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Connecting Visitors to People and Place: Visitors' Perceptions of Authenticity at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona

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This study examines the effect of visitors' characteristics, motivations and sense of place attachment on perceptions of authenticity at a cultural heritage site. Data were collected in summer and fall 2006 through an on-site survey questionnaire administered to a random sample of visitors to Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona ($n = 379$; 76% response rate). The most important motives for visiting were 'To enjoy nature' and 'To experience Navajo culture'. Additionally, visitors perceived a strong sense of place identity but a weaker sense of place dependence. Preservation of the archaeological resources was the most important contributor towards an authentic experience, followed by learning about customs and values of local people, meeting local people and visiting with an authorised Navajo guide. Attending interpretive programmes contributed the least. Results show that motivation to experience Navajo culture, the place identity dimension of place attachment, educational attainment, age and past experience at the monument had significant effects on the perception of an authentic experience at the monument. Place identity emerged as the strongest predictor of perceptions of authenticity, suggesting that a strong emotional bond is an important factor in visitors perceiving a site to be authentic. As visitor motivations for learning about the Navajo culture increased, so did perceptions of authenticity. Higher age also led to increased feelings of authenticity. As education levels and prior experience increased, perceptions of authenticity decreased.

Although cultural and heritage tourism have received increasing attention as areas of research and management concern, additional inquiry is necessary to define key constructs and establish relations among them to inform theory and improve practice. Specifically, research is needed to explore how tourists experience and construct meaning from visiting cultural heritage sites. One of the most promising avenues for study in this area is to document the relations between tourists' motives for visiting a site, the symbolic, emotional and functional meanings they ascribe to the site, and their perceptions of the authenticity. This is the goal of the present study.

As a relatively new line of inquiry, cultural heritage tourism research lacks agreed upon definitions for some key constructs, and thus it is informative to identify the key perspectives and identify the approach taken in this study. Heritage has been defined as 'not simply the past, but the modern-day use of elements from the past' (Timothy & Boyd, 2003: 4). More specifically, heritage tourism has been defined as tourism 'centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery' (Yale, 1991: 21). Thus, heritage can refer to natural and cultural inheritance. In our view, heritage is somewhat more circumscribed and refers to elements of the natural and cultural landscape that have been consciously preserved by human action to represent the experience and meaning of individuals and groups in a certain place and time.

Likewise, heritage tourism is open to some interpretation. At least two perspectives have emerged that describe heritage tourism experiences. One approach focuses on the supply-side, or the descriptive and definitional aspects of the experience. The second approach highlights heritage demand, representing consumptive or experience-based components. There has recently been a shift from a product-based (supply) to a consumer-based (demand) market assessment, associated with tourists' desire for unique or authentic experiences (Apostolakis, 2003; Nyaupane, *et al.*, 2006).

Individuals involved in the supply side of cultural heritage typically take a descriptive or curatorial approach (Garrod & Fayall, 2000). This focus lies in defining the material components of cultural heritage sites such as attractions, objects, artwork, artefacts and relics Additional characteristics of this concept include traditions, languages, and folklore, or the 'pull' factors (Apostolakis, 2003). In essence, these different components are attractions that cultural heritage managers use to attract the attention of potential visitors.

The demand side of heritage tourism emphasises the visitor experience. In this vein, Moscardo (2001: 5) defined heritage tourism as 'an experience, which is produced by the interaction of the visitor with the resource'. This approach centres on visitors' cognitive perceptions, motivations and expectations in relation to a particular site (Apostolakis, 2003; Nyaupane *et al.*, 2006). Thus, visitor motivation is part of the demand view of cultural heritage tourism owing to its foundation in perceptions and personal experiences. The conceptual definition of demand gives rise to 'push' factors, that help provide an understanding about why travellers select certain destinations and how they perceive or identify with specific sites (Apostolakis, 2003; Nyaupane *et al.*, 2006).

Cultural heritage tourism points to visitors' desires and expectations for 'genuine' representations of reality. Authenticity is increasingly being promoted as a central component of a meaningful and satisfying heritage tourism experience. Thus, authenticity or the perception of a unique experience is critical in successful heritage tourism (Apostolakis, 2003; Chhabra *et al.*, 2003; Taylor, 2001; Xie & Wall, 2002). With authenticity enhancing the quality of heritage tourism and becoming a major travel motive, the cultural heritage market has increasingly focused on this concept as a marketing strategy (Chhabra *et al.*, 2003; Clapp, 1999; Cohen, 1988). It is therefore important to understand which factors are most important in contributing to a visitor's sense of authenticity and the relationship between authenticity and other components of tourist

experiences. The key perspectives on authenticity are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

This study investigates the effect of visitors' characteristics, motivations, past experience and sense of place attachment on their perceptions of an authentic experience at a cultural heritage site in the southwestern United States. The objective is to understand better the role of these variables in predicting an authentic experience. The study begins with a review of the literature on authenticity and place attachment, followed by a description of methods. The results of presented next, and finally the implications of the findings are discussed in the concluding section of the paper.

Related Research

Authenticity in cultural heritage tourism

MacCannell (1973, 1976) first introduced authenticity into the tourism literature, and it has subsequently been the focus of much discussion. Like cultural heritage tourism, a major focus of authenticity research has been on the conceptual definition of the term; however, a lack of consensus regarding its meaning remains (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1976; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). MacCannell (1984) suggested that attractions vary in the degree to which they are 'staged' or shown to tourists. Visitors, he suggested, seek real or authentic (backstage) experiences because everyday modern life is artificial, fragmented and holds little meaning. Based on this perspective, the visitor looks for that which is pristine, primitive and natural, yet untouched by modernity (MacCannell, 1976; Taylor, 1991). According to MacCannell, it was from this quest that modern tourism arose. Thus the 'staged' approach assumed that authenticity was an agreed upon absolute, and could be objectively defined, discovered and enjoyed.

Cohen (1988) critiqued MacCannell's approach as being overly simplistic. Beyond the idea that not all visitors seek authentic experiences, Cohen argued that the visitor socially constructs authenticity and actively creates meaning in his or her experience based on point of view, needs, beliefs and perspectives. Accordingly, authenticity of a site, object or event was dependent on each individual's interpretation. Unlike the objective nature of authenticity introduced by MacCannell (1976), genuineness was subject to the meaning ascribed or constructed by the visitor (Littrell *et al.*, 1993; Waitt, 2000; Wang, 1999; Xie & Wall, 2002). Authenticity, therefore, was not to be received but rather 'negotiated' by the visitor (Cohen, 1988).

Though widely used, the conventional definitions of authenticity (objective and constructive) may be considered less useful in explaining visitor motivations and experiences. In an attempt to clarify the conceptual meaning of authenticity, Wang (1999) presented a third perspective – that of 'existential authenticity'. Having its roots in the philosophical question of what it means to be a human, Wang's approach specified authenticity by differentiating between authentic objects and authentic experiences. This separation was central in explaining an existentially authentic experience in which the visitor experienced a state of being or what Brown (1996) called an 'authentically good time'. An underlying notion was that being in touch with one's inner

self, living according to one's sense of self, having a sense of identity and making meaning of one's life contributed toward authentic experiences (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

Few empirical studies have explored visitor perceptions of authenticity in relation to other variables. One notable exception is a study by Moscardo and Pearce (1986), that reported authenticity as an important factor in visitor satisfaction with an historic theme park experience. Beyond satisfaction, authenticity has been examined in relation to demographic, socioeconomic and experiential variables. In another notable study, Littrell *et al.* (1993) examined determinants of visitors' perceptions of handicraft authenticity. Their findings indicated, first, that authenticity was not associated with gender, and second, as visitors aged and travelled more, concerns regarding authenticity increased. The tourism style, that was based on specific behaviours prominent to a given activity, also determined perceptions of authenticity. Littrell *et al.* (1993) provided tentative evidence that authenticity is related to certain visitor demographics, characteristics, past experiences and motivations.

Similar findings were reported by Waitt (2000) in a study of tourist perceptions of authenticity of The Rocks – a historic quarter in Sydney, Australia. Waitt examined visitor demographics, socioeconomics, past experiences and motivations in relation to authenticity. Findings revealed that perceptions of authenticity varied by age and place of residence. Overall, younger visitors experienced significantly greater authenticity levels than older visitors. International respondents perceived less historical accuracy than Australians. Other differences emerged by gender, contrary to the findings of Littrell *et al.* (1993). Male repeat visitors perceived The Rocks to be more authentic than males who were visiting for the first time. In addition, older, female Sydney residents perceived greater levels of authenticity. More recently, Chhabra *et al.* (2003) reported various levels of perceived authenticity among visitors to Scottish Highland Games in the USA. Their study revealed an increase in authenticity by clan versus non-clan members, respondents with personal memories of Scotland, and women compared to men who had visited Scotland. Finally, Yeoman *et al.* (2007) presented two scenarios to explore concepts surrounding tourism and authenticity and to illustrate the authentic tourist experience. They identified trends from these scenarios that shape the authentic tourist. Key among these was an increasing global network, a shift toward ethical consumption and volunteering, an affluent and educated consumer, trust in the past and a shift toward individualism. Yeoman *et al.* suggested that future tourists will desire an authentic rather than false experience because they will be better educated, more sophisticated, globally aware and environmentally conscious.

Place attachment in cultural heritage tourism

As with authenticity, the concept of place has gained increasing prominence in research. In his book *Place and Placelessness*, Relph (1976: 29) described place as a combination of 'setting, landscape, ritual, other people, personal experiences, care and concern for home, and in the context of other places'. Relph suggested that in modern, mobile societies, it was becoming increasingly difficult to connect with the world through place. He differentiated

between 'insidedness' and 'outsidedness' based on the nature of one's relationship with place. According to Relph, 'to be inside a place is to belong and identify with it' and 'the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place' (Relph, 1976: 49). In other words, an insider was one whose identity was tied to a place thus allowing for genuine or authentic experiences with that place. On the other hand, an outsider did not possess such a relationship, thus leading to inauthentic experiences with place or what Relph termed 'placelessness'. Relph argued that in modern societies travel and tourism contributed to placelessness, since in his view, travel destinations became less important than the act and style of getting there.

Since Relph's (1976) contribution to the literature, the concept of place has continued to capture research attention. Altman and Low (1992: 5) described places as 'spaces that have been given meaning through personal, group or social processes'. In a similar vein, Dixon and Durrheim (2000: 27) noted that rather than being unchanging and empty backgrounds within which social action occurs, places are 'dynamic arenas that are both socially constituted and constitutive of the social'. Each of these concepts shares the underlying theme that 'sense of place results from people attaching meaning to what otherwise would simply be space' (Moore & Scott, 2003: 2). These concepts reflect the premise suggested by Tuan (1977) that place has no human meaning until a human imposes meaning upon it.

As visitors interact with places, they may develop a bond that has been called 'place attachment'. Place attachment is discussed in several disciplines including recreation and tourism, geography and psychology, and is related to constructs such as topophilia, insidedness, genres of place, sense of place or rootedness, environmental embededness and community sentiment (Altman & Low, 1992). Within the recreation and tourism field, place attachment has proved useful in understanding non-commodity values and meanings associated with recreation and tourism places and in informing 'place-based' management (e.g. Davenport & Anderson, 2005).

Conceptual and measurement-focused studies have indicated that place attachment includes a functional 'place dependence' dimension and an emotional/symbolic 'place identity' dimension (Kyle *et al.*, 2003, 2004; Moore & Scott, 2003; Williams *et al.*, 1992, 1995). Place dependence occurs when visitors demonstrate a functional need for a space that is not transferable to another space (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981). Stokols and Shumaker suggested that there are two factors that individuals and groups employ to determine place dependency. One is the quality of current place; the second is the relative quality of comparable alternative places. Place identity involves a deeper connection with a place in which an individual's personal identity is linked with this space (Proshanky, 1978). Place identity not only includes the physical setting or environment, but also includes the social element. Beyond the role of place in an individual's self-identity formation, place also contributes to group or social identity. In fact, Proshansky and collegues (1983) suggested that physical settings or environments are merely 'backdrops' to the group's social and cultural existence, which is influenced by the group's activities, interpersonal relationships, as well as an individual's and group's role functions. In their evaluation of place-identity research, Dixon and Durrheim (2000) suggested that even

though environmental psychologists often emphasised the individualistic dimension of place identity, research by social psychologists such as Bonaiuto *et al.* (1996), and Devine-Wright and Lyons (1997) point to the importance of place to a collective identity.

An interest in non-commodity values of place has led to a growing body of literature on place attachment and its relationship with other variables (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Kyle *et al.*, 2003, 2004a; Smaldone *et al.*, 2005; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001; Williams *et al.*, 1992). For instance, Vaske and Kobrin (2001) and Moore and Graefe (1994) suggested that as visitation to a specific setting becomes more frequent, place dependence increases and will in turn lead to an emotional attachment (place identity) to that particular area. Kyle *et al.* (2003) examined the relationship between place attachment and visitors' attitudes toward paying fees for recreation area use as well as spending preferences for the fee programme revenue. Place identity was a significant moderator, and thus as visitors' attachment to the setting increased, their support for the fee programme and spending increased as well. Bricker and Kerstetter (2000) examined the relationship between place attachment and level of specialisation among whitewater recreationists. Results indicated that as skill level increased, place dependence decreased and as specialisation increased, place identity became more important.

In summary, the concepts of authenticity and place attachment are important aspects of cultural heritage tourism and are gaining significance in marketing, research and management strategies. Based upon the literature, age, past experience and motivations were expected to be significant determinants of visitor perceptions of authenticity. Additionally, place attachment was included in the analysis given that bonds visitors develop with places have been shown to be useful in understanding the non-commodity values and meanings associated with these places.

Research Methods

Study area

This study was conducted at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona (see Figure 1). This is an 83,840-acre protected area in northeastern Arizona located on Navajo Tribal Trust Land (Stoker, 1990). The National Park Service works in cooperation with the Navajo Nation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to manage the natural and cultural resources, as well as administrative and visitor facilities at the park (Sanders, 1996). It is unique among National Park Service units, not only because it is located on tribal land, but also because approximately 40 to 80 Navajo families reside in the canyon for at least part of the year to support traditional cultural practices.

According to contemporary archaeologists, the Navajo – or Dine'é in their language, which is typically translated as 'the people' – were not the first to reside within the canyon walls. The first residents, referred to as Archaic and dating back to 2500 BCE did not build permanent structures, but moved along different campsites in the canyon. These people left images etched and painted on the canyon walls that visitors can still see today. The Archaic people gave way to the Basketmakers, who were hunters and gatherers. They grew corn and
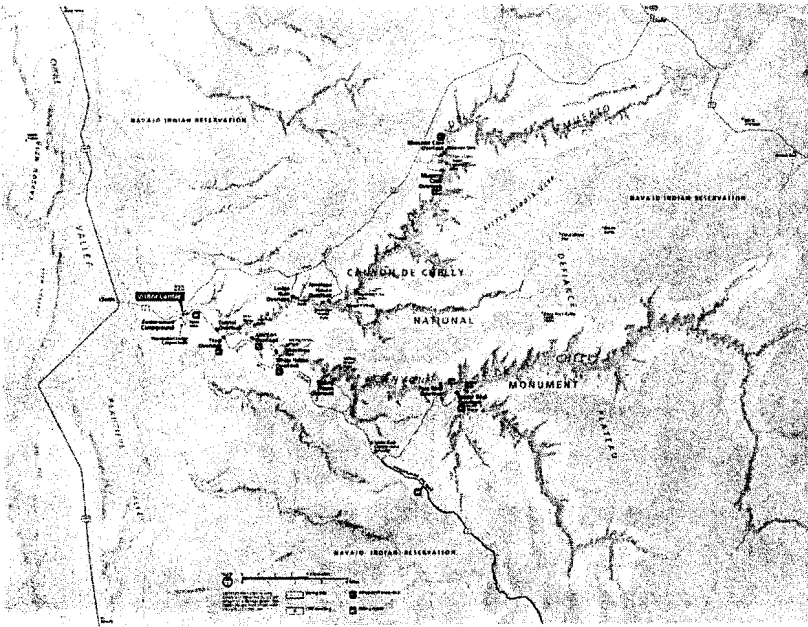
Figure 1 Map of Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona

beans, and also left paintings and etchings telling their stories along the walls of Canyon de Chelly. The Ancestral Pueblo, often referred to as Anasazi, resided within the park from about 750 to 1300 CE. Archaeologists and anthropologists believe these people to be the predecessors to today's Pueblo and Hopi tribes. The Puebloans built the primitive structures that remain within the park today. Around 1300 CE the majority of these people moved away for unknown reasons. Migrating Hopi Indians then settled in the canyon during the summers for farming and hunting. The last to arrive were the Navajos, in approximately 1700 CE.

Canyon de Chelly is located near the town of Chinle, Arizona, approximately a five hour drive from Phoenix, Arizona, through the remote high desert of the Navajo Reservation. One of the reasons visitors travel such great distances to see the park is to experience the living and past culture the monument has to offer. Through the visitor centre, guided tours and rim drives, visitors can see ancient dwellings and etchings around the park. The natural beauty of the canyon is another draw for many. The rocks in the canyon walls take on different colours throughout the day due to shifting sunlight. Most visitor access to the canyon is limited and requires the accompaniment of an authorised Navajo guide and a permit from the visitor centre. Many visitors opt to drive along the North and South Rim where there are numerous views overlooking into interesting parts of the canyon, including Spider Rock (see Figure 2), home to 'Spider Woman' of Navajo lore. One hiking trail leading visitors down to the ruins and back to the rim is available without a Navajo guide. Because of limited access on other hiking trails, this is a popular visitor destination.
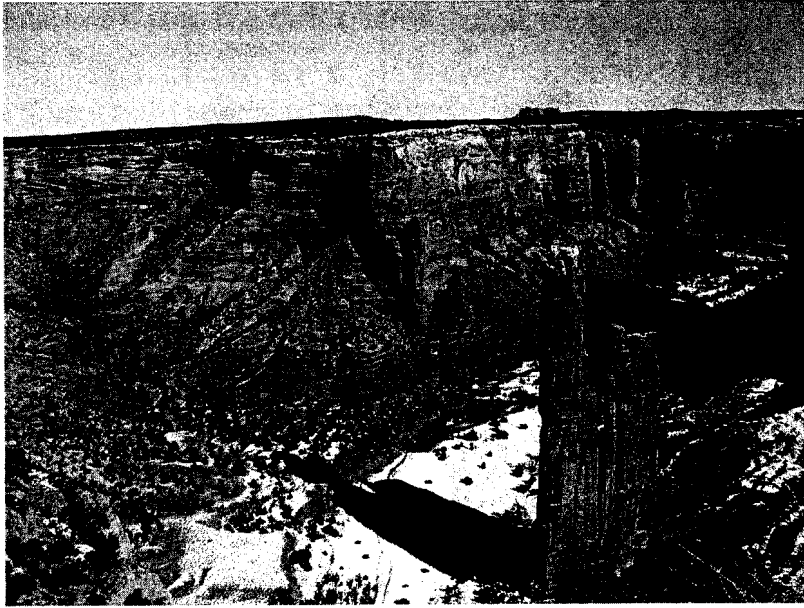
Figure 2 Spider Rock in Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona

Sampling and survey administration

Data for this study were collected via survey questionnaire conducted on site between August 2006 and January 2007. Fifteen sample days were randomly selected within the sample period and stratified by time of week (60% weekend vs. 40% weekday) to reflect visitation patterns. During the sample periods, a trained survey administrator approached each group encountered, and requested participation in the study. Individual respondents were selected at random by asking for a member from the group, 18 years or older, who had the most recent birthday. A total of 500 randomly-selected visitor groups were contacted on site, and 379 complete and usable surveys were obtained, resulting in an overall response rate of 76%. Questionnaires were coded, entered into a databases and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 14.0.

Non-response bias analyses demonstrated that there were no significant differences between survey respondents and non-respondents based on gender ($\chi^2 = 3.10$, df $= 1, p = 0.078$) or personal group size ($F = 0.449$, df $= 1, p = 0.50$). There was a significant difference between respondents and non-respondents based on number of children present ($F = 7.83$, df $= 1, p = 0.005$). Those visitors who refused to take the survey were more likely to have more children present than those who participated in the survey. This difference, although small, should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

Instrument, variables and measurements

The data analysed in this paper were collected as part of a larger study designed to inform management planning for Canyon de Chelly National

Monument. The questionnaire included sections on visitor characteristics; trip/visit characteristics; visitor perceptions of their park experiences; visitor evaluations of park programmes, facilities, and services; and visitors' opinions about park management. This analysis focuses on visitors' sociodemographic characteristics; motives or desired recreation experiences; perceptions of place attachment; and perceptions of authenticity.

Motives for visiting Canyon de Chelly were measured by 13 items assessing the importance of desired experiences (see Table 1). Motivation to visit was conceptualised as desire for satisfying experiences and operationalised through the use of the Recreation Experience Preference (REP) scales (Driver *et al.*, 1991; Manfredo *et al.*, 1996; Moore & Driver, 2005). The full REP scales include 21 factors, each with two to seven dimensions (Moore & Driver, 2005). The REP scales were not based explicitly in motivation, human need or self-determination

Table 1 Item and scale means and standard deviations, and scale reliabilities for motivations place attachment and perceptions of authenticity

Scale items	Mean	SD
Enjoy nature (α = 0.663)	3.51	0.997
Be close to nature	3.7867	1.146
Learn about nature	3.1979	1.157
Learning (α = 0.740)	3.2787	1.015
Develop my knowledge of history	3.4946	1.095
Learn about archaeology	3.0601	1.192
Family togetherness (α = 0.618)	3.2393	1.2023
Be with family or friends	3.3194	1.440
Be with people who share my values	3.1726	1.391
Navajo culture (α = 0.884)	3.4603	1.044
Have an authentic experience of Navajo culture	3.5570	1.143
Learn about Navajo traditions	3.4471	1.128
Experience a connection with Navajo culture	3.3777	1.209
Introspection (α = 0.770)	2.7296	1.213
Develop personal, spiritual values	2.5556	1.342
Experience solitude	2.9106	1.343
Place identity (α = 0.856)	3.6462	0.714
Canyon de Chelly means a lot to me	4.0738	0.80167
I am very attached to Canyon de Chelly	3.6154	0.91780
I identify strongly with Canyon de Chelly	3.4338	0.95230
I have a lot of fond memories about Canyon de Chelly	3.9015	0.86218

(*Continued*)

Table 1 (*Continued*)

Scale items	Mean	SD
I have a special connection to Canyon de Chelly and the people who live and visit here	3.21	0.94
Place dependence ($\alpha = 0.912$)	2.83	0.84
I enjoy recreating in Canyon de Chelly more than any other area	2.94	0.90
I get more satisfaction out of visiting Canyon de Chelly than from visiting any other national monument	2.88	0.98
Recreating here is more important than recreating in any other place	2.71	0.91
I wouldn't substitute any place for the type of recreation I do here	2.77	1.00
Authenticity	—	—
Canyon de Chelly NM provided me with an authentic experience	3.83	0.91

theory, but rather were developed inductively over 20 years through repeated factor analyses. While the REP scales may be criticised for poor theoretical specification, Manfredo *et al.* (1996: 204) concluded that the scales 'can be usefully applied when attempting to determine motivations for or the psychological outcomes desired from leisure'. Manfredo *et al.* (1996) determined that the REP demonstrated overall consistency, construct validity and acceptable reliability in a meta-analysis of 36 studies using them to measure leisure motivations.

In the current study, multiple item scales were used to measure: enjoying nature (two items); learning (two items); family togetherness/being with similar people (two items); escape (two items); introspection (two items); and experiencing Navajo culture (three items developed specifically for this study). Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the items on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). A composite score was calculated for each respondent for each motivation domain by summing the item scores and dividing by the number of items.

Multiple item scales were also used to measure the two dimensions of place attachment: place identity (four items) and place dependence (four items) (see Table 2). These items were drawn from prior studies that have and measured the construct with a similar number of items (e.g. Kyle *et al.*, 2003; Williams & Vaske, 2003). As with motivation, a composite was calculated for each respondent for each place attachment domain by summing the item scores and dividing by the number of items.

To measure authenticity, visitors first rated the importance (on a five-point scale) of five items that may contribute to an authentic experience: visiting with an authorised Navajo guide, preservation of archaeological resources, meeting local people, attending interpretive programmes, and learning about customs and values of local people. Second, a single item was used to assess visitors'

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for respondents' socio-demographics

Educational attainment	
Less than high school	1.1%
High school graduate	13.8%
Technical school or Associates degree	13.3%
Bachelor's degree	31.2%
Master's degree	27.1%
Ph.D., M.D., J.D. or equivalent	13.5%
Gender	
Female	47.5%
Male	52.6%
Mean age in years (SD)	51.98 (14.43)

overall perceptions of authenticity: 'Canyon de Chelly National Monument provided me with an authentic experience of Native American culture'. The single-item measure was used as the dependent variable in the multiple regression analysis presented in the next section.

Results

Visitor profile

Although there is some diversity, most visitors to Canyon de Chelly National Monument travel in small groups of two to three; they are typically middle-aged, very well educated, white, and from Arizona (see Table 2). It is noteworthy that more than two thirds of respondents (71.8%) had attained a Bachelor's degree or higher level of education; this is nearly three times the percentage of the general public in Arizona (23%). Visitors are often travelling in the 'Four Corners' (the area around the point where the US states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona meet) to see Canyon de Chelly along with other natural and cultural resource attractions such as Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park Petrified Forest National Park and Grand Canyon National Park. About half of the visitors stay overnight on their trip away from home, typically spending two nights in the area; the remainder of visitors are on a day trip from home and spend about five hours in the park.

Most respondents were first-time visitors and unlikely to return within the next year. During their visit, people enjoyed taking photographs, horseback riding, hiking, and jeep touring. A very small number of visitors took part in organised interpretive programmes. Inside the monument, visitors were most likely to travel the North and South Rim Drives and stop by the visitor centre. About one third participated in a guided experience, and most of these visitors took larger guided tours, euphemistically called 'shake and bake' tours by park

staff, due to the bumpy ride in the canyon in high desert heat. The results also show that visitors did not feel crowded in the park; the mean value on a nine-point crowding scale was 1.28, indicating that visitors felt 'not at all crowded'.

Motivations

As shown in Table 1, the most highly rated motives for respondents, as indicated by mean scores for multiple-item scales measured on a five-point response scale, were: 'to enjoy nature' ($M = 3.51$) and 'to experience Navajo culture' ($M = 3.46$). 'Learning' ($M = 3.28$) and 'family togetherness' ($M = 3.24$) were also important to visitors. In contrast, 'introspection' ($M = 2.73$) was a less important motive for visiting Canyon de Chelly. The most highly rated single item was 'to be close to nature' ($M = 3.79$) and the lowest rated item was 'to develop personal, spiritual values'.

Place attachment

Mean scores (on a five-point scale) suggest that, on the whole, visitors perceived a moderately strong sense of place identity ($M = 3.65$) but a moderately weak sense of place dependence ($M = 2.83$). For place identity, the results show that visitors feel that Canyon de Chelly 'means a lot' to them, they will have 'a lot of fond memories', they feel 'very attached', 'identify strongly' and 'have a special connection' to the canyon, its residents and visitors. The mean value for each of the place identity items was higher than the midpoint on the scale (3.0), indicating that most visitors agreed or strongly agreed with these statements. For place dependence, however, the mean score for four of the five items was less than 3.0, indicating that most visitors did not feel their goals, activities and experiences were specifically dependent on the canyon. In other words, visitors considered other destinations to be potential substitutes for their desired experiences.

Perceptions of authenticity

The most important contributor toward an authentic experience was preservation of the archaeological resources ($M = 4.1$, see Table 3). Preservation was followed in importance by learning about customs and values of local people ($M = 3.65$), meeting local people ($M = 3.39$) and visiting with an authorised Navajo guide ($M = 3.12$). Attending interpretive programmes ($M = 2.83$) was less important by comparison. For overall perceptions of authenticity, the mean value on a five-point scale was 3.82, indicating that visitors agreed that 'Canyon de Chelly National Monument provided me with an authentic experience of Native American culture'. Table 3 also displays the non-parametric correlation matrix for the items that may contribute to authenticity.

Determinants of visitors' perceptions of authenticity at Canyon de Chelly National Monument

A multiple regression was next conducted to examine the effects of motivations, place attachment, sociodemographics and past experience on visitors' overall perception of authenticity at Canyon de Chelly (see Table 4). The analysis shows that motivation to experience Navajo culture, the place identity dimension of place attachment, educational attainment, age and past experience had

Table 3 Mean, standard deviation and correlation matrix for the importance of items contributing to an authentic experience for visitors

	B	C	D	E	Mean	SD
A. Visiting with an authorised Navajo guide	0.357*	0.570*	0.532*	0.552*	3.12	1.42
B. Preservation of archaeo-logical resources		0.382*	0.395*	0.449*	4.11	0.97
C. Meeting local people			0.514*	0.687*	3.38	1.19
D. Attending interpretive programmes				0.614*	2.87	1.25
E. Learning about customs and values of local people					3.65	1.08

Note: Mean scores are values on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important).
*Non-parametric correlation (Spearman's rho) is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 4 Regression analysis for variables predicting the perception of an authentic experience of Native American culture among Canyon de Chelly National Monument visitors

	B	SE B	β
Motivations			
Enjoying nature	−0.08	0.08	−0.09
Introspection	0.01	0.06	0.02
Learning	−0.08	0.07	−0.08
Family	0.02	0.05	0.03
Experiencing Navajo culture	0.27	0.08	0.30*
Place attachment			
Place identity	0.31	0.10	0.24*
Place dependence	0.10	0.08	0.10
Socio-demographics			
Education	−0.11	0.04	−0.15*
Gender	0.00	0.11	0.00
Age	0.01	0.00	0.16*
Past experience	−0.04	0.02	−0.14*

Note: *Significant at $p < 0.05$; $R^2 = 0.21$.

significant effects on the perception of an authentic experience of Canyon de Chelly National Monument ($F = 6.54, p < 0.05$).

Specifically, desire to experience Navajo culture, place identity and age significantly and positively affected perceptions of authenticity. Thus, the more important experiencing Navajo culture was to respondents as a motive for visiting Canyon de Chelly, the stronger the emotional bond between the visitor and the site (i.e. place identity), and the older the visitors, then the more authentic they perceived the site to be. On the contrary, education and prior experience significantly and negatively influenced perception of an authentic experience. That is, the higher the level of education and the greater prior site experience, the less authentic the experience for visitors.

Of all the variables examined here, the strongest determinants of authenticity, while controlling for other variables, were motivation to experience Navajo culture and the place identity dimension of place attachment. The adjusted percent of variance accounted for in this model was 21%. In other words, the independent variables of motivation to experience Navajo culture, place identity, educational attainment, age and past experience explained 21% of the variation in the dependent variable of perception of an authentic experience of Canyon de Chelly National Monument.

Discussion and Conclusion

Prior to discussing the implications of the study for research and management, several limitations should be noted. First, this study utilised a self-administered questionnaire and thus it is not possible to know if visitor responses reflected actual perceptions and behaviour. By administering the survey on-site during the actual visit with the assistance of trained surveyors, however, this limitation was controlled. Second, although the sampling plan was designed to provide reliable estimates of the visitor population, the study results are truly representative only of the visitors during the sample periods and do not necessarily apply to visitors during other times of the year or to other sites. Thus, the findings should be considered a 'snapshot' in time. Finally, there is room for improvement in future studies in the operationalisation and measurement of authenticity. In this study, visitors were asked to assess the importance of five items that may contribute to an authentic experience (e.g. visiting with an authorised Navajo guide, preservation of archaeological resources, meeting local people, attending interpretive programmes, and learning about customs and values of local people). Also, the study measured overall perceptions of authenticity using a single item in contrast to the study by Chhabra *et al.* (2003), which used multiple items. Future research is necessary to explore construct validity measurement validity and dimensionality of the authenticity construct. To encourage this research, this paper presented the inter-item correlations for the importance of various items that may contribute to an authentic experience (see Table 3).

The results of this study show that visitors to Canyon de Chelly are motivated by desire to enjoy nature, to experience and learn about Navajo culture, and to socialise with family; they have a moderately strong sense of place identity but a comparably weaker sense of place dependence; visitors perceive that Canyon de Chelly provides an 'authentic' experience, which is enhanced by preservation of archaeological resources, learning about customs and values of local people,

meeting local people, and visiting with a Navajo guide. The findings also show that the higher visitors' desire to experience Navajo culture, the higher their level of place identity, and the greater their age, the higher their perceptions of authenticity at the site. On the contrary, the higher visitors' education and the greater their levels of prior experience, the lower their perceptions of authenticity were. Considering the experience at Canyon de Chelly National Monument encompasses tangibles such as the historic buildings and monuments as well as intangibles such as values and art forms, the authors regard visitors at this site to be cultural heritage tourists as described in Nyaupane *et al.* (2006).

The finding that greater motivation to experience Navajo culture enhances perceptions of authenticity reinforces the notion that specific tourist motivations affect not only travel choices but also experiences and management preferences, is consistent with studies of other cultural heritage sites in the southwestern US (Nyaupane *et al.*, 2006; White *et al.*, 2005). This may be because visitors are seeking a site that is pristine, primitive, natural and untouched by modernity (e.g. MacCannell, 1976) and concluded based upon their visit that Canyon de Chelly presented an accurate historical and cultural representation; that is the site provided an 'objectively' authentic experience. On the other hand, visitors who were highly motivated to experience Navajo culture may have been more likely to interact with the people, artefacts, and educational opportunities and thus actively construct a sense of authenticity, consistent with Cohen's (1988) concept of negotiated authenticity. It is also possible that some visitors, driven by a strong desire to experience authenticity, are simply inclined to report attaining an authentic experience regardless of actual experience, in a process of cognitive rationalisation, which justifies the time, expense and effort of visiting such a remote cultural site. This process of cognitive rationalisation is one of several coping mechanisms that visitors may employ when on-site conditions do not meet expectations or desires (see Manning, 1999). Interestingly, although several other desired experiences were important to visitors – specifically to enjoy nature and learning about archaeology and history – these motives did not significantly explain visitors' perceptions of authenticity. This supports the notion that it is the strength of specific desired experiences and expectations about cultural heritage that influence authenticity perceptions.

The results also demonstrate the importance of a strong emotional bond with a place in explaining perceptions of authenticity. This lends support to Relph's (1976) idea of insidedness; that is, having an identity tied to a place enables an individual to have a genuine or authentic experience at that place. Place identity refers to what Proshanky (1978) called a deeper connection with a place in which an individual's personal identity begins to be associated with this location. Place identity can also be more conceptual, concerning either a personal or shared symbolic meaning attached to a place such as in the way the National Parks symbolise 'American heritage' (Williams *et al.*, 1992). Referring to Cohen's (1988) definition of authenticity, this finding suggests that the symbolic meaning associated with Canyon de Chelly facilitates the creation of an individual's meaning of an experience.

Several visitor characteristics emerged as explanatory, including age, education and prior experience. Age was a significant predictor of authenticity, but the direction of this relationship in this study contradicts the findings reported in other studies (e.g. Littrell *et al.*, 1993). In the present study, older visitors expressed

higher perceptions of authenticity. A second demographic variable that emerged was education; the more educated the visitors were, the less authentic they perceived the site to be. This could be because more educated visitors were more knowledgeable about Navajo culture and were therefore more discerning about the accuracy of the historical narrative provided by interpretation educational materials. These finding are illustrative of Yeoman *et al'.s* (2007) suggestion that education is a key driver in authenticity since the consumers are more discriminating and sophisticated in the choices they are making. Given that some 72% of visitors to Canyon de Chelly NM were well educated (having a Bachelor's degree or higher), this might be an area of concern for managers. Even after controlling for educational attainment and age, the more experienced visitors were with the site, the less authentic they felt it was. This may suggest, on the one hand, that as visitors become more experienced they are more critical of the monument's presentation of the history, culture and natural environment. On the other hand, if visitors are considered to be actively involved in constructing authenticity through an interactive process, it may be that repeat visitors desire additional, more unique experiences that are simply not available.

Several management implications of this study should be considered. Given prior research suggesting an impact of authenticity perceptions on overall satisfaction and the increasing relevance of authenticity as a management goal, it is important for managers to consider how to maintain or increase visitors' perceptions of authenticity. This may be accomplished through interpretive and educational programmes, services, and exhibits that address explicitly the complex narrative of human history in the canyon and provides visitors, especially those who are highly educated and motivated by desire for cultural learning experiences, with opportunities to see 'backstage' and to actively explore, question and critically evaluate the site. Clearly, this may be uncomfortable for managers and perhaps unwelcome by local residents. Thus, as with nearly every aspect of management at Canyon de Chelly, a careful and cooperative approach would be necessary.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing body of research demonstrating the effects of place identity and place dependence on a variety of visitor perceptions, including sensitivity to site impacts (Williams *et al.*, 1992), crowding (Kyle *et al.*, 2004b), support for fees (Kyle *et al.*, 2003) and environmentally responsible behaviour (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). If cultural heritage managers wish to enhance perceptions of authenticity, they should cultivate visitors' identification with the site by promoting meaningful, memorable, and significant experiences.

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