware/not visited group. Similar results are emerged from the comparison of these four groups with negative attitude scores. The aware/visited groups had the significantly lower mean score ($M=1.77$) than both unaware groups (1.86, 2.19) ($F=4.66, p < .01$). The results suggest that overall, residents have positive attitude towards the preservation of historic sites. However, those residents who visited historic

buildings and were aware of historic preservation tend to have higher positive attitude towards historic preservation.

Residents were also asked to rate their agreement/disagreement of seven different functions of heritage preservation. Responses to these seven functions are shown in table 1. Overall, respondents agreed/strongly agreed with all seven functions of heritage preservation as the mean scores range from 3.74 to 4.53 on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The four items, historic preservation saves archeological site, museums and parks, buildings/structures, and historic districts received highest scores (4.53, 4.49, 4.41, and 4.41, respectively). Further, these functions were compared among the four groups of residents. Although only two of these functions were significantly different among the four groups, descriptive statistics showed interesting differences. The aware/visited group placed more emphasis on saving museums and parks, local neighborhoods and commercial downtown, and rehabilitations of old buildings for new uses, while aware/not visited groups placed more emphasis on saving buildings/structures, archeological sites, and historic districts. These functions can be categorized as preservation and conservation. The aware-visited group supported for conservation functions, whereas not-visited group supported for preservation functions – a good point for discussion.

The respondents were also asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the statements related to the government's role in historic preservation. The scores range from 3.94 to 4.16 on a 1-5 scale, suggesting that the residents want government to play important role in different aspects of heritage preservation. Among the five different aspects of heritage preservation role "government should play a role in historic preservation" received highest scores ($m=4.16$). When these roles were compared across the four groups of residents, as expected, descriptive statistics showed the aware/visited groups want the government to play more important role in heritage preservation than other groups do. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests indicated that only two of the roles were significantly different among the four groups. The aware/visited groups had significantly higher agreement on "government should provide tax incentives and grants to owners of historic properties/buildings" than unaware/not visited group. Similarly, for the statement, "government should help educate the public about historic properties" the aware/visited group had significantly higher score than the aware/not visited and the unaware/not visited groups.

To assess the residents' opinion on the criteria of preservation, the respondents were asked "when identifying an historic property or building for preservation, how important you think each item is?" Among four criteria, "historic/cultural importance" received the highest importance ($m=4.7$ on a 1-5 scale), followed by architecture merit ($m=4.29$), age of the building ($m=4.13$), beauty of the building ($m=3.94$), and economic potential of property ($m=3.23$) (Table 2). When these criteria were compared across the four groups of residents, the aware/visited residents placed more importance on all of these criteria than other groups did. Further, ANOVA results revealed that two of the criteria (historic/cultural and economic potential) were significantly different among the four groups. The aware/visited group had significantly higher score on "historic/cultural importance" than the unaware/visited group had. The aware/visited group also rated more important of economic potential of property for the preservation criteria than other group did.

The residents were also asked, if they were to visit an historic site, how important would each of the following features or facilities be to them on a 1-5 scale. Out of the eleven features or facilities, the materials used to rehabilitate the building, access to visitors with special needs, architecture of the building, and age of the building, and literature and brochures received mean scores over 4.00, suggesting that these features or facilities would be very important for people to visit historic sites and buildings (Table 3). Souvenirs/gift/cards and facilities around the site that provide food or beverages were the least important. This could be because the questions were asked at home, not at the site. Interestingly, eight out of the eleven features or facilities were rated more important by unaware/not visited group than the other groups. However, only those features or facilities receiving lower importance were significantly different. These least important features were felt more important by the unaware or not visited group than the other groups.

Table 1. A Comparison of Function of Historic Preservation among Four Types of Residents

Attitudes	Aware/ visited	Aware/ not visited	Unaware/ visited	Unaware/ not visited	M	F
Historic preservation saves buildings/structures	4.45	4.71	4.49	4.26	4.41	3.14*
Historic preservation saves places that are set aside for public visitation such as museums and parks	4.56	4.14	4.50	4.51	4.49	0.83
Historic preservation saves archeological sites	4.62	4.64	4.56	4.45	4.53	0.91
Historic preservation saves historic districts	4.45	4.57	4.47	4.31	4.41	1.25
Historic preservation saves local neighborhoods	4.14 ^a	3.14 ^b	3.73 ^{ab}	3.68 ^{ab}	3.74	3.97**
Historic preservation rehabilitates old buildings for new uses	4.21	3.93	4.11	4.00	4.08	0.77
Historic preservation saves commercial downtown areas and rural Main Streets	4.13	3.86	3.85	3.83	3.87	1.31

*P<.05, ** P<0.01

Table 2. The preservation criteria by Four Types of Residents

Attitudes	Aware/ visited	Aware/ not visited	Unaware/ visited	Unaware/ not visited	m	F
Beauty of the building	3.95	3.57	3.86	4.08	3.94	1.89

Historical/cultural importance	4.86 ^a	4.21 ^b	4.70 ^{ab}	4.67 ^{ab}	4.70	4.17 ^{**}
Sense of place or atmosphere	4.00	3.93	3.90	3.87	3.90	.25
Economic potential of property	3.79	3.18	3.37	3.23	3.23	2.94 [*]
Architecture merit	4.30	4.00	4.27	4.33	4.29	.58
Age of the building	4.36	3.71	4.07	4.17	4.13	2.09

** P<0.01

Table 3. Importance of features or facilities to visit the sites

Attitudes	Know/ visited	Know/n ot visited	Unaware / visited	Unaware e/ not visited	m	F
The age of the building	4.28	3.85	4.04	3.97	4.05	1.60
The materials used to rehabilitate the building	4.05	3.86	3.73	3.78	3.79	1.48
The historic and cultural importance	4.81	4.50	4.65	4.62	4.66	1.68
The architecture of the building	4.28	3.92	4.28	4.29	4.27	.65
Information displays	4.05	4.29	4.17	4.33	4.21	1.81
Guided tours	3.65	3.86	3.70	3.92	3.77	1.80
Literature and brochures	3.97	4.00	3.94	4.15	4.02	1.62
Souvenirs/gifts/cards	2.23 ^a	2.71 ^{ab}	2.50 ^a	2.84 ^b	2.58	5.01 ^{**}
Facilities around the site that provide food or beverages	2.86 ^{ab}	3.29 ^{ab}	2.78 ^a	3.17 ^b	2.93	4.36 ^{**}
Access for visitors with special needs	4.30	4.71	4.38	4.53	4.43	2.05
An attractive setting and atmosphere	3.66	3.57	3.82	3.95	3.83	1.60

** P<0.01

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, heritage awareness is conceptualized using a combined measure of heritage awareness and residents' visits to heritage sites. The results indicate that residents who visited historic sites and buildings were more likely to be aware than those who did not. Heritage awareness is a critical factor, for if they are aware, residents and other users will have more positive attitudes toward heritage preservation. When four types of residents were compared on demographic variables, attitudes toward preservation, preservation criteria, and importance of feature and facilities, most of these variables were significant. The findings of this study provide important information for heritage preservation managers and policy makers. Unlike heritage preservationists' view, opening heritage sites to the public and tourists can help to create awareness. Lower income, less educated, and younger people were more likely to be unaware and not visited heritage sites. The findings suggest that heritage managers should reach out to this group to encourage them to visit heritage sites.

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