

A Provisional Code of Conduct for War Heritage Sites: Veterans' and Managers' Perceptions.

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Abstract

Visits to war-related heritage sites such as museums, monuments, and specific sites in the former war-torn countries of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam appear to have increased substantially in recent years. Although previous research has addressed various elements of heritage, there has been only little attempt to understand visitors' perceptions regarding the visitation of war-related heritage sites. In spite of the significant role of veterans, no appropriate standards of professional practice and performance, which pay particular consideration to this visitor group, have been developed at sites. By incorporating perceptions of veterans as well as developing a greater understanding of the provision of war heritage, this thesis attempts to develop a provisional code of conduct for war heritage sites in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

To develop a provisional code of conduct, a framework was established which encompassed perceptions from managers of war heritage sites (supply side) as well as veterans (demand side). Three different research studies were carried out, two of which were in the form of questionnaire surveys, which were sent to managers of chosen war heritage sites and New Zealand Vietnam War veterans respectively. Additionally, a case-study approach was undertaken that provided an overview of the characteristics of war heritage sites in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Upon analysis of primary and secondary research, and with special consideration given to veterans' perceptions, an eleven-point provisional code of conduct was developed. Key principles included internal as well as external concerns, such as ensuring an ethical presentation of artefacts, the prevention of impacts of visitors upon the local community and heritage sites, governmental and site policies as well as the representative status of war heritage sites. The acceptance of, commitment to, and further development of these principles would ensure a high level of professional standard at war heritage sites and provide a clear assertion of what the public may expect from a visit to these sites.