

Marketing Communications Media Used by Heritage Tourists: New Insights from a Pennsylvania Study

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This study measured marketing communications media that are the most important sources of information about heritage-related tourism sites. The study employed a quantitative survey method with 3,524 valid questionnaires collected at dozens of locations across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. “Word of mouth” was the most frequent source cited by respondents (58%) with “the Internet” and “social networking” representing a combined 23% of total mentions. Traditional communications media like newspapers, magazines, billboards, TV, and radio were used at a much lower rate. Limitations of the study as well as implications for future research are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

This article reports on a major study investigating heritage-related tourism within large geographic areas of Pennsylvania known as Designated Heritage Areas (DHAs). The key objective of the study was to determine which marketing communications media were used most by visitors to heritage-related attractions in Pennsylvania. This objective was driven by the desire to understand which media are most effective in attracting the attention of potential heritage visitors and then to use this information to fine-tune the media used in future marketing programs.

The study sought to build upon existing heritage tourism 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 sought to quantify the relative use of both traditional and new marketing communications media by heritage tourists. The existing literature includes several studies of the role of marketing communications media employed in heritage tourism, including a recent surge in the study of

web-based media, but this study fills a gap by quantifying the use of many different web-based and non-web-based media.

Third, the study employed QR image technology that the researchers used to facilitate the use of an online survey instrument. The research team believes this technology could be helpful in future studies to engage potential respondents to use mobile smart devices to participate in consumer surveys.

Background on Designated Heritage Areas Program

The DHA program was first established in 1988 and has grown to include 12 multi-county heritage areas located throughout the Commonwealth. Over the course of nearly three decades, the focus of DHA programs has gradually shifted to regional efforts that center on the conservation of natural areas and the relationship of conservation programs to economic development, tourism, preserving a sense of place, community education about local heritage, and the preservation of historic buildings (Mahoney, 2014).

This project builds on three previous studies that examined the DHA program. These studies employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches.

A qualitative approach was used successfully in a 2012 study that focused on case studies of tourism promotion agencies in different geographic areas of the Commonwealth (Holoviak, 2012). Another study of National Heritage Areas (NHAs) in the Northeast Region of the U.S., including two located in Pennsylvania (Tripp Umbach/National Park Service, 2013), also helped guide the methodology for this research.

A quantitative approach was used in a 2010 study of Pennsylvania's DHAs to gather information about visitors titled "The Economic Impact of Pennsylvania's Heritage Areas" (Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 2010). The work on that previous study also helped guide the development of the present research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The appeal of visiting historical attractions has led to the growth of a new subset of the tourism industry known as "cultural and heritage tourism" with its own body of literature Goeldner and Ritchie (2006). The literature suggests that heritage tourism is one of the "fastest growing tourism sectors," (Bonn, Joseph-Mathews, Dai, Hayes and Cave, J, 2007: 345).

The term "heritage tourism" has been explored by numerous researchers over the past three decades stretching back to the early work of Hewison (1987). Since then the topic has been the subject of "increasing interest from a range of disciplines" (Poria et al., 2003: 240).

Heritage tourism focuses on a destination's historic, natural, and cultural value (Boyd 2002), and goes beyond a simple interest in the past. According to this view, heritage and cultural tourism should be viewed from a "holistic perspective and taken to include natural, cultural and historic attractions such as national and provincial parks, nature reserves, museums, galleries, cultural festivals and special celebrations..." (Boyd, 2002: 214).

Bonn et al. (2007) also suggest that heritage tourism is marketed in different ways across different cultures, for example: "In some instances, destination promoters focus on the architecture and built heritage, such as churches, castles, government buildings, and so on. This type of heritage tourism is commonplace in many European nations. In other locations, the heritage tourism focus is on archeological significance and the history of ethnic groups, as is the case in Canada. For some countries such as Australia and New Zealand, heritage and cultural tourism focuses more on the natural environment and surrounding beauty, although in other heritage tourism destinations, cultural attractions such as museums and performing arts centers define their cultural and heritage tourism product" (Bonn et al., 2007: 345).

A description of the term that is very helpful to the present study is provided by Poria et al. when they define 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: 1047). This captures the way many visitors to Pennsylvania's DHAs view their destination. An example would be the Johnstown Flood Museum, a facility that

documents the 1889 Flood in Johnstown, PA, within the Allegheny Ridge DHA. Visitors to this facility 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 study is a discussion of literature related to tourism marketing. From a broad perspective, Tsiotsou and Goldsmith (2012) note that marketing has become critical to success in the tourism industry. They argue that the very existence of tourist attractions in the future will depend on their ability to engage in strategic marketing planning (Tsiotsou and Goldsmith, 2012).

Bonn et al. (2007) agree with this sentiment and suggest that “increased competition for visitor dollars has prompted many 21-century heritage attractions to assume a more aggressive marketing campaign” (Bonn, et al., 2007: 347).

Despite the growing importance of marketing, Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010) note that there is a gap in the literature as it relates to marketing strategy in tourism. The present article attempts to address this need and focuses on one of the four critical areas of marketing, marketing communications, also known as the promotion element.

Park (2013) identified promotion as one of the “traditional 4Ps of Marketing” as highlighted in Table 1 below, and listed three media as common promotion tools: advertising, public relations, and sales promotion.

TABLE 1
TRADITIONAL 4PS OF MARKETING FOR HERITAGE TOURISM SERVICES

Product	Place	Promotion	Price
<i>Heritage artifacts, sites, monuments and events</i>	<i>Location Accessibility</i>	<i>Advertising Public Relations Sales Promotion</i>	<i>Admissions fees Discounts Allowances Memberships</i>

Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (1996) and Goeldner and Ritchie (2006) also identified advertising, public relations and sales promotion as marketing communications tools that are commonly used by the hospitality industry, but also included personal selling.

Of these tools, advertising has probably been studied the most over time, including a study of newspaper and magazine advertising images by Smith & McKay (2001) and of television imagery by Pan (2011). This existing research establishes a base for the consideration of traditional marketing communications media examined in the present study, including advertising in magazines, on the radio, on television, and on billboards.

However, more recent work has broadened the scope of these traditional forms of marketing communications media. In their study of tourism communication in Norway, Rosendahl and Gottschalk (2015) suggest a much wider range of marketing communications media for tourism-related organizations as “all forms of communication between an enterprise and a buyer of whatever that enterprise has to offer” (Rosendahl and Gottschalk, 2015: 18). They identified a wider array of communication media that includes advertising, direct marketing via mail, phone, and email, as well as websites and mobile applications.

Elliott and Boshoff (2009) focused more on the importance of emerging marketing communications media and note that increased use of the Internet as a marketing tool has delivered significant benefits to the tourism industry in terms of cost efficiencies, improved consumer convenience and targeting as well as virtual “...world-wide reach for even the smallest tourism business” (Elliott and Boshoff, 2009: 35).

Sigala and Gretzel (2012) narrowed the focus even more, asserting that Internet-based social media (SM) are “transforming...tourists’ roles and behavior...fundamentally changing the way tourists search, read and trust, as well as collaboratively produce information about tourism suppliers and tourism

destination” by allowing tourists to “coproduce and share a huge amount of information and knowledge namely user-generated content (UGC)” (Sigala and Gretzel, 2012: 1). This represents a major shift away from the traditional one-way flow of communication from a marketer to a tourist to more of a marketer-tourist dialogue and even partnership were tourists become “co-marketers, co-designers, co-producers and co-consumers of travel and tourism experiences” (Sigala and Gretzel, 2012: 1).

In a detailed study of emerging SM developments, Leung, Law, Van Hoof, and Buhalis (2013) agree that these new media will be critical to future competitiveness of tourism entities. Park (2013) echoes this belief these new technologies are creating “a fundamental change in the ways in which heritage is marketed and promoted to contemporary tourists,” (Park, 2013: 149), and suggests. They also note the role that SM can play “creating and sharing dialogical connections between heritage and tourists” (Park, 2013: 212).

One important SM tool is Twitter, and Sotiriadis and van Zyl, 2013 studied the application’s users, mainly from Europe (Greece and other European countries) and South Africa. They found that the three most important factors regarding the use of tourism attraction information were: “reliability” of Twitter sources;” the “degree of involvement” of Twitter users, meaning the frequency of posting; and the technical “know-how” of Twitter users/followers (Sotiriadis and van Zyl, 2013). They also suggest a shift from the terminology of “word of mouth” to two more appropriate terms, “word-of-net,” originally suggested by Moutinho, Ballantyne and Rate (2011), and “online reviews,” originally recommended by Lee, Law, and Murphy (2011), and Robinson, Goh, and Zhang (2012).

The present study investigates the popularity of the traditional marketing communications media noted above as well as the “new” media including the Internet and SM.

METHODOLOGY

A sample of five DHAs was selected from among the total of 12 areas across the Commonwealth. The selection process included consultation with the study sponsors and DHA leadership, and resulted in agreement on three points: that the five DHAs should represent a diverse geographical range within the Commonwealth; that study DHA leadership should be willing and enthusiastic participants; and that the five study DHAs should not include those that participated in a previous study of DHAs in Pennsylvania (Tripp Umbach/National Park Service, 2013). The five DHAs selected for the study were Allegheny Ridge, Lincoln Highway, National Road, Pennsylvania Route 6, and Susquehanna Gateway.

Building upon the research noted above, this study employed a quantitative approach using surveys that were administered over an eight-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 best practices from other economic impact studies the research team had been involved with in the past. Once the paper questionnaire instrument was completed, an identical mobile/online version was created using Qualtrics, the approved online and mobile research vendor approved by the sponsoring university’s Internal Review Board (IRB).

Survey instruments were distributed to visitors by volunteers during spring, summer and fall of 2014. Visitors were asked to complete a paper questionnaire instrument. To encourage response, a \$200 gift card was awarded to a randomly-selected survey participant from each of the five DHAs involved in the study. A separate questionnaire instrument was designed for each of the five DHAs with a unique identity for each area, although all survey questions were identical across each of the five DHAs.

Data collection supervisors were selected by the leadership of each DHA, and worked with a range of anchor sites scattered throughout each area. The anchor sites were also 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 upon the geographic size of the area. Volunteers were recruited by the data collection supervisors at each of the anchor sites. Most of the data collection was via the passive collection method whereby visitors to the site were advised about the survey, and then chose to complete either the paper or mobile/online version. Many anchor attractions using this method placed the survey

instrument 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 mobile/online instrument. The same instruments were used in both passive and intercept methods.

Mobile/online surveys were available for visitors who did not wish to complete a paper survey. This option used an Internet-based version of the paper questionnaire instrument noted above hosted on a secure site by the vendor Qualtrics. Invitation cards were distributed to participants passively at stations as well as during intercepts by the data collection coordinators for those who did not have time to participate at the time of their visit. These participants were also incentivized to complete the questionnaire by the chance to win the \$200 gift card (Appendix B).

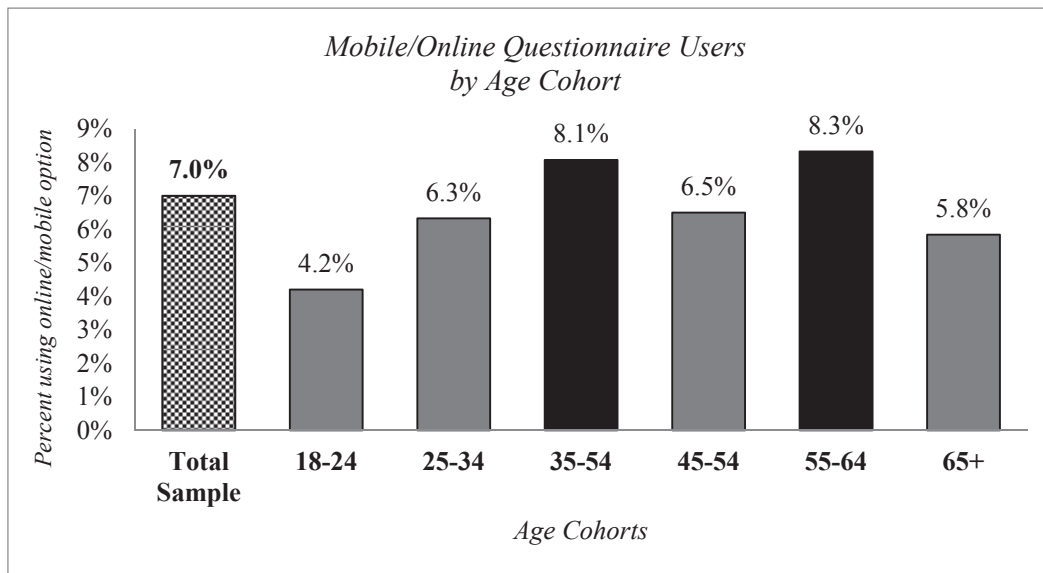
The research team chose to integrate this mobile/online option to address a need identified in the literature by Kim and Law (2015) who suggested that there was a need to study new practices in “smart” mobile device marketing.

Once the paper and mobile/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 mobile/online questionnaire respondents. However, since 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 mobile/online questionnaire respondent (.05 percent 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 traveling together. One respondent may have chosen to complete the paper questionnaire while another decided to take the survey via the mobile/online platform.

One surprise that emerged from the dual paper and mobile/online methodology was the relatively low proportion of mobile/online responses. In fact, 93% of all completed questionnaires were of the traditional paper type, with only 7% being completed via the mobile/online platform. The research team believes there are two possible explanations for this outcome. First, the summer of 2014 included a number of highly publicized “hacks” of major retail databases, including Home Depot. These incidents may have discouraged potential respondents from using any mobile/online questionnaire out of fear for the security of their information. Second, the demographics of the sample skew older (the largest single segment is 55-64, representing 25% of respondents), suggesting to the researchers that this group had less of an inclination to use the smart phone technology required to scan the invitation card’s QR image or enter the URL address in a web browser. However, upon further analysis of the data, a greater proportion of respondents in older age cohorts (particularly 35-54 and 55-64) used the mobile/online questionnaire option versus the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups, as noted in Chart 1 below. This is a surprising finding that seems to defy explanation, other than to suggest that older age cohorts, at least among respondents in this sample, may be more willing to use new technologies than expected.

CHART 1
USE OF MOBILE/ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE FORMAT



The combined total of paper and mobile/online questionnaires was 3,524, representing a response rate of 0.0243% of the total estimated 14,555,743 annual visitors to all five study DHAs that was supplied by the DHA staff in each geographic area. 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 +/-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. Since 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 range of error.

The sample included respondents from 1,678 different zip codes from throughout the U.S. representing visitors from 46 states. In addition, the sample included visitors from 16 countries as close as Canada to as distant as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Colombia, and Venezuela, to the European nations Austria, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.

The sample also included 240 different destination zip codes located throughout the Commonwealth, primarily located within the boundaries of the five study DHAs.

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 (48%) reported their age within the 25-54 demographic often used by marketers to target consumers. Only 6% of respondents reported their age in the 18-24 segment.

Sample respondents skewed toward females by a 60/40 proportion. In terms of household income, the sample skewed fairly upscale with the single largest segment of respondents (25%) reporting household income of \$50-75,000, and 68% of all respondents reporting income of more than \$50,000.

Only 9% reported household income of less than \$25,000.

The sample skewed toward 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 they had earned a masters' degree or higher.

More than one-third (39%) of respondents indicated that this was their first trip to the DHA where they completed the questionnaire.

The questionnaire instrument incorporated the following items to operationalize each of the key measures of the study. First, the measure of marketing communications sources was captured by the

question “How did you hear about the attraction you are visiting today” followed by the direction to select one of the following options: “billboard,” “Internet,” “magazine,” “newspaper,” “radio,” “social networking,” “TV,” and “word of mouth.”

Second, awareness measures were captured in two ways. First, for the global measure of total Pennsylvania DHA Program awareness, the questionnaire asked: “Have you ever heard of the Pennsylvania Heritage Areas program?” followed by a “yes” or “no” response option. Second, awareness of the local DHA where respondents were visiting when they completed the survey was captured by the item: “Were you aware of the _____ before this visit?” again followed by a “yes” or “no” response option. As noted earlier, a unique questionnaire instrument was developed for each of the five study DHAs that completed the blank in the item above to aid respondent recall (for example, “Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor” was provided for questionnaires completed in the Lincoln Highway DHA).

Third, the visitor satisfaction measure was operationalized by the following item: “Overall, how satisfied have you been with your visit to the _____ before this visit?” with the specific DHA indicated for each of the five different study DHA questionnaires. Respondents were given a standard 5-point Likert-type scale response option with a scale anchored by “very satisfied” and “very dissatisfied.”

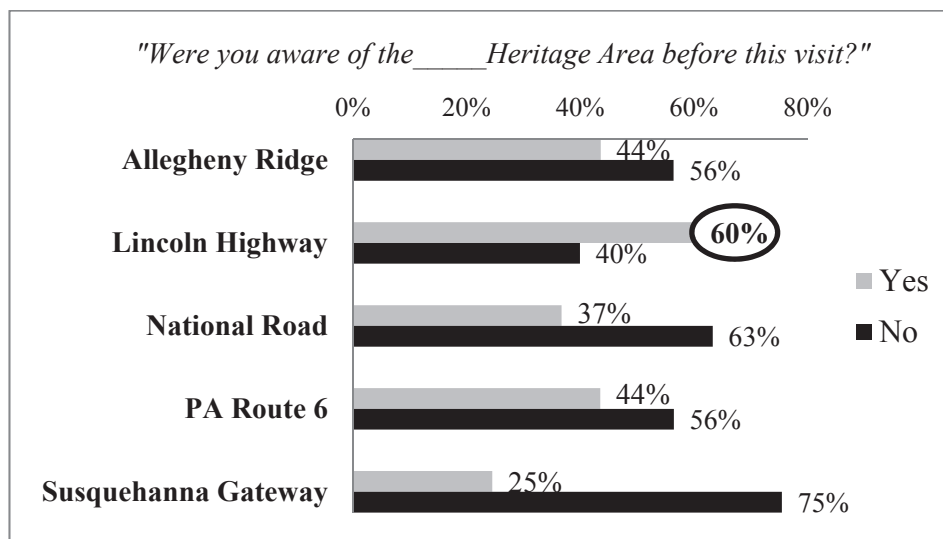
Finally, another, more indirect, measure of visitor satisfaction was captured by the questionnaire item: “How likely would you be to come back to the _____?” again with the specific DHA indicated for each of the five different study DHA questionnaires. Respondents were given a standard 5-point Likert-type scale response option with a scale anchored by “very likely” and “very unlikely.”

RESULTS

Analysis of the data indicates that existing marketing communications efforts have not been very effective in generating awareness for the DHA program as a whole. Only one-third (33%) of respondents reported that they were aware of the existence of the Pennsylvania DHA program (67% reported a lack of awareness).

Awareness of some of the individual study DHAs was higher than the overall program as a whole. The Lincoln Highway DHA enjoyed the highest awareness of all five study DHAs with 60% of respondents reporting that they were aware of the area before their visit. It was also the only DHA where more than 50% of respondents reported awareness prior to their visit, as illustrated in Chart 2 below.

CHART 2
AWARENESS OF INDIVIDUAL HERITAGE AREAS



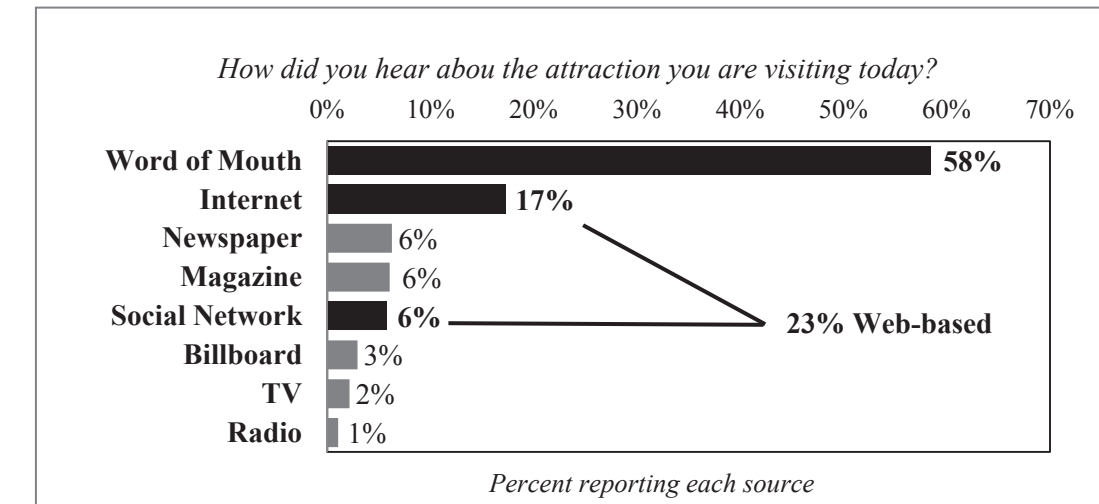
Source of Marketing Communications Information

Analysis of the data indicates that two marketing communications media dominated. “Word of mouth” was the overwhelming source (58%) of information about the site where respondents completed their questionnaires. The second most-cited source was “the Internet” with 17% of total respondent mentions. Combined with the 6% responding “social networking,” this brings web-based sources to 23%.

There was a second tier of sources, with each cited by 6% of respondents. Two of these sources are the traditional media newspapers and magazines.

The final, lower tier of sources were all traditional marketing communications media, including “billboard” with 3% of respondents citing as their source, followed by “TV” with 2% and “radio” with 1%, as depicted in Chart 3 below.

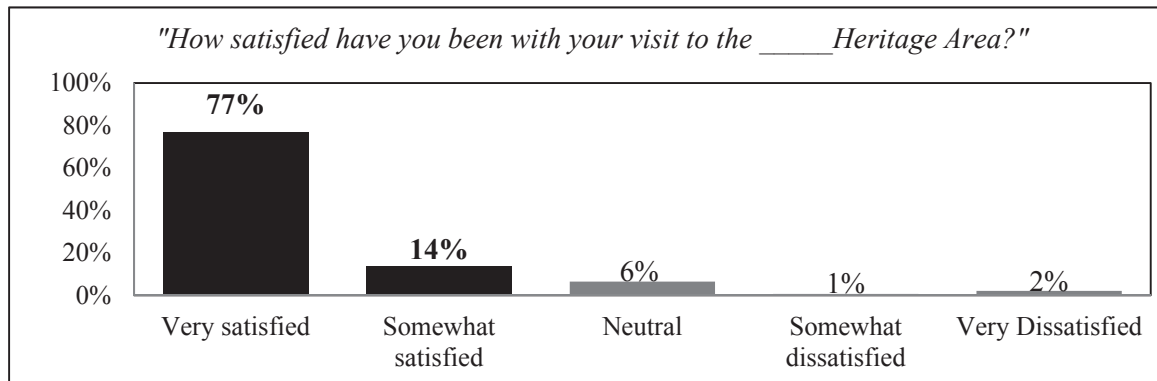
CHART 3
MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS SOURCES FOR ATTRACTION INFORMATION



Visitor Satisfaction and Likelihood to Visit Again

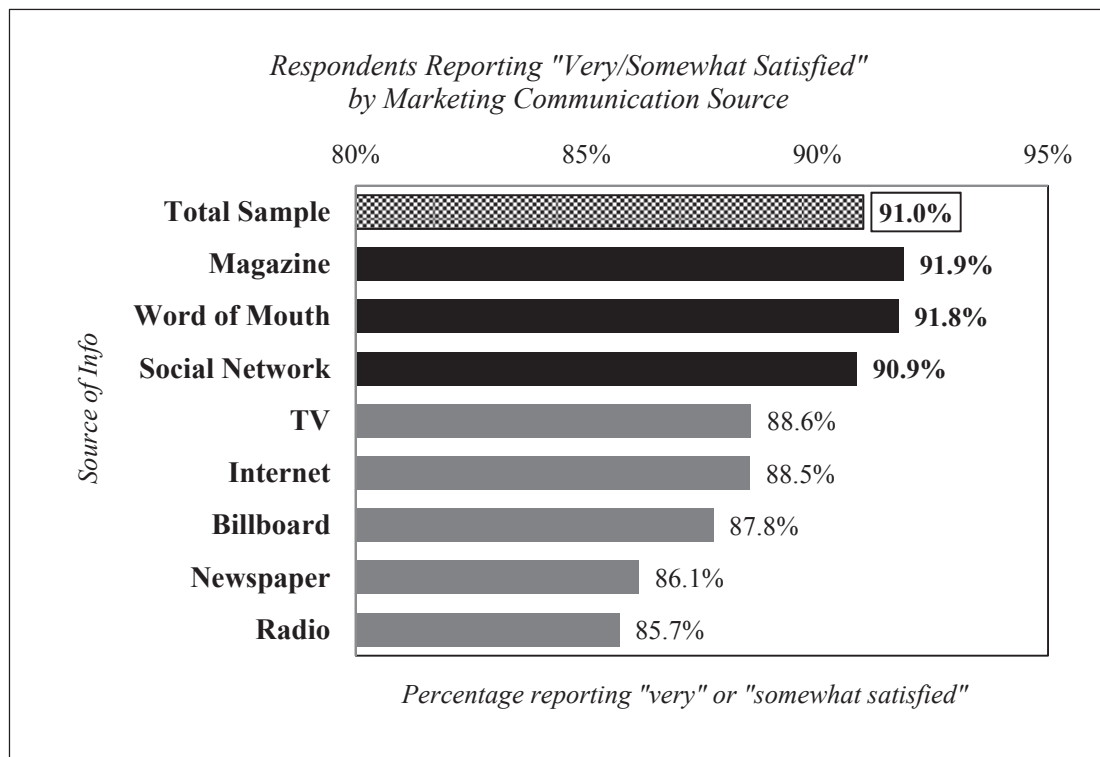
Ninety-one percent of respondents reported that they were “very” or “somewhat satisfied” with their visit (combining 77% who reported “very satisfied” and 14% reporting “somewhat satisfied”) as noted in Chart 4 below.

CHART 4
RESPONDENT SATISFACTION WITH THEIR VISIT



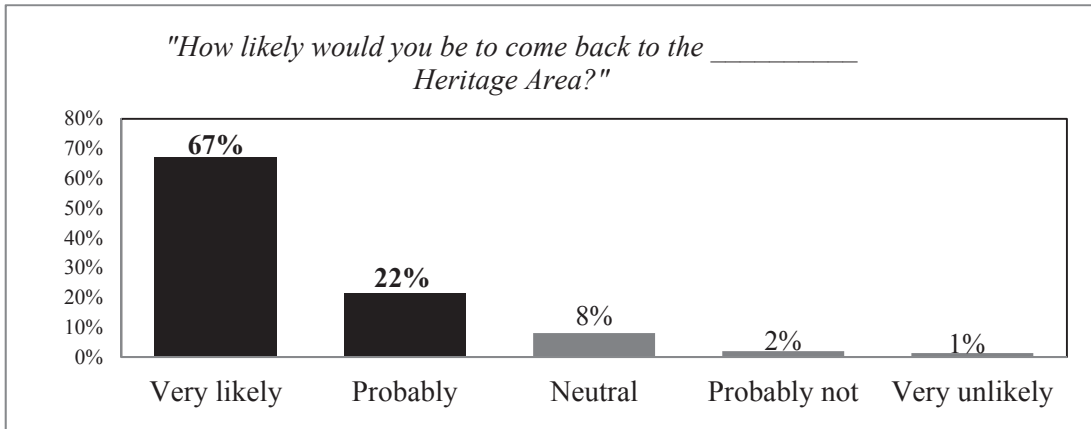
Delving deeper into the data, the researchers examined the effect that marketing communications sources may have had on respondents' satisfaction levels. A cross tabulation analysis revealed that satisfaction levels were the strongest for three sources: magazines (91.9%); word of mouth (91.8%); and social networking (90.9%). In fact, the satisfaction scores relating to the sources were very similar to, or higher than, the total sample satisfaction score noted above (91%). As noted below in Chart 5, satisfaction scores related to traditional marketing communications sources including TV, billboard, newspaper, and radio were lower than the sample average. Another interesting finding of this analysis was that satisfaction scores related to "the Internet" were also lower also than the sample average at 88.5%, suggesting that perhaps respondents view "the Internet" differently than web-based "social networks" (and other forms of "word of mouth"). Another anomaly was that "magazines" scored higher than "word of mouth" and "social networking." This result seems to defy the recent literature in the field of SM noted including Sigala and Gretzel (2012), and Park (2013) that would seem to suggest that consumer satisfaction would be higher for new forms of media that allow for visitor collaboration and even creation of content about heritage sites.

CHART 5
RESPONDENT SATISFACTION SCORES



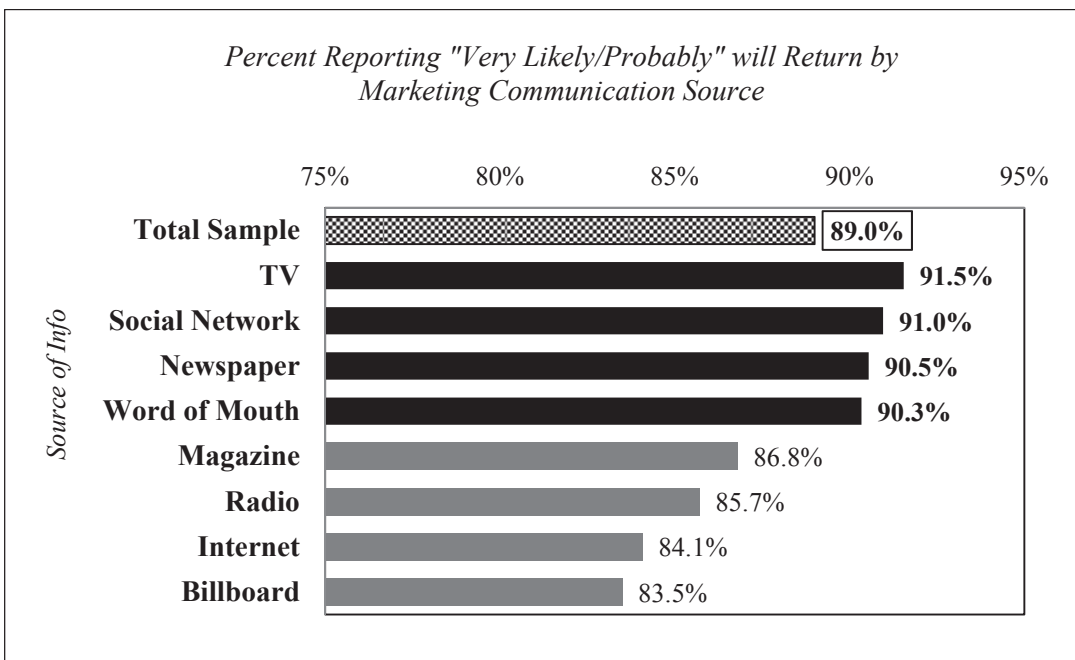
The other, more indirect, measure of visitor satisfaction "likelihood to come back" to the DHA, generated similar with responses with a large majority (89%) responding that they were "very" or "somewhat likely" to return in the future, as noted in Chart 6 below.

CHART 6
LIKELIHOOD TO RETURN TO HERITAGE AREA



A cross tabulation of these responses by marketing communications sources yielded similar results as the satisfaction measure above with “social networking” and “word of mouth” receiving scores higher than the total sample average as noted in Chart 7 below. This analysis did indicate another anomaly, however: like in the previous analysis, two traditional marketing communications sources, “TV,” and “newspapers” ranked among highest scoring media, along with “social networking” and “word of mouth,” but replacing “magazines” in the satisfaction cross tabulation. Again, this seems to defy the logic that SM would yield more positive visitor experiences because of the possibility of creating a consumer-heritage site dialogue, as discussed by Park (2013).

CHART 7
RESPONDENT LIKELIHOOD TO RETURN SCORES
CROSS-TABULATED BY MARKETING COMMUNICATION SOURCE



LIMITATIONS

This study has three key limitations. First, the methodology of the study ensured that findings provide a relatively strong representation of the awareness and respondent sources of marketing communications information about heritage sites for the five study DHAs. However, there may be unique features of the remaining seven DHAs that would render extrapolation of the results to all 12 areas very risky.

Second, the exclusive focus upon Pennsylvania DHAs certainly limits the generalization of results beyond the boundary of the Commonwealth. Heritage 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 (or distance from) major population centers that Pennsylvania enjoys due to its location in the populous Middle Atlantic region.

Third, the study's measure for marketing communication sources was weighted heavily toward the traditional media described in the older existing literature, such as newspapers, radio and TV. Although the questionnaire did include response options for "the Internet," and "social networking," the survey instrument could have included items that delved deeper into the rapidly evolving SM environment including specific reference to media such as Twitter and online reviews on sites like TripAdvisor as indicated in the more recent work of Lee, et al. (2011), Robinson, Goh, and Zhang (2012), and Sotiriadis and van Zyl (2013).

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The results of this study have both positive and negative implications in terms of heritage area marketing communications.

First, the study illustrates the weakness of existing marketing communications efforts in generating awareness for the overall DHA program. However, the breakout of awareness by DHA also indicates an opportunity to improve upon these results. This is as evidenced by the success of the Lincoln Highway area, where awareness of the DHA was nearly twice as strong as for the program as a whole at 60%. This suggests a key implication: to more closely study the marketing communications efforts of the Lincoln Highway area to determine the reasons for its relative success. Could it be that there is a latent level of elevated awareness for this area due to the national scope of the Lincoln Highway (perhaps somewhat akin to another famous highway, Route 66)? Or is it due to some unique marketing communication message or media campaign? Further research into Lincoln Highway's success could provide some useful insights.

Second, the results related to the source of marketing communications information suggest that the combined total reporting "the Internet" or "social networks," perhaps surprisingly, was not as powerful a medium as "word of mouth." However, could it be that some respondents may have unintentionally included the impact of "social networking" media like Twitter or Facebook within the response category of "the Internet," or perhaps even "word of mouth?" After all, the lines between different types of web-based applications are increasingly blurred. For example, would a respondent describe TripAdvisor as a medium belonging to "the Internet," "social networking," or "word of mouth?" The site has aspects of each of these media with standard information like location descriptions and maps, but it also relies heavily on consumer-generated content like visitor reviews. In fact, O'Connor (2010) acknowledged that "part social network, part virtual community, and part blog, like all Web 2.0 sites, TripAdvisor is difficult to categorize" (O'Connor, 2010: 761).

Tham, Croy and Mair (2013) examined the conceptual differences between word of mouth types. They suggest that traditional word of mouth is still important to potential tourists, but that "eWOM" (electronic word of mouth) is exploding in accessibility, and therefore importance. However, they cautioned that eWOM suffers from less credibility than traditional word of mouth and that tourist organizations should "invest time and effort to understand how eWOM can evoke strong influence and destination appeal..." (Tham, Croy and Mair (2013:151). From a practical perspective, this suggests an opportunity for heritage sites by more aggressively employing SM tools to create positive "buzz" and

“eWOM” about heritage sites. A useful implication for future research in this regard would be to consider the recommendation of Moutinho, Ballantyne and Rate (2011) to use the term “word-of-net,” as part of the marketing communication source questionnaire item, and/or the suggestion of Lee, Law, and Murphy (2011), and Robinson, Goh, and Zhang (2012) of the terminology “online reviews.” This future work would also be consistent with the urging of Park (2013) who believes that SM could be successful in “...attracting the younger generations who are not generally part of traditional (heritage tourism) visitor groups” (Park, 2013: 213).

Third, the research process required close collaboration among the five DHA staffs, and as a result of this collaboration, we observed an opportunity to implement a common visitor survey method. Prior to this project, the five study DHAs did not employ a common approach to collecting visitor data. The key implication here is that all Pennsylvania DHAs could implement a common survey technique, built on the practices used in this study. This collaboration could even extend beyond Pennsylvania to future National Park Service studies of NHAs across the nation, employing some of the protocols used by Tripp Umbach/National Park Service, 2013, as well as this study. This approach would be consistent with the guidance provided in the position paper drafted by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities for the 2005 U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism Summit that suggested “Individual cultural and heritage institutions, and their national affiliates, should collect meaningful data about their visitors including, but not limited to, projected visitation, actual visitation, and economic and cultural impacts and make it available to the travel industry” (U.S. Department of Commerce, and the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 2005: 9).

Finally, another implication for future research is that the results that “word of mouth” and the web-based sources of “the Internet” and “social networking” were generally related to greater visitor satisfaction and likelihood to return to a heritage site. However, there were some anomalies in the findings that indicate that some more traditional marketing communications media could also yield positive consumer responses in these areas, including magazines, TV and newspapers. This suggests an opportunity for deeper research, perhaps even of a qualitative nature, to gain a better understanding of visitor uses and reactions to different types of marketing communications media. This could also address the blurring of the line between traditional websites, SM, and “eWOM” noted earlier with sites like TripAdvisor. A better understanding of these media is critical, as suggested by Leung et al. (2013) and O’Connor (2012) who argues that tourist attractions will “need to actively embrace the concepts of social networks and user-generated content, and try to leverage these developments to generate incremental business and build customer loyalty” (O’Connor, 2012: 769).

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to build upon the existing body of literature in the heritage tourism field, and to provide some new insights into the relative effectiveness of marketing communications media in delivering promotional messages to potential visitors. The results of this study may be helpful as future research is conducted in this area, particularly in the quickly evolving social media environment.

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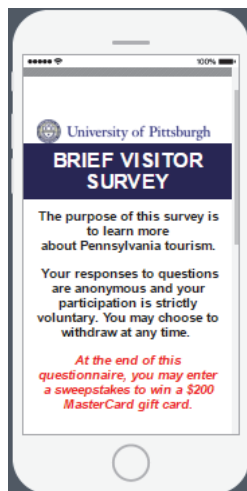
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APPENDIX A

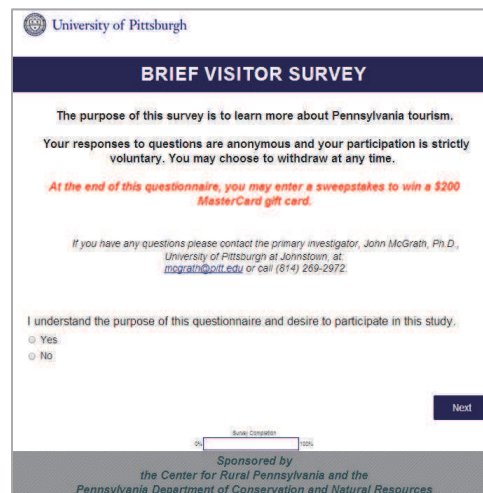
MOBILE/ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE INVITATION CARD AND SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE VISUALS



Mobile Visual



Online Visual



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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