

ABSTRACT

For the Old, Rich, and Cultured? Historic House Museums
and their Relationship with Young Adults

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It has been traditionally understood that young adults are not active participants in historic house museums. This is a concern because if it is true, it means that historic house museums are not fulfilling their responsibility to educate the public as they are not reaching a particular demographic. Also, by failing to attract young adults, historic house museums are not ensuring that future generations will fulfill the roles of board members, volunteers, and financial support. This study investigated this claim through surveys distributed to likely historic house museum visitors between the ages of 18 and 35. Through this research, this thesis examines the current relationship young adults have with historic house museums, possible causes of this current situation, and potential actions historic house museums can take in the future to strengthen this relationship.

For The Old, Rich And Cultured? Historic House Museums
and Their Relationship with Young Adults

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Problem

In the last decade it has become clear that the future of historic house museums is in question. In 2004, visitation at Colonial Williamsburg was down 18% from 2000¹ rose for three years, only to again continue downward from 2007 through 2009.² In 2005, Old Sturbridge Village laid off staff and closed major facilities.³ Other institutions have completely shut down, such as Robert E. Lee's Childhood home which sold for \$2.5 million in 2000 for the personal use of the buyer.⁴ In his article, "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" Cary Carson looks at these cases and weighs the question, "[a]re historic sites and house museums destined to go the way of Oldsmobiles and floppy disks?"⁵

Compared to nine other types of museums in the United States, historic house museums and sites rank eighth in terms of median annual attendance. Coming in first are science/technology centers and museums which can bring in 357,103 visitors a year. In comparison, historic houses and sites have a median annual attendance of 11,700 people,

¹ Cary Carson, "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" *The Public Historian* 30, no. 4 (Fall 2008) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2008.30.4.9> (accessed July 24, 2011).

² Collin Campbell, Colonial Williamsburg Annual Report 2007-2009.

³ Bruce Courson, "Why Rural Museums Are Becoming Ancient History" *Walls Street Journal*, December 27, 2005 <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB113563562278931609.html> (February 25, 2012)

⁴ Robert E. Lee's Childhood Home is Sold," *New York Times*, March 12, 2000 <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/03/12/us/robert-e-lee-s-childhood-home-is-sold.html> (Accessed February 25, 2012)

⁵ Carson, 11

larger only than the attendance of history museums and historical societies which average 10,000 people per year.¹

The decreased attendance, closing of facilities, loss of entire museums, and the general lack of popularity facing historic house museums has caused concern among museum professionals, but a lot of the problem is, Carson argues, that “the truth of the matter is that nobody knows for sure what’s really going on.”² Since there are no national organization monitoring museum attendance and no consistent format among museums to count visitors, many historic house museums have been acting on the perception that visitation is down.³

Carson admits there is a problem and looks to identify the source by examining what is and is not working for historic house museums. He also questions the method of relying on guest counts as an indicator of museum health as these might be deceiving. He criticizes “jumble sales and bridal showers” because they are often the pragmatic approach to bring people through the door, but these events are a sidetrack from the true historical purpose of a historic house museum.

Carson instead focuses on improving the visitor experience and proposes innovative ways to engage visitors through technology. He sees technology as having the potential to take the visitor from spectator to participant. While Carson’s suggestions might help historic house museums, they fail to identify who is visiting historic house

¹ American Association of Museums, “Frequently Asked Questions About Museums” <http://www.aam-us.org/aboutmuseums/abc.cfm#visitors> (February 28, 2012)

² Carson, 11

³ Ibid, 12

museums, who is not visiting, and how historic house museums can get both of these audiences more involved.

While many institutions are forced to make decisions without data about their visitors, Colonial Williamsburg took the time and resources to better understand their audience. The organization conducted a visitor research survey in 2007 that provided valuable information about visitors and non-visitors. In addition to other details about the surveyed population, the study found that visitors tended to be interested in human culture, while non-visitors found history boring. From this research Colonial Williamsburg was able to new develop programs that engage their audience.⁴

While Carson's work and the study at Colonial Williamsburg start to offer a solution to the problem, these works reinforce the importance of studying historic house museum and visitor relationships. There is not enough information compiled to understand the whole, so it is necessary to start by carefully studying the parts. Individual populations must be evaluated to determine the state of the relationship between historic house museums and their visitors.

With little research available it is logical to start with young adults ages 18-35 because this demographic is reflective of both the current situation and the future situation. The study of current potential visitors helps to establish the true state of historic house museums today and perhaps reasons for the decline in attendance. In addition to providing insight about a current audience, this population is also a future audience. Studying their habits, experiences, preferences, and expectations will start to

⁴ Conny Graft, "Listen, Evaluate, and Respond! The Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Research Story," AASLH History News 62, no.2 (Spring 2007).

reveal how this problem might be fixed in future generations as these young adults become more involved in their community.

Young adults are also an interesting population to study because it has traditionally been understood that historic house museums struggle to attract an audience between the ages of 18 and 35.⁵ This seems to come from historic house museum's perception of their membership, volunteer corps and visitors. A quick glance around many historic house museums reveals older, retired age and affluent adults serve as board members, volunteer, general members and even staff. Data compiled by Research Advisors also supports this perception as over 65% of respondents that are regular visitors to historic house museums and historic sites were over the age of 50.⁶

Perhaps, there is even a sentiment out there that it is okay that historic house museums and other history organizations are only reaching this audience. A blog post on Research Advisors discusses the issue based on an email the author received from her friend who is a museum director. The museum director recalled listening to a talk where a development director from a large historical society. She summarized his suggestions that historical societies "should give up on the 20-30 somethings and wait until they get to retirement homes and then target them as an audience...20-30 somethings are only going to come in through the door for happy hour."⁷ The line between historic house museums and historical societies is thin, and if this sentiment becomes prevalent across

⁵ These ages have been identified because they represent a wide population of young adults.

⁶ Research Advisors, Museum Audience Insight http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/2010/04/whos-coming-to-your-museum-demographics-by-museum-type.html (February 29, 2012)

⁷ Research Advisors "Why Bother with Young Adults? We've Got the Retirees!" http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/2011/08/why-bother-with-young-adults-weve-got-the-retirees.html (February 29, 2012)

historical organizations, they could risk their future. While this statement not only degrades a certain population, it can cause long term damage to the sustainability of historical organizations if interest is not cultivated among young adults now.

It also seems that other museums do not have this problem. Science Centers, which are among the most visited in the United States, have “generally younger visitor bases, with 72% of respondents under age 50.”⁸ Children’s Museums also, perhaps obviously, are able to attract a much younger audience with 89% of respondents under the age of 50.

The importance of this age groups participation as potential current and future visitors, combined with the perception that this is an uninterested population seems to be part of the larger problem already addressed: historic house museum interest is down from recent generations. In his essay in *Interpreting Historic House Museums* Patrick A. Butler III, identifies the need for a renewed interest in historic house museums. He recognized that many “museums that have survived for only one generation face issues associated with passing on the torch of strong leadership and secure funding.”⁹ This suggests that with decreased interest, historic house museums risk continued support if a younger generation does not demonstrate support for these institutions. Butler rightly fears that “[w]henver the founders of an institution pass from the scene, continued success depends on preparation for this transition. In at least some instance, survival of the museum may be in question.”¹⁰

⁸ Research Advisors, Museum Audience Insight

⁹ Patrick H. Butler III, “Past, Present, and Future: The place of the House Museum in the Museum Community” in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press, 2002)34

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 34

While Butler does not directly point to the problem of uninterested young adults he alludes to this as part of the larger problem. He sees that historic house museums are not reaching the public, and if there is not renewed interest in younger generations historic house museums will be in danger. As an answer to this problem Butler recognizes the need for historic houses to freshen their interpretive plan as current plans are obviously not drawing in the audience necessary.

While Butler recognizes the need, he did not fully identify the problem. Historic house museums need a renewed interest among young adults to carry these houses another generation and it seems that these young adults are not there. But, would Butler and Carson's plan to simply change interpretive plans solve the problem? Until the habits, the needs and opinions of this demographic of potential visitors are understood, historic house museums will only be guessing as to what works. Instead, this population must be isolated to determine their current interaction with historic houses, their perceptions of historic houses and intended future interaction with historic houses. From this, historic house museums can evaluate the scope of the problem and what solutions might meet the needs of this audience.

As Carson suggests in his article, part of the difficulty in understanding who visits historic house museums, is that there has been little research completed in this area. The organization Cultural Heritage Tourism published the findings of a survey conducted by the research firm, Synovate and consulting group DataPath Systems, in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.¹¹ In the article reporting the findings,

¹¹ Partners in Tourism: Culture and Commerce "First-ever survey on Historic House Museums lends insight into future visitors" <http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/newsletter/historichouse.html> (accessed January 11, 2012)

Cultural Heritage Tourism titled the work: “First-ever survey on Historic House Museums Lends Insight into Future Visitors.”¹² Whether they are asserting that this is the first survey they have conducted on the subject, or it is simply the first survey ever, the title of the article reveals that visitor trends in historic house museums is an understudied topic. Without a resource of substantiated data it is hard for historic house museums to move forward in an informed manner. Instead, institutions are left to offer solutions without understanding the problem.

This survey revealed what many in the field feared: “those who will consider visiting a historic house museum in the next 12 months tend to be older and more affluent.”¹³ According to this survey, 36% of participants between the ages of 55 and 64 plans on visiting a historic house museum within the next year, while only 31% of the general population responded this way.¹⁴ Yet, there appears to be some good news as the survey also reveals that young adults ages “18-24 have increased interest (16%) in visiting historic house museums in the next 24 months compared to the general population (13%).”¹⁵ This seems to suggest that young adults have not lost all interest in historic house museums, instead, they see it as something they would be interested in doing in the future, but it is not something they do regularly.

While this research is helpful to start understanding historic house museum visitors it is only one study and it has not been substantiated by a large body of other work. This makes it difficult to identify habits and trends over time. Instead we can only

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

get a glimpse of the situation in 2007. This is a good and important place to start, but the topic is something that must be better explored to ensure accuracy over time.

As mentioned in the Butler essay, if there is not a new generation to take over historic house museums, the survival of these institutions is at risk. While this is a problem, it is not necessarily the fundamental problem. Perhaps young adults do not become involved with historic house museums until they are older. Research Advisors support this idea in the article “Giving: It’s All About Age.” This piece identified the reasons of charitable giving, and found that as people age they move to more philanthropic reasons, suggesting a more invested participation in the organization.¹⁶

Despite a hope of an active audience in the future, this problem is bigger than replacing a diminishing volunteer core. This is only a symptom of how historic house museums might be failing to do as educational institutions. The educational responsibility of museums has been revealed as a priority since museums began the transition from cabinets of curiosities to educational institutions. No longer can museums settle for an audience that is exclusively affluent and educated; instead, museums must attempt to offer something for all people regardless of social status, age or education level. This understanding of the museum’s role in the community requires museums not to neglect one particular audience based on demographic information.

A crucial step in this transformation came in the 1960s and 1970s when the Belmont Report helped to convince congress that museums were educational institutions,

¹⁶ Research Advisors “Giving: It’s All About Age” http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/history_visitors/ (Feburary 25,2010).

not recreational.¹⁷ As educational institutions, under the 1969 Tax Reform Act museums qualified for financial support. Today, museums qualify as tax exempt, 501(c) 3 organizations, which suggest they have an obligation to serve the public. This obligation comes in the form of preservation and education. By holding objects in public trust and educating people about the significance of these objects, museums are serving the community by preserving history.

In 1992 the public service element of museums was further explored in the study *Excellence and Equity*, which addressed the responsibility of museums to meet the needs of a broad audience. The study insisted that to be a successful museum, institutions must “combine a tradition of intellectual rigor with the inclusion of a broader spectrum of our diverse society.”¹⁸ It is no longer acceptable for museums to reach only a limited audience; instead, they must be “accessible to a broad audience” and work to insure that they do not “unintentionally exclude anyone.”¹⁹ While the study also realizes that individual museums cannot be all things to all people, it requires institutions to examine their methods and ensure they are reaching as broad as audience as possible.

The suggestions in *Excellence and Equity* have remained relevant to the museum field today as seen in the first six Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum according to the American Association of Museums. These concepts reveal the importance of a museum reaching a broad audience. The standards being referenced are as follows:

¹⁷ Marjorie Schwarzer, *Riches, Rivals & Radicals: 100 years of museums in America*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2006. 194

¹⁸ Ellen Cochran Hirzy. *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums*. Washington, D.C.: The Association, 1992. 6

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9

1. “The museum is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.
- 2.The museum identifies the communities it serves, and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them.
- 3.Regardless of its self-identified communities, the museum strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.
- 4.The museum strives to be inclusive and offers opportunities for diverse participation.
- 5.The museum asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.
- 6.The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.”²⁰

The first characteristic reveals the museum’s responsibility to the public. The museum preserves and maintains artifacts for the public. This means that the nature of the museum is not an inward looking, but instead it is outward looking and concerned with the needs of the public. The second characteristic, much like the first, identifies the service element of a museum, but insists the museum identify their audience so they might best serve their community.

The third characteristic takes the demands of the first two and elevates the responsibility of the museum. It is not good enough to only serve the identified community, but the museum must provide a positive impact. This suggests that the social responsibility is something wider than what is explained in the first two characteristics.

The fourth and fifth characteristics most clearly supports the idea that all demographics must be considered and the museum must do what it can to reach as diverse of a population as possible. And as stated in the fifth characteristic these opportunities offered to a diverse population are found in the public service role of education. If education is to be at the center of the museum’s role, it is important that this education is offered to as many people as possible.

²⁰ American Association of Museums “Accreditation Program Standards: Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum” <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/accred/upload/Characteristics%20of%20an%20Accreditable%20Museum%201-1-05.pdf> (Accessed January 23, 2012).

The sixth characteristic reinforces the idea that the museum is for the public. It is important that the public have access to the museums resources. This includes people of all ages. While museums would not outwardly reject a specific segment of the public, they might be creating an environment that does not welcome particular demographics. To truly fulfill the museum's responsibility to the public, they must create an environment where all people are able to access the resources offered by the museum.

These standards, set by the American Association of Museums, expose the responsibility of museums to their community. Because of this public service element, museums cannot only meet the needs of a limited population. While it is impractical to assume that a museum can directly reach every person in the community in which they are located, it is important that they strive to reach the largest audience possible.

This research seeks to further explore the relationship that young adults have with historic house museums, how historic house museums fit into the context of the leisure activities of young adults who are likely to visit, and what historic house museums can do in the future to attract this audience. A sub population within this particular demographic was identified to better focus the results. Young adults who are students or alumni of Baylor University and students of disciplines related to historic house museums were asked to participate. By understanding this population the research will expand on what has already been completed. This research looks not only at the intentions of all young adults in the future, but looks closely at the habits, perceptions and opinions of a population that might have a natural disposition to historic house museums.

By identifying what young adults do with their time and how they perceive historic house museums, historic house museums will be better equipped to fulfill the

wants and needs of this population allowing the institutions to better fulfill the educational aspect of their mission. It is important that subjects within this age range be surveyed to understand the motives, feelings and activities of a particular age group.

The survey explores if young adults ages 18-35 participate in opportunities historic house museums offer as volunteers, board members or visitors. Why or why not? The survey identifies 3 categories of information. The first is the demographic information of participants, the second is what this population does with their time and money and the third is how the population perceives historic house museums. These three areas of information reveal the current situation, the potential causes of this situation and how museums can meet the needs of this audience in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

Methods and Materials

This thesis will start to investigate the degree to which young adult's ages 18-35 are involved with historic house museums. In addition to establishing the current level of involvement, the research will identify current expectations and perceptions of this population. This data will help reveal the current situation and possible causes of this situation. To identify possible solutions for the future the study will assess whether opportunities to participate in programming beyond the standard tour and volunteer opportunities appeal to an audience of young adults. The purpose of this research is to determine how young adults participate with historic house museums and what historic house museums can and/or should to do to best reach this demographic. The research is based on an anonymous survey of people within this population. The survey consisted of 33 multiple choice, Likert Scale, short answer and long answer questions.

Subjects

This research was not conducted to determine the opinions and habits of a diverse population, nor did it only survey visitors of historic house museums, but instead it focused on a 18-35 year olds likely to participate in activities offered by historic house museums. Due to both the accessibility of the participants and the perceived likelihood of historic house museum activity, 18-35 year old undergraduate students, graduate students and recent alumni of Baylor University were identified as participants of the survey.

To provide further focus to the population surveyed, students of the humanities were targeted as participants of a survey. The specific disciplines that were asked to participate in the survey were History, Political Science, Art History, Museum Studies, Journalism, and Interior Design. Students taking classes in these disciplines were considered likely visitors to historic house museums because each of these disciplines directly relates to topics interpreted in these institutions.

To collect data from students, professors in the Art, History, Political Science, Museum Studies, and Interior Design departments at Baylor University were asked to participate by distributing the surveys to their classes. The professors and students had the option to not participate at any time during the process. The professors were contacted and asked to distribute surveys to each of their classes. Professors had the option to provide students with a hard copy of the survey or the link to the online version of the survey. Three history professors, two art history professors and three museum studies professors agreed to offer the surveys to their classes. The surveys were also distributed to the every graduate student in the Political Science Department and the History Department.

To achieve a better sample size of young adults above the age of 22, the alumni of the Museum Studies department and two apartment complexes housing graduate students were also asked to participate in the survey. To find these participants outside of the classroom setting, a series of emails were sent providing the link to the online survey using the online service Survey Monkey. The community directors of the two graduate student housing apartment complexes were asked to forward the survey to their residents.

These participants were surveyed to determine the degree to which young adults do or do not participate in the activities offered by historic house museums. By examining a likely audience the surveys reveal the success or failure of historic house museums to reach young adults. If historic house museums cannot reach audiences that have demonstrated a natural disposition to topics related to historic house museums then the problem can be identified. If the survey reveals that the most likely audience of young adults do not participate in historic house museums the extent of the problem will certainly be large in the population as a whole.

Of those asked to participate, 199 students and alumni started the survey. Of these participants, 167 people completed the survey. A completed survey is determined based on the form of survey taken by the participant. For the surveys on paper, a survey is considered complete if the participant returned the survey with the purpose of it being included in the research. The online surveys are considered complete based on Survey Monkey's identification of a completed survey. Survey Monkey identifies a completed survey as a survey where the participant chooses "done" on the last page of the survey. A survey is not complete if the participant leaves the survey in some other manner. To choose "done" on the last page assumes the participant has had an opportunity to answer each question and has acted according to his preference.

This thesis will consider the 167 completed surveys to determine results. All demographic information and other results will be based on these surveys. The 33 incomplete surveys and 6 surveys failing to meet the criteria will not be considered.

To ensure that those surveyed accurately represented the targeted population, participants were asked to identify their gender. Of those who completed the survey,

66% or 110 people were females and 34% or 57 people were males. This is consistent with students who graduated from Baylor University with a Bachelor of Arts degree between summer 2010 and spring 2011, as 64% were female and 36% male.¹

This demographic information serves not only to ensure a correct sample, but it also provides insight concerning the habits and opinions of the surveyed population concerning historic house museums. Knowing the gender of each participant will allow for further analysis of who participates in the activities offered by historic house museum and who holds what opinions. Having an accurate sample of men and women will allow for a better understanding of the habits of men compared to the habits of women.

To identify if there are any differences in habits and opinions of those who are still college age and those who are alumni or graduate students, participants were asked to provide their age. Of the 167 people who provided their age, 113 people between the ages of 18-22 and 53 people between the ages of 22-35 participated in the survey.

Participants were asked to provide their education level to better profile people as related to their habits and opinions. All people asked to participate in the survey were Baylor University students or alumni. 167 offered their highest education level. 104 people responded they have had some college, 25 have had some graduate school, 20 have a Master's degree, 8 have graduated from college, 8 have a High School education, 1 has a Doctoral Degree, and 1 has had some high school.²

¹ Baylor University, Statistics on Enrollment and Degrees Awarded 2010-2011 Session <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/148968.pdf> (Accessed February 25, 2012).

² All participants surveyed were students or alumni of Baylor University, suggesting that those who answered they had only some high school or only a high school education either misunderstood the question or provided an inappropriate answer.

One leveling tool used in this survey is the fact that all participants had a connection to Baylor University, suggesting they have all lived in Waco, Texas for at least some time. Understanding how long participants have lived in Waco not only provides a fuller profile of participants, but reveals how they interact with historic houses in a town in which they have lived. The length of time a person has spent in Waco and their interaction with the local historic house museums helps to reveal the level of interest a person has in historic house museum. Of the 162 people that responded to this question 55 people have lived in Waco for 3-5 years, 44 have lived in Waco 6 months to 2 years, 40 just moved here, 11 have lived in Waco 5-7 years, 10 have lived in Waco over 9 years and two have lived in Waco 7-9 years.

Though the survey focused on gathering information about students in the humanities, other students were invited to participate either because they were currently taking a class in the humanities field or lived in graduate student housing. To better understand the primary disciplines of participants, the survey asked them to identify their area of study in college. Of the 163 people who answered the question 43 people responded History, 24 people responded Art or Art History, 25 people responded Museum Studies, 23 people responded Political Science, 11 responded Business, and 10 people responded English. Other areas of study that received less than 10 responses were American Studies, Anthropology, Archeology, Aviation Science, Bio Chemistry, Biology, Chemistry, Classics, Communication, Computer Science, Economics, Education, Family and Consumer Science, Finance, General Studies, Health, Interior Design, International Studies, Journalism, Language, Law, Marketing, Music, Office Administration, Public Relations, Philosophy, Psychology, Science, Social Studies,

Social Work, Sociology, Speech Pathology, Sports Management, and Theater.

Participants were able to provide more than one area of study.

To further profile participants the survey asked to provide marital status. 167 people responded to the question concerning marital status, 149 responded single, 15 responded married and 3 responded divorced.

The survey sought to not only answer how people interact with and perceive historic house museums, but also gain an understanding of the resources people have in terms of time and money. Participants were asked to provide their employment status. Of the 164 people that offered their employment information 107 people responded that they are currently an undergraduate student, 60 responded they are a part-time employee, 24 responded they are currently a Master's Student, 21 responded they are a full time employee, 21 responded they are unemployed, 7 responded they are a Doctoral Student, and 1 responded they are a full-time homemaker.

To further understand the resources people have available, they were asked to provide their estimated disposable income for one year. Due to both a low response and perceived confusion in the question, the data collected must be considered as only a rough guideline. The answers provided do not provide a deep insight about those surveyed, but it does reveal basics about their spending capacity.

The survey also sought to answer how the behavior of families might differ from singles. Participants were asked to include the number of children living in their household and how many of these children were under five. This question has been eliminated from consideration due to perceived confusion in the question as a few people

responded they had up to five children over the age of five by the age 19. Due to a misunderstanding this question must be not be used to determine the habits of families.

Survey Design and Procedures

Participants were surveyed over a two month time period from October to November 2011.

The 3 part survey consisted of 33 questions aimed to better understand 1) their demographic identification, 2) their leisure activities, and 3) their opinions of historic house museums. These three areas of information were developed to reveal the current situation, possible causes of the situation, and possible future actions for historic house museums. The survey consisted of multiple choice, Liker scale, short answer, and long answer questions.

The first section of the survey provided profile information as participants were asked basic demographic identifiers including: age, gender, length of time in Waco, education, area of study in college, marital status, disposable income, age and number of children and employment.

Following the demographic questions participants were asked to identify their habits concerning leisure activities. This second portion of the survey was designed to reveal how people spend their time and money. These questions are valuable to understanding how historic house museums fit into the context of other activities of the participants.

To understand participant's leisure habits, the survey offered a series of multiple choice questions. These questions examined how much money and time participants spend going to movies, watching television, eating at restaurants with friends, shopping,

reading for enjoyment, having get-togethers with friends, playing a sport with friends, participating in events on a university campus, going to art museums, going to history museums, going to the zoo, going to historic house museums, going to college or professional sporting events, going to concerts, and taking vacations.

Other questions to better understand the habits of the survey participants asked how many hours each day the participant has for leisure activities, and how does the educational value, entertainment, cost, location, preferences of friends and novelty effect how they choose leisure activities. Participants were also asked how much they rely on different forms of media for information.

The final question of the second section began to move away from how people spend their leisure time to how they understand local history. This question was developed to identify if there is a link between a participants appreciation of local history and how they interact with cultural institutions such as history museums and historic house museums. To determine the participants relationship to local history, the survey asked for the participant to gauge on a scale of 1-10, 1 being not important at all and 10 being very important, how important it is that people develop a knowledge of local history of the community in which they live.

The third portion of the survey focused on personal experiences and perceptions of historic house museums. Using mostly open ended questions that encouraged a short answer this portion of the survey was designed to gather opinions rather than habits. Participants were asked if they had ever been to a historic house museum. If they answered yes, they were then prompted to describe their experiences explaining the historic house museums they visited, how old they were they the last time they visited

historic house museums, who they went with, if they were on vacation if they went, if they enjoyed their experience and if they would go back. Both the people who had been to a historic house museum and those who had not were prompted to answer questions about what they think their experience would be like if they were to visit a historic house museum in the future. Participants were asked what they would expect to do during a visit, what they would expect to see during a visit, would they expect to learn something during a visit, would they expect to be entertained, and if this is something they thought they would enjoy.

The final question of the survey asked participants to check the activities from a list in which they would be interested. This question is aimed to provide information for historic house museums about what activities would be work best to reach this demographic. Participants were also asked to explain why these activities interested them. The answers provided can provide better insight to why certain activities might be more successful than others.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

One limitation from using the instrument of a survey for the study is the restricted amount of information collected through a survey. By using a survey to collect data there is no opportunity to ask follow up questions that might further expose the attitude of the participant. While the survey provided space for long answer responses, there is no occasion to ask for more information concerning an interesting statement. Instead, the research is limited to the answers provided on the survey.

One perceived limitation of the survey is the audience surveyed for the study. The audience is limited to Baylor University students and alumni who have taken classes

in the humanities. This sample only provides information concerning the habits and opinions of a narrow group of people, ultimately limiting the focus of the survey to only include educated people who have expressed an interest in the humanities.

While this certainly limits the breadth of the survey it does not limit the depth. Instead, this restriction is an advantage in that it provides a deeper look at how likely visitors interact with historic house museums. The young adults connected with Baylor University can provide an insight to the opinions of other young adults with their education level and academic interest.

By identifying people who have demonstrated interest in subjects found in historic house museums the research reveals the extent of the problem. Surveying this subgroup allows historic house museums to better understand who they are reaching and how successful they are in the process. This is superior to trying to understand a general population between the ages of 18 and 35.

Another advantage of the audience surveyed is that, while they are likely visitors they are not necessarily actual visitors. This is an alternative to the visitor's survey, which only reaches those who have already voted with their feet by visiting a historic house museum. This alternative allows for responses from people who have never been to a historic house or have not visited since they were children. This provides a more rounded view of how well historic house museums are reaching these young adults.

CHAPTER THREE

Statistical Analysis

This research seeks to identify the current relationship young adults ages 18-35 have with historic house museums, the causes of this current situation, and how historic house museums might strengthen the relationship in the future. It is often assumed that young adults are not visitors, members or volunteers of historic house museums, but there is little evidence to support this perception. Examining the current relationship between young adults and historic house museums will allow historic house museums to determine their effectiveness in reaching this audience and develop future strategies that ensure more participation from this age group.

To answer this question, the survey identified three categories of information. The first is a basic demographic profile, which allows us to better understand who is in the surveyed population. The second portion of the survey seeks to find what this population does with their time and money and how they make these decisions, so we might better know the habits of young adults allowing historic house museums to better reach this audience. The third portion of the survey seeks to explore the population's previous experiences, perceptions and potential future interactions with historic house museums.

Analysis of this data reveals three different areas of information. First, the current situation can be identified and analyzed followed by an examination of potential causes of this situation. The third area is a study of potential solutions that can improve the situation for the future and better meet the needs of this audience.

Analysis of the Situation

Demographics

The survey indicates that 74% of young adults identified as likely visitors have visited a historic house museum while 26% have not (Figure 1). While this does not reveal the amount of experience or level of participation young adults have had with historic house museums, it does suggest that a majority of likely participants have at least some experience with historic house museums. To better understand this audience it is necessary to further identify those who have visited historic house museums from those who have not.

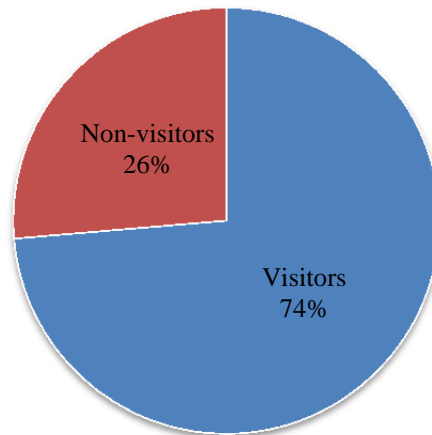


Figure 1. Previous experience with historic house museums.

Looking at participants ages 18-22 as compared to those who are 23-35¹ reveals that there is a correlation between the age of the participant and their past experience with historic house museums. When asked if they had ever been to a historic house museum, 64% of the 18-22 year olds responded yes, while 94% of the 23-35 year olds responded

¹ Participants have been divided into these two age groups to distinguish the activity of those who are college age from those who are post college age. Identifying participants by age and not their status as students allows us to see any correlation in behavior that is related to the age of a student.

yes (Figure 2). This is a 30% difference between age groups, suggesting that the 23-35 year olds are more likely to have visited a historic house museum in the past.

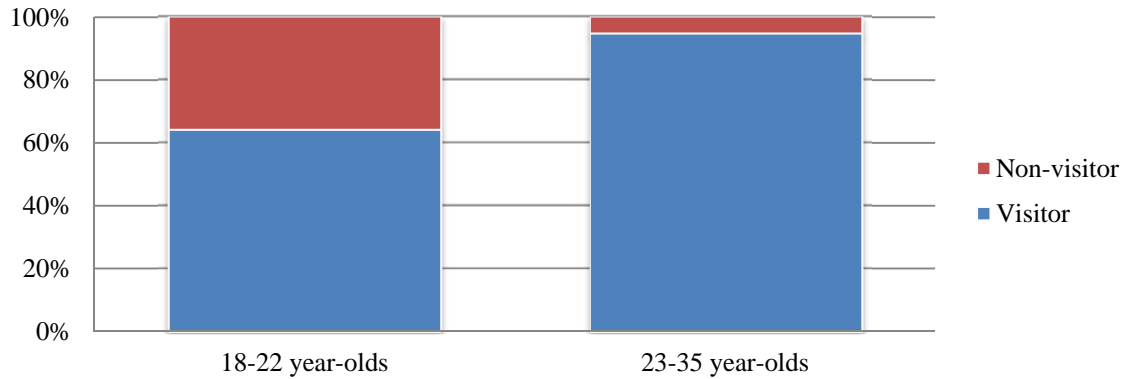


Figure 2. Age of historic house museum visitors.

Analysis of this data must acknowledge that 46% of the 23-35 year olds surveyed were graduate students and alumni from the Museum Studies department at Baylor University. All of these participants have taken field trips to different house museums while at Baylor. When Museum Studies students and alumni are removed we see that 89.6% of 23-35 year olds have visited a historic house museum. This still presents a 26% difference between the activity of the 18-22 year olds and the 23-35 year olds verifying that there is a correlation between age and historic house museum attendance.

The data reveals that approximately 74% of males and females have visited a historic house museum (Figure 3). The margin of difference is too small to identify different tendencies based on gender. Instead we see that historic house museums are reaching both males and females of the surveyed population proportionally.²

² This does not mean that historic house museum visitors, volunteers and members who are in this age range are evenly split by gender. This only suggests that the historic house museum participation proportionally reflects the gender breakdown of the identified likely audience.

According to survey, there is no correlation between marital status and whether or not the participant has visited a historic house museum. Among those who are single, 70.5% responded yes, they have visited a historic house museum, while among those who are married 100% responded yes. . Three people responded that they were divorced, and all 3 also responded they had visited a historic house museum (Figure 4). While 100% of married and divorced people responded they have been to a historic house museum, these numbers might be deceiving. As it revealed earlier, there seems to be a correlation between older participants and the young participants, due to the insignificant number of respondents that are married or divorced it is hard to determine if this trend is related to marriage or age.

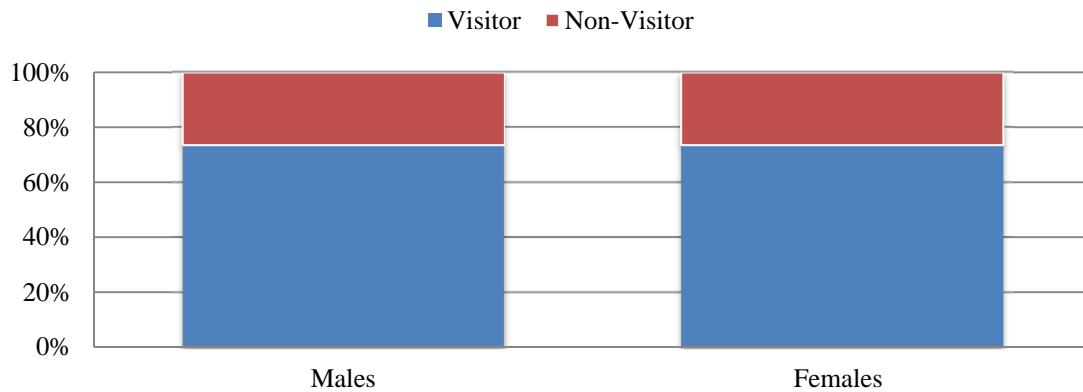


Figure 3. Gender of historic house museum visitors.

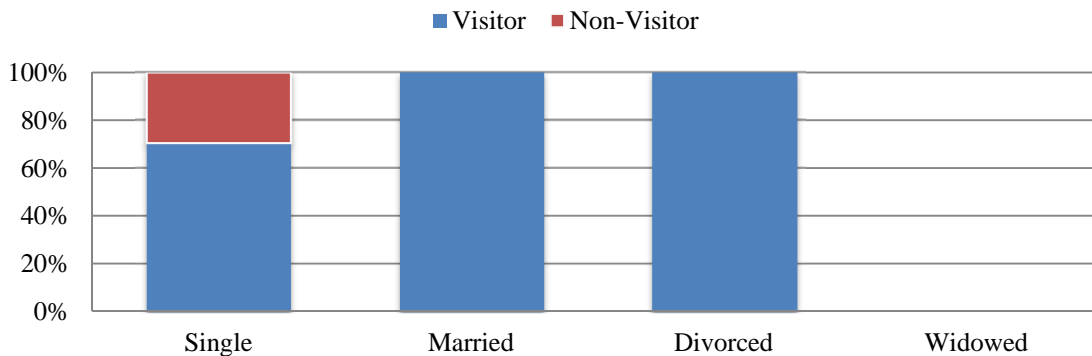


Figure 4. Marital status of historic house museum visitors.

Demographic Summary

For this study, likely museum visitors were identified as university educated students and alumni of academic disciplines in the humanities related to the content covered in historic house museums. The study of this population suggests that historic house museums are reaching young adults ages 18-35 who have studied disciplines in the humanities, but the 18-22 year-olds have demonstrated less interest in visiting historic house museums than the 23-35 year-olds. For both those who have and have not been to historic house museums, gender and marital status seem to be irrelevant.

What this means for historic house museums is that they are indeed reaching a population of most of the likely audience, suggesting that the problem might not be as deep as anticipated. If we found that the likely audience was not visiting historic house museums, it would reveal that historic house museums are failing to reach any 18-35 year old. Instead, we see that historic house museums have successfully brought most of the people in this audience through their door.

While it might seem that the demographic analysis negates the fears that young adults are neglecting historic house museums, it does not provide an accurate understanding of this population's relationship with historic house museums. It does not prove that young adults have had continued activity with historic house museums, or that the historic house museum they visited fully met their needs. What these numbers do reveal is that many have had at least some experience with historic house museums, suggesting that if these young adults have not had continued activity in historic house museums it is not due to inexperience with museums of this type.

Also, we must consider that 26% of this population has not visited a historic house museum. As museums, it is important that historic house museums reach as many people as possible. As established by the study *Excellence and Equity*, museums are for all people, and must deliver a quality experience that can reach a broad audience. If historic house museums have failed to reach 26% of a population that has been identified as a likely audience then this could be an even bigger problem among other populations.

The knowledge disseminated in a historic house museum is not reserved for those interested in certain academic disciplines, instead, the themes of local history and human lifestyles should be communicated to as many people as possible. There will probably always be a heightened interest among those who study disciplines within the humanities, but if we are not fully reaching the young adults in these areas, it is unlikely historic house museums are successfully reaching young adults with other academic disciplines, or those who have not continued on to higher education.

Experiences

Simply investigating who does and does not visit historic house museums is not enough to understand the current relationship young adults ages 18-35 have with historic house museums. To understand the current situation we must also analyze the experiences they have had visiting historic house museums.³

Participants identified 101 different historic house museums that they have visited. These historic house museums were then ordered from the most visited to least visited (Figure 5). Museums listed by more than 5 participants were specifically

³ To gather this information those who responded yes, they have visited a historic house museum, were prompted to expand on their experiences through a series of questions to identify the circumstances under which young adults visit historic house museums.

identified. The most popular museum was Historic Waco Foundation, which is an organization that cares for four separate houses.⁴ There is a problem that a number of visitors were Museum Studies students who have visited a number of the houses on field trips. While this certainly does not negate their participation in the museum, it does make it unclear how many young adults are visiting Historic Waco Foundation as part of a leisure activity.

The second most popular museum mentioned was Mount Vernon, which was the home of President George Washington. It is interesting that the home of such a famous figure in American history is one of the most visited home of the participants. This is also consistent with the general population, as Mount Vernon is known as the most popular historic home in the United States. It could be inferred that the only reason this house came in second to Historic Waco Foundation is because all of the respondents have lived in Waco, Texas, which gives the houses of HWF an edge over other possible historic house museums. To fully understand this situation it is necessary to analysis the popularity of houses based on their location.⁵

According to the survey, 73 of the participants who have been to a historic house museum have visited one out of the state of Texas but in the United States. The next most popular location to visit a historic house museum was in Waco, where 31 of the participants have been to at least one historic house, 30 people visited historic house museums in the state of Texas, but not Waco, Austin or Dallas, 16 people visited house

⁴ The results for each house were added together and then added to the number of people who simply listed Historic Waco Foundation as a historic house museum. While this is one organization, it does represent multiple museums.

⁵ Waco, Austin and Dallas were identified specifically due to relative ease in traveling between these three cities. Other museums in Texas were also considered as a specific group. All museums outside of Texas but in the United States make up the out of state category, and any museum not in the United States is considered abroad.

museums abroad, 13 people have been to house museums in Austin, and 10 people have visited house museums in Dallas (Figure 6).⁶

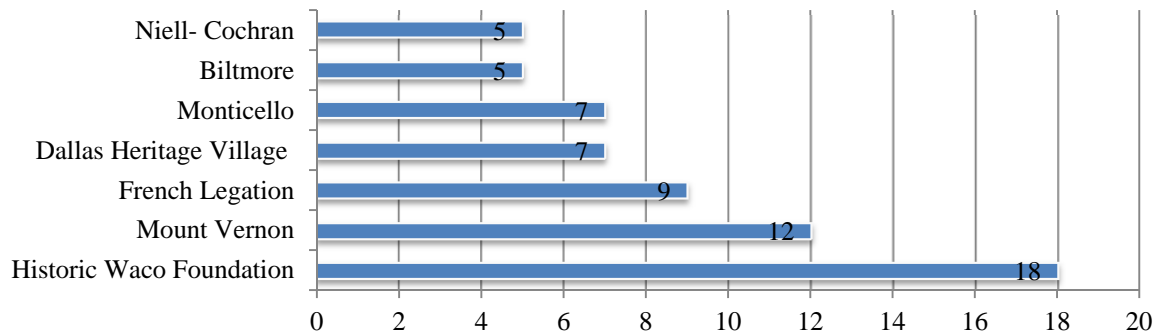


Figure 5. Historic house museums listed the most often.

While these numbers might suggest people travel to see historic house museums it is important to note that 22% of undergraduate students at Baylor have out of state permanent addresses, which might explain some of the 73 participants that mentioned out of state museums.⁷ What is more revealing is that the next highest number is Waco, where 31 participants visited a house museum. Since all of the participants have lived in Waco for at least some time the historic house museums located in Waco serve as a leveling tool for all participants. Each participant has access to these houses due to their proximity. Identifying Waco as the second most popular location suggests that there are young adults who are visiting historic house museums in the community in which they live.⁸

⁶ Since people could list more than one museum some participants fall into multiple categories. The data looks only at categorizing the houses listed.

⁷ Baylor University. IRT Series 11-12, no. 25 (September 9, 2011):8., <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/151566.pdf> (accessed January 24, 2011).

⁸ The behaviors of this group related to their time in Waco were further studied but the results did not produce data relevant to the other findings. Overall there was no major difference in Waco historic

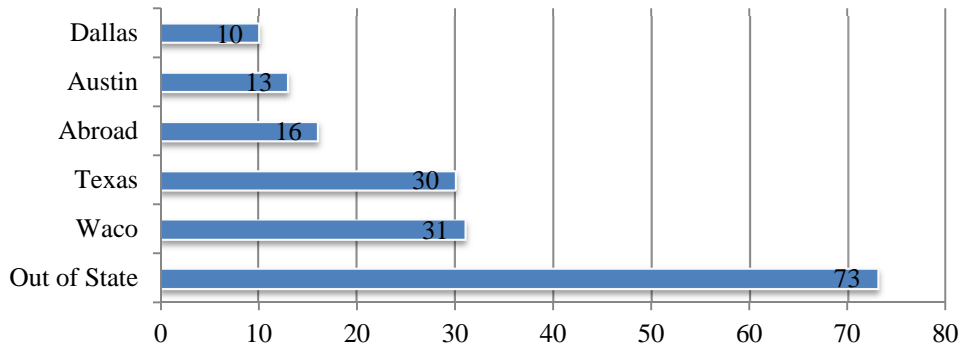


Figure 6. Most popular locations of historic house museums listed.

Knowing that the Museum Studies department often works with houses located in Waco, which could potentially inflate the numbers, it is necessary to examine how many students outside of the department have visited a historic house museum in Waco. When removing all of the surveys of participants who identified themselves as Museum Studies students we see that 18 people with other academic backgrounds have been to a historic house museum in Waco. While this takes Waco from being the second most popular to the third, it still reveals a basic interest in the local house museums. This supports the previous finding that people are interested in the house museums located in the city in which they live.

The two locations identified the least are Dallas and Austin. These cities, each located approximately 90 miles from Waco are accessible destinations for Waco residents. What is most interesting here is that 9 of 13 people who have been to a historic house museum in Austin, and 6 of 10 who have been to a historic house museum in Dallas, have identified themselves as Museum Studies students, who often take field trips to each of these cities. When eliminating the participants who might have gone with a

house museum visits between those who just moved here (20.7%), those who have been here 6 months to 2 years (24.1%) and those who have lived here 5-7 (20.7%) years. Those who have lived here 3-5 years (13.8%) and those who have been here over 9 years (17.2%) also demonstrated similar habits. The smallest group of participants was those who have been here 7-9 years (3.4%)

class we see much less participation. This is important because it reveals that people are not as willing to spend time at historic house museums on their own time while in Dallas or Austin.

Of the 101 different house museums listed, 36 of them were associated with historic people or events. These museums include places such as Mount Vernon, the home of President Washington, or The House Where Lincoln Died,⁹ the site of an important historical event. Identifying the houses in this way allows us to inquire as to whether people are more likely to go to houses that are associated with a particular part of history, or if they go for other reasons. It is clear that a good number of people do indeed visit the homes of historical people and events.

The remaining house museums listed were not associated with nationally significant historic people or events; these houses were preserved for alternate motives. Perhaps the house was the home of an important local figure, demonstrated a fine architectural style or it was an example of how common people lived during a certain time in history. These constitute 67 of the museums listed suggesting that people do not need nationally known historic people or events as a draw to the house museum. Instead, they can be interested in visiting for other reasons (Figure 7).

The final three categories reveal a disconnect in the current relationship between young adults and historic house museums. They were museums of which the participants could not remember the name; museums where no name was offered at all, and museums listed that were museums, but not historic house museums.

⁹ The House Where Lincoln Died is part of the Ford's Theatre tour. This only furthers the point that many houses are visited not out of an interest for historic house museums, but instead for the historical event or famous person that is associated with the house.

Thirty-five of the participants did not name the museum they visited; instead they listed cities, states or countries where they have visited museums. This suggests that the individual museum is not as important as where they were when they visited the museum.

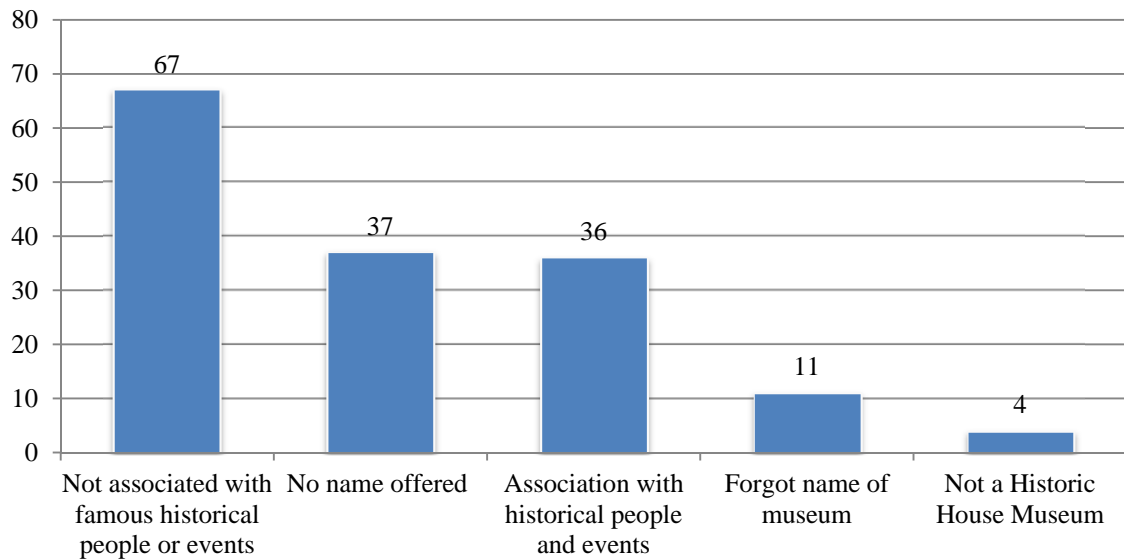


Figure 7. Historical interpretation focus of the historic house museums listed by participants.

There were also 11 people who could not remember the name of the museum they visited. Some of these people could not remember simply because there were too many. This often came after a list of other museums. Some people responded that they could not remember any of the museums they have visited. This suggests that their experience did not make a lasting impression. Again, a closer look at these particular surveys is required to better understand why they might have forgotten which historic house museums they have visited.

The final category is for the participants who have said they have been to a historic house museum, but when asked which ones they listed museums that were not houses such as the National Museum or the Rosa Parks museum. While only 4

participants responded this way, it is interesting that they are not familiar enough with historic house museums to be able to identify whether or not they have been to one.

Since historic house museums can be both a part of the local culture as well as tourist destinations it is important to understand if young adults engage with historic house museums while on vacation or in other situations. On vacation people often look for unique experiences that will allow them to better understand the location while local participation might suggest something about involvement in the history of the community. According to their responses we see that approximately 52% of participants responded yes, they were on vacation, while the other 48% responded no (Figure 8).¹⁰ This very even split suggests that half of museum visitors are tourists and are not members of the local community that will continue to support the museum, but they are an important audience whose needs must be met. This reveals that there is a substantial population of young adults who have visited historic house museums while on vacation. It is important that historic house museums provide a positive experience that will encourage them to come back if they return or tell their friends who also go to that particular location.

The other half may or may not be members of the community, they could be in town for different reasons, such as school or business trips. What this does reveal is that historic house museums are not reserved only for vacations; almost half of the participants have visited such a museum under a different circumstance. This suggests that historic house museums have an opportunity to impact audiences in a potentially deep and meaningful way.

¹⁰ Some participants offered multiple answers to accommodate for multiple past experiences, each answer was considered individually.

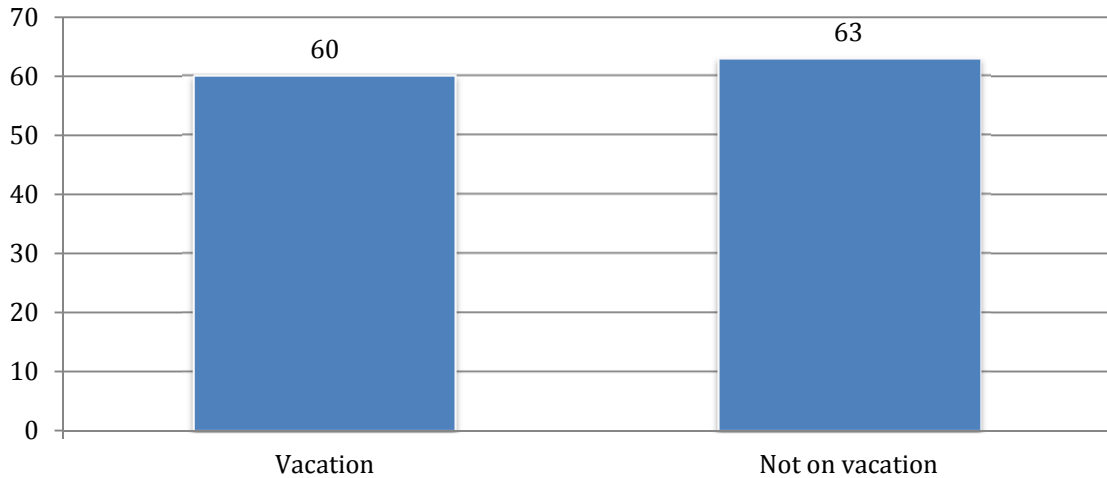


Figure 8. Visitors who visited a historic house museum while on vacation compared to those who were not.

The museum experience is not limited to the museum and visitor but also includes the group that accompanied the visitor. According to the survey 46% of participants went with a family member the last time they visited a historic house museum. The second most popular answer was classmate at 25%, in third was friends with 19%, 5% wrote something other than these three groups such as Boy Scouts, and approximately 4% responded that they visited a historic house museum alone (Figure 9).

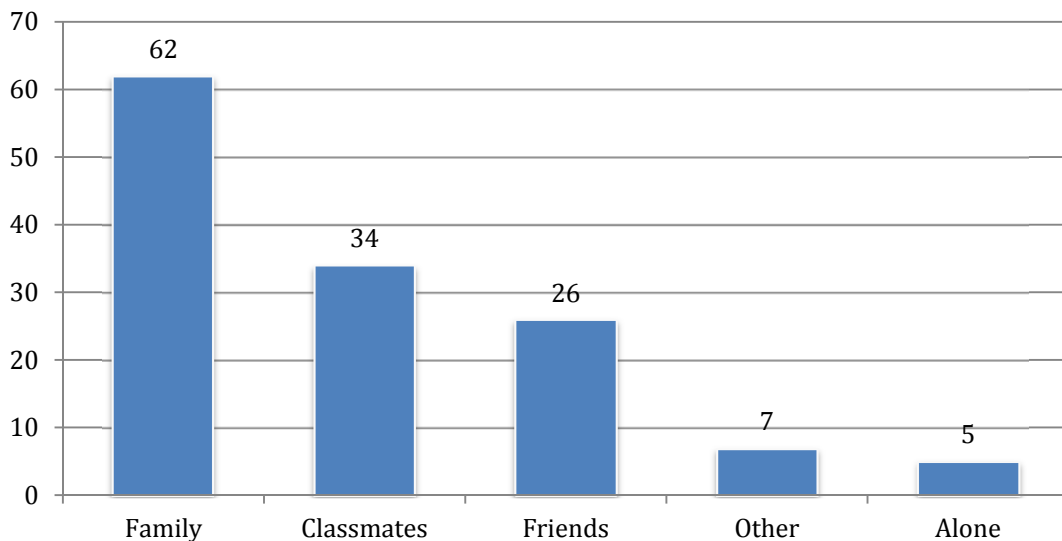


Figure 9. Groups of people who accompanied the survey participant when visiting a historic house museum.

This reveals that most people visit historic house museums as a leisure activity, not as part of a class for school, and they are more likely to visit with family than they are with their friends.

Included in the survey were Museum Studies students, who might have different habits than other students in the humanities due to their particular career interests. When looking at this population we see that 14 of the 35 participants that have visited a historic house museum with classmates are Museum Studies students who often take fieldtrips to historic house museums. This population also makes up 6 of the participants who have gone with their friends and 4 that have gone with their families. Even when the Museum Studies students are removed from the data the order of groups remains the same. This suggests that the data is not skewed by the makeup of the surveyed population.

While the family group is the most common at historic house museums, it does not mean all young adults are brought only by the will of their parents. Instead we must look at the age participants last visited a historic house museum. This, of course, does not assume they did not enjoy the experience, or that they were resistant to going. Instead it allows us to better see if people over 18 visit historic house museums after they live on their own.

According to the survey, 66% of participants have visited a historic house museum when they were over the age of 18. This means that 34% have not visited a historic house museum since they were 17 or younger (Figure 10). Since the survey includes people as young as 18 this could be as recent as less than a year ago. What this does is help us to understand the activity of an adult versus a minor.

These numbers reveal that most of the participants have visited a historic house museum over the age of 18. This suggests some level of activity once they are considered an adult. The 33% that have not visited a historic house museum since they were 17 or younger suggest that they visited with their parents, school group or other adults, but have not made a decision to go back. This 33% is a particularly interesting group because they are the ones who have been exposed to historic house museums but have not returned to visit them as an adult. This could be due to lack of interest, a poor experience, or outside forces such as time and resources that have kept them from visiting a historic house museum again.

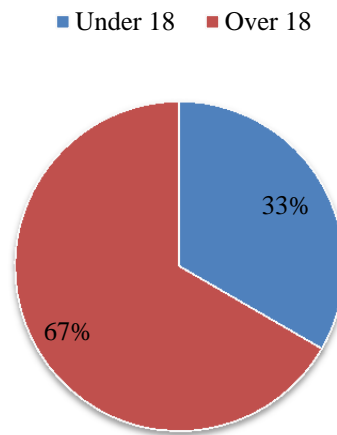


Figure 10. Age of participant last time they visited a historic house museum.

Opinions, Perceptions and Expectations

In addition to determining the circumstances of their experience it is necessary to examine how participants viewed their experiences. In the survey, an overwhelming majority, 92% responded with positive remarks about their experience. This means that only 8% offered negative remarks concerning their past experiences with historic house museums (Figure 11). Some participants differentiated between good experiences and

bad, expressing the fact they have had good experiences at some houses and bad experiences at others.

People could have enjoyed their visit because those who have the motivation to visit historic house museums are predisposed to enjoy the experience they have while at the museum or because the historic house museum has successfully affected them. In the first case, this population has taken the time and effort to visit house museums because they find them interesting and the historic house museum met their expectations. In the second case their visit provided them with an enjoyable experience even if they didn't think it was something they would enjoy.

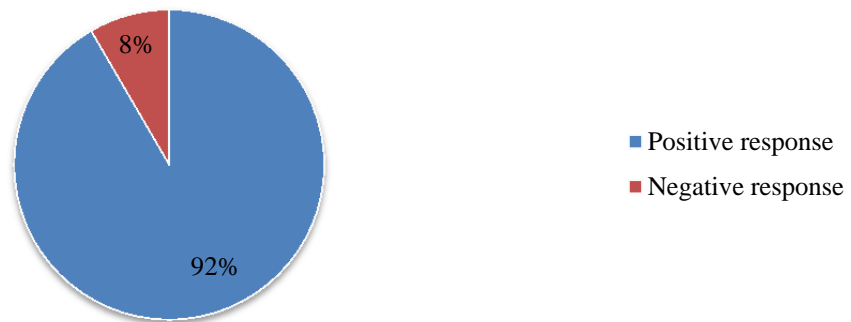


Figure 11. Enjoyment of last visit to a historic house museum.

This data reveals that nearly all of the participants surveyed enjoyed their experience, it is not a given they would return to the historic house museum in the future. For a museum to have a healthy culture of young adult activity it is important that this audience have continued participation in the museum. This leads us to an analysis of the expectations of this demographic.

To determine the participant's likelihood of a repeat visit they were asked if they would go back; among those who have visited a historic house museum, 73% responded positively to the idea of visiting a historic house museum in the future, saying that this is something they think they would enjoy, 9% responded with an indifferent response or a maybe, while 18% responded with a negative answer, suggesting this was not something they would enjoy in the future (Figure 12).

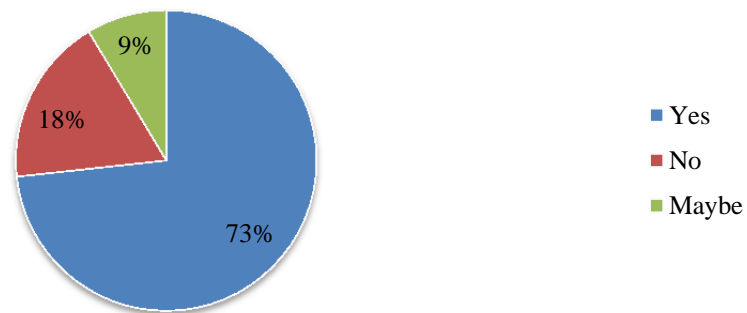


Figure 12. Desire to visit a historic house museum in the future.

Since only 8% had poor experiences and 18% have suggested they would not return we see that more than just those with poor experiences show no interest in having a repeat visit. This suggests that a good experience does not mean the visitor will want to return to the museum. Instead visitors might believe that once they have seen a house they do not need to see it again, or while they enjoyed the experience it is not necessarily something they would want to repeat.

Both visitors and non-visitors were also asked to imagine a visit and what they think it would be like. When asked if they thought they would enjoy the experience 40% responded positively about a future visit, 45% responded that maybe this was something

they would enjoy, and 15% responded no, they did not think they would enjoy the experience.

The response of the non-visitors is quite different from the response of the visitors (Figure 13 and 14). It is clear that those who have not visited historic house museums do not have as positive of expectations as those who have visited. This suggests two things, either visiting a historic house museum will improve your perception of future visits, or it is higher among visitors because those are the people who are predisposed to like historic houses. What we can see is that many non-visitors have not taken the time or energy to visit a historic house because this is not something they envision themselves enjoying.

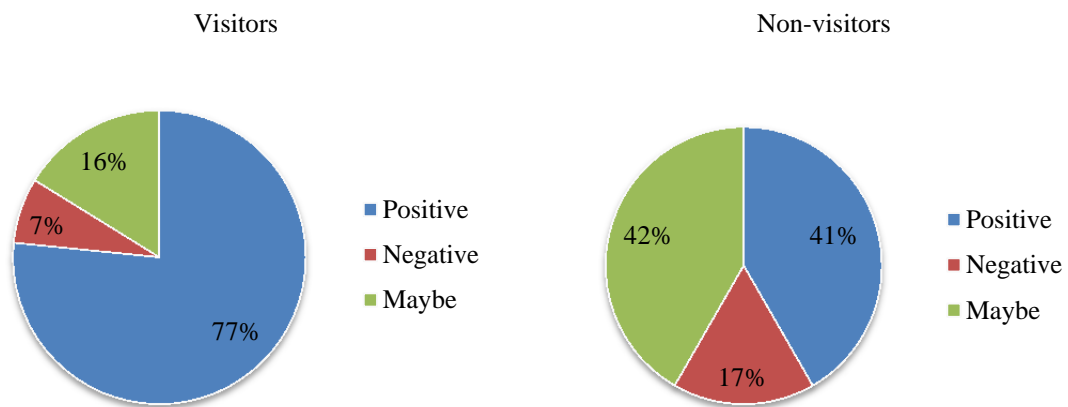


Figure 13. Visitor expectations of future visits.

Figure 14. Non-visitor expectations of future visits.

We also see that 41% of non-visitors think this is something they would enjoy, but they have not taken the time to visit a historic house museum. This is an important problem for historic house museums because they are failing to reach an interested population. Historic house museums must focus on reaching the 41% who expressed they think they would enjoy a visit and convincing the 42% who expressed they were not

quite sure. By better meeting the needs of this audience historic house museum will be better able to fulfill their public responsibility as museums.

As this analysis of demographics, experiences and perceptions suggests, the situation seems to be moderate. Historic house museums have not lost the attention of all young adults, but it is also clear historic house museums have not fully reached this audience either. We see that historic house museums have found a way to attract at least a majority of the young adults who took the survey, and that nearly all who have visited a historic house museum had a positive experience. Where historic house museums seem to be failing is getting people back through the door and attracting new visitors from a likely population. This reveals that while people might enjoy their experience it does not meet their needs enough for them to participate in historic house museums regularly.

Potential Causes

There are four potential causes of this problem: bad previous experiences, negative perceptions and expectations, limited time and resources, and personal preferences that are not compatible with historic house museums. Examining these four areas might reveal why historic house museums have not been able to fully reach this audience.

The first possible cause of this problem could be due to bad previous experiences. Ninety-two percent of historic house museum visitors had a positive previous experience yet only 74% of visitors intend to visit in the future. This suggests that a good experience is not enough for at least 18% of the surveyed populations to continue interaction with historic house museums.

The second possible cause of this problem could be due to negative perceptions and expectations of historic house museums. This could apply to both visitors and non-visitors who are dissuaded from visiting a historic house museum because they do not anticipate an enjoyable, engaging or worthwhile experience.

While 92% of visitors enjoyed their experience at a historic house museum, only 77% predicted that they would enjoy a future experience. This suggests that there is something in their perception of historic house museums that would make some think they would not enjoy a future visit even though they have had positive experiences in the past. Also, we see that 77% predict they would enjoy their experience, but only 74% intend to visit in the future. While this is a small margin of difference we do see that the level of enjoyment is not directly related to the future activity of this population.

The margin of difference between the level of enjoyment and intended future visits might also reveal that historic house museums do not always attract repeat guests. Of the 22 visitors who responded they would not return in the future, 12 indicated that they would not revisit the same house in the future because they viewed this as a one-time activity. They responded with answers such as, “no, once I’ve heard the story of the house, I don’t see the need,” and “probably not, because I feel as though I have seen what the houses and exhibits have to offer.” While 10% of all visitors hold this opinion, it is the most prominent opinion of those who do not intend to return a historic house museum they have already visited. This identifies a potential cause to the problem, as historic house museums have not done a sufficient job in engaging the population over a period of time.

The perceptions of non-visitors tend to be more negative than those of visitors. As previously mentioned it is hard to determine why non-visitors might demonstrate more negative perceptions. It is not clear that visiting a historic house museum would improve one's perception or if the people with positive perceptions simply are the people who tend to visit historic house museums.

To further analyze the perceptions and expectations this population has of historic house museums both visitors and non-visitors were asked to predict what they would do, see and if they expected to learn something during a visit to a historic house museum. These questions were open ended questions, allowing the participants to freely express their feelings about historic house museums. Understanding how this population views historic house museums might reveal why they have demonstrated limited participation.

When asked what they expected to do when visiting a historic house museum, 51% responded that they expected to tour the house. Among 64% of visitors, touring the house was the most popular answer while among 36.8% of non-visitors this was the most popular. While there is a major difference between the visitor and non-visitor, this answer was the most popular for the visitor, and the second most popular for the non-visitor. As many historic house museums offer tours, we see that non-visitors do have an accurate understanding of what they might do when they visit a historic house.

The second most popular answer, with 31% of participants responding, was that they would learn when visiting a historic house museum. There was a substantial difference between visitors and non-visitors as 27% of visitors and 44% of non-visitors responded to this question in this way. This suggests that non-visitors have a strong

perception of historic house museums as educational institutions, even though they have never been to one (Figure 15).

The remaining answers included responses such as look at the furniture, house and objects and see how people lived. Only one responded that they were not sure, and no one responded with an answer that was improbable, or could not be done while visiting a historic house museum. This suggests that this population does understand what they would do if they visited a historic house museum.

In terms of what participants expected to see while visiting a historic house museum, 30% of visitors responded that they would expect to see artifacts and 28% responded they would expect to see the house. For non-visitors, 37% expected to see artifacts and 29.7% expected to see the house. Again we see little difference between the expectations of the visitors and the non-visitors. This suggests that the non-visitors have an accurate idea of what they might see when visiting a historic house museum.

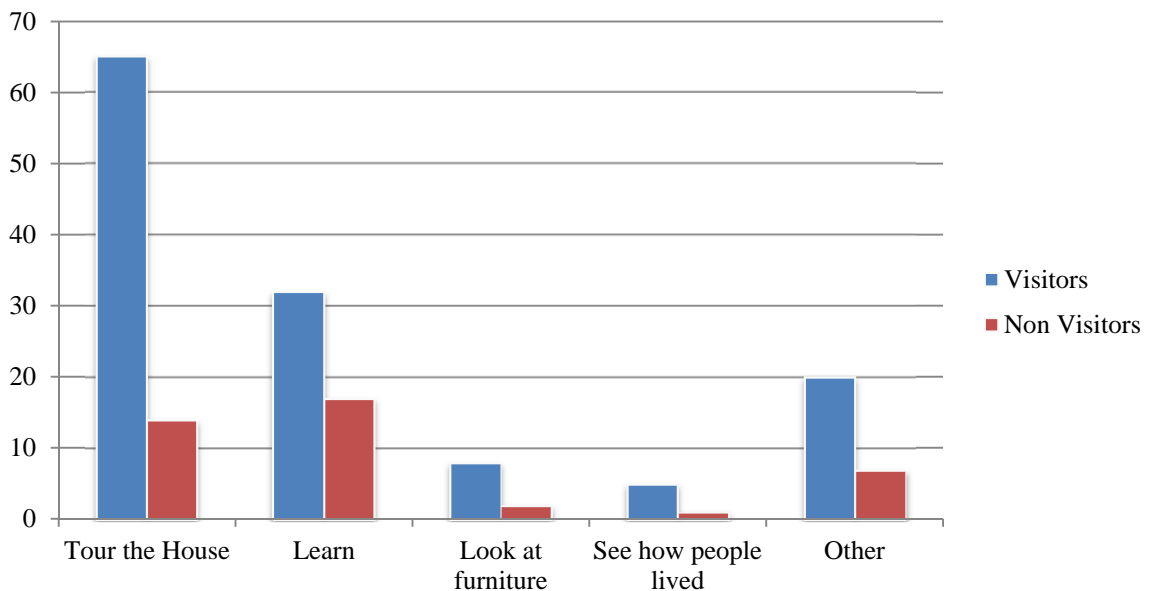


Figure 15. Expectations of what visitors might do at a historic house museum.

Where visitors and non-visitors expectations differ is in the third most popular thing they expected to see during a visit; 23% of visitors responded that they would specifically see furniture when visiting a historic house museum, while 5.4% of non-visitors responded in this way. Instead, for non-visitors seeing the rooms of the house was the third most popular answer. This suggests that those who visit historic house museums have a tendency to identify furniture as a particularly important artifact in the house while non-visitors might consider furniture as an artifact or simply part of the room (Figure 16).

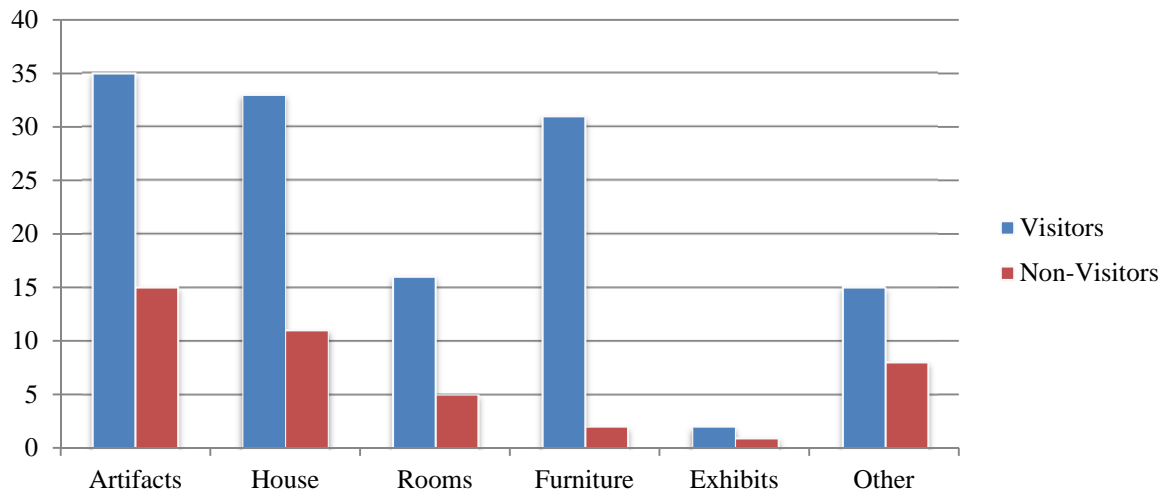


Figure 16. Expectations of what visitors might see at a historic house museum.

In terms of whether or not they expected to learn while visiting a historic house, participants overwhelmingly responded yes, they would expect to learn something as 91% of visitors and 97% of non-visitors responded in a positive way, 4% of visitors and zero non-visitors responded that they hoped they would learn something while 2.5% of visitors and 3% of non-visitors suggested that they might learn something when visiting a historic house museum, only 1.7% of visitors and zero non-visitors responded that they

did not expect to learn anything. These numbers reveal that young adults do view historic house museums as educational institutions (Figure 17).

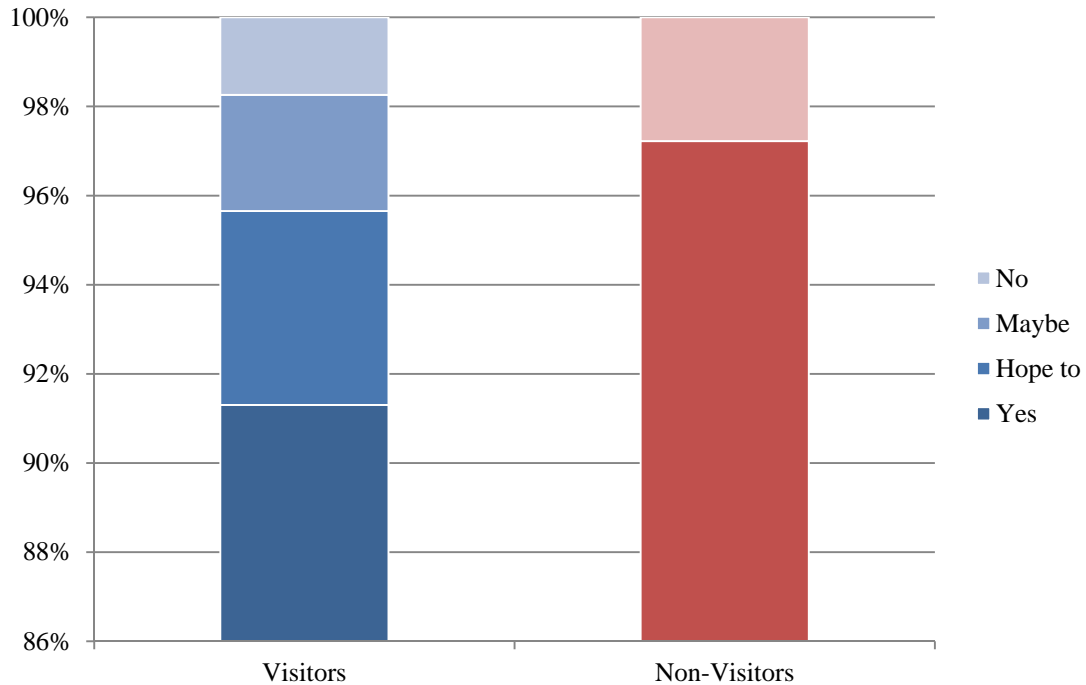


Figure 17. Expectations of whether or not visitors will learn at historic house museums.

Participants were also asked whether or not they expected to be entertained. This proved to be a more mixed opinion than the question concerning education, as 68% of visitors and 61% of non-visitors responded that they did expect to be entertained, though many qualified this answer with the idea that they found education or history entertaining. Nineteen percent of visitors and 23% of non-visitors responded that they did not expect to be entertained while 6.9% of visitors and 9% of non-visitors responded maybe. The remaining responses could not be categorized into these three categories as they either did not directly answer the question or provided a description of what they thought an experience might be like. This reveals that most of the surveyed audience would expect to be entertained at a historic house museum (Figure 18).

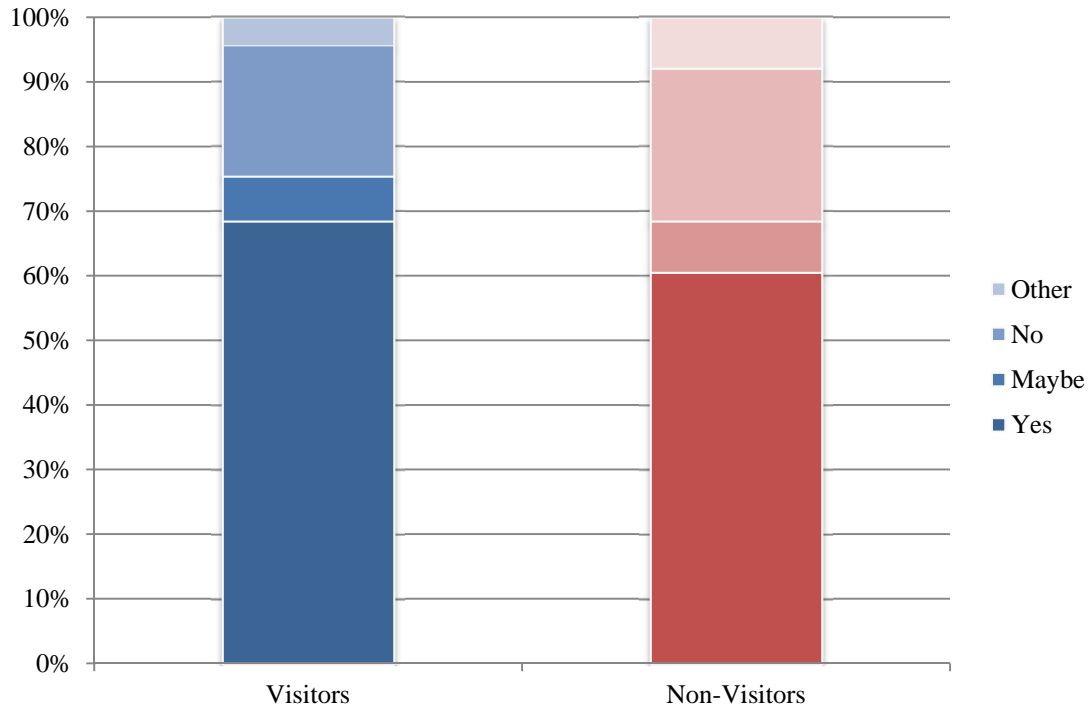


Figure 18. Expectations of whether visitors would be entertained at a historic house museum.

These statistics reveal that both visitors and non-visitors have similar expectations, suggesting that non-visitors have an accurate view of historic house museums. We also see that the surveyed participants understand historic house museums to be a place where you go to view items and learn about history. While entertainment is not absent from historic house museums it is not as central as what you see, do and learn while visiting historic house museums.

It is impossible to identify what formed these perceptions, but we can see this audience has an accurate view of historic house museums, suggesting that inactivity is not caused by an erroneous understanding of the experience they will have at historic house museums. What is of some concern is that entertainment is not central to the historic house museum experience. This perception that they will not be entertained while at a historic house museum might lead to limited activity.

The availability of time and resources might also be a cause for limited interaction with historic house museums. If young adults have a limited amount of time and money and they are spending it on other activities there might be little time or money left to visit historic house museums.

According to the results, the average yearly disposable income for the surveyed population is approximately \$6,300. Before these results are analyzed, we must first realize that this number is affected by a number of factors. First, 11 people responded that they made above \$20,001, two of which made over \$50,000 of disposable income. These extremities pull the entire average higher than what might be accurate.

According to the results most of the surveyed population has approximately \$1000-\$3000 in disposable income per year. Also these results might not be accurate because 35 people did not provide an answer to the question. This could greatly affect the accuracy of the data because the sample size has been reduced. Another reason this data might be inaccurate is that there is a possibility that participants did not understand the question and instead of providing their disposable income they provided their total income. This might account for the aforementioned outliers. The final reason this data might not be accurate is that participants did not have the resources available to properly tabulate this number. This can be seen in individual surveys that respond they have zero disposable income, yet they indicate that they spend a considerable amount of money per year on other leisure activities. These surveys seem to suggest people were not able to properly identify this item of their budget given the situation in which they took the survey.

Despite the complications with this data, it does reveal that the surveyed population has access to disposable income. This population is not limited to purchasing necessities, but instead has the monetary means to participate in at least some leisure activities.

While the average amount of disposable income reveals that this population does have money available, it is necessary to explore how they use the money they have on leisure activities.¹¹ Of the listed leisure activities, people responded that they spend the most money on average per month eating at a restaurant with friends. The activity people spend the least amount of money on is playing a sport with friends as 78% do not spend any money on this activity. From this we can see that people are willing to spend money on a number of different leisure activities. This suggests that they have money available and are able to choose to participate in activities outside of their daily needs.

While we can see that people spend the most amount of money eating at a restaurant with friends, this does not reveal how people spend their time. Analysis of how many hours people spend participating in these activities suggests that watching television is the number one leisure activity. The least popular leisure activity was to go to a movie theater. While going to a movie theater was the fifth highest activity people spent money on it is not something they choose to do very often. This suggests that going to the movies is an expensive activity and visiting fewer times requires more money than some of the other activities (Table 1).

While identifying how people spend their time and money each month allows for general understanding about the habits of participants it does not directly place historic

¹¹ For each activity they were asked to select one of five different ranges based on what they thought the spent per month on that particular activity. The first category was \$0, the second ranged from \$1-20, category three was \$21-40, category 4 was \$41-\$60 and category 5 was \$61+.

house museums into the context of leisure activities. To identify how historic house museums fit into leisure activities participants responded to a list of less common activities people might participate in multiple times a year. These activities included going to an art museum, history museum, zoo, historic house museum, sporting event, or concert. This list of leisure activities allows us to better understand the surveyed population’s activity with historic house museums as it is compared to similar activities that people might not participate in once a month.

Table 1. Ranking of leisure activities by money and time spent per month.

| Amount of money spent per month ¹² | Number of hours spent per month |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Eat at a restaurant with friends | 1. Watch television |
| 2. Shop | 2. Get-togethers at a friend’s house |
| 3. Get-togethers at a friend’s house | 3. Eat at a restaurant with friends |
| 4. Watch television | 4. Read for enjoyment |
| 5. Go to a movie theater | 5. Participate in university events |
| 6. Read for enjoyment | 6. Shop |
| 7. Participate in university events | 7. Play a sport with friends |
| 8. Play a sport with friends | 8. Go to a movie theater |

This list reveals that people spend the most money per year going to a concert; ranked second was going to a college or professional sporting event. This is very similar to the number of times per year people spend going to each of these activities as going to a college or professional sporting event is most popular and going to a concert is the second (Table 2).

¹² The responses were then averaged for each activity based on participants response to each of the categories. By averaging the responses based on the categories most frequently selected we are able to see the order of activities from the most amount of money spent to the least. The same process was used to determine the ranking for the number of hours spent on each activity per month.

The average rankings for both time and money suggest that going to a historic house museum is the least popular of the activities. When considering the amount of money participants spend per year on each activity it is likely that going to a historic house museum is the last because this tends to be a cheaper activity than the other activities listed. What is truly revealing is that it is also the least popular in terms of number of times people visit a historic house per year. Other cultural experiences such as going to history and art museums or going to the zoo are more popular than visiting historic house museums. This suggests that while most of the surveyed population has visited a historic house museum in their life, this is not a regular activity.

Table 2. Ranking of leisure activities by money and time spent per year.

| Amount of money per year | Number of times per year |
|---|---|
| 1. Go to a concert | 1. Go to a college or professional sporting event |
| 2. Go to a college or professional sporting event | 2. Go to a concert |
| 3. Go to art museums | 3. Go to history museums |
| 4. Go to history museums | 4. Go to art museums |
| 5. Go to the zoo | 5. Go to the zoo |
| 6. Go to historic house museums | 6. Go to historic house museums |

The reason people choose to participate in other activities cannot be directly identified, but this does help us to better see what types of activities people do choose. By knowing how historic house museums fit into the context of leisure activities we can start to develop ways to better attract this audience.

The final aspect to examine is how personal preferences affect how young adults choose leisure activities. To identify a relationship between personal preferences and leisure activities we will look at three main areas. First, the correlation between

academic discipline and leisure activities; second, factors people identify for choosing leisure activities such as education, cost or novelty; and third, the correlation between how people understand the importance of local history and how this correlates with the type of perception they have about historic house museums.

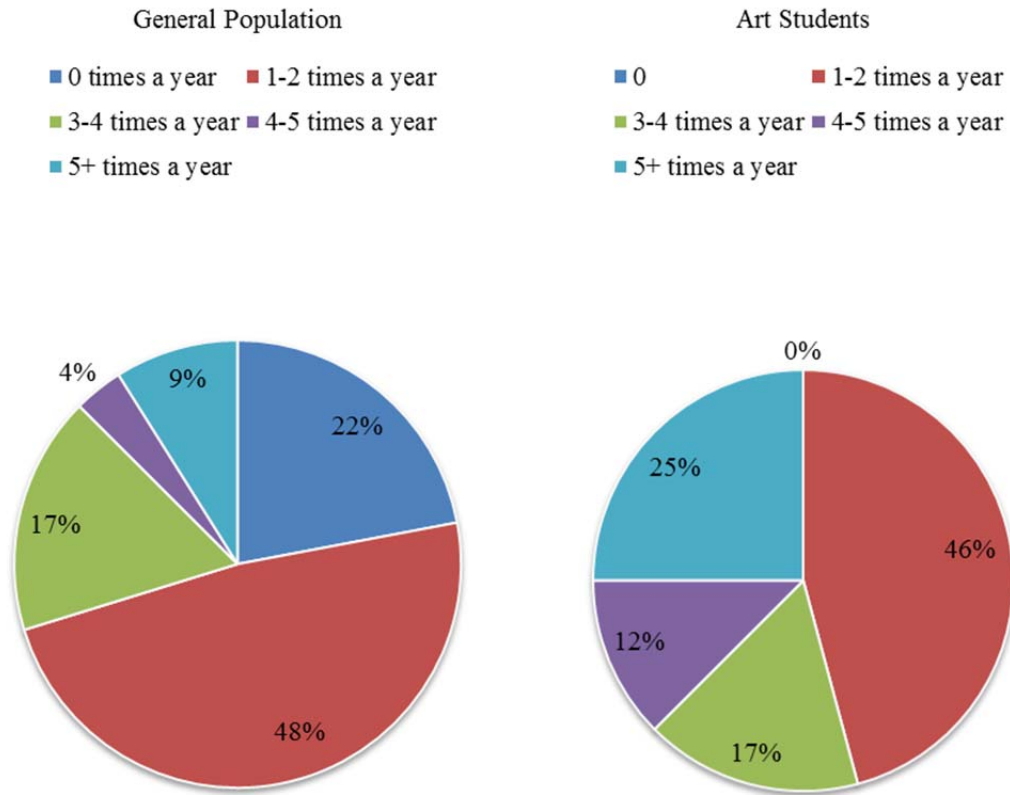
Identifying the correlation between academic disciplines and leisure activities help us to realize how personal preferences affect decisions in leisure activities.

Examining the relationship between art museums and art students, we see that 46% of art students surveyed visit art museums 1-2 times per year (Figure 20). Looking at the rest of the breakdown we see that 16% visit 3-4 times per year, 12% visit 4-5 times a year and 24% visit art museums over five times a year (Figure 20).

This is particularly interesting because it reveals that 100% of art students surveyed visit art museums at least once a year while only 78% of the general surveyed population visit art museums this often (Figure 19). This suggests that there is a correlation between academic interests and leisure activities.

Further analysis reveals that not only are art students more likely to visit art museums, but they also tend to visit these institutions more often than the general population. Even though there is little difference between the entire surveyed population and art majors who go 1-2 times a year (46% of art students and 46% the general population), there is a difference in the three highest categories: 3-4 times a year, 4-5 times a year and more than five times a year. For the general population, there is a combined total of 30% that visit art museums more than three times a year, while among art students, 52% visit art museums with this frequency. Because art students are not

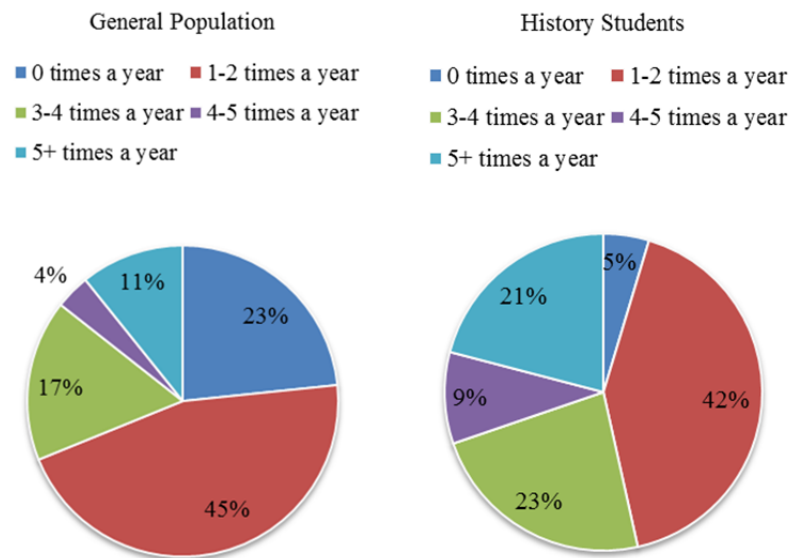
only more likely to visit art museums, but are more likely to visit them more often, the correlation between academic interests and leisure activities is strengthened.



Figures 19 and 20. Frequency with which art students visit art museums compared to the general public.

Similar behavior is revealed when analyzing the behavior of history students as compared to the general population. According to the survey, 42% of history students visit history museums 1-2 times per year. Different from art students, 5% of the history majors surveyed responded that they visit history museums zero times a year, suggesting that not all history students regularly visit history museums yet we still see that a majority of history majors have some participation as 23% said 3-4 times a year, 9% responded 4-5 times a year, and 21% responded that they visit more than five times per year (Figure 21).

Compared to the entire surveyed population there is a difference in the frequency history majors visit history museums. Much like the relationship between art majors and the surveyed population there is a similarity in those who visit 1-2 times per year as 42% of history majors responded this way and 45% of the entire surveyed population provided this response (Figures 21 and 22). The biggest difference between history students and the entire surveyed population is in the extremities of the response options. Among the entire surveyed population, 23% responded that they visit history museums zero times per year, while only 5% of history majors responded this way. Also, the data further confirms a correlation between academic study and leisure activity as 23% of history students visit historic house museums more than five times a year while only 11% of the entire surveyed population visit with this frequency.



Figures 21 and 22. Frequency history majors visit history museums compared to general population.

By comparing the frequency with which art and history students visit the respective museums we see that there is a correlation in academic discipline and number of times of year people visit particular museums.

Unlike history and art museums, historic house museums do not cater to one limited academic discipline; instead they cover a broad range of topics reaching across disciplines. To see how preferences in terms of academic disciplines affect attendance to historic house museums it is necessary to study what disciplines reported having visited a historic house museum.

According to the survey 100% of Museum Studies students have visited a historic house museum. They were followed by English at 90%, History at 88%, Education at 86%, Art at 62%, and Political Science at 61%, and Business at 54%. Of all of the other academic disciplines combined, 62% have visited a historic house museum and 6 people did not answer the question.¹

Analyzing these numbers suggests that Museum Studies, English, History and Education are the most likely to visit a historic house museum. Looking at the other category, which is identified as all of the majors who had 5 or less people visit a historic house museum; we see that 62% have visited a historic house museum. This number acts as a leveling tool so we might better understand those who identify with disciplines that are likely to participate in historic house museums as compared to others.

Originally students of History, Political Science, Art History, Museum Studies, Journalism and Interior Design were identified as likely visitors to historic house museums. While Journalism and Interior Design students cannot be analyzed due to low participation, we can see how History, Political Science, Art and Museum Studies students relate to this hypothesis. This research suggests that History and Museum

¹ Participants had the ability to respond with multiple different areas of study. Each area was identified independently and data was analyzed based on every participant who answered a certain way regardless of the other answers included. This means that a participant who was listed as a Museum Studies major and History major would be analyzed within both categories to ensure the highest accuracy in regard to the area of study.

Studies, are indeed academic disciplines that illustrate a correlation with attendance at historic house museum. While Political Science and Art students were originally identified as likely participants, their results are not much different than those students who are identified in the 'other' category, suggesting .

In addition to understanding how academic preferences affect leisure activities it is necessary to study how people's values correlate with their selected activities. Exploring what people value in leisure activities gives insight concerning the current situation, but also provides information for historic house museums to make decisions for the future that can benefit how historic house museums reach this age group.

According to the responses, entertainment, cost and location were the considered the most important values when making a decision about leisure activities. When allowing for a 5% margin of error any of these three could be interchanged, but in this survey on a scale of 1-10, entertainment scored an average value of 8.68, cost an 8.01 and location scored 7.59. The next highest was preferences of friends, which also came in a close fourth with a ranking of 7.13 and when considering a 5% margin of error it could have been as high as second. The two lowest were novelty at 5.86 and educational value 5.68. As these two rankings are so close there is no statistical difference between the two, but they are ranked significantly lower than the other options (Figure 23).

This exposes a number of important things that guide how people choose to spend their free time. First, the clearest revelation from this question is that the entertainment value of an activity is more likely to determine how people choose leisure activities than the educational value of an activity. People will make choices based on whether or not they expect to be entertained and they are less concerned with whether or not they will be

educated. Also, we see that cost, location and preferences of friends are almost as important as the entertainment value of an activity. This suggests that these are the key factors that must be present to capture the attention of likely visitors.

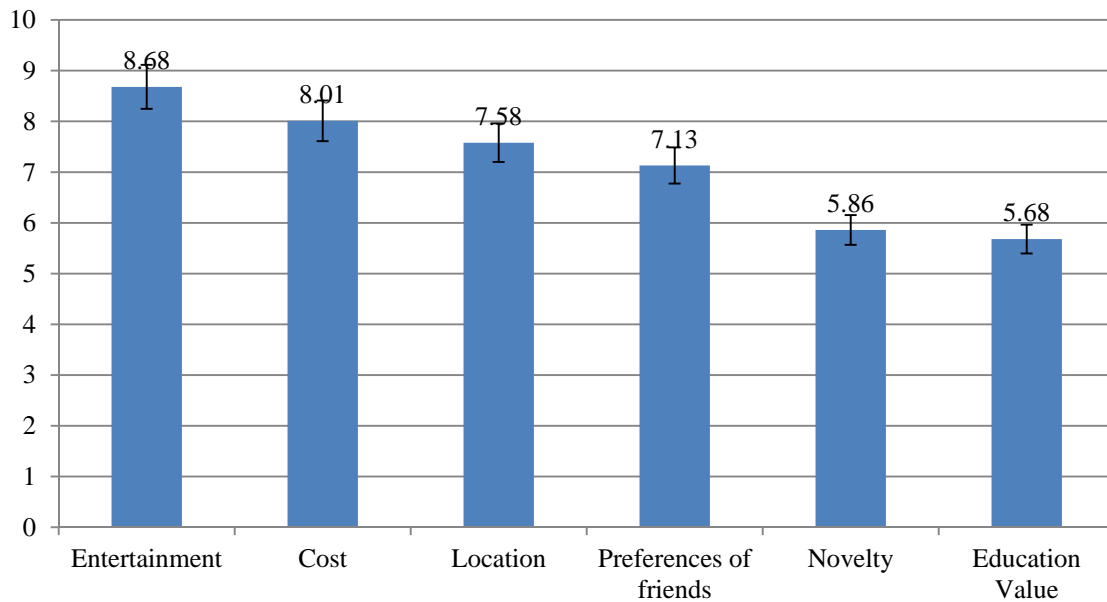


Figure 23. Ranking of influential factors.

To understand how these factors affect decision making choices we must examine the habits of those who hold each factor as high importance as compared to those who hold it as a low importance. This will allow us to see what types of activities people are likely to participate in based on what factors they consider when choosing leisure activities.

The leisure activities of those who place a high importance on educational value when selecting an activity were compared to those who place a low importance on educational value.² From this we see that those who find educational value important

² The frequency of leisure activities between people who responded that the educational value of the activity ranked between a 1 and a 5 in terms of importance were compared to those who responded that educational value ranked between a 6 and a 10. This method was used for each of the values.

display different habits in choosing leisure activities from those who have placed a low importance on educational value. Those who place a high importance on educational value are more likely to visit art museums, history museums and historic house museums. People who place a low importance on educational value are more likely to attend a college or professional sporting event. Also, going to the zoo and a concert seem to be unaffected by whether or not a participant values education in an activity or not (Figure 24). This suggests that educational value is a factor when people decide whether or not to visit a historic house museum.

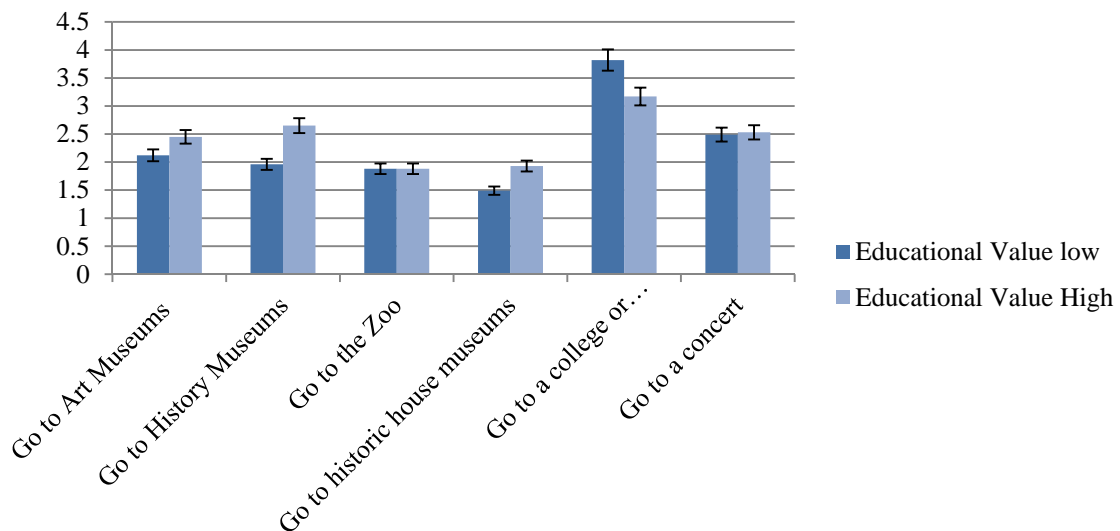


Figure 24. Ranking of activities based on importance of educational value.

The next factor considered is the entertainment value of an activity. According to the survey many of the areas were unaffected by whether or not people held entertainment value as important. This similarity is because over 97% of participants place a high importance on entertainment. This makes understanding the difference between those who do and do not value entertainment impossible through this survey (Figure 25).

Instead, the data suggests that an overwhelming majority of the surveyed population consider the entertainment value when selecting leisure activities. This implies that while the other personal preferences might influence how individuals in this audience act, entertainment is something that is valued by a majority of young adults. Examination of this data reveals that historic house museums are among the least popular activities while going to professional sporting events is the most popular. It is difficult to make a correlation between the personal preferences of participants and their activities because without a larger sample of people who do not value entertainment, we cannot see how those who value entertainment would act compared to those who do not.

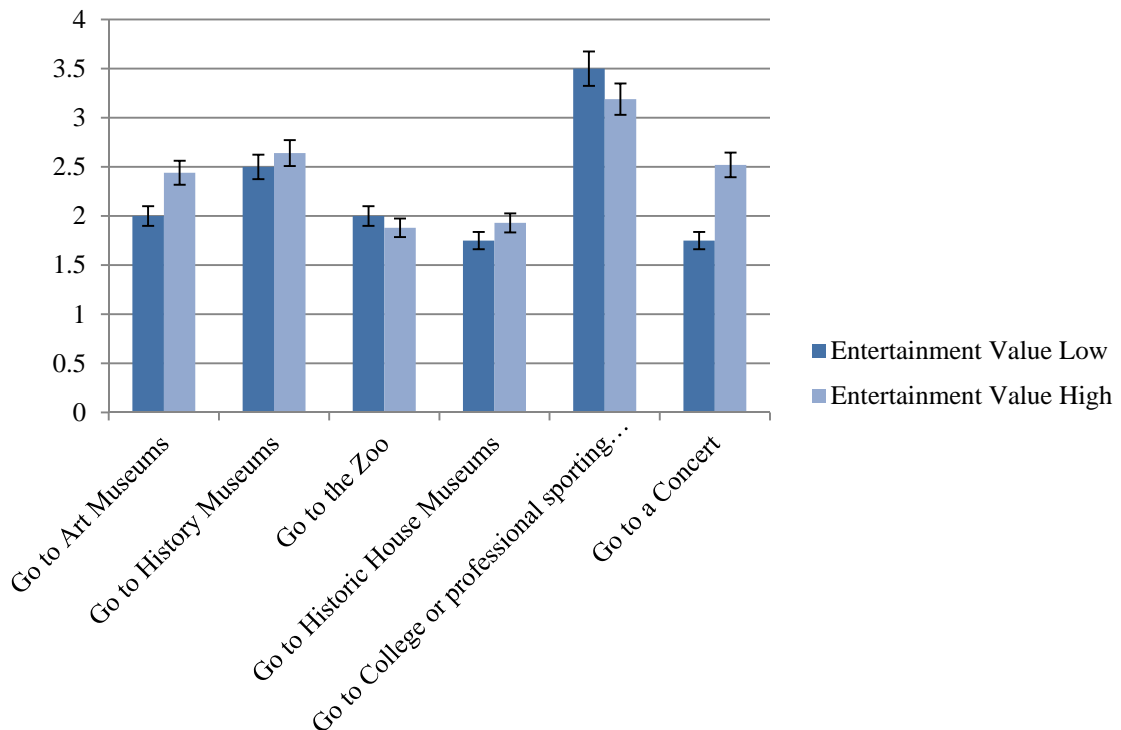


Figure 25. Ranking of activities based on the importance of entertainment value.

The third factor considered is the cost of the activity. The survey indicates that those who place a high importance on cost and those who place a low importance on cost

show little difference in whether or not they visit art museums, zoos, or historic house museums. We do see that people who place a low importance on cost visit history museums more frequently than those who have a high importance on cost. We also see a large difference in who attends college or professional sporting events and who goes to concerts. In both of these instances people who place a low importance on cost participate in these activities more frequently (Figure 26).

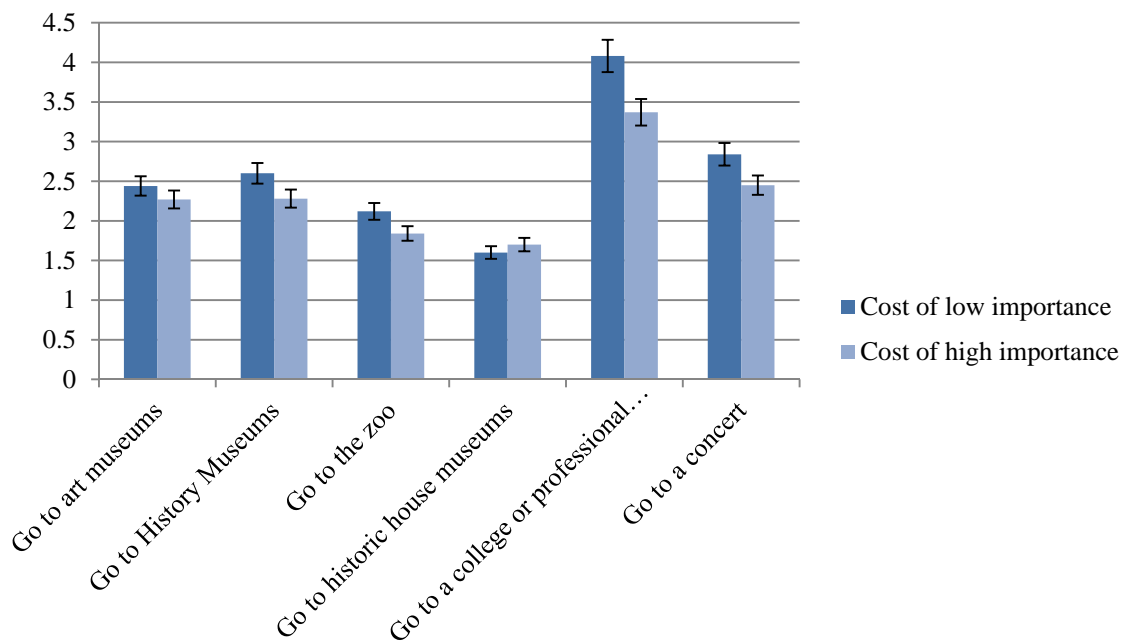


Figure 26. Ranking of activities based on the importance of cost.

These findings suggest that people do not make decisions about whether or not to go to art museums, zoos, or historic house museums based on cost. Instead there are other factors that either attract them to these activities or keep them from participating. We can also see that going to a concert and attending a college or professional sporting event can be affected by people's preferences of cost of the activity. Those who hold cost as a high importance tend to participate in these activities with less frequency than

those who do not. This relationship might be explained by the high prices of tickets required to participate in these events and those who are more concerned with the cost of an event are less likely to participate.

What we see in terms of historic house museums is that cost is not a contributing factor into whether or not people visit. Instead those who consider cost with high importance demonstrate similar behaviors as those who consider cost with low importance.

The next factor considered is how location is related to how people choose leisure activities. The rankings reveal that people who hold location with low importance are more likely to attend a college or professional sporting event or go to the zoo. Each of the other activities revealed insignificant statistical difference, suggesting that it does not matter whether or not people value location when choosing these activities. This suggests that in terms of historic house museums there is no difference between the activity of those who consider location important and those who do not (Figure 27).

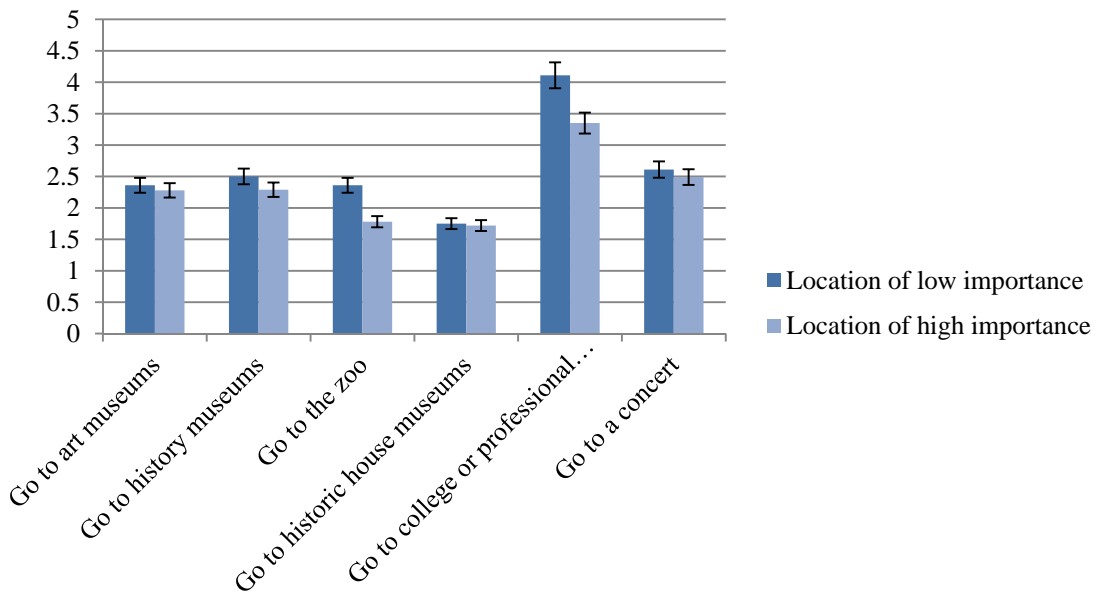


Figure 27. Ranking of activities based on the importance of location.

The fifth factor considered was preferences of friends. According to their responses there was no significant difference in habits. While people might put more importance in what their friends want to do than others this does not significantly affect most of the activities they choose, suggesting historic house museums are unaffected (Figure 28).

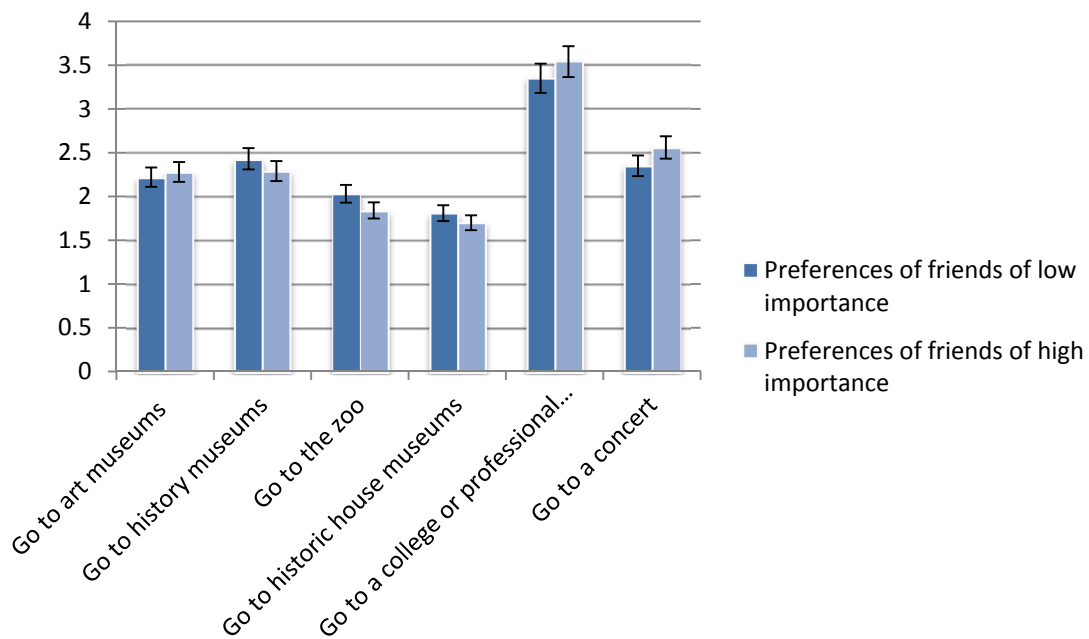


Figure 28. Ranking of activities based on preferences of friends.

The final factor considered was whether or not people found the novelty of an activity important when trying to decide on leisure activities. The survey revealed that people who held novelty of low importance had similar habits to those who held it to a high importance in all cases except visiting history museums. In the case of history museums, those who considered novelty an important factor have visited history museums more frequently (Figure 29). This reveals that historic house museums are unaffected by whether people value a novel experience or not.

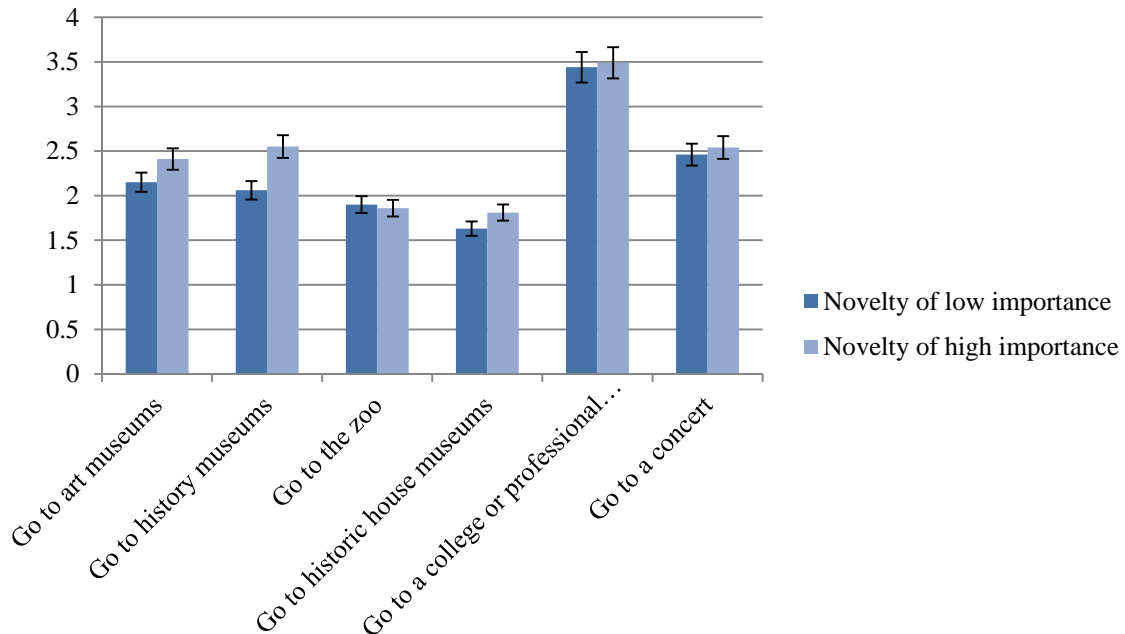


Figure 29. Ranking of activities based on the importance of novelty.

In addition to ranking these basic values, the importance of knowledge of local history of the community in which participants live was specifically identified. By understanding how they view local history as compared to their interaction with historic house museums we can start to not only see who visits historic house museums but identify something deeper about why they might chose to visit historic house museums or whether or not they enjoy their experiences.

Survey participants responded that on a scale of 1-10, the importance of people developing knowledge of local history of the community in which they live ranks at a 7.2. This suggests that most of the surveyed population finds local history something important in the lives of people (Figure 30).

To better understand how this relates to historic house museum activity those who found local history important (6-10) were compared to those who do not. According to this comparison we can see that holding local history as important has little effect on

whether or not someone has visited a historic house museum. We see that among historic house museum visitors 77% place a high level of importance on local history while 33% place a low value on local history. Among non-visitors we see that 72% place a high value on local history while 38% place a low value on local history. This small margin of difference suggests that the likelihood of visiting a historic house museum has no correlation with one's opinions about local history.

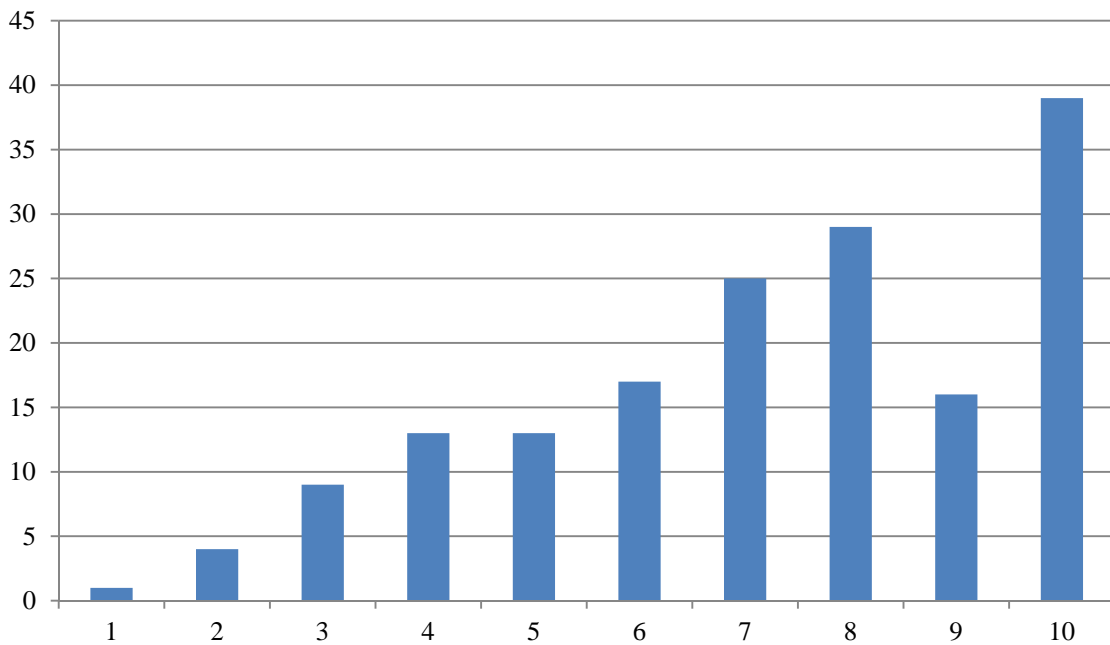


Figure 30. Response breakdown of the importance of learning about local history.

Looking then at the experiences of those who have visited historic house museums based on their opinion of local history we see that there is a difference in experience related to whether or not one finds local history important or not. According to the survey approximately 78% of those who had a positive experience also place a high importance on local history. This is compared to 50% of those who had a negative experience who place a high value on local history. This suggests that those who find local history important are also more likely to have a positive experience at a historic

house museum. What is inconclusive about this knowledge is whether or not the positive experience instilled the importance of local history in a visitor or whether or not the visitor's value of local history predisposed them to having a positive experience when visiting a historic house museum.

Meeting the Needs

As the current situation and the possible causes of this situation have been studied, it is necessary to try to identify how historic house museums might find a solution. This is not to suggest that historic house museums abandon their mission to educate, but instead try to find a way to educate that will entertain and engage visitors according to preferences stated previously. This will not limit education, but instead enhance education as visitors will be more responsive to what they learning. It is important historic house museums find a way to reach the likely audience in this way if they want to better reach young adults.

The surveys revealed that previous bad experiences have little effect on a future visit, as most visitors had a good experience. Instead perceptions and expectations seemed to be a larger problem than visitor experiences. This suggests that historic house museums need not to overwhelm themselves in changing the basic visitor experience, but instead try to find ways to engage the public so they will come through the door, and once through the door, meet their needs in a serious way that might encourage them to visit again in the future.

When considering time and resources we see that young adults are willing and able to spend money on the activities they in which they choose to participate. This suggests that historic house museums do not need to lower admission prices, but instead

develop programming and a marketing plan that will make visiting historic house museum activity young adults might want to do.

What might be more valuable to this age group than money, is time. The survey revealed that Monday through Friday most young adults only have 1-3 hours for leisure activities per day, while on the weekends most only have 4-6 hours for leisure activities. This suggests that historic house museums need to be available on the weekends, when young adults have the most time. This also suggests that the experience needs to be a valuable use of time as it is evident they do not have a lot of free time to spare.

Analysis of the data also revealed that a number of personal preferences can have an effect on historic house museum participation. While some particular values such as entertainment and cost had a little effect on the likeliness of visiting a historic house museum, values such as educational and the importance of local history greatly affected participation as those who placed a high importance on these two values tended to visit historic house museums more often.

Recognizing that people who value local history and education are the most likely audience, it is important that historic house museums must provide valuable activities that both adhere to their mission and engage this population through serious interpretations, and activities that will encourage them to return.

While it is important to continue serving the current audience, it is also important expand the audience as much as possible. To meet the needs of a wider population it is important that historic house museums develop programming that is engaging to this demographic. To determine what activities young adults would participate in both visitors and non-visitors were asked to check each historic house museum related activity

that interested them from a provided list. There are both future and immediate implications when analyzing their responses. Immediately, we can see how people understand historic house museums and how this relates to their current activity with historic house museums. The implication for the future is that we can see how historic house museums can better reach each audience as we start to understand what ways people would be more likely to participate (Table 3).³

The immediate implication of this information suggest that members of the surveyed population are more interested in visiting a historic house museum than they are in participating in the other activities mentioned. This is of particular significance because touring a historic house museum was the most popular answer for both visitors and non-visitors. Ninety percent of visitors responded that they would be interested in visiting a historic house museum for a tour, while 66% of non-visitors responded they would be interested.

Comparing this to the percentage of participants who anticipated they would enjoy a visit to a historic house museum reveals a correlation in the data collected. Visitors responded with 77% positive and 16% maybe responses when asked if this was something they would enjoy with in the future. This means that 93% of visitors think that this is an activity that they might enjoy. This is very close to the 90% of visitors who responded they would be interested in visiting a historic house museum when asked to check which activities interested them later in the survey.

³ Participants were not asked to rank their favorite activity, but instead were instructed to simply check any activities in which they might be interested in participating in. The activities were then ordered according to their popularity among participants. The number listed besides each ranking is the ranking that particular activity received from on the opposite list:

Table 3. Comparison of preferred historic house museum activities.

| Visitors | Non-Visitors |
|--|---|
| 1. Visit a historic house museum for a tour (1) | 1. Visit a historic house museum for a tour (1) |
| 2. Hold a wedding, bridal shower or other party at a historic house museum (7) | 2. Use technology such as mobile devices and computers to view digital collections (8) |
| 3. Attend a lecture about local history (8) | 3. Use technology such as mobile devices and computers that guide users to historic sites (6) |
| 4. Attend a luncheon with a guest speaker (5) | 4. Volunteer at an educational event for children (5) |
| 5. Volunteer at an educational event for children. (4) | 5. Attend a luncheon with a guest speaker (4) |
| 6. Use technology such as mobile devices and computers that guide users to historic sites. (3) | 6. Attend a fundraiser such as a dinner (11) |
| 7. Volunteer to help care for the collections of a historic house museum. (9) | 7. Holding a wedding, bridal shower or other party at a historic house museum (2) |
| 8. Use technology such as a mobile device and computers to view digital collections. (2) | 8. Attend a lecture about local history (3) |
| 9. Volunteer at an educational event for adults. (12) | 9. Volunteer to help care for the collections of a historic house museum (7) |
| 10. Attend an educational event for families. (11) | 10. Volunteer for a fundraiser for a historic house museum (13) |
| 11. Attend a fundraiser such as a dinner. (6) | 11. Attend an educational event for families (10) |
| 12. Serve as a board member. (13) | 12. Volunteer at an educational event for adults (9) |
| 13. Volunteer for a fundraiser for a historic house museum. (10) | 13. Serve as a board member (12) |

Among non-visitors 41% think that a future trip is something they would enjoy and another 42% responded with an uncertain answer that was categorized as a maybe. Looking at this we see that 83% of non-visitors think that visiting a historic house museum is something that they might enjoy, but only 64% of the non-visitors responded that this is something they are interested in doing in the future. In this case we see that the visitor's expectations and interests are much more consistent than the expectations and interests of those who have never been to a historic house museum. While 83% of the population of non-visitors leaves room for the possibility this could be an enjoyable activity, only 64% present interest in actually visiting a historic house museum. This suggests that the non-visitors are not as willing or are as interested to try the experience even if it is something they think they might enjoy. Recognizing this disinterest among non-visitors we can start to understand how to better reach this audience in the future.

While there is a certain amount of disinterest from non-visitors, visiting a historic house museum was the most popular answer for both visitors and non-visitors. From this we can deduce that people are more interested in the actual house than are interested in the supplemental activities offered by historic house museums. This might be because the other activities listed are designed to reach particular audiences, while a tour of a house museum is intended for all visitors, this seems to be a foundational activity for historic house museums. For example, only people with families might be interested in a family event, or only people with collections experience would want to volunteer to care for the collections of a historic house. Each of these other activities targets a smaller population so the historic house museum can better meet the needs of individuals. What this suggests is that the tour is still the central activity, where different interests come

together. But as revealed earlier, it is not always enough to attract people back to the house on multiple occasions. This means that historic house museums must work to create tours that meet the needs of a broad audience and develop enough programming that will target different individual audiences.

Focusing on the rest of the list, we can see that visitors and non-visitors have a different priority of interests in some areas, but agree on others. For example, there is little difference between visitors and non-visitors desire to volunteer at a museum or attend an event such as a lecture dinner or fundraiser. By examining where the surveyed population has a similar opinions we can start to understand the needs of this population as a whole are and then later understand their differences to expand the reach of historic house museums to non-visitors.

One example of where both visitors and non-visitors agree is attending a luncheon with a guest speaker. This was the fourth most popular activity among visitors and the fifth among non-visitors. This suggests that a number of members of the surveyed population would be interested in this activity, but it would not necessarily garner a large audience.

Understanding the differences between the visitor and the non-visitor will allow historic house museums to better reach each individual audience. More visitors are interested in having a wedding, bridal shower or other party at a historic house museum, while more non-visitors tend to be more interested in integrating technology with the historic house experience.

The fact that visitors are more interested in holding a wedding, bridal shower or party at a historic house museum than non-visitors suggests that visitors are willing to

make historic house museums part of their life. Many people responded that it would be a very pretty setting or they would enjoy the ambiance set by the style of the house. This exposes a level of comfort around historic house museums that non-visitors might not have.

The issue of technology is particularly interesting because non-visitors are more receptive to integrating technology into historic house museums than those who have visited a historic house museum in the past. Using technology that guides users to a historic site was the third most popular answer among those who have not visited a historic house museum while among visitors it was the fifth most popular answer. Also non-visitors responded that they were more interested in using technology to view digital collections as this was the sixth most popular among non-visitors and the seventh most popular response among visitors. While identifying the motivations between each group is impossible, we can see that non-visitors are more comfortable using technology to experience the offerings of historic house museums.

While developing tours, interpretive plans and other programming is essential to the success of historic house museums it is irrelevant if these wonderful programs are not marketed to young adults in the appropriate manner. To successfully reach this population it is important that historic house museums are present in the lives of young adults, suggesting that they need to use the media outlets that young adults use. While developing a website or Facebook page will not make up for bad programming, it will allow for historic house museums with a lot to offer be noticed by this demographic.

According to the survey young adults rely on websites the most for information, followed by e-mail, word-of-mouth, Facebook, and television. The least popular sources

for information are radio, newspapers, magazines and Twitter (Figure 31). This suggests that historic house museums need to have an online presence through both websites and email. Also, the strength of word-of-mouth is still important; perhaps getting young adults through your door will boost participation. It is also important to note that twitter is the least popular source of information. This indicates that historic house museums need to be careful with new technology and not spend time trying to catch up with the newest things, but instead focus on what works. Websites and email have proven to stick and have become a way of life for this population. Websites and email are vital a historic house museum wants to be present in the lives of young adults.

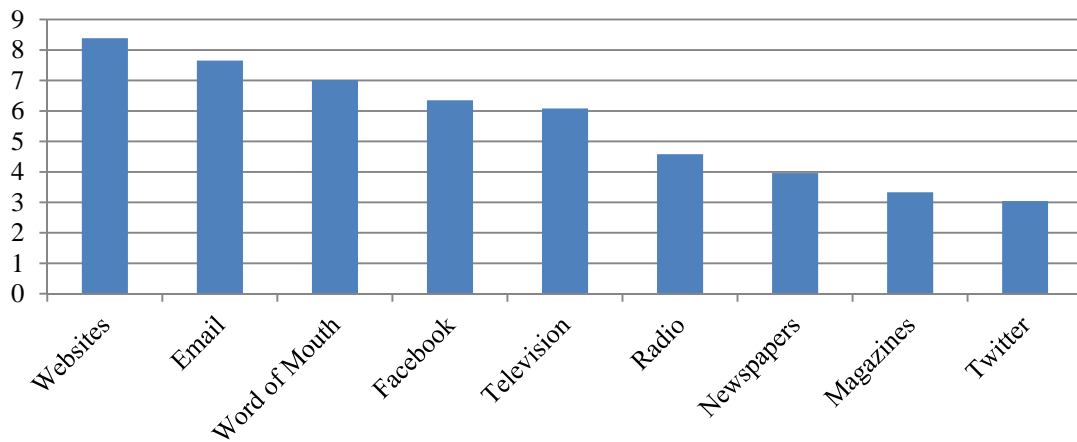


Figure 31. Information sources on which participants rely.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

This research reveals that a meaningful segment of the young adults surveyed ages 18-35 are interested in participating in historic house museums. They have visited historic house museums in the past, and many intend to return in the future. Also, there is a segment of the surveyed participants who have not visited a historic house museum but have expressed interest in a future visit, which they think they would enjoy. This confirms that there is an audience of young adults that are open to visiting historic house museums, and these institutions have a responsibility to meet the needs of this audience.

While this should provide hope for historic house museums, it does not mean that they have succeeded in meeting the needs of young adults. There are two other segments of this audience that should be of some concern. The first are those who have visited a historic house museum but expressed minimal interest in visiting one in the future. The second group consists of those who, while identified as a likely audience, express little to no interest in ever visiting a historic house museum. They have not visited a historic house museum in the past and they do not anticipate enjoying a visit in the future.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 19% of those who have visited a historic house museum responded that they would not go back in the future. Also, while an overwhelming majority, 92% of visitors stated that they enjoyed their experience only 77% thought this was something they would enjoy in the future, with 16% stating maybe and 7% responding with a negative response. This is a particularly important segment of

the audience because while they expressed interest initially they have decided not to continue to participate in what historic house museums have to offer. This should be as some concern to historic house museums and perhaps suggest that historic house museums have failed to fully meet the needs of their visitors.

The 15% of non-visitors who anticipated they would not enjoy a future visit should also cause us to pause and evaluate why they might have this sentiment. As chapter three sought not only to identify the problem but also the cause and possible solutions we see that personal preferences might have a considerable effect on whether or not this population visits historic house museums. For example, the surveys revealed that those who considered the educational value when choosing leisure activities were more likely to visit historic house museums more often than those who held it as a low priority. Even though the surveyed population consisted of likely visitors, there seems to some resistance to historic house museums. This suggests that there might be a population of people who will simply be uninterested in historic house museums due to their predisposed preference.

Recognizing this uninterested population does not negate that responsibility historic house museums have to the public. Historic house museums, like all institutions, cannot be all things to all people, or represent a universal audience. To meet the wants of some audience members might require abandoning the mission and focusing on activities that are more entertaining than educational, or are not beneficial for the collection. It is important to realize that historic house museums must be accessible to all audiences, but this does not require that they compromise their identity as museums to reach an audience that simply does not want to be reached.

Recommendations

Based on the survey results there are a number of recommendations that can be made for historic house museums in the future. The first recommendation is that historic house museums prepare a solid interpretive foundation. From the survey we see that there is an interested audience among young adults, and it is important to provide them with the best product possible. Instead of trying to find the newest and latest ways to bring these audience members in, historic house museums need to focus on a serious historical interpretive agenda that accurately reconciles the great men and monumental events with the daily life of the middle and lower classes.

Museums must be careful in their interpretive plan as this is a nuance to how we should understand elitism. While certainly no one would be turned away from the museum's door due to class or race, historic house museums can alienate a group by exclusivity in interpretation. This is a result of lazy interpretations that only focus on one story. Instead, we must practice a careful and meticulous form of interpretation that provides the audience with an accurate representation of the past.

This solution does, by its nature, eliminate some from participating in historic house museums, even if historic houses achieve this level of rigorous historical interpretation they will not be sought after by all people. As the study *Excellence and Equity* noted, while “museums have an aggregate importance as educational institutions... not every museum can be all things to all people.”¹ This recognizes that there is a portion of the population that is not interested in historic house museums, no

¹ Ellen Cochran Hirzy, *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* (Washington, D.C.: The American Association of Museums, 1992)

matter how fair, diverse and inclusive they might be. This does not mean that historic house museums have failed as public service institutions.

To ensure success museums need to work to be sure that the only audience they are not reaching are the ones previously described. Museums need to focus on the needs of their current visitors, their previous visitors who might have lost interest, and their potential visitors who have no previous experience with a historic house museum. This requires the rigorous historical interpretation previously mentioned as well as examining the wants and needs of these particular populations. If historic house museums are presenting valuable information in an engaging way they will be able to fulfill their service to the community and attract more visitors.

The second recommendation comes only after historic house museums have developed a strong interpretive plan. Once this is established, historic house museums can consider integrating different programming that might appeal to this specific generation. Chapter three discussed the fact that these young adults are interested also in other opportunities historic house museums have to offer beyond the traditional docent-led tour through this house. The lists, divided by those who have and have not visited a historic house provide a starting point for historic houses that are ready to explore additional programming in their houses. The list of visitor preferences can be used to better meet the needs of the visitors already in the door, while the list of non-visitor preferences will allow for museums to take action in reaching those who are not visiting. It is important this program supplement an already strong and established interpretive plan.

The final recommendation requires historic house museums to meet the audience where they are through successful communication and convenient programming.

According to the surveys, young adults are most likely to use websites and email for information. It is absolutely essential historic house museums use this media if they want to reach this population. Also, young adults do not have a lot of time, and have limited money, understanding this suggests that these programs need to be on the weekend and affordable.

Future Potential Research

As there has been very little research on this topic there is a lot of room for future potential research. In particular, this research needs to be directly compared to what is going on in historic house museums today. This study only focused on potential visitors and did not analyze the behavior of any institutions. A study examining how historic house museums are working to reach this population compared to the findings in this study will reveal a deeper understanding of the situation.

Research can also be conducted to better identify the causes of activity or inactivity. This study was intended to identify the problem, the causes and possible solutions. Due to this broad topic the surveys were limited in closely examining an individual area. For example, closer study on the causes of the situation could explore in more detail how cost directly affects participation.

To expand this research, more subjects need to be surveyed as this study focused only subjects who were defined as likely visitors who are connected to Baylor University. With such a narrow scope for the research there is an opportunity to test a different population of young adults ages 18-35 to either confirm or refute the findings of this particular survey.

Another limitation of this research was that the non-visitor population was rather small as compared to the visitors. A study analyzing the behavior of only non-visitors might reveal more about how historic house museums might better reach this audience.

Since young adults are the future of historic house museums, it is vital to the survival of historic house museums that this topic continues to be studied. While changing interpretation and adding programming might reach this audience, it is best for historic house museums to target the wants, needs and expectations of young adults. This will allow for historic house museums to stretch their resources to both broaden and deepen their impact. While surveys and studies take time, they are necessary; without continued analysis of the field it is difficult to move forward in an efficient and effective way.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Survey

Baylor University

Certification of Informed Consent

Principal Investigator: Emily Carrington, Student, Department of Museum Studies

This form asks for your consent to participate in behavioral research. The research is intended to identify trends of young adults concerning leisure activities. For this research you will be asked to complete a survey of multiple choice and short answer questions, and the entire procedure should last no more than twenty minutes.

There will be no physical risks at any time. Your name will not be included on the survey, you are guaranteed complete anonymity.

The data collected in this survey will be used to analyze this demographic so the museum community can better reach young adults.

You have been selected to participate in this survey as you are between the ages of 18 and 35. You may elect, either now or at any time during the study, to withdraw your participation, with no penalty or loss of benefits. You should understand that your participation is completely voluntary.

Your name is not to be included on this survey and all information about an individual's response to any question will remain anonymous.

This study poses no risk to you as a participant.

If you are completing this survey on the internet please be aware, electronic communication may be subject to interception, legally by your employer or illegally by another party, while the information is in transit. Therefore, it is possible that your information might be seen by another party and I cannot control whether that happens. Although none of the information requested is of a personal nature, if you are concerned about your data security, I suggest that you keep this document, fill out the answers by hand, remove information from headers, etc. that identifies you as the respondent and mail the completed survey to the address listed below:

Please direct all inquiries to Emily Carrington, Student, Department of Museum Studies, Baylor University, Waco, TX, 76798. Emily Carrington can also be reached at (330) 464-0411. The faculty advisor for this project is Kenneth Hafertepe. He may be contacted at (254) 710-4349.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to you as a participant, please contact the Baylor University Committee for Protection of Human Subjects in Research,

Dr. Michael E. Sherr, PhD., Chair Baylor IRB School of Social Work, Baylor University, One Bear Place # 97320 Waco, TX 76798-7320. Dr. Sherr may also be reached at (254) 710-4483.

I have read and understood this form, am aware of my rights as a participant, and have agreed to participate in this research.

Name _____

Signature _____

Survey Questions:

Please complete the survey and return to Emily Carrington. If you choose not to complete the survey at this time, but still want to participate in the research please return the survey to Department of Museum Studies; Attn: Emily Carrington One Bear Place, #97154 Waco, TX 76798-7154. If you chose not to participate in the survey please hand in a blank survey to Emily Carrington upon leaving.

Please do not provide your name. All answers will be kept anonymous for the protection of the participant.

Age _____

Gender: Please circle one.

Male

Female

How long have you lived in Waco? Please circle one.

Just moved here

5-7 years

6 months – 2 Years

7-9 years

3-5 years

9+ years

Education: Please circle one

Some high school

Some graduate school

High school graduate

Master's Degree

Some College

Doctoral Degree

College graduate

If you have had at least some college, what is/was your area of study?_____

Marital Status: Please circle one

Single

Divorced

Married

Widowed

Approximately how much disposable income do you have per year?_____

How many children live in your home as dependents: Please circle one

0

3-4

1-2

4

How many of these children are under age 5: Please circle one

0

1-2

3-4

Employment: Please circle all that apply

Unemployed

Full-time employee

Student

Full-time homemaker

Undergraduate

Masters

Doctoral

Other

Part-time employee

How many *times a month* do you participate in the following leisure activities?

Go to the Movie Theater

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Watch Television (Include Broadcast, Cable, Netflix, DVR, Tivo and rented movies)

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Eat at a Restaurant with Friends

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Shop (please exclude grocery shopping)

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Read for enjoyment

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Have get-togethers with friends at someone's house or apartment

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Play a sport with friends

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Participate in events on a university campus

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

How many times a year do you participate in the following leisure activities?

Go to Art museums

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Go to History museums

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Go to the Zoo

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Go to Historic House Museums

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Go to a college or professional sporting event

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Go to a concert

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Take a vacation

(0) (1-2) (3-4) (4-5) (5+)

Not counting the time you sleep at night on average how many hours each day to you have for leisure activities? Please circle an answer for each day

Sunday - (0) (1-3) (4-6) (6-8) (9+)

Monday - (0) (1-3) (4-6) (6-8) (9+)

Tuesday - (0) (1-3) (4-6) (6-8) (9+)

Wednesday - (0) (1-3) (4-6) (6-8) (9+)

Thursday - (0) (1-3) (4-6) (6-8) (9+)

Friday - (0) (1-3) (4-6) (6-8) (9+)

Saturday - (0) (1-3) (4-6) (6-8) (9+)

On a scale of 1-10 how much do you rely on the following sources for information - 1
being do not use at all 10 being use all the time. Please circle your answer for each medium.

Newspapers

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Magazines

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Television

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Radio

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Email

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Websites

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Word of Mouth

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Facebook

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Twitter

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

Other social media (please
list _____)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

How much money per month do you spend participating in the following activities?

Please circle one for each activity

Go to the Movie Theater

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Watch Television (Include Broadcast, Cable, Netflix, DVR, Tivo, and rented movies)

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Eat at a Restaurant with Friends

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Shop (please exclude grocery shopping)

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Read for enjoyment

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Have get-togethers with friends at someone's house or apartment

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Play a sport with friends

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Participate in events on a university campus

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

How much money per year do you spend participating in the following activities? Please circle one for each activity.

Go to Art museums

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Go to History museums

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Go to the Zoo

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Go to Historic House Museums

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Go to a college or professional sporting event

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Go to a concert

(0) (\$1-\$20) (\$21-\$40) (\$41-\$60) (\$61+)

Take a vacation

(0) (\$1-\$500) (\$501-\$1000) (\$1001-\$1500) (\$1501+)

On a scale of 1-10 how important is each of the following when choosing leisure activities? Please circle your response, 1 being not at all important and 10 very important.

Educational value

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

Entertainment

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 - 10

Cost

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

Location

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 - 10

Preferences of friends

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 - 10

Novelty

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

How important is it that people develop a knowledge of local history of the community in which the live?

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

Have you ever been to a historic house museum, yes or no?

- **If yes, describe your experience(s):**

What historic house museum(s) have you visited?

How old were you the last time you visited a historic house museum? _____

Who did you go with?

Were you on vacation? _____

Did you enjoy your experience? Please explain your answer.

Would you go back? Please explain your answer.

- **If you were to visit a historic house museum in the future, what you think the experience would be like:**

What would you expect to do during a visit?

What would you expect to see during a visit?

Would you expect to learn something? Please explain your answer.

Would you expect to be entertained? Please explain your answer.

Is this something you think you would enjoy? Please explain your answer.

Which of the following activities would you be interested in participating in? Please check all that apply and explain why that area interests you. This information is for research purposes only.

Visiting a historic house museum for a tour

Using technology such as mobile devices and computers to view digital exhibits and pictures of artifacts

Using technology such as mobile devices and computers that guide users to historical sites

Attending a lecture about local history

Attending a luncheon with a guest speaker

Attending a fundraiser such as a dinner

Attending an educational event for families

Holding a wedding, bridal shower or other party at an historic house museum

Volunteering to help care for the collections of an historic house museum

Volunteering at an educational event for children

Volunteering at an educational event for adults

Volunteering for a fundraiser for an historic house museum

Serving as a board member of an historic house museum

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