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## Tourist motivations for visiting heritage attractions: new insights from a large US study

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**Abstract:** This article describes the results of a large study measuring tourist motivations for visiting heritage-related attractions in a major state in the US. The study used a quantitative survey method with a sample size of more than 3,500 collected at dozens of diverse heritage tourism attractions in a geography spanning hundreds of miles. The methodology used a blended paper and online technique using QR image technology to assist respondents in completing surveys on any mobile device. The study also used GIS software to map survey data points. 'Seeing heritage attractions' was the top motivation cited by respondents for their visit (39%) followed by 'outdoor recreation' (22%), 'visiting friends and family' (13%) and 'just passing through' (8%). Eighteen percent of visitors reported that they visited because they lived nearby. Conclusions and limitations of the study as well as implications for future research are also discussed.

**Keywords:** GIS software; heritage tourism; mobile and online questionnaires; QR images; visitor motivations.

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## **1 Introduction**

The study described in this article was undertaken to gain a better understanding of the motivations for tourists to visit heritage-related attractions in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This need has both theoretical and economic roots.

From a theoretical perspective, Goeldner and Ritchie (2006) plainly state that “to be successful, tourism practitioners must understand consumer motivations” (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2006, p. 246). Over time, the topic has been the subject of “increasing interest from a range of disciplines” (Poria et al., 2003, p. 240). A major goal of this growing body of research has been to identify the motivations that drive tourist demand. Tchetchik et al. (2009), for example, have argued that heritage-related attractions each offer a unique mix of characteristics that appeal to tourists in different ways, whereas Prebensen et al. (2012, p. 261) describe this mix as ‘perceived experience value’. Therefore, there is a sound theoretical need to identify what motivates visitation to heritage sites.

From an economic perspective, the identification of heritage tourist visitation motivations is important because heritage tourism can be seen as an economic development tool, especially in rural areas. Existing research on the topic supports this idea, with Timothy (2005) noting that “heritage resources have the potential to assist in regenerating rural areas” (Timothy, 2005, p. 50). Dong et al. (2013) agreed, commenting that “in the United States, many rural communities rely on tourism for economic growth to compensate for declines in manufacturing, agriculture, extraction of natural resources, and population” (Dong et al., 2013, p. 181).

Hampton (2005) also explored this economic dynamic in his commentary on the monetary benefits of tourism at heritage sites, and Chang et al. (1996) agreed that heritage tourism is increasingly employed in an attempt to bolster struggling regional economies. This is very much the case in Pennsylvania, where many of the heritage-related sites are located in smaller urban areas and rural areas with weak local economies (McGrath, 2003).

Recognising this potential for economic stimulation, this study was designed to identify the motivations for tourist visitation to heritage-related attractions to focus marketing efforts on tapping into future growth in the heritage travel market. According to the white paper *Cultural and Heritage Tourism in the USA*, historic/cultural travel volume increased 13% from 1996 to 2002, increasing from 192.4 million person trips to 216.8 million person trips in 2002. This growth also was very attractive economically, because heritage tourists tend to spend more during their trips than standard tourists (\$623 vs. \$457) and to stay at a hotel, motel or B&B (62% vs. 55%) and to travel for longer time periods (US Department of Commerce, 2005).

This study sought to add to the existing literature in three ways. First, the study's sample is very broad, focusing on many different types of heritage-related attractions across hundreds of miles of geography. The sites range from primarily historical (Johnstown Flood Museum) to primarily cultural (Amish communities) to primarily industrial (Hershey chocolate factory) to primarily natural (Pennsylvania's 'Grand Canyon') to primarily historic preservation (Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater). The literature includes many studies on single attractions or regions, but few studies have sought to measure heritage tourism motivations across such a broad range of different attractions.

Second, the study employed QR image technology to facilitate the use of an online survey instrument. The use of this technology is emerging as a way to engage potential respondents to use the mobile smart devices to participate in consumer surveys.

Third, the study utilised Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology to capture, analyse and visually depict both the heritage attraction locations where respondents completed the survey, as well as their home zip code. This provided a tool to map the locations where research was conducted as well as the home zip codes of all respondents.

## **2 Literature review**

Heritage tourism is not a new concept. In fact, Timothy and Boyd (2006) noted that it represents one of the oldest forms of travel, dating back to the experiences of ancient Egyptians and Romans who traveled to locations of cultural or historic importance.

In recent years, heritage tourism has received more attention as an important subset of the mass tourism market. Also over time, the focus of heritage tourism has expanded from historic buildings and artefacts (Prentice, 1993) to locations featuring interesting and significant cultures (Timothy and Boyd, 2006) to include sites of natural heritage as well (Butler and Boyd, 2000).

The study of heritage tourism has been explored by numerous researchers over the past three decades stretching back to the early work of Hewison (1987). Some researchers have borrowed terms from the field of Economics to describe the concept. For example, Prentice (1993) suggested that heritage-related attractions could be considered the 'supply side' of the heritage tourism phenomenon. Balanced against this is the view of Poria et al. (2004) that the 'demand side' of the equation could be seen as the visitor experiences at the heritage sites.

Garrod and Fyall (2001) defined the concept as the tourists who visit cultural and heritage sites, and Pearce and Butler (1993) included any visitors who have a heritage-related experience at a given site. A description of the concept that is pertinent to this study is provided by Poria et al. (2001) when they defined heritage tourism "...as a phenomenon which, at its core, has not the heritage attributes of a specific site, but rather the motivation to visit it, both in relation to that site's attributes and the tourists' perception of their own heritage" (Poria et al., 2001, p. 1047). This captures the way that many visitors to Pennsylvania's heritage tourism sites view their destination. An example would be the Johnstown Flood Museum, a facility that documents the 1889 Flood in Johnstown, PA. Visitors to this site often plan trips to the area based not only on the historical significance of the flood event itself but also by their family's historical connection to Johnstown history.

More specific to this article is a discussion of the literature related to the motivations of tourists to choose specific destinations.

### 2.1 Tourism motivation conceptual framework

Starting with a macroview of motivations for tourism in general, Botha et al. (1999) identified specific areas that seem to motivate tourists. Their research, on tourism to Ghana, found that the highest rated motivations were related to ‘cultural’ factors (87%); ‘adventure’ (87%); ‘relaxation’ (85%); ‘novelty’ (82%); specific factors related to ‘destination’ (80%); ‘escape’ (74%) and ‘social contact’ (73%).

To better understand the motivations of tourists, some researchers have consulted the literature of the psychology field, specifically, the concept of a ‘hierarchy of needs’ originally proposed by Maslow (1943). For example, Pearce (1988) proposed that tourist visitation motivations could also be seen as a five-step hierarchy that mirrors Maslow’s stages of physiological needs, safety/security needs, relationship needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualisation needs. According to this ‘travel career ladder’ (TCL), tourists may first seek to satisfy physiological needs in their travels that can be seen from a tourism perspective as a desire to travel for relaxation. A second step on this ladder is be the motivation to travel for some degree of stimulation, but only destinations that are viewed as safe choices for the. A third step could be seen as travel motivated but the desire to maintain existing relationships or to seek out new social interactions and relationships. The fourth step would explain travel that is motivated by self-esteem needs, such as to acquire new knowledge of a destination or a new skill, or for an element of the glamour of travel. The final level of motivation would be travel for the sake of self-actualisation, which could include the desire to achieve a level of fulfilment or inner peace at a destination or attraction, or to travel for altruistic purposes, such as a trip to assist others in need. A comparison of these two models is noted below in Table 1.

**Table 1** Comparison of motivation models

<i>Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943)</i>	<i>Pearce’s travel career ladder (1988)</i>
Self-actualisation	Fulfilment
Self-esteem	Self-esteem and development
Belonging	Relationship
Safety	Stimulation
Physiological	Relaxation

In an update of the TCL model, Pearce and Lee (2005) used a sophisticated two-step research process to establish that the four most critical motives for travel are related to ‘novelty’, ‘escape/relax’, ‘relationship’ and ‘self-development’ regardless of one’s travel experience level. They went so far as to describe these four motivation factors as the backbone’ of all travel motivation and travel career patterns (Pearce and Lee, 2005, p. 236).

However, Oguz (2014) noted that there has been some criticisms of TCL model. Specifically, Ryan (1998) argued the concept may not explain all the travel motivations. In a study of UK tourists, Ryan found that past tourism experiences with a destination may serve as a better indication of motivations than the psychological needs proposed by

the TCL model. Despite these limitations, Oguz (2014) identified three studies in which the TCL model served as a useful conceptual framework to help understand consumer motivations for visiting tourist destinations: specifically, the work of Kim (1997) that helped explain Korean tourists' motivation to visit Australia and a study by Murphy (2001) to explain backpackers' motivations. Interestingly, these motivations included 'excitement' and 'adventure' (which would relate to Pearce's stimulation motivation), and 'meeting the local people' (which would relate to relationships needs); and research by Paris and Teye (2010), who also conducted research on backpackers. Their study identified six backpacker travel motivations: 'relaxation' (relating to Pearce's relaxation need); 'experience' and 'budget travel' (which would relate to Pearce's stimulation needs); and 'cultural knowledge', 'personal/social growth' and 'independence' (which would relate to Pearce's fulfilment need).

In a study of visitation to the Anne Frank House Museum in Amsterdam, Poria et al. (2006) found five main motives for a visit: 'learning' (relating to Pearce's 'self-esteem and development' factor); 'leisure pursuit' (relating to Pearce's 'relaxation' factor); 'emotional involvement' (relating to Pearce's 'stimulation' factor) and 'connecting with my heritage' and 'bequeathing for (my) children', both of which relate most closely to the 'relationships' and 'fulfilment' motivation levels of Pearce's model.

In a more recent study, Prebensen et al. (2012), in a study of tourists to Norway, narrowed these key motivators down to two broad areas: 'relaxation' (including "enjoy peace and tranquility", "having a sense of freedom and relaxation", "getting away from work/stress", "being emotionally and physically refreshed" and "getting closer to nature") and 'socialisation' (including "participating in many activities", "meeting new people and socialising", "developing my personal interests", and "seeking intellectual enrichment/learning new things").

Narrowing the focus to research investigating heritage tourism, Prentice (1993) identified six motivations including 'pleasure of viewing', 'education', 'information', 'relaxation', 'entertainment' and 'exercise', all of which mesh at different levels of Pearce's model discussed above. Chen (1998) identified two factors that also were consistent with Pearce's model: "learning about a new culture" and "increasing personal knowledge". In two more studies that fit the motivation model to different degrees, Confer and Kerstetter (2000) identified 'culture', 'heritage' and 'ethnicity' as key drivers for visitation, and Timothy and Boyd (2003) found that 'pursuing new knowledge' and 'satisfying curiosity' about heritage-related attractions were key motivators.

Poria et al. (2004) studied the motivations of international tourists visiting Israel. They found that visitor motivations for visiting heritage sites were classified into three groups: 'heritage experience', 'learning experience' and 'recreational experience'. In a subsequent study, Poria et al. (2006) identified two unique motivators that were not identified in earlier work: 'bequeathing' knowledge to children and 'emotional involvement'. In the context of Pearce's model, these could be seen as related to the 'relationship' and 'fulfilment' motivations.

Yao (2013) delved deeper into the issue in a study of heritage tourism in Nanjing, China, attempting to understand the relationships among heritage motivation, travel experience and overall satisfaction. The results found that the three most important dimensions of a tourist's interaction with a heritage site were 'heritage product representativeness', 'heritage product attractiveness' and 'facilities and service'. All three dimensions of attributes were found to contribute significantly to tourist experience satisfaction, with 'heritage product attractiveness' being the most significant.

Oguz (2014) found similar motivations in a study of heritage tourist motivations in Turkey. Results of this study mirrored Poria et al. in that three key areas emerged: 'heritage/emotional', 'recreational', and 'cultural/educational' (Oguz, 2014).

Wang and Leou (2015) also investigated tourist motivations in an effort to gain a greater understanding of cultural and heritage tourisms in Macao. They found that one overarching motivator is perceived value. Furthermore, they identified three dimensions: 'scenic value', 'knowledge value' and 'social value'.

Jamal and Hill (2004), as well as Poria et al. (2001) also identified another key factor central to many heritage tourism experiences: 'authenticity'. During their study of cultural sites in Australia, Jamal and Hill (2004, p. 359) highlighted the importance of a 'sense of place' that includes a "lived experience of both tourists and residents". In addition to authenticity, Poria et al. (2001) also found that 'social distinction' and 'nostalgia' are critical motivations for visits to heritage sites. Poria et al.'s (2006) study of visitors to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam also found that there is also a link between tourists' personal family heritage and their motivations for visiting a heritage site. This personal heritage link is similar to the dynamic at one of this study's research sites, the Johnstown Flood Museum, noted above.

As a counterpoint to the literature on relatively sophisticated motivation models for heritage travel, however, there is also research that suggests that some tourists are motivated by more simplistic factors. One example of this is the work of Ryan and Hsu (2011) who found that the motivation for museum visitation might be no more complex than finding an outlet for entertaining children on a rainy day. Another example of this more simplistic view is the work of McKercher (2002) who found that visitors to Hong Kong cultural attractions were motivated primarily by the desire to simply see something different and unusual (although this could apply to Pearce's stimulation motivation).

In view of the many different possible motivations discussed in the literature, this study focused on a more narrow view, largely following Pearce's TCL model (Pearce, 1988).

### **3 Methodology**

To study the motivations of heritage tourists, this study used a sampling frame of 12 large multicounty regions in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania known as designated heritage areas (DHAs). The DHA program was first established in 1988 and has grown to include 12 multicounty areas located throughout the Commonwealth. The focus of DHA program is to promote heritage-related economic development, tourism, preserving a sense of place, community education about local heritage, and the preservation of historic buildings and artefacts (Mahoney, 2014).

A sample of five DHAs was selected from among the total of 12 areas across the Commonwealth for budgetary reasons. The five DHAs selected for the study were Allegheny Ridge, Lincoln Highway, National Road, Pennsylvania Route 6 (PA Route 6) and Susquehanna Gateway. Of these DHAs, all follow to some extent the types of heritage trails described by Timothy and Boyd (2014). Specifically, Lincoln Highway, National Road and PA Route 6, each of which follow early highway corridors, are "human-created linear courses that were not developed specifically to be a tourist trail by function as one anyway" (Timothy and Boyd, 2014, p. 21). On the other hand, Susquehanna Gateway, which largely follows the contours of existing river, is an

“organically-evolved cultural routes...which follow linear-shaped natural resources such as rivers” (Timothy and Boyd, 2014, p. 20). Allegheny Ridge, which follows both river systems as well as the path of the historic Pennsylvania Main Line Canal, would contain elements of both types of route.

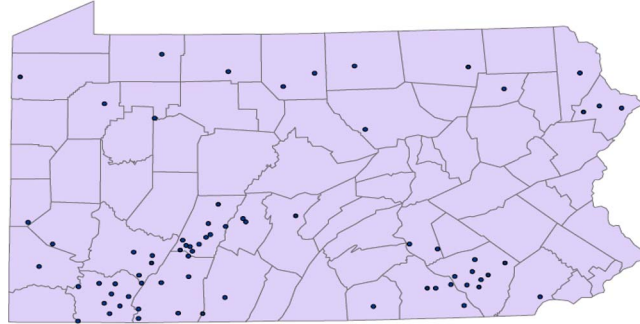
These five DHAs represent efforts to accomplish what Xie (2015) refers to as ‘heritagisation’. Xie attributes this concept to Misiura (2006) and describes it as a process by which “culture is selected, preserved and reconstructed by uniting principles, practices and processes” (Xie, 2015, p. 16). In all cases, the organisations managing each of the DHAs, in partnership with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, have essentially prioritised the value of the historic attractions in each of their geographies and then ‘packaged’ these sites as part of their overall marketing efforts to create a brand for their region.

The study employed a quantitative approach using surveys that were administered over an 8-month period during the spring, summer and fall of 2014 beginning in May and ending in December.

The survey instrument was developed in a collaborative process that included major stakeholders of the project and which incorporated the best practices from other economic impact studies that the research team had been involved with in the past. Once the paper questionnaire instrument was completed, an identical online version was created using the Qualtrics online survey platform.

Data collection sites were chosen by the executive directors of each DHA based upon their knowledge of the local tourism environment. The number of sites varied by DHA, based largely on the geographic size of the area. Specific examples of anchor attractions by DHA include major railroad and flood-related sites in the Allegheny Ridge area such as the Horseshoe Curve and Railroaders’ Museum near Altoona and the Johnstown Flood Museum in Johnstown. Key sites within the Lincoln Highway DHA include the Gettysburg Battlefield Visitor Center on the eastern end of the corridor and the Flight 93 National Memorial near the western end. Examples of anchor sites within the National Road DHA include Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater architectural site and Fort Necessity National Battlefield. Within the PA Route 6 area, major attractions include the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum and the Kinzua Bridge State Park, site of an observation deck built on the remaining towers of a huge, historic railway bridge over a gorge. Examples of anchor sites within the Susquehanna Gateway DHA include many Amish culture-related attractions and the historic Hershey chocolate factory.

In all, the sample covered 240 different heritage attraction zip codes located throughout the Commonwealth, as depicted in Figure 1. The research team employed the use of GIS technology to create this and other maps to aid in visualising the survey data. Both public and private sector organisations including healthcare, criminal justice and economic development groups are developing innovative ways to harness this type of data integration and spatial visualisation (Elebead et al., 2012). In this study, the GIS data were collected via two questionnaire items. The first item, “where is your home zip code?” was completed by respondents. The second item, identifying the survey site, was completed by members of the research team for the paper survey. For the online study, the Qualtrics survey software automatically provided GIS coordinates for the location where the online survey was taken using a mobile smart device and respondent home zip codes were also collected. All of these data were then analysed using ArcGIS software. Using this tool, the research team created maps to depict both the heritage sites where surveys were completed as well as the home locations of all respondents.

**Figure 1** Zip codes of heritage attraction survey locations (see online version for colours)

The locations are overwhelmingly located within the boundaries of the five study DHAs. As noted in Figure 1, each heritage attraction in which visitors completed a survey is represented by one dot on the map. For simplicity of viewing, each dot is equal in size, even though only a couple dozen respondents may have completed surveys at the Friendship Hill historic site in the National Road DHA whereas hundreds of respondents have completed surveys at Fallingwater, the world famous home designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1935 (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, 2016), which is also located in the National Road DHA.

For reference purposes, the PA Route 6 DHA is represented by the dots along the geographic northern tier of the state in Figure 1, whereas the dots in the lower portion of the map represent (from left to right) National Road, Allegheny Ridge, Lincoln Highway and Susquehanna Gateway.

Most of the data collection was completed via the passive collection method whereby visitors to the site were advised about the survey and then given the option to complete either the paper or online version. If they chose the online option, respondents were given a printed invitation card that included a QR image that could be scanned by free software available on most smart phones.

QR images or 'codes' were invented by Denso Wave Inc. in Japan in 1994 originally to track parts information in the automobile manufacturing industry. The images are essentially two-dimensional bar codes that can be converted to content, including URLs, phone numbers and text, when scanned by a camera-enabled smartphone with a QR reader application (Atkinson, 2013). For the purposes of this study, the researchers created a unique image using a free Google service known as 'Google URL Shortener' that also simplifies long URL addresses (see Appendix A for a visual of the study's invitation card featuring the QR image and shortened URL as well as screen shots of the mobile and online questionnaire instrument).

Scanning this unique QR image directed respondents to the online version of the questionnaire hosted on a secure site by Qualtrics. Many anchor attractions placed the paper survey instrument or online invitation card with the QR image near high traffic locations such as the reception desk or visitor guest book. A minority of the data collection was performed by either volunteers or data collection supervisors as a visitor intercept at the anchor attraction sites. This method was used during high-profile events at anchor attractions that were identified by the executive directors and the data collection supervisors. In this situation, data collection supervisors or volunteers would approach



visitors and ask them to complete either the paper or online instrument. The same instruments were used in both passive and intercept methods.

Regardless of the method respondents chose, participants were incentivised to complete the questionnaire by the chance to win a \$200 gift card.

Once the paper and online data were collected, the research team merged the two sets of data using Microsoft Excel and transferred the data to SPSS for more detailed analysis. SPSS allowed the research team to investigate many different measures including the total number of respondents, their awareness of DHAs, the source of information about the DHAs and demographic data.

This statistical analysis also allowed for a degree of control over the duplication of paper versus online questionnaire respondents. However, because the survey was billed as an anonymous enterprise, no unique identifier information about respondents was recorded unless they voluntarily provided their telephone number for a chance to win the \$200 gift card. The analysis identified one telephone number match between a paper and online questionnaire respondent (0.05% of the sample), but the records were not thrown out because the research team believed the respondent(s) could have been unique individuals within a party travelling together. One respondent may have chosen to complete the paper questionnaire, whereas another decided to take the survey online.

One surprise that emerged from this paper and online methodology was the relatively low proportion of online responses. In fact, 93% of all completed questionnaires were of the traditional paper type, with only 7% being completed online. The research team believes that there are two possible explanations for this outcome. First, the demographics of the sample skew older (the largest single segment is 55–64, representing 25% of respondents), suggesting that there may be less of an inclination for this population to use the mobile smart device technology required to scan the online invitation card's QR image for a link to the online questionnaire. Second, the summer of 2014 included a number of highly publicised 'hacks' of major retail databases, including Home Depot. These incidents may have discouraged potential respondents from using the online questionnaire out of fear for the security of their information.

The combined number of paper and online questionnaires that were deemed usable by the research team totaled 3,524, representing a response rate of 0.0243% of the total estimated visitors from across all five DHAs of 14,555,743, an estimate provided by DHA staff in each of the regions.

Using the sample error estimate online calculator provided by Decision Support Systems, LP, a respected national marketing research consulting firm, this response rate yields an estimated error rate of approximately  $\pm 1.7\%$ . This error estimate is based upon a sample proportion of 50% and a confidence interval of 95% and is calculated using a method that is most appropriate for a random sample. Because the sample for this study is a convenience sample and not random, the error rate would be higher, but this provides a rough estimate of the extreme low range of possible study error.

### *3.1 Sample composition*

To operationalise demographic measures, the questionnaire instrument included five items that asked for respondent gender, household income, age, occupation and the zip code of their home. Table 2 summarises the key demographic characteristics of the sample.

**Table 2** Demographic overview of sample

Gender	Female	Male				
	40%	60%				
Age	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
	6%	12%	15%	20%	25%	22%
Income	< \$25k	\$25–50k	\$50–75k	\$75–100k	\$100k+	
	9%	23%	25%	20%	23%	
Education	High School	Trade School	Bachelor's	Masters+		
	17%	28%	30%	25%		

Sample respondents skewed towards females by a 60/40 proportion. This is consistent with earlier work that suggests that female historic sites visitors outnumber male visitors (Timothy and Boyd, 2003).

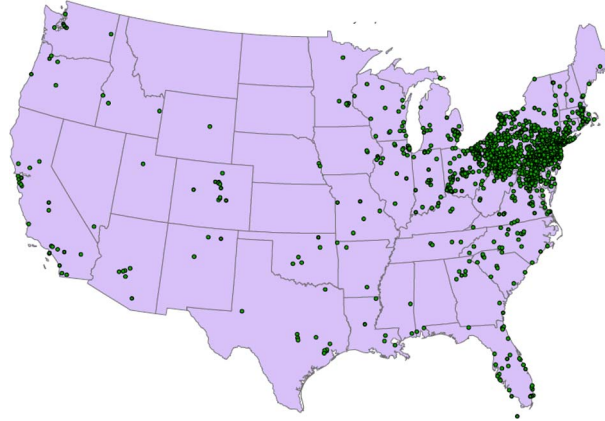
As noted earlier, the sample skewed older with the largest single segment (25%) of respondents reporting an age of 55–64. Slightly less than half of respondents (47%) reported their age within the 25–54 demographic often used by marketers to target consumers. Only 6% of respondents reported that their age in the 18–24 segment. Huh et al. (2006) also found visitors to a Virginia heritage site skewed older, although Timothy and Boyd (2003) came to a different conclusion suggesting that “the heritage market is usually younger than that of other tourism types” (Timothy and Boyd, 2003, p. 66).

The sample skewed towards higher levels of education with nearly a third of respondents (30%) reporting the attainment of a bachelor's degree. Overall, a majority (55%) had at least a bachelor's degree, with 25% reporting that they had earned a master's degree or higher. This is also consistent with Timothy and Boyd (2003) who suggested that heritage tourists are likely to have a higher education level than other type of tourists.

In terms of household income, the sample skewed fairly upscale with the single largest segment of respondents (25%) reporting household income of \$50,000–75,000 and 68% of all respondents reporting income of more than \$50,000. Only 9% reported household income of less than \$25,000. This also mirrors Timothy and Boyd (2003) who suggested that “since the heritage public is better educated, it is also reasonable that they are better off financially than the average citizen and have better-paying jobs” (Timothy and Boyd, 2003, p. 66).

The sample included respondents from 1,678 different zip codes from throughout the US representing visitors from 46 states, as noted in Figure 2. In addition, the sample included visitors from 16 foreign countries from as close as Canada and as distant as Venezuela, Colombia, Ireland, England, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Italy, as well as Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

**Figure 2** Home zip code of sample respondents (see online version for colours)



### 3.2 Operationalising the primary measures

To operationalise the measure of motivation for visiting heritage sites, the study mirrored aspects of two of the motivational models discussed above, particularly Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) and Pearce’s TCL model (Pearce, 1988).

As noted in Table 3, the questionnaire instrument for this study was designed to capture elements of both models through the following options to the item: “What is your primary reason for being in this (heritage) area?” The response options were ‘to see heritage attractions’, ‘for outdoor recreation’, ‘visiting friends and family’, ‘just passing through’ and ‘I live here’.

**Table 3** Comparison of motivation models and questionnaire items

<i>Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943)</i>	<i>Pearce’s travel career ladder (1988)</i>	<i>This study’s motivation questionnaire items</i>
Self-actualisation	Fulfilment	‘To see heritage attractions’
Self esteem	Self-esteem and development	
Belonging	Relationship	‘Visiting friends and family’
Safety	Stimulation	‘For outdoor recreation’
Physiological	Relaxation	‘Just passing through’; ‘I live here’

#### 3.2.1 Trip purpose

Recognising that not all visitations to a region are strictly for heritage-related attractions, the survey design provided the opportunity for the research team to conservatively define heritage visitation. Previous research estimated that about two thirds of the spending by DHA visitors would be lost to the local region in the absence of heritage-related attractions (Stynes and Sun, 2004). In this study, the questionnaire instrument included two items intended to operationalise the primary purpose of the respondent’s visit: “Please list a few of the facilities/attractions you have visited/or will visit during your

stay in our area”; and the follow-on item, “Was one or more of these attractions the primary reason for your trip to our area?”

As noted in Table 4, the quantitative survey found that the National Road DHA recorded the highest percentage of visitors reporting that the attraction in which they completed the survey was the primary reason they visited the DHA (probably driven by the dominance of the Fallingwater site within this area). PA Route 6 was lowest among the study DHAs.

**Table 4** Trip purpose by heritage area

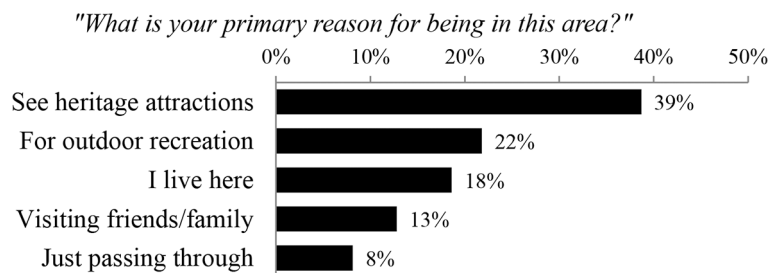
<i>Heritage area</i>	<i>Was a visit to a local attraction the “primary reason for your trip?”</i>
Allegheny Ridge	64%
Lincoln Highway	74%
National Road	82%
Route 6	58%
Susquehanna Gateway	66%
Overall average	69%

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Motivations

‘Seeing heritage attractions’ was the top motivation (39%) cited by respondents for visiting the heritage site where they received their questionnaire. ‘Outdoor recreation’ was the second strongest motivation for visitors with 22% of respondents reporting that it was the reason for their visit. The remaining motivation options scored lower with ‘I live here’ being reported by 18% of respondents and ‘visiting friends and family’ by 13% and ‘just passing through’, with 8%, as depicted in Chart 1.

**Chart 1** Primary motivation for visit

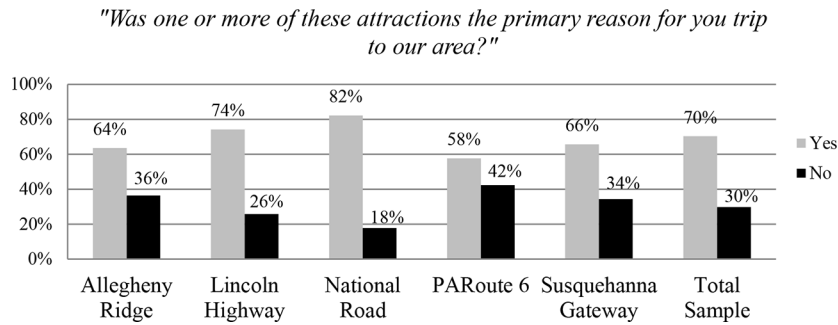


### 4.2 Primary reason for visit

The survey also asked respondents to confirm that the specific attraction they visited was their primary reason for the overall DHA. The research team was interested in confirming that the actual percentage of visitors travelling to regional attractions could warrant the

term ‘heritage’ visitor. For this reason, the survey attempted to capture this variable by asking the question: “was this attraction(s) the primary reason for your trip to our area?” Results for the overall sample indicated that 70% of respondents said that the attraction they were visiting was indeed the primary reason for their trip to the DHA. However, as Chart 2 indicates, the proportion varied from a high of 82% for the National Road DHA to a low of 58% for the PA Route 6 DHA.

**Chart 2** Primary reason for visit to each DHA

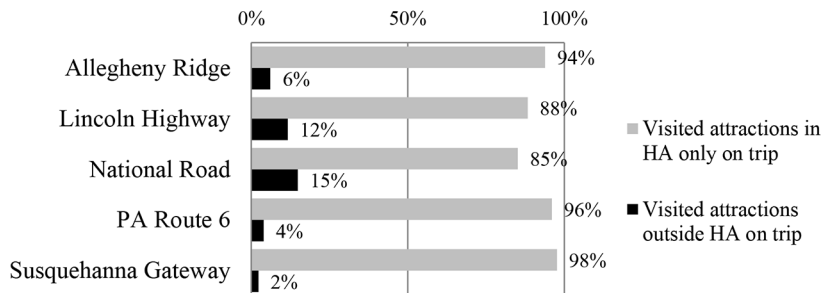


### 4.3 Cross visitation between heritage areas

The research team was also interested in determining if visitors planned their trip to include more than one heritage site within a DHA. It is possible, and more likely in some DHAs, for visitors to shuffle between DHAs during a single visit. As Chart 3 illustrates, over 90% of visitors to three of the five study DHAs reported that their visit was strictly within DHA geographic borders, whereas two (National Road and Lincoln Highway) recorded a larger percentage of visitor who reported that they also crossed over the geographic border of the DHA to visit another DHA during their trip.

**Chart 3** Visitation beyond heritage area borders

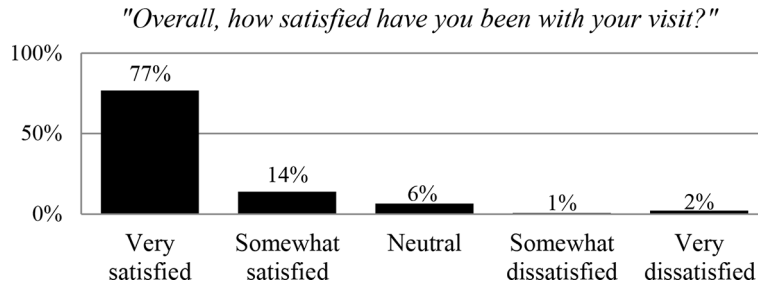
*Comparison of results of "Please list a few of the facilities/attractions you have visited/or will visit during your stay in our area"*



4.4 Visitor satisfaction vs. motivation for visit

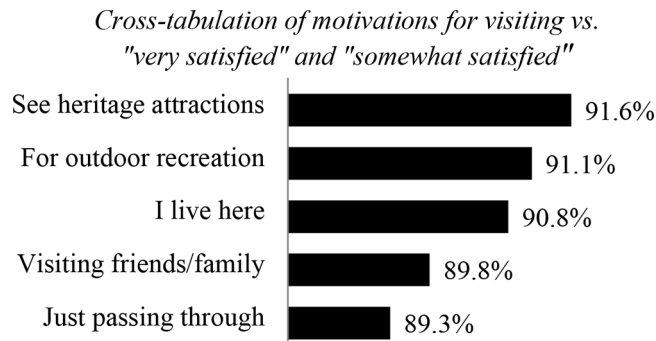
Survey results indicated that 91% of all respondents were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat satisfied’ with their visit as noted in Chart 4, with only 3% of all respondents reporting some level of dissatisfaction. Six percent reported a ‘neutral’ reaction.

**Chart 4** Satisfaction with visit



A cross-tabulation analysis was used to further investigate the level of satisfaction experienced by respondents with different motivations for their visit. Respondents who reported that their primary motivation for their visit was ‘to see heritage attractions’ also reported the highest level of satisfaction with their visit (91.6% for the top two satisfaction responses) as illustrated in Chart 5. The visitation motivation that ranked number two among respondents was ‘for outdoor recreation’ (with a 91.1% rating for the top two satisfaction responses).

**Chart 5** Motivations and satisfaction level



More than one third (39%) of all respondents indicated that this was their first trip to the DHA where they completed the questionnaire. This percentage of first-time visitors was exactly the same as reported in the 2010 DHA study at 39% (Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 2010).

A cross tabulation of the data on these first time visitors indicated that the ‘just passing through’ motivation segment reported the highest proportion (60%) of first time visitation, as noted in Table 5. The ‘to see heritage attractions’ segment represented the second highest proportion of first time visitation at 51%. This suggests that heritage-related sites were powerful attractions not only for those motivated by such an experience but also for those who were travelling nearby, who diverted their trip to make a visit.

Not surprisingly, two strong segments for repeat visitation were 'I live here' (90%) and 'visiting friends and family' (62%). It was interesting to note that 'outdoor recreation' is also a powerful draw for repeat visitors (67%), suggesting that some of the more nature-related attractions may be the locations for regularly-scheduled vacations.

**Table 5** Motivation for visit by visitor type cross-tabulation

<i>Motivation segments</i>	<i>Percentage of each segment who were first-time visitors</i>	<i>Percentage of each segment who were repeat visitors</i>
'To see heritage attractions'	51	49
'Visiting friends and family'	38	62
'For outdoor recreation'	33	67
'Just passing through'	60	40
'I live here'	10	90

In another interesting analysis, data for each of the study's motivation segments were cross tabulated by respondents' answer to the questionnaire item noted earlier: "was one or more of these attractions the primary reason for your trip to our area?" Results of this analysis indicated that respondents in the 'to see heritage attractions' motivation segment had the highest percentage of affirmative responses at 85.4%, as noted in Table 6. This suggests that respondents in this segment were the most highly motivated to visit attractions, most of which were heritage-related, although this motivation varied by DHA, as indicated in Table 4 (where the National Road had the highest proportion of respondents reporting that a local heritage-related attraction was their 'primary reason for visiting', probably driven by the dominance of the Fallingwater attraction in that area).

**Table 6** Cross-tabulation of motivation segment by primary purpose of visit

<i>Motivation segments</i>	<i>Percentage of each segment indicating local attractions were their "primary purpose for visiting the area"</i>
'To see heritage attractions'	85.4
'Visiting friends and family'	42.0
'For outdoor recreation'	75.7
'Just passing through'	54.3
'I live here'	56.7

## 5 Conclusion

The findings of this study build upon the existing body of the literature on heritage tourism motivation. Specifically, the findings are very consistent with those of Poria et al. (2004) who reported that having a 'heritage experience' was one of the top three top motivations. This study reports that 'outdoor recreation' is the second strongest motivation for visitors, again very consistent with Poria et al. (2004), who found that a 'recreational experience' was one of the top three motivations. The third motivation studied by Poria et al. (2004), 'learning experience', was not one of the response options

for this study. The results also are similar to Oguz (2014) who found three motivations: ‘heritage/emotional’, ‘recreational’ and ‘cultural/educational’.

This study extends the Poria et al. (2004) and Oguz (2014) works by investigating the link between the motivations for visiting heritage sites and the level of visitor satisfaction. As noted above, ‘seeing heritage attractions’ is not only the top motivation for visitation, but this motivation also results in the strongest level of visitor satisfaction with the visit. Furthermore, the second highest rated motivation, ‘for outdoor recreation’, also ranks number two in terms of visitor satisfaction.

The results also are interesting to view through the lens of Pearce’s TCL model (see Table 7). From this perspective, the data suggest that the greatest proportion of motivation appears to fall within Pearce’s ‘fulfilment’ and ‘self-esteem and development’ motivational areas with 39% of respondents reporting that this was their “primary reason for being in this area” on the questionnaire instrument. It is also interesting to note that the other greatest proportion of responses fall within Pearce’s ‘lower’ motivational levels of ‘stimulation’ (22%) and ‘relaxation’ (a combined 16%). Responses from respondents whose motivation was related to Pearce’s ‘relationship’ factor (13%) were sandwiched between these two groups.

**Table 7** Comparison of motivation models, questionnaire items, and survey results

<i>Pearce’s travel career ladder (1988)</i>	<i>Motivation questionnaire items</i>	<i>Survey results</i>
Fulfilment and self-esteem and development	‘To see heritage attractions’	39%
Relationship	‘Visiting friends and family’	13%
Stimulation	For outdoor recreation’	22%
Relaxation	‘Just passing through’; ‘I live here’	8% (‘Just passing through’); 18% (‘I live here’)

The study also delves deeper into the motivation issue by confirming that heritage-related interests are indeed the primary reason for visitation, with a strong majority (70%) of respondents agreeing. We believe that the variation in the responses by DHA is due to the unique nature of the different attractions in each DHA. For example, 82% of respondents visiting attractions in the National Road DHA reported that ‘heritage’ was their main reason for visitation. This is almost certainly due to the dominance Fallingwater. On the other hand, the area with the lowest percentage of respondents (58%) reporting that ‘heritage’ was their primary reason for visiting was the PA Route 6 region. This was probably due to the presence of a water recreation-related attraction within the area, the Kinzua Reservoir.

Another interesting aspect of this study is that over 90% of visitors for three of the five study areas reported that their visit was strictly within the geographic borders of those areas.

There were two anomalies: the Lincoln Highway DHA, where 12% of respondents reported that they visited attractions outside the area, and National Road DHA, where 15% of respondents reported this activity. We believe that this is due to the unique nature of these two DHAs, as corridors that connect major attractions. For example, many National Road visitors also reported that they visited the Flight 93 National Memorial, which is nearby, but lies within the Lincoln Highway DHA. And conversely, many



Lincoln Highway visitors reported that the visited Fallingwater, which is within the National Highway DHA.

## **6 Implications**

There are several practical implications of this study including theoretical, economical, and methodological perspectives.

From a theoretical perspective, the study's results were consistent with the findings of Poria et al. (2004) noted above, who identified three broad areas: 'heritage experience', 'learning experience' and 'recreational experience'. This study found that responses to questionnaire items citing 'seeing heritage attractions' and 'outdoor recreation' combined for 61% of all reported motivations for respondents' visit. The implication here for policymakers is that these themes should be stressed in marketing efforts. An excellent example of this combination of marketing themes already exists in the form of a new interactive itinerary map application that the PA Route 6 DHA has created for downloading to mobile devices. This application allows a visitor to envision what the nearest heritage or recreational site is along the Route 6 corridor, giving travelers and incentive to move further along the highway and hopefully spend extra time in the region.

Economically, findings of the study make the point that heritage tourism is an important economic driver, helping to sustain 25,708 jobs - limited strictly to the 12 Pennsylvania DHAs (This estimated job total was developed in the economic analysis portion of the study not discussed in this article). These data should provide DHA administrators with strong ammunition in their quest for future funding for the program from political leaders in the state capitol. These findings can also be used by heritage-related tourism attractions beyond the Commonwealth to help quantify and legitimise the significant economic value of heritage tourism.

Methodologically, this study also suggests that future research can be assisted through the use of QR image technology enabled by Google URL Shortener to simplify survey administration. The key implication here is that respondents in future studies will be able to complete visitation questionnaires on mobile smart devices anywhere - even in their cars or hotel rooms. One hurdle identified in this study was the skew of online survey usage towards younger users, but this issue should ease with the growing acceptance of mobile device applications by users of all ages. The other method employed in this study that could be very useful in future is the GIS analysis enabled by ArcGIS software.

## **7 Limitations**

This study has four key limitations. First, the methodology of the study ensured that findings provide a relatively strong representation of the economic impact of heritage-related attractions for the five study areas. However, there may be unique features of the remaining seven Pennsylvania areas that make extrapolation of the results to all 12 areas more risky.

Second, the exclusive focus upon Pennsylvania DHAs certainly limits the generalisation of results beyond the boundary of the Commonwealth. Heritage tourism sites in other states may have unique characteristics that could create differences in results, such as variations in state funding of heritage attractions or the relative proximity

to (or distance from) major population centers that Pennsylvania enjoys due to its location in the populous Middle Atlantic region.

Third, there was a challenge in attributing visitation to an attraction or DHA exclusively to the presence of a heritage attraction. Not all the visitation to a region is for such purposes. Many visits are conducted for business or other personal vacations that relate little to the work of the DHAs or their missions. The heritage-visitor definition continues to be a challenge within the field although this study attempted to address this issue with two questionnaire items: "Please list a few of the facilities/attractions you have visited/or will visit during your stay in our area" and the follow-on item, "Was one or more of these attractions the primary reason for your trip to our area?"

Fourth, although this study's findings meshed well with Poria et al. (2004), they did not incorporate measures to address other relevant areas of research in the field, including the notion of 'authenticity' examined by Jamal and Hill (2004) or 'heritage product representativeness' that was studied by Wang and Leou (2015). Another opportunity could have been an effort to address the three-dimensional 'value' construct proposed by Yao (2013).

## **7 Future research**

One of the key motivations for writing this article has been the desire to share the findings and methods used in this study with the academic and practitioner community worldwide. This is facilitated by the willingness of our project sponsor, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to make all results and methods available to the general public.

Looking forward, there is an opportunity to enhance future research into the motivations of heritage visitation by working with researchers across different geographies studying tourism. The main focus of this collaboration would be to encourage the adoption of a few common motivation-related questionnaire items that could be incorporated into future studies. The literature review for this study reveals that these efforts are widely dispersed geographically and are ongoing. By adopting even a small number of the measures we have employed, plus those of Poria et al., Oguia, Jamal and Hill, Wang and Leou, and Yao, a much more compelling cross-cultural depiction of heritage tourism motivations could emerge.

There are also many opportunities to replicate the methods used in this project to conduct research into the economic impact of heritage tourism in many different settings. For example, it would be very interesting to apply these methods to the study of heritage tourism in more urban areas within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (such as Independence Hall in Philadelphia) and beyond. Also, it would be interesting to see if future research using QR image technology might be more acceptable to a broader demographic of respondents in other cultures (such as the Far East or Europe), where mobile smart devices also have wide acceptance.

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## Appendix A

### Mobile/Online Survey Invitation Card Featuring QR Image

**Brief Visitor Survey**

Enter a drawing for a \$200 MasterCard gift card

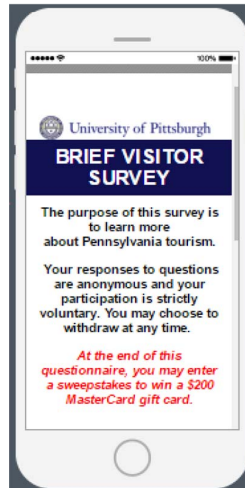
Tell us your thoughts about the Allegheny Ridge Heritage Area, and earn the chance to win a \$200 MasterCard gift card.

Simply enter the URL address or scan the QR symbol below on any smart mobile device, answer some questions, and enter the sweepstakes to win.

[goo.gl/trEZQl](http://goo.gl/trEZQl)

This site is a secure address hosted by Google

Mobile screen shot



Online page view

University of Pittsburgh

### BRIEF VISITOR SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about Pennsylvania tourism.

Your responses to questions are anonymous and your participation is strictly voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any time.

**At the end of this questionnaire, you may enter a sweepstakes to win a \$200 MasterCard gift card.**

If you have any questions please contact the primary investigator, John McGrath, Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, at [jmcgrath@ucsd.edu](mailto:jmcgrath@ucsd.edu) or call (814) 259-2972.

I understand the purpose of this questionnaire and desire to participate in this study.

Yes  
 No

[Next](#)

Sponsored by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources