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Value Identification of Celebrities' Former Residences: An Exploration Using Cultural Triad Theory and the Contingent Valuation Method

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Abstract

With the deepening of cultural heritage conservation concepts, the preservation and revitalization of former residences of historical figures face challenges such as one-dimensional value recognition and imbalanced resource allocation. It is therefore necessary to construct a systematic value evaluation framework grounded in public participation, so as to scientifically identify multidimensional values, accurately guide conservation priorities and revitalization pathways, and promote the continuation of heritage values and functional transformation in contemporary contexts. This study focuses on 20 former residences of historical figures located in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou. Using the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM), the non-use value of these residences was quantified, revealing an average willingness to pay (WTP) of 60.07 CNY per person per year, with an annual total value of approximately 177 million CNY. These findings underscore their significance in social memory and cultural transmission. Furthermore, by integrating "Cultural Triad Theory" with UNESCO's six categories of heritage values, a "3 × 6" value identification framework was constructed. The results indicate that value weights are distributed as follows: cultural value (41.86%), architectural value (33.22%), and institutional value (24.92%). Building on this, different regression models were developed to analyze the determinants of whether the public is willing to pay and the specific amount they are willing to contribute. Based on the results, revitalization pathways are proposed that emphasize cultural leadership, architectural support, and institutional safeguards. This research not only provides empirical evidence for the conservation and funding allocation of former residences of historical figures in Yangzhou's Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block but also offers a replicable methodology and empirical support for similar practices in other regions.

Keywords: former residences of historical figures; cultural triad theory; value identification and evaluation; activation and protection; Dongguan; Yangzhou

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1. Introduction

In 2024, China's cultural tourism market continued its recovery, with 5.615 billion domestic tourist trips recorded and total tourism expenditure reaching approximately 5.75 trillion CNY. The 14th Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development explicitly calls for

"the creation of historical and cultural tourism destinations centered on cultural heritage", emphasizing the principle of "shaping tourism with culture" and promoting the transformation of cultural heritage into a driving force for tourism development. According to estimates by the United Nations World Tourism Organization, cultural tourism accounts for about 40% of the global tourism industry, demonstrating immense potential and growth prospects [1]. By 2025, there are expected to be approximately 1248 World Heritage Sites worldwide [2], 60 of which are in China [3], the majority being cultural heritage, highlighting the international community's recognition of their value. Reports further indicate that the global cultural tourism market is projected to reach USD 524.4 million in 2025 and is estimated to grow to USD 984.3 million by 2035, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 6.5% [4]. As an important component of cultural heritage, the former residences of historical figures not only embody historical memory and spiritual values but also serve as key carriers of regional cultural identity and tourism development. They play vital roles in education and dissemination, city branding, and economic growth [5]. Therefore, the scientific identification and effective evaluation of the value of former residences of historical figures, as well as their integration into broader strategies of cultural heritage protection, cultural–tourism integration, and urban regeneration, have become pressing issues that deserve close attention [6].

Existing studies on former residences of historical figures have accumulated substantial insights into architectural restoration and modes of utilization [7–10]. Although many works have examined their social value, these are mostly defined in a top-down manner, relying primarily on qualitative description with limited public participation, and lacking research from a bottom-up perspective [11–13]. Some scholars have assessed the non-use value of former residences, but no standardized value system has yet been established, and factor analyses remain incomplete [14]. At present, research suffers from the absence of a systematic framework for value assessment and quantification, leaving resource allocation without adequate theoretical support. At the practical level, the former residences in Yangzhou's Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block are highly concentrated and representative, yet face challenges of limited funding, insufficient public participation, and ambiguous value positioning in the processes of conservation and revitalization. As a unique type of cultural heritage, related research in China and abroad has primarily focused on architectural restoration, exhibition and utilization, and tourism development. For example, S.V. Viudes traced the origins of literary tourism and scholarly accounts to analyze how Shakespeare's birthplace transformed from a private space into a public cultural heritage site and tourist attraction [15]. Ye Qing and colleagues reconstructed former residences through archaeological investigation, comparative studies, and design methodologies [16]. Zhang Lei and others conducted field surveys and mapping to evaluate damage to former residences and proposed targeted restoration strategies [10]. Meanwhile, value assessment of cultural heritage has been more extensively explored at the theoretical and methodological levels. Zhang Yaxuan et al. examined heritage values from five dimensions—historical, artistic, scientific, social, and cultural—and suggested integrating the perspectives of celebrity culture and architectural heritage [17]. Mousumi Dutta and colleagues applied CVM and econometric models to quantify public willingness to pay for heritage conservation, estimating the total value of four heritage buildings in their study area [18]. S. Giannakopoulou et al. combined CVM with cultural economics, collecting willingness-to-pay data from tourists and residents via questionnaires to estimate the non-use value of traditional buildings in mountainous Greece, thereby demonstrating the feasibility and necessity of integrating cultural economics with CVM in heritage evaluation [19]. Dai Jian et al. used logistic regression analysis to reveal the determinants of public willingness to pay for the conservation of Harbin's Daoli historic district [20]. Xiong

Kai and colleagues employed the Heckman two-stage model on the Stata 12.0 platform to investigate the factors influencing both the willingness and amount of payment among residents in the lower Ganjiang River region [21]. Nevertheless, current studies on former residences of historical figures remain largely at the level of qualitative interpretation or single-value estimation, and a systematic framework integrating multidimensional value identification with quantitative evaluation has yet to be established. Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on 20 former residences in Yangzhou's Dongguan Block, employing the Contingent Valuation Method to quantify their non-use value while constructing a value identification framework. This approach seeks to address the deficiencies of existing research and to respond to the dual demands of cultural heritage conservation in both academic and practical contexts.

The non-use value of former residences of historical figures refers to the cultural, historical, and spiritual significance they embody by virtue of their existence, even without direct utilization or visitation. This value is characterized by intangibility, non-marketability, publicness, and intergenerational transmission, making it difficult to measure through conventional pricing mechanisms [22,23]. To achieve monetary expression, many studies adopt the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM), which constructs a hypothetical market to elicit public willingness to pay [24]. However, existing applications largely remain at the level of overall value estimation, offering limited insight into the public's nuanced recognition of different value dimensions. Building on this, the present study introduces Cultural Triad Theory into the CVM framework, subdividing non-use value into three systems—cultural, architectural, and institutional—and further integrating UNESCO's heritage value framework to construct a multidimensional identification system. Empirical results show that the annual non-use value of 20 former residences in Yangzhou's Dongguan Block is approximately 177 million CNY, with cultural value carrying the highest weight (41.86%), followed by architectural value (33.22%) and institutional value (24.92%). The study also identifies the main factors influencing public willingness to pay. This approach enhances the explanatory power of CVM and provides more targeted policy implications for the conservation and revitalization of former residences of historical figures.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Area

This study selects the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block in Yangzhou as the research area. Located in the core zone of Yangzhou's ancient city, the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block is one of the best-preserved historical and cultural districts in China and is listed as a first-class traditional street and alley protection area in Yangzhou. Its street texture has been preserved since the Ming and Qing dynasties, retaining a large number of Ming and Qing residences, salt merchants' mansions, and former residences of historical figures of historical, artistic, and scientific value. The block stretches about 1122 m in length, with numerous historic buildings and cultural relics distributed along both sides. Its spatial pattern, architectural form, and cultural atmosphere are typical and representative among China's historic and cultural streets (Figure 1).

Among the numerous cultural heritage units, former residences of historical figures, as important carriers of the cultural connotations of the block, record the lives and trajectories of outstanding figures in modern and contemporary Yangzhou in fields such as literature, art, politics, and economy, bearing abundant historical information and cultural memory. To ensure systematicness and representativeness, this study selects 20 former residences of historical figures with explicit recognition from those currently preserved in the block as case samples (Table 1), covering different periods and types of residences. Through field surveys, architectural mapping, spatial pattern analysis, and documentary verification, the

study explores in depth the material forms, spatial characteristics, and socio-cultural connotations of these former residences of historical figures, thereby providing a solid empirical foundation for their value identification, classification, and non-use value evaluation.

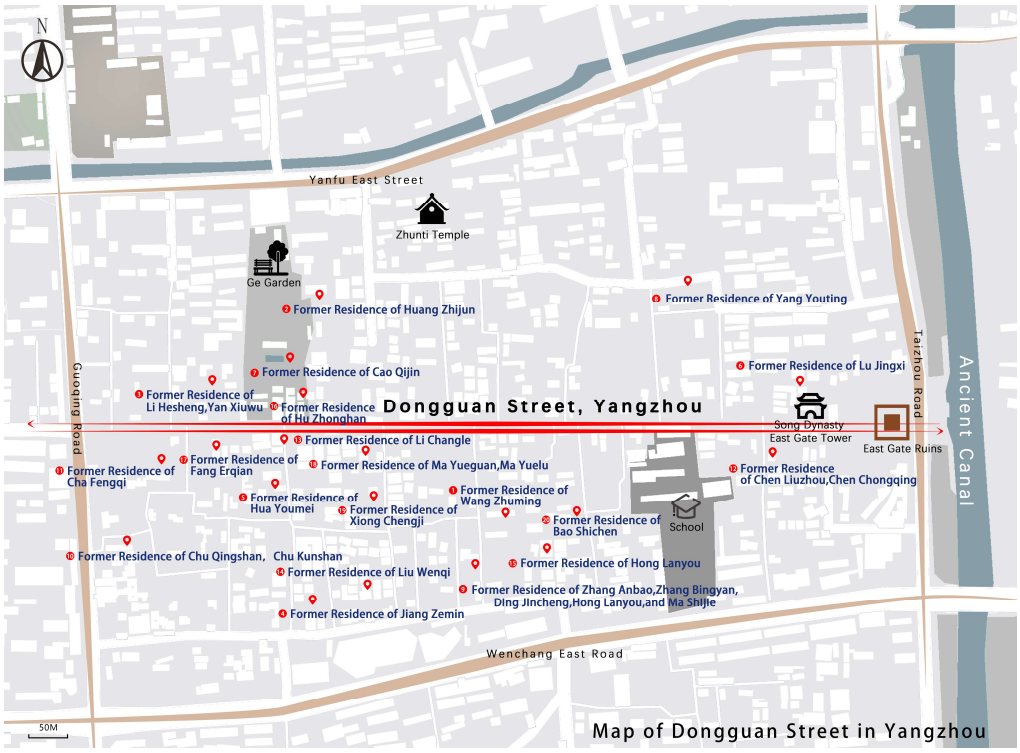


Figure 1. Distribution of Former residences of historical figures in the Research Area.

Table 1. Statistical Information on 20 Former residences of historical figures in the Research Area.

No.	Former Residence of Celebrity	Alternative Name of Former Residence	Protection Category	Historical Period	Address
1	Wang Zhuming	Wang's Little Garden	National Key Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 14, Diguan, Urban Area
2	Huang Zhijun	Ge Garden/Shou Zhi Garden	National Key Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 328, Dongguan Street, Urban Area
3	Li Hesheng/ Yan Xiuwu	Yi Garden	National Key Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 356, Dongguan Street, Urban Area
4	Jiang Zemin	-	Provincial-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Republic of China Period	No. 16, Dongquanmen, Guangling District, Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province
5	Hua Youmei	Hua Family Garden	Provincial-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Republic of China Period	No. 2 & 4, Doujichang, Urban Area
6	Lu Jingxi	Dongrong Garden/Lu Residence/Salt Merchant's Residence	Provincial-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 98, Dongguan Street, Urban Area
7	Cao Qijin	-	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	1906–1931	No. 338, Dongguan Street, Urban Area
8	Yang Youting	Yang Family Residence in Dacao Lane	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 62, Dacao Lane, Guangling District

Table 1. *Cont.*

No.	Former Residence of Celebrity	Alternative Name of Former Residence	Protection Category	Historical Period	Address
9	Zhang Anbao/Zhang Bingyan/Ding Jinchen/Hong Lanyou/Ma shijie	Bing'ou Xianguan/Ding Family Salt Merchant's Residence	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 12, Diguan, Urban Area
10	Chu Qingshan/ Chu Kunshan	Zhu Family Salt Merchant's Residence	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Late Qing and Early Republic of China Period	No. 342–346, Guoqing North Road, Urban Area
11	Cha Fengqi	Zha Family Residence in Wenjing Lane	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 46, 48 & 50, Wenjing Lane, Dongguan Street, Guangling District
12	Chen Liuzhou/ Chen Chongqing	Jinsu Mountain House	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 6 & 8, Caomi Lane; No. 23, Yang Lane, Dongguan Street
13	Li Changle	-	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 41, Wugu Lane, Dongguan Street, Urban Area
14	Liu Wenqi	Qingxi Old Residence	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 14, Dongquanmen, Urban Area
15	Hong Lanyou	Ma Family Residence	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Qing Dynasty	No. 10, Diguan, Urban Area
16	Hu Zhonghan	Hu Family Residence	Municipal-level Cultural Relics Protection Unit	Republic of China Period	No. 306 & 312, Dongguan Street, Urban Area
17	Fang Erqian	One Song One Shop	Immovable Cultural Relics Not Yet Officially Designated as Protection Units	Republic of China Period	No. 355–9, Dongguan Street, Urban Area
18	Ma Yueguan/ Ma Yuelu	Jienan Study	Immovable Cultural Relics Not Yet Officially Designated as Protection Units	Qing Dynasty	No. 309, Dongguan Street, Qionghuaguan Community
19	Xiong Chengji	-	Immovable Cultural Relics Not Yet Officially Designated as Protection Units	Qing Dynasty	No. 6, Weijiajing, Qionghuaguan Community
20	Baoshichen	Xiao Juanyou Pavilion	Immovable Cultural Relics Not Yet Officially Designated as Protection Units	Qing Dynasty	Opposite the West Gate of Qionghuaguan, Qionghuaguan Community

2.2. Research Methods

2.2.1. Cultural Triad Theory

The "Cultural Triad" theory was proposed by Malinowski in his seminal work A Scientific Theory of Culture. He regarded culture as an organic whole, divided into three interrelated levels: the material substratum, social organization, and language (spiritual life), which together satisfy human physiological, social, and spiritual needs. This theory emphasizes the integrity of cultural structures, in which none of the factors can be dispensed with [25].

In the Cultural Triad theory, the material substratum, as the most manifest layer of culture, includes all tangible material tools and modes of production, such as architecture, tools, vessels, and means of transportation. These are the direct products created by humans

using natural materials to meet basic survival needs. Social organization, situated at the intermediate level, encompasses social, economic, and political organizations as well as institutions, rules, and customs, such as the educational system, banking institutions, or family structures. Although this layer requires material carriers (such as the human body or objects), its core lies in the operation of ideas and concepts. Language (spiritual life), as the innermost part of culture, involves ethics, value orientations, and behavioral norms, such as judgments of good and evil, philosophical thought, or religious beliefs. It provides the intrinsic foundation and value orientation for the other two layers. These three levels together constitute an organic whole, forming a self-consistent cultural system that serves to analyze how culture fulfills the dynamic functions of human needs, ranging from basic survival to spiritual pursuit. Drawing upon the Cultural Triad theory, this study approaches from the perspective of the overall cultural system, regarding the material, institutional, and spiritual dimensions as an interacting organic whole, thereby systematically identifying the value of former residences of historical figures

2.2.2. Contingent Valuation Method (CVM)

The Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) is a non-market valuation approach based on the stated preference method, widely applied in the value assessment of public goods such as environmental resources and cultural heritage [26–31]. By constructing a hypothetical market and ensuring full information disclosure, this method directly obtains the public's willingness to pay or willingness to accept compensation through questionnaire surveys, thereby achieving the monetary quantification of non-use value.

CVM is based on the theories of utility maximization and consumer surplus. In a hypothetical market, individuals, when faced with cultural heritage conservation or improvement schemes, pay a certain amount to maintain or enhance their utility level, or receive compensation in the event of a loss to keep their utility unchanged. Its core logic lies in the fact that cultural heritage, as a public good characterized by non-rivalry and non-excludability, cannot have its value directly reflected through market transaction prices, but must instead rely on consumers' subjective willingness to pay in a hypothetical market to indicate its economic value. The essence of CVM is to design specific scenarios of heritage conservation in the form of questionnaires, construct reasonable payment mechanisms, and estimate the total value within the overall social group through the willingness to pay of surveyed samples. Its value calculation is generally based on the following formula:

$$V = WTP \times N \tag{1}$$

where V represents the non-use value of cultural heritage; WTP denotes the average willingness-to-pay value of the sample; N refers to the size of the study population (the effective number of respondents).

CVM can encompass direct use value, indirect use value, and non-use value, and is particularly suitable for valuing cultural heritage characterized by uniqueness, irreplaceability, and non-marketability. Compared with other methods, its advantage lies in starting from public perceptions and preferences, enabling the multidimensional value of heritage to be quantified in monetary terms, thereby providing a quantitative basis for conservation decision-making and resource allocation. Since CVM is established within hypothetical scenarios, potential issues such as information bias, hypothetical bias, and embedding bias may arise. Therefore, in research, efforts should be made to enhance data validity and result reliability through refined questionnaire design, reasonable determination of survey samples, appropriate choice of elicitation formats—such as payment card or dichotomous choice—and full disclosure of background information during the survey process [32,33].

2.3. Research Framework

This study, grounded in Cultural Triad Theory, evaluates the non-use value of former residences of historical figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou. The technical pathway follows a closed-loop process of "framework construction, value identification, data collection, indicator quantification, model analysis, and mechanism interpretation" (Figure 2), adopting a two-stage "qualitative–quantitative" approach. In Stage One, a comprehensive value indicator framework was established through systematic literature review and field investigation, identifying value elements of former residences across different dimensions and forming an integrated indicator system. In Stage Two, based on the outcomes of Stage One, a CVM-based scenario questionnaire was designed, with sample size determined using sampling theory formulas. Empirical assessment and mechanism analysis were then conducted through CVM and regression models. Ultimately, this study develops a holistic understanding of the value of former residences of historical figures in Yangzhou's Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block and proposes stratified and categorized pathways for their conservation and revitalization, along with corresponding policy recommendations.

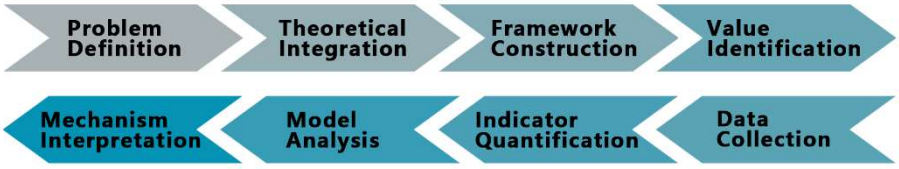


Figure 2. Technical Route Diagram.

3. Construction of the Value System of Former Residences of Historical Figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou

In Malinowski's Cultural Triad Theory, culture is regarded as an organic whole composed of three interrelated dimensions: the material substratum, social organization, and language (spiritual life). This theory emphasizes the dynamic unity and structurality of cultural systems across time and space, providing a multidimensional and systematic analytical framework for value identification of cultural heritage. When applied to the study of former residences of historical figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou, this theory enables, from a holistic cultural perspective, the correspondence of the three factors, respectively, to the architectural, institutional, and cultural dimensions of former residences of historical figures, thereby achieving systematic identification of their value.

3.1. Design of the Value Indicator Framework for Former Residences of Historical Figures

Based on the framework of the Cultural Triad Theory, this study conducts field investigations of 20 former residences of historical figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou and, drawing on previous research findings, constructs a value indicator system for the cultural heritage of former residences of historical figures (Table 2).

3.1.1. Material Substratum: Architecture

The material substratum, as the most tangible external manifestation of the cultural system, carries the authenticity and perceptibility of heritage. The former residences of historical figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou embody distinct regional characteristics and the cultural background of salt merchants in their architectural forms, construction craftsmanship, and environmental landscapes, serving as an important basis for the "material substratum" indicators in constructing the value evaluation system.

Table 2. Value Indicator System of Former residences of historical figures as Cultural Heritage.

Theory	Category	Indicator	Reference Achievement
Cultural Triad	Material Foundation—Architecture	Architectural Form	[34,35]
		Component Craftsmanship	[36,37]
		Environmental Landscape	[38,39]
	Social Organization—Institution	Clan Rites and Regulations	[40–44]
		Conservation and Management System	[45,46]
		Public Participation Mechanism	[47,48]
	Spiritual Life—Culture	Celebrity Culture	[49,50]
		Spiritual Symbol	[51,52]
		Cultural Communication and Education	[53,54]

Architectural form reflects the spatial layout, volumetric proportions, and morphological characteristics of former residences of historical figures, constituting the core content of the material substratum value. Former residences of historical figures in Yangzhou generally present features of compact street-facing layouts, deep multi-courtyard progressions, axial symmetry, and hierarchical distinction. The horizontal layout often consists of two or three routes, while the longitudinal grouping depth typically extends to three, five, or seven courtyards. The front section is equipped with a screen wall and entrance hall, the middle with the main hall and side rooms, and the rear with a garden or inner residence. Roof forms are mostly gabled, hipped-gable, and partially pavilion-style, with some incorporating horse-head walls and wind boards, while the façade proportions emphasize uprightness and steadiness [34,35]. These architectural forms are not only material symbols of the salt merchants' social status and economic strength but also representative paradigms of local residential typology in Yangzhou.

Construction craftsmanship reflects the technical level and artistic characteristics of former residences of historical figures in woodworking, stonework, and brickwork, constituting an important value expression of the material substratum. In Yangzhou former residences of historical figures, detailed components such as beam frames, doors and windows, eaves, and plinths frequently employ techniques such as nanmu beam frames, refined mortise-and-tenon joints, openwork carved panels, brick-carved screen walls, and bluestone plinths. For example, in the entrance hall of the Wang Family Garden, the beams beneath the eaves are decorated with openwork carvings of "two dragons playing with a pearl," while the hanging drops in the corridors often feature floral-and-bird or antiquity motifs. Brick-carved screen walls are commonly adorned with auspicious patterns such as "pine and crane for longevity" and the "plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum" quartet. Lattice windows frequently adopt patterns such as "begonia lattice", "ice-crack lattice", or geometric antiquity motifs. Stonework often includes plinths on Sumeru bases, bluestone drum stones, and gate threshold stones, all crafted with delicacy and bearing auspicious symbolism [36,37]. The richness of these craft details not only demonstrates the superb building techniques of Yangzhou artisans but also reflects the dual pursuit of aesthetic taste and social identity by the residence owners.

Environmental landscape refers to the overall relationship between former residences of historical figures and their surrounding spaces, as well as the composition of courtyard and garden elements, serving as an important indicator of locality within the material substratum. Former residences of historical figures in Yangzhou generally integrate small garden spaces with inner residences, forming a composite spatial system of courtyards, corridors, and garden scenery. For instance, in Ge Garden, the halls are connected with the rear garden, where a flower hall, rockeries, ponds, and small pavilions create a landscaped atmosphere. Within courtyards, long-eaved corridors and patios are often arranged,

forming a layout of "storing wind and gathering qi, with scenery in all seasons". Some residences retain ancient trees (such as ginkgo or locust), flowering plants (such as begonia or plum), ornamental rocks, and old wells in their courtyards. These environmental landscape elements not only regulate the microclimate but also embody cultural imagery that carries local identity. In the rear garden of the Wang Family Garden, rockeries are largely constructed with yellow stones, with rock arrangement and water management following the principles of Yangzhou garden design, creating an inner–outer complementary spatial ambience with the residence [38,39].

3.1.2. Social Organization: Institution

The social organization factor emphasizes the institutional support upon which the cultural system operates and endures, corresponding to the institutional dimension in the value identification of former residences of historical figures. Based on the regional characteristics of Yangzhou and the investigation of former residences of historical figures, the social organization factor can be further subdivided into three indicators: patriarchal rites and institutions, conservation and management systems, and public participation mechanisms.

Patriarchal rites and institutions form the historical foundation of the institutional dimension of former residences of historical figures, reflecting the mapping of traditional family ethics and hierarchical order onto spatial layouts and functional arrangements. Former residences of historical figures in the research area generally follow the spatial organization and functional configuration of Confucian ritual norms. For example, in salt merchants' mansions, the main hall is set on the central axis as the core space for clan meetings and ancestral rituals, with side rooms and subsidiary courtyards arranged on both sides, thereby forming a layout of "order between interior and exterior, and distinction between ranks." Plaques and couplets are often hung in the halls, inscribed with family mottos such as "loyalty and filial piety pass down the family" and "poetry and ritual succeed through generations", reinforcing clan ethics and moral order [40–44]. These institutional traces constitute important ritual elements within the cultural value system of former residences of historical figures, providing a symbolic foundation for subsequent cultural transmission and revitalized utilization.

The conservation and management system is the contemporary core of the social organization factor, involving the legal recognition, protection planning, and daily supervision of former residences of historical figures. Many former residences of historical figures in the research area have been included in the protection lists of immovable cultural relics and in the conservation plans of historical and cultural districts. For instance, Shouzhi Garden, Yi Garden, and Wang's Small Garden have been designated as national key cultural relic protection units. In addition, the local government, through policy documents such as the Regulations on the Protection of Yangzhou Ancient City [45] and the Conservation Plan for the Historic and Cultural City of Yangzhou [46], has established institutional procedures for planning permissions, restoration approvals, and revitalization utilization of former residences of historical figures, thereby ensuring the institutionalization, standardization, and sustainability of their conservation work.

The public participation mechanism reflects the interactivity and vitality of the social organization factor in contemporary conservation practices, determining the social foundation for the continuation of the value of former residences of historical figures. Public participation mechanisms mainly include: community involvement in conservation activities, assisting with daily inspections, residence interpretation, and the organization of cultural events; and, in terms of social supervision, strengthening the public's right to know and to provide suggestions on the conservation planning and restoration schemes of

former residences of historical figures through means such as public opinion solicitation and Cultural Heritage Protection Awareness Days [47,48].

3.1.3. Language (Spiritual Life): Culture

In the Cultural Triad Theory, the spiritual life factor is the abstract and enduring core of the cultural system, carrying the intellectual spirit of historical figures, cultural symbols, and the cultural significance of external communication. In the former residences of historical figures in the research area, this factor corresponds to the construction of value at the cultural level, which can be subdivided into three indicators: celebrity culture, spiritual identity, and cultural communication and education.

Celebrity culture is the core of the language factor, reflecting the intellectual achievements of celebrities in the literature, art, politics, and economy, as well as their influence on local culture. The residence of Li Hanqiu preserves the imagery of the "Qinxiang Pavilion" study, and his representative work Guangling Tide, deeply nourished by Yangzhou's history and urban life, stands as an important literary achievement of the late Qing and Republican periods [49]. The residence of He Lianfang (Hu Garden) reflects the cultural exchanges between salt merchants and literati, with its couplets and literary records embodying the poetic and pictorial ambience of late Qing literati gardens [50].

Spiritual identity refers to the symbolic significance formed by former residences of historical figures in public memory and social identity, serving as a symbolic system that crystallizes regional spirit and collective values. The residence of Cao Qijin, as a base for revolutionary education, has a couplet handwritten by the martyr hanging in its main hall, becoming a material witness to the revolutionary spirit of Yangzhou [51]. The residence of Jiang Zemin features a themed exhibition area titled "Yangzhou Will Always Be Home", which reinforces hometown identity and patriotic sentiment. Through manuscripts, speeches, letters, and historical photographs, it showcases the spirit of patriotic intellectuals and principles of governance [52]. The presence of spiritual identity renders former residences of historical figures not merely physical spaces but also convergence points of social emotions and value recognition.

Cultural communication and education represent the practical extension of the language factor, reflecting the functions of former residences of historical figures in public education, cultural promotion, and intergenerational transmission. The residence of Jiang Zemin hosts three themed exhibitions—"A Great and Glorious Life", "A Patriotic Intellectual Family", and "Yangzhou Will Always Be Home"—which conduct systematic educational communication through manuscripts, relics, and historical images. Some residences on Dongguan Street are integrated with digital guide systems and study-tour programs, incorporating former residences of historical figures into the humanities study routes for primary schools, secondary schools, and universities, thereby expanding the audience for cultural communication [53,54]. Cultural communication and education enable the cultural connotations of former residences of historical figures to go beyond mere conservation and display, fostering dynamic cultural revitalization and mechanisms of value reproduction.

3.2. Value Identification and Classification of Former Residences of Historical Figure

The former residences of historical figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou possess outstanding historical and cultural value, constituting an important part of the conservation system of Yangzhou as a National Historic and Cultural City. They are protected under the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics and related local regulations, carrying irreplaceable cultural memory. Building upon the Cultural Triad Theory, and in accordance with the six criteria defined by UNESCO

for World Heritage—namely creative value, value of exchange, value of witnessing history, exemplary value, human–land relationship value, and associative value—this study establishes a systematic value classification framework (Table 3). Accordingly, a comprehensive identification, classification, and analysis of their multiple values is conducted.

At the material substratum (architectural level), the former residences of historical figures in the research area exhibit significant multidimensional values. In terms of creative value, the architectural layouts often adopt innovative combinations, façades display flexibility, construction craftsmanship demonstrates originality in themes and combinations, and environmental landscapes form novel spatial patterns through the integration of residences with small-scale gardens. Regarding exchange value, the architecture incorporates Huizhou and Suzhou craftsmanship, integrates Jiangnan garden design principles, and in some details reflects elements of Sino-Western fusion, showcasing mutual learning between the region and external cultures [34,35]. In terms of the value of witnessing history, the architectural forms, as the living spaces of celebrities and venues of major events, preserve construction techniques and craftsmanship across different historical periods, while the environmental patterns maintain the original garden and courtyard spaces, thereby bearing witness to the lifestyles of specific historical eras. As for exemplary value, the architectural layouts embody the typical paradigm of salt merchants' mansions in Yangzhou, while the craftsmanship highlights regional characteristics, providing models for the conservation and restoration of similar buildings [36,37]. In terms of human–land relationship value, the architectural forms harmonize with the street texture of Dongguan's historical lanes, orientations and spatial forms align with natural ventilation and lighting patterns, and environmental landscapes achieve unity with surrounding spatial layouts [38]. Regarding associative value, the architectural spaces are closely connected with celebrity images and cultural spirit, while the overall atmosphere interacts with the city's cultural image, constituting important cultural symbols of social identity [39].

At the social organization (institutional level), the multidimensional embodiment of institutional value is evident. In terms of the value of witnessing history, the continuation of the patriarchal system and family order in spatial forms serves as important material evidence of historical transformation [40]. Regarding exemplary value, the ritual spatial paradigms of salt merchants' mansions, the Confucian family ethics model, and the replicable conservation and management models together construct a paradigm of local cultural heritage [41,42]. In terms of human–land relationship value, the spatial layouts under patriarchal rites and the street–alley patterns reflect local history and culture [43,44], while conservation and management systems, through overall block protection planning and style control, strengthen the harmony between residences and their surrounding environment, maintaining emotional connections through community co-construction [45,46]. As for associative value, patriarchal rites are closely tied to celebrity family histories and family motto culture; conservation and management systems reinforce the cultural brand recognition of celebrities; and public participation mechanisms enhance social identity and cultural communicative power [47,48], thereby providing institutional guarantees for the cultural continuity and social value reproduction of former residences of historical figures.

Table 3. Value Identification System of Former residences of historical figures.

Value Identification System of Former Residences of Historical Figures.									
	Material Foundation—Architecture			**Social Organization—Institution**			**Spiritual Life—Culture**		
	Architectural Form	**Component Craftsmanship**	**Environmental Landscape**	**Clan Rites and Regulations**	**Conservation and Management System**	**Public Participation Mechanism**	**Celebrity Culture**	**Spiritual Symbol**	**Cultural Communication and Education**
Creative Value	Architectural Layout Façade Modeling	Theme and Craftsmanship Combination	Integration with Small-scale Gardens			Promoting Revitalization Forms	Literary Creations and Intellectual Achievements Promoting Local Artistic and Intellectual Innovation	Shaping Unique Cultural Symbols	Conveying the Cultural and Creative Spirit Stimulating Cultural Re-creation
Communicative Value	Absorbing Hui-style and Su-style Craft Elements Integrating Jiangnan Garden-making Techniques Influences of Northern and Southern China	Integration of Su-style and Hui-style Carving Techniques Chinese–Western Hybrid Details	Drawing on the Landscaping Principles of Jiangnan Gardens			Enriching the Dimensions of Historical Memory	Promoting Exchanges in Domestic and International Literary and Artistic Circles Promoting the Transmission of Core Values		
Historical Witnessing Value	Birthplace of Celebrities and Site of Historical Events Reproduction of Living Patterns in Significant Historical Periods	Continuation of Construction Techniques Level of Arts and Crafts	Preservation of Original Garden and Courtyard Layout	Continuation of Clan System and Family Order	Witnessing the Institutionalization Process of Local Conservation		Cultural Records	Bearing Political and Socio-cultural Memories of Specific Historical Periods	Enhancing Public Cognition of Historical Contexts Conveying Social and Cultural Changes across Different Periods

Table 3. *Cont.*

Value Identification System of Former Residences of Historical Figures.									
	Material Foundation—Architecture			Social Organization—Institution			Spiritual Life—Culture		
	Architectural Form	**Component Craftsmanship**	**Environmental Landscape**	**Clan Rites and Regulations**	**Conservation and Management System**	**Public Participation Mechanism**	**Celebrity Culture**	**Spiritual Symbol**	**Cultural Communication and Education**
Exemplary Value	Typical Layout Paradigm of Yangzhou Salt Merchants' Residences	Regional Paradigm of Construction Techniques in Yangzhou Salt Merchants' Mansions		Ritual Space Paradigm of Salt Merchants' Residences	Formulation of Replicable Conservation and Management Models	Demonstration of Local Cultural Heritage Governance Models		Local Spiritual Paradigm	Promotion of Standardized Restoration and Management Practices
				Typical Model of Confucian Family Ethics				Representative of the Regional Cultural Value System	
Human–Land Relationship Value	Integration with the Historical Street Texture		Coordination with the Street Texture	Layout and Spatial Organization Coordinated under Clan Rites and Regulations	Coordination of Overall Street Relations and Style Control	Community Co-construction and Maintenance	Promoting Cultural Confidence and Identity of Family–Nation Values		Strengthening the Holistic Perception of Former Residences and Street Spaces
	Adaptability of Orientation, Ventilation, and Lighting					Strengthening Emotional Connections with Local Residents			Enhancing Sense of Belonging to Regional Culture
Relational Value	Interconnection with Celebrity Images and Cultural Spirit		Association with Celebrities' Daily Life and Cultural Activities	Association with Celebrities' Family History and Family Precepts	Strengthening Celebrity Culture and Brand Recognition	Enhancing Social Identity and Cultural Communication Power	Formation of Celebrities' Works and Thoughts within Local Spaces	High Correlation with Public Emotions and Regional Identity	Constructing Collective Cultural Memory
	Interaction between Atmosphere and the Overall Cultural Image of the City								Expanding the Cultural Influence of Former Residences

Note: The six subheadings on the left side of the table (Creative Value, Communicative Value, Historical Witness Value, Exemplary Value, Human–Environment Relationship Value, and Associative Value) represent the six heritage value dimensions defined by UNESCO. They are positioned at the same analytical level as the Cultural Triad Theory framework and are used to systematically identify and classify the multiple values of Former Residences of Historical Figures.

At the spiritual life (cultural) level, former residences of historical figures embody rich cultural connotations and multidimensional values. In terms of creative value, celebrities' literary creations and intellectual achievements drive innovations in local arts and ideas, spiritual identities shape unique cultural symbols, and cultural communication stimulates cultural re-creation and the continuation of spirit [49]. Regarding exchange value, celebrity culture promotes interactions within and beyond literary and artistic circles, advancing the transmission and resonance of core values [50]. In terms of the value of witnessing history, the cultural records of residences and spiritual identities carry the political, social, and cultural memories of specific historical periods, reinforcing public historical cognition and reflecting social transformations across different eras [51,52]. As for exemplary value, the residences serve as models of local spirit and representatives of regional cultural value systems, promoting the dissemination of normative conservation and management practices. In terms of human–land relationship value, residence culture strengthens local residents' cultural identity and sense of belonging, enhancing the overall perception of street–alley spaces and regional cultural affiliation. Regarding associative value, celebrities' works, ideas, and living spaces are closely connected; through the interaction of public emotions and local identity, they construct shared cultural memory and expand the cultural influence of former residences of historical figures [53,54].

4. Value Evaluation and Analysis of Former Residences of Historical Figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou

4.1. Data Sources and Sample Design

The data for this study were obtained from a questionnaire survey conducted between June and July 2025, using both online and offline distribution methods. The survey covered Guangling District, Hanjiang District, Jiangdu District, county-level cities, and functional zones of Yangzhou. To ensure that the evaluation results possess both statistical significance and practical representativeness, the study followed the principle of probability sampling [55], thereby meeting the validity requirements of the Contingent Valuation Method for sample data. In designing the sample, Scheaffer's sampling theory formula was applied as a reference:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p\,(1 - p)}{e^2} \tag{2}$$

where n represents the required sample size; Z is the critical value corresponding to the confidence interval (usually 1.96 for a 95% confidence level); p is the estimated proportion, which is taken as 0.5 when no prior data are available, in order to maximize the sample size; and e is the allowable sampling error. Based on the above formula, and taking into account the questionnaire structure and error tolerance of this study, the final required sample size was determined to be at least 385, so as to meet the requirements of the confidence interval and error control.

In addition, some scholars argue that the population in CVM studies should be defined according to the policy decision-making level targeted by the research [56], with annual tourist visits to the study area included in the sample population [57,58]. However, both the present author and several experts in the field contend that annual tourist visits measure the number of events rather than independent individuals, as the same visitor may account for multiple visits. Moreover, tourists do not constitute a long-term and stable potential paying group. Including this data in the sample population would substantially inflate the population size and consequently lead to an overestimation of the final non-use value [33,59]. On this basis, this study defines the sample population as the potential value-perceiving group within the research area, namely the permanent residents of Yangzhou. According to Yangzhou's 2024 statistical data, the year-end permanent resident population

was 4.5868 million. To more accurately reflect effective individuals with payment capacity, approximately 520,000 adolescents were excluded from the sample population, resulting in a final sample population of

$$N = 4.5868 \times 10^6 - 5.2 \times 10^5 = 4.0668 \times 10^6 \quad (3)$$

Based on the aforementioned minimum required sample size of 385, and to ensure the completeness and validity of the questionnaire data, a total of 490 questionnaires were distributed in this study, of which 245 were issued to local permanent residents and 245 to tourists and other public groups. During the data cleaning process, questionnaires deemed invalid due to incomplete responses, severe logical conflicts, or duplicate submissions were excluded. Ultimately, a total of 415 valid questionnaires were obtained, including 212 from the resident group and 203 from the tourist and other groups, with an overall effective recovery rate of 84.7%. This outcome reflects the high validity and representativeness of the questionnaire design and implementation in this survey, providing a reliable data foundation for the subsequent identification and quantitative analysis of non-use value.

The overall survey sample in this study is characterized by a relatively high level of education, a predominance of young and middle-aged groups with medium income, and strong interests in tourism and heritage experiences. At the same time, the public generally shows a low level of satisfaction with the current state of conservation of former residences of historical figures, but demonstrates a high degree of recognition of the conservation concept based on the Cultural Triad Theory (Table 4).

Table 4. Sample Characteristics.

Sample Characteristics					
	Junior High School and Below	Senior High School, Secondary Technical School, and Junior College	University	Postgraduate and Above	
Educational Level	60	140	160	55	
	Do Not Like	Do Not Like	Neutral	Quite Like	Like Very Much
Degree of Enthusiasm for Tourism	21	42	79	124	149
	With Cultural Heritage Visiting Experience	Without Visiting Experience			
Experience of Visiting Cultural Heritage Sites	257	158			
	Completely Unfamiliar	Not Very Familiar	Neutral	Somewhat Familiar	Quite Familiar
Level of Understanding of Former Residences of Historical Figures in Yangzhou Dongguan Street and Related Historical Culture	42	79	48	140	106
	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Quite Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Satisfaction with the Current Condition of Former Residences of Historical Figures	33	91	149	91	51
	No Positive Impact at All	Slightly Positive Impact	Neutral	Relatively Positive Impact	Relatively Positive Impact
Perceived Degree of Positive Impact from Conservation Based on Cultural Triad Theory	12	28	62	148	165

Table 4. *Cont.*

Sample Characteristics						
Gender Distribution of Respondents	Male	Female				
	178	237				
Age Distribution of Respondents	18–27 years	28–37 years	38–47 years	48–57 years	58–67 years	68 years and above
	108	96	83	67	41	20
Monthly Income Distribution of Respondents	Below 3000	3000–4999	5000–6999	7000–8999	9000–19,999	20,000 and Above
	52	88	104	86	67	18
Distribution of Respondents by Place of Residence	Guangling District	Hanjiang District	Jiangdu District	County-Level Cities and Administrative Areas	Functional Zones	
	98	84	79	72	82	
Occupational Distribution of Respondents	Agricultural Practitioners	Workers/ Skilled Workers	Employees of Enterprises and Public Institutions	Self-Employed/Freelancers	Students	Retired
	21	76	124	63	74	57

4.2. Value Evaluation of Former Residences of Historical Figures

This study adopts the public's maximum willingness to pay (WTP) as the measurement indicator of the non-use value of former residences of historical figures in Yangzhou, mainly based on the following considerations: First, WTP aligns with the principles of utility maximization and constant utility on which the Contingent Valuation Method is based, enabling it to accurately reflect the public's value perception and willingness to pay for cultural heritage conservation under hypothetical market scenarios [57]. Second, compared with willingness to accept compensation (WTA), WTP is easier for respondents to understand and accept, and its values are generally less affected by psychological expectations of compensation, thereby providing stronger practical operability and policy reference significance. In addition, WTP is usually constrained by individual income, making its evaluation results closer to the public's actual payment capacity, and thus more suitable for cost–benefit analysis and funding estimation in the formulation of public policies on cultural heritage [60–62].

On this basis, the following formula is adopted in this study to quantitatively estimate the non-use value (V) of former residences of historical figures in Yangzhou:

$$V = \overline{WTP} \times P_0 \times r \quad (4)$$

where $\overline{WTP}$ denotes the average willingness-to-pay value of the sample; P_0 represents the effective population base of the overall study population; and r is the payment willingness rate, that is, the proportion of respondents expressing a positive willingness to pay.

In the questionnaire design of this study, the payment card format was adopted to set the core valuation questions. Compared with open-ended or dichotomous formats, the payment card method provides a series of monetary options, which reduces respondents' cognitive burden and guides them to express their true willingness-to-pay values within a reasonable range. This format helps improve response rates, control strategic answering behaviors, and enhance data stability and comparability, and has been widely applied in CVM studies on cultural heritage [63–65]. In this study, the final payment card interval was set at 10–500 CNY, based on the following considerations. First, reference was made

to relevant research in the field of cultural heritage conservation. For instance, Liu Tao applied CVM and the SPIKE model in a study of Dalian Dongguan Street, estimating an average willingness to pay of 33.5 CNY, with the questionnaire designed to include a wide interval in order to capture realistic public expectations [58]. Similarly, Dai Jian's survey of Harbin's Daoli District revealed an average willingness to pay approximately 60 CNY, with options ranging from 5 CNY to 1000 CNY to ensure data representativeness [20]. Second, local small-scale interviews and pilot testing indicated that the public's psychological tolerance range was concentrated mostly between several tens to several hundred CNY. Accordingly, this study adopted the 10–500 CNY interval, which covers both the minimum payment capacity of low-income groups and the higher expectations of high-income groups, thereby reducing the risk of data bias caused by overly narrow intervals. By combining insights from literature and empirical investigation, this design helps mitigate risks of anchoring bias and range bias. Guided by the evaluation objectives, the questionnaire design refers to the structure of relevant literature and typical case studies [66,67], while also considering common CVM bias types and corresponding countermeasures. The questionnaire is divided into five parts: the first part provides a brief introduction to the basic information of former residences of historical figures in the research area, helping respondents establish preliminary knowledge of the evaluation object; the second part introduces the construction of the value system of former residences of historical figures based on the Cultural Triad Theory; the third part is a survey on value perception and attitudes, aiming to understand respondents' level of knowledge, emotional identification, and attitudes toward the conservation of former residences of historical figures; the fourth part concerns willingness-to-pay, guiding respondents to select their maximum payment amount within a reasonable range; and the fifth part collects respondents' personal basic information. This questionnaire structure is designed to improve the effectiveness of responses and enhance the scientific validity and explanatory power of the valuation data.

The survey design required participants to make choices among the three value dimensions of "material substratum, social organization, and spiritual life," in order to determine their preferred direction of investment in subsequent conservation and revitalization processes. At the same time, combined with the previously established framework of value identification and classification of former residences of historical figures, the relative importance weights of sub-indicators within different dimensions were comprehensively considered to further refine the payment structure. This approach was used to quantify the priority levels of various indicators within each value system in public perception, thereby providing more in-depth reference for resource allocation and priorities in cultural heritage conservation strategies.

A total of 415 valid questionnaires were collected in the survey, among which 301 respondents expressed willingness to pay a certain amount for the conservation and utilization of former residences of historical figures, yielding a payment willingness rate of 72.53%. According to the frequency distribution statistics of willingness-to-pay values (see Table 5), the weighted average method was used to calculate the maximum average willingness-to-pay as 60.07 CNY per person per year. This figure falls within the medium range compared with similar cultural heritage studies in China, reflecting a balanced attitude of the public between economic affordability and cultural identity. Based on the foregoing formula, substituting the observed data yields an annual non-use total value of approximately 177 million CNY for the 20 former residences of historical figures in Yangzhou's Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block.

Table 5. Frequency Distribution Statistics of Willingness-to-Pay Values.

Bid Value A	Frequency	Proportion *P* (%)	Partial WTP
10	78	25.91	2.59
20	61	20.27	4.05
30	17	5.56	1.70
40	11	3.65	1.46
50	43	14.29	7.15
60	20	6.64	3.98
70	11	3.65	2.56
80	6	1.99	1.59
90	7	2.33	2.10
100	34	11.30	11.30
200	5	1.66	3.32
300	1	0.33	1.00
400	3	1.00	4.00
500	2	0.66	3.30
above 500	2	0.66	9.97
Total	301	100	60.07

Based on the value identification system (Table 6), respondents' willingness to pay shows significant differences across the three value systems, with the overall pattern being Cultural System (41.86%) > Architectural System (33.22%) > Institutional System (24.92%). The cultural system ranks highest, highlighting that in the perception of non-use value, the public tends to assign greater economic recognition to the spiritual and cultural dimension. The architectural system follows, reflecting that the material forms of architectural layout, construction craftsmanship, and environmental landscape remain an important foundation of public perception. Although institutional guarantees carry long-term significance, their direct perceptibility and corresponding willingness-to-pay levels are relatively lower.

Among the six value dimensions, the value of witnessing history ranks first with a share of 25.87%, indicating that the public places the greatest emphasis on the unique role and core status of former residences of historical figures in recording major historical events, carrying regional memory, and embodying the spirit of historical figures. The second highest is creative value, reflecting the public's strong recognition of and attention to unique craftsmanship, artistic design, and cultural innovation. Exemplary value and associative value fall at a medium level, suggesting that local former residences of historical figures hold certain advantages as institutional models and as connectors within diverse cultural networks. Human–land relationship value and exchange value are relatively lower, pointing to the need to enhance public perception of functions such as cross-cultural communication and environmental interaction. From the perspective of conservation strategies, the concentration of high willingness-to-pay in the two dimensions of "witnessing history" and "creativity" indicates that priority in the future should be given to safeguarding the authenticity and integrity of the historical appearance, cultural symbols, and unique craftsmanship of former residences of historical figures. At the same time, although institutional value accounts for a relatively small share overall, conservation management systems and public participation mechanisms remain the foundation of the long-term sustainable utilization of heritage. Measures such as greater transparency in systems and diversification of participation channels should be adopted to strengthen public recognition of and engagement with institutional mechanisms. In addition, within the value identification system of this study, the exchange value willingness-to-pay for former residences of historical figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou is 6.03 CNY, accounting for 10.04% of the total, the lowest among the six value dimensions. This result reflects the relatively weak public perception of the function of former residences of historical figures

in cross-cultural exchange and the interaction of values. In terms of heritage form, the architectural styles, display modes, and interpretive systems of former residences of historical figures on Dongguan Street largely emphasize regional and localized characteristics, lacking material evidence and narrative resources that directly reflect cultural exchanges across different times and spaces. This primarily local-oriented value expression results in relatively indirect cross-cultural connections in the public mind, thereby lowering the perceptibility of exchange value. In conservation and utilization practices, existing exhibitions mainly focus on the life stories of figures, historical backgrounds, and architectural features, while cross-cultural interaction, international exhibitions, and dialogical displays with other cultural heritage sites remain relatively scarce. Consequently, the public finds it difficult to perceive the role of these heritage sites in transmitting values across different eras and civilizations during their visits. Overall, this value identification system not only provides a quantitative basis for public preferences regarding celebrity residence conservation but also offers a reference for resource allocation and the formulation of stratified and differentiated conservation and revitalization strategies. By concentrating investment in high-recognition value dimensions while simultaneously stimulating the potential of low-perception dimensions, former residences of historical figures can be transformed from singular cultural attractions into comprehensive cultural heritage sites that integrate historical memory, cultural innovation, and international exchange.

Figure 3 clearly illustrates the structural characteristics of the numerical distribution. From a vertical comparison, the overall color scale in the upper half of the heatmap is noticeably darker, while that in the lower half is relatively lighter. This difference indicates that the public demonstrates a stronger willingness to pay for high-perception functions of former residences of historical figures, such as historical memory, cultural heritage innovation, and exemplary paradigms. From a horizontal perspective, the two columns representing the architectural system on the left and the cultural system on the right show overall darker color scales. This pattern reveals a stratified feature of public perception across the three value systems: material forms and spiritual culture exert stronger appeal to the public, whereas the institutional system, despite showing certain significance in dimensions such as "exemplary value", lags behind the other two in overall perception and willingness to pay. This may be attributed to the fact that the value of the institutional system is manifested more indirectly and lacks direct, visualized experiences.

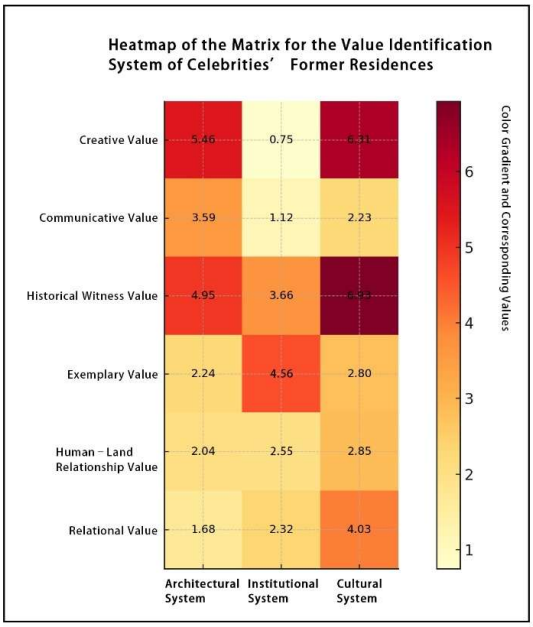


Figure 3. Matrix heatmap of the value identification system of former residences of historical figures.

Table 6. Evaluation of the Value Identification System of Celebrity Former Residences.

Evaluation of the Value Identification System of Celebrity Former Residences										
	Material Foundation—Architecture			Social Organization—Institution			Spiritual Life—Culture			
World Heritage Criteria Value System	**Architectural Form**	**Component Craftsmanship**	**Environmental Landscape**	**Clan Rites and Regulations**	**Conservation and Management System**	**Public Participation Mechanism**	**Celebrity Culture**	**Spiritual Symbol**	**Cultural Communication and Education**	**Payment Price (CNY) and Proportion**
Creative Value	1.76	2.45	1.25			0.75	2.79	1.68	1.84	12.52 (20.84%)
Communicative Value	1.44	1.40	0.75			1.12	2.23			6.94 (11.55%)
Historical Witnessing Value	1.60	2.10	1.25	2.09	1.57		2.79	1.96	2.18	15.54 (25.87%)
Exemplary Value	1.20	1.04		1.79	1.83	0.94		1.12	1.68	9.6 (15.98%)
Human–Land Relationship Value	1.04		1.00	1.20	0.79	0.56	1.68		1.17	7.44 (12.39%)
Relational Value	0.94		0.74	0.90	1.05	0.37	1.68	0.84	1.51	8.03 (13.37%)
Payment Price (CNY) and Proportion	7.98 (13.29%)	6.99 (11.63%)	4.99 (8.3%)	5.98 (9.96%)	5.24 (8.64%)	3.74 (6.31%)	11.17 (18.6%)	5.60 (9.31%)	8.38 (13.95%)	60.07
		19.96 (33.23%)			14.96 (24.9%)			25.15 (41.87%)		

Note: The six subheadings on the left side of the table (Creative Value, Communicative Value, Historical Witness Value, Exemplary Value, Human–Environment Relationship Value, and Associative Value) represent the six heritage value dimensions defined by UNESCO. They are positioned at the same analytical level as the Cultural Triad Theory framework and are used to systematically identify and classify the multiple values of Former Residences of Historical Figures.

4.3. Analysis of Factors Influencing Willingness to Pay

This chapter conducts a stratified analysis of the factors influencing willingness to pay. First, it examines whether the public is willing to pay, with a focus on revealing attitudinal and conceptual determinants. Building on this, it further explores the mechanisms determining the specific payment amounts, in order to analyze individual differences in economic capacity and payment preferences. By considering both dimensions—"whether to pay" and "how much to pay"—the study provides a clearer understanding of public support intentions and actual contribution levels in the conservation of former residences of historical figures. To further explore the main factors influencing whether the public is willing to pay for the conservation and development of former residences of historical figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou, this study established a binary logistic regression model based on questionnaire survey data. This model effectively characterizes respondents' binary choices between paying and not paying, and reveals the impact of different socio-demographic characteristics and cognitive–attitudinal factors on willingness to pay. The Hosmer & Lemeshow test results of the model are $\chi^2 = 7.42$, $p = 0.493$, indicating good model fit. The prediction accuracy reaches 70.2%, demonstrating that the model has strong explanatory power and robustness [29,68–70].

Drawing on previous research experience [18,29,71] and the content of the questionnaire design, this study selected 11 potential influencing factors as independent variables, covering three dimensions: demographic characteristics, tourism and cultural preferences, and attitudes and evaluations. These variables are: gender, age, educational level, monthly income, place of residence, occupation, degree of enthusiasm for tourism, whether or not the respondent has had cultural heritage visiting experience, level of understanding of former residences of historical figures and related history and culture, satisfaction with the current state of former residences of historical figures, and the perceived extent to which conservation based on the Cultural Triad Theory can bring positive impacts. Among these variables, age, educational level, place of residence, and occupation were dummy-coded during the modeling process; were processed with dummy variables in modeling; gender and whether the respondent had cultural heritage visiting experience, as binary variables, were directly coded as 0/1; and the remaining ordinal variables were valued according to a five-point Likert scale. The dependent variable was whether respondents were willing to pay for the conservation and development of former residences of historical figures, defined specifically as: willing to pay = 1; unwilling to pay = 0 [72,73]. First, univariate binary logistic regression analyses were conducted for the 11 independent variables. The results showed that willingness to pay was unrelated to gender, age, monthly income, place of residence, and occupation. On this basis, variables meeting the significance level requirement were included in the multivariate binary logistic regression model. According to the regression results (Table 7), six independent variables exerted significant effects on the dependent variable, ranked in order of coefficient size as follows.

According to the results of the regression analysis, the extent to which respondents believe that protection based on the Cultural Triad Theory can generate positive effects exerts the strongest positive influence on willingness to pay (WTP). The higher the respondents' recognition of this theoretical framework, the stronger their belief that this protection path can deliver tangible benefits, thereby significantly enhancing their WTP. This finding underscores that the scientific rigor of the theoretical system and the degree of public recognition are crucial for fostering broad social support. Education level also demonstrates a significant positive effect on WTP. As educational attainment rises, respondents tend to possess deeper awareness of cultural heritage values. Individuals with higher education levels generally exhibit stronger cultural responsibility and social participation consciousness, leading to a higher willingness to provide financial support. Similarly,

knowledge of former residences of historical figures and their associated historical and cultural context is significantly and positively correlated with WTP. Respondents who have a deeper understanding of the history and cultural narratives embodied by former residences of historical figures are more likely to appreciate their role in carrying cultural memory and social value, thus demonstrating greater WTP. This indicates that enhancing publicity and education can effectively strengthen public recognition and commitment to heritage protection. Satisfaction with the current condition of former residences of historical figures is significantly and negatively correlated with WTP. The less satisfied respondents are with the present status, the more strongly they expect timely improvements, thereby showing a greater WTP. This reflects a critical public perception of the current state of protection, which in turn becomes an important driving force for promoting heritage improvement. Moreover, passion for tourism exerts a significant positive effect on WTP. Tourism enthusiasts often regard cultural heritage as an essential component of their travel experiences, adopting a more active attitude toward heritage protection, and thus demonstrating stronger willingness to contribute financially to conservation and adaptive reuse. Finally, previous experience of visiting cultural heritage sites also positively influences WTP. Respondents who have personally visited such sites are more likely to establish emotional connections and develop a deeper understanding of their historical and cultural values, making them more inclined to pay for protection. This highlights the importance of direct public engagement in enhancing willingness to pay for heritage conservation.

Table 7. Results of Logistic Regression Analysis.

Variable	B	S.E.	Wals	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Senior High School/Secondary Technical School/Junior College	0.215	0.132	2.65	1	0.104	1.24
Undergraduate	0.412 ***	0.115	12.83	1	0.000	1.51
Postgraduate and Above	0.356 *	0.161	4.89	1	0.027	1.428
Degree of Enthusiasm for Tourism	0.328 *	0.133	6.08	1	0.014	1.388
Experience of Visiting Cultural Heritage Sites	0.276 *	0.121	5.21	1	0.022	1.318
Level of Understanding of Former residences of historical figures and Related Historical Culture	0.389 **	0.118	10.84	1	0.001	1.476
Satisfaction with the Current Situation of Former residences of historical figures	−0.341 *	0.137	6.19	1	0.013	0.711
Perceived Degree of Positive Impact of Protection Based on the Cultural Triad Theory	0.521 ***	0.12	18.82	1	0	1.684
Constant	−1.126	0.812	1.92	1	0.165	0.324

Note: The reference group is "Junior High School and Below". * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Model Hosmer & Lemeshow test: $\chi^2 = 7.41$, $p = 0.496$; prediction accuracy = 71.2%.

Based on the Exp (B) values from the regression analysis, and holding other conditions constant, respondents' probability of willingness to pay increases by 68.4% for each one-level rise in recognition of the conservation concept. Compared with the reference group (junior high school and below), respondents with undergraduate and postgraduate or above education show an increased probability of willingness to pay by approximately 51.0% and 42.8%, respectively, indicating stronger support among highly educated groups for the conservation of former residences of historical figures. Conversely, for each one-level increase in satisfaction with the current condition of the residences, the probability of willingness to pay decreases by 28.9%. At the same time, level of understanding, enthusiasm for tourism, and heritage visiting experience all exert significant positive effects on willingness to pay. In summary, the formation of WTP is shaped both by individuals' socio-cultural capital and by their trust in heritage protection approaches as well as their evaluation of current conditions. At the policy level, efforts should focus on

enhancing public knowledge, increasing opportunities for cultural heritage experiences, and strengthening recognition through scientific protection theories and practices, thereby effectively reinforcing social support for heritage conservation.

Building on the analysis of factors influencing willingness to pay, this study further focuses on the determinants of the payment amounts. The original distribution of willingness-to-pay (WTP) values exhibited a pronounced right skew: a large number of respondents clustered in the 10–20 CNY range, while a few extreme high values extended the tail, displaying a typical long-tail distribution. Applying ordinary least squares (OLS) regression directly could therefore violate the fundamental assumptions of OLS regarding residual normality and homoscedasticity [74]. To address this, the dependent variable was log-transformed to mitigate skewness and improve the robustness of estimation [75]. Moreover, given that modeling based solely on the 301 positive-payment samples may introduce sample selection bias, this study adopted the Heckman two-stage model for correction. Specifically, the inverse Mills ratio (IMR) calculated from the first-stage Probit model was incorporated into the second-stage regression as a continuous explanatory variable to adjust for sample selection bias [76] (Table 8).

Table 8. Model Variable Assignment Description.

Variable Category	Variable Name	Assignment Method	First-Stage Probit Regression	Second-Stage Multiple Linear Regression [ln (WTP + 1)]
Dependent Variable	Willingness to Pay	Pay = 1; Not Pay = 0	Dependent Variable	-
	Payment Amount	Respondent's Maximum Willingness to Pay	-	Ln (WTP + 1), Continuous Dependent Variable
Demographic Variables	Gender	Male = 1; Female = 0	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
	Age	Six-category classification: 18–27, 28–37, 38–47, 48–57, 58–67, and ≥68. The 18–27 age group is set as the reference group, with five dummy variables created accordingly.	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
	Education Level	Four-category classification: Junior High School and Below, Senior High School/Secondary Technical School/Junior College, Undergraduate, and Postgraduate and Above. Junior High School and Below is set as the reference group, with three dummy variables created accordingly.	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
	Monthly Income	1 = Below 2999 CNY; 2 = 3000–5999; 3 = 6000–8999; 4 = 9000–11,999; 5 = 12,000–14,999	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
	Place of Residence	Five-category classification: Yangzhou Guangling District, Hanjiang District, Jiangdu District, County-Level Administrative Areas, and Functional Zones. Guangling District is set as the reference group, with four dummy variables created accordingly.	Independent Variables	Independent Variables

Table 8. *Cont.*

Variable Category	Variable Name	Assignment Method	First-Stage Probit Regression	Second-Stage Multiple Linear Regression [ln (WTP + 1)]
	Occupation	Six-category classification: Agricultural Practitioners, Workers/Skilled Workers, Enterprise Employees, Self-Employed/Freelancers, Students, and Retired/Unemployed. Agricultural Practitioners are set as the reference group, with five dummy variables created accordingly.	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
Cognitive and Attitudinal Variables	Degree of Enthusiasm for Tourism	Likert 5-point scale: 1 = Do Not Like, . . ., 5 = Like Very Much	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
	Visiting Experience	Yes = 1, No = 0	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
	Level of Understanding	Likert 5-point scale: 1 = Completely Unfamiliar, . . ., 5 = Quite Familiar	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
	Satisfaction with Current Condition	Likert 5-point scale: 1 = Very Dissatisfied, . . ., 5 = Very Satisfied	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
	Recognition of Conservation Concept	Likert 5-point scale: 1 = No Positive Impact at All, . . ., 5 = Very Positive Impact	Independent Variables	Independent Variables
Model Correction Variable	Inverse Mills Ratio (IMR)	Calculated from the first-stage Probit regression, Continuous Variable	-	Independent Variables (Used to correct sample selection bias)

The results (Table 9) indicate that economic conditions and cultural capital are the core factors influencing the amount the public is willing to pay. Monthly income has a significant positive effect at the 1% level, suggesting that higher-income groups are more willing to contribute greater financial resources to the conservation of former residences of historical figures. Educational attainment also shows a significant impact: compared with respondents holding junior high school education or below, those with senior high school/secondary technical school/junior college, undergraduate, and postgraduate education all contribute significantly higher payment amounts. This demonstrates that the higher the education level, the stronger the public's willingness to pay for cultural heritage conservation. Cognitive factors are also of critical importance. Both the level of understanding of former residences and the degree of recognition of the Cultural Triad Theory–based conservation concept have significant positive effects at the 5% level, indicating that deeper comprehension of heritage values and stronger endorsement of conservation concepts are key drivers of economic commitment. Among demographic variables, age shows notable significance across several groups: the 48–57 and 58–67 age groups contribute significantly higher payment amounts compared to the 18–27 baseline group, suggesting that middle-aged and older populations are more inclined to assume conservation responsibility and make higher financial contributions. By contrast, gender, occupation, and place of residence are generally insignificant, indicating that these basic demographic attributes have limited explanatory power for payment amounts. Regarding attitudinal and experiential factors, satisfaction with the current condition is significantly negative at the 5% level, implying that respondents who are less satisfied with the current state are more willing to pay higher amounts to promote conservation improvements. Enthusiasm for tourism and experience of visiting heritage sites are marginally significant at the 10% level, suggesting that personal

interest and prior experience exert some positive influence on payment amounts, though their impact remains relatively limited.

Table 9. Results of the Heckman Two-Stage Selection Model.

Variable	First-Stage Probit (Willing to Pay = 1, Not Willing = 0; N = 415)			Second-Stage OLS ln(WTP + 1), N = 301		
	Coef.	Z-Value	*p*-Value	Coef.	t-Value	*p*-Value
Educational Level (Reference = Junior High School and Below)						
Senior High School/Secondary Technical School/Junior College	0.284	2.15	0.031 *	0.163	2.09	0.037 *
Undergraduate	0.436	2.96	0.003 **	0.241	2.65	0.008 **
Postgraduate and Above	0.392	2.23	0.026 *	0.284	2.41	0.016 *
Age (Reference = 18–27 years)						
28–37 years	0.115	0.9	0.368	0.071	0.85	0.397
38–47 years	0.184	1.37	0.171	0.112	1.23	0.221
48–57 years	0.296	1.99	0.047 *	0.209	2.11	0.035 *
58–67 years	0.341	1.98	0.048 *	0.246	2.16	0.032 *
≥68 years	0.216	1.14	0.254	0.178	1.28	0.2
Recognition of Conservation Concept	0.331	3.24	0.001 **	0.184	2.27	0.024 *
Level of Understanding	0.218	2.29	0.022 *	0.159	2.15	0.033 *
Satisfaction with Current Condition	−0.209	−2.15	0.032 *	−0.131	−1.99	0.048 *
Degree of Enthusiasm for Tourism	0.187	2.31	0.021 *	0.099	1.71	0.088 †
Visiting Experience	0.142	1.97	0.049 *	0.086	1.69	0.092 †
Gender	0.036	0.51	0.61	0.018	0.4	0.688
Monthly Income	0.059	0.88	0.377	0.314	3.41	0.001 **
Occupation (Overall Dummy Variable Group)	-	-	Not Significant	-	-	Not Significant
Place of Residence (Overall Dummy Variable Group)	-	-	Not Significant	-	-	Not Significant
Inverse Mills Ratio (IMR)	-	-	-	0.223	2.46	0.015 *
Constant Term	−1.034	−2.69	0.007 **	2.241	7.81	0.000 ***

Model Goodness-of-Fit: First-Stage Probit: χ^2 (24) = 68.47, $p < 0.001$; Pseudo R^2 = 0.197; Prediction Accuracy = 73.5%. Second-Stage OLS: R^2 = 0.471; F (25, 275) = 9.79, $p < 0.001$. IMR is significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating the presence of sample selection bias, which the Heckman model effectively corrects. Table Notes: Occupation and Place of Residence were included in the model as dummy variable groups, but their overall tests were not significant and thus are not reported individually. † $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

From the regression coefficients, it can be seen that among continuous variables, the coefficient of recognition of the conservation concept is 0.184, which implies that for every one-level increase in recognition, the payment amount increases by an average of about 20.2%. For dummy variables, the coefficient for the undergraduate group is 0.241, meaning that compared with the junior high school or below group, respondents with an undergraduate degree on average contribute about 27.3% more. For negative coefficients, the satisfaction with the current condition is −0.131, indicating that for every one-level increase in satisfaction, the payment amount decreases by about 12.3%. Other variables can be interpreted analogously. Notably, the inverse Mills ratio (IMR) is significant in the model, suggesting that if the 114 zero-payment respondents were ignored and only the positive-payment sample were used in an OLS regression, sample selection bias would occur, potentially underestimating or overestimating the effects of certain variables [77]. By incorporating IMR, the Heckman model effectively corrects this bias, enhancing both the robustness and explanatory power of the results. Overall, the determinants of payment amounts demonstrate that economic conditions and cultural capital serve as the core drivers, cognitive understanding and conceptual recognition play amplifying roles, while emotional and experiential preferences exert supplementary influence.

4.4. Pathways for the Activation and Continuation of Former Residences of Historical Figures

According to the research findings, the cultural system, due to its strong spiritual resonance and role in carrying historical memory, received the highest level of economic recognition from the public. The architectural system, as the material foundation for

cultural experience, also demonstrated considerable payment potential. By contrast, the institutional system, while of long-term significance, showed relatively lower WTP, owing to its indirect perception pathways and limited visibility.

Based on this structural cognitive disparity, the activation pathway of former residences of historical figures should adhere to a multi-level strategy of cultural leadership, architectural support, and institutional safeguards, with a core focus on leveraging the cultural benefits of celebrities and strengthening the inheritance and promotion of celebrity spirit and culture. Local governments should endeavor to "tell the stories of celebrities well", which constitutes the nucleus of the activation and continuation pathway of former residences of historical figures. For example: integrating celebrity residence resources into the local education system; establishing a "historical memory atlas" of former residences of historical figures; enhancing the restoration and presentation of symbolically significant craft details and cultural motifs; and highlighting the contemporary features of cultural creativity. At the same time, diverse communication mechanisms should be promoted, such as interactive exhibitions, digital guides, and public education programs, to enhance cultural awareness and emotional connection. In architectural terms, interventions on the building body and spatial form should be strictly controlled to preserve the integrity of historical features and ensure the authentic expression of architectural heritage. Regarding the relatively weak institutional system, efforts should be made to strengthen transparency in protection policies and mechanisms of public participation, such as community co-management, volunteer system development, and the establishment of deliberative platforms. In addition, introducing international exhibition collaborations and constructing cultural exchange interfaces can expand cross-cultural communication pathways, thereby stimulating the latent value of the institutional and exchange dimensions. Ultimately, these measures can facilitate the transformation of former residences of historical figures from local memory spaces into comprehensive cultural heritage sites.

In the subsequent formulation of refined conservation and activation strategies, it is essential to further draw upon the value identification system constructed under the Cultural Triad Theory, while integrating the structure of public willingness to pay (WTP) and the perceptual differences across value dimensions. A hierarchical and weighted investment allocation mechanism should be established accordingly. Specifically, the detailed indicators within the three major systems can be ranked and weighted according to their WTP values, serving as the basis for prioritizing resource input. Through this mechanism, a protection and activation pathway can be achieved that advances from strong to weak dimensions, progresses in stages, and ensures comprehensive recognition. This approach guarantees the rational allocation of limited resources and maximizes investment benefits, thereby promoting a strategic leap for former residences of historical figures—from static conservation toward dynamic value regeneration.

5. Discussion

This study takes 20 former residences of historical figures in the Dongguan Historical and Cultural Block of Yangzhou as its research objects and establishes a cultural heritage value identification and evaluation framework based on Cultural Triad Theory. The framework encompasses three major dimensions—architectural, institutional, and cultural systems—and is refined into an indicator system aligned with UNESCO's six heritage value criteria. Furthermore, by introducing the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) and willingness-to-pay analysis, the study quantifies the public's economic recognition of each value dimension from the perspective of non-use value. Combined with multiple regression models, a multilayered analytical system of influencing factors—covering cognitive, emotional, and social attributes—was constructed. This provides empirical support and the-

oretical grounding for value identification, pathway formulation, and policy interventions in the conservation and revitalization of former residences of historical figures.

With the continuous advancement of cultural heritage value assessment research, methodological approaches have become increasingly diversified, particularly in aspects such as public perception surveys, value indicator construction, and willingness-to-pay analysis, each demonstrating distinct advantages [78–81]. However, most existing studies focus on a single dimension or stage of value identification—such as static classification of cultural representations or one-dimensional economic valuation—while lacking a systematic research pathway that extends from theoretical construction and indicator design to empirical quantification and policy translation [82–84]. This study integrates qualitative and quantitative methods by constructing a value identification matrix based on Cultural Triad Theory and refining it into a "3 × 6" evaluation framework aligned with UNESCO's heritage value criteria. The Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) was employed to capture public willingness to pay, while regression models were applied to identify willingness-to-pay determinants. Together, these form a comprehensive evaluation system that is structured, quantifiable, and oriented toward policy application. The findings provide precise evidence for setting conservation priorities, planning revitalization pathways, and allocating policy resources for cultural heritage such as historic districts and former residences of historical figures. Nonetheless, it should be noted that when extending this methodological approach to other types of cultural heritage, it is essential to consider the distinct characteristics and sociocultural contexts of each case. On the one hand, different heritage types—such as religious architecture, industrial heritage, or intangible cultural heritage—differ significantly in value composition and public perception pathways, and thus require localized adjustments to the "3 × 6" framework indicators. On the other hand, the elicitation and interpretation of public willingness to pay are often influenced by economic conditions, cultural identity, and policy environment, meaning that application in different regions must incorporate local cultural contexts and socio-economic conditions into sample design and model calibration. In addition, to mitigate the biases commonly associated with the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) in practical application, this study adopted multiple measures during questionnaire design and survey implementation. First, in terms of controlling information bias, the questionnaire explicitly introduced the historical value, current conservation status, and potential risks of former residences of historical figures, using plain and accessible language rather than academic jargon, so as to ensure that respondents made judgments on the basis of sufficient and consistent information [85]. Second, to reduce hypothetical bias, the core valuation questions incorporated guiding statements framed as a "real payment scenario". Respondents were asked to state their "maximum annual acceptable payment amount", encouraging them to make rational judgments in line with their income levels [86]. Third, to minimize strategic bias, the payment design of the questionnaire included assumptions of "earmarked funds" and "regular public disclosure" to make clear that respondents' contributions would directly support heritage conservation, thereby reducing the likelihood of underreporting or overreporting payment intentions [87]. For the "warm-glow effect", additional options were provided for "reasons for unwillingness to pay", guiding respondents to differentiate between refusal due to financial burden, perceived government responsibility, or lack of trust. This helped to prevent respondents from overstating willingness to pay as a form of moral signaling [88]. Finally, to address the embedding effect, the description of the payment object was revised repeatedly during pilot testing to ensure that respondents confined their willingness to pay to "the conservation and development of the former residences of historical figures under study", rather than generalizing it to the entire historic district [89]. By drawing extensively on prior research experience and incorporating feedback from pilot surveys,

this study sought to minimize practical bias as much as possible, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the evaluation results.

Previous studies on cultural heritage evaluation have primarily focused on the representational analysis of cultural symbols or the static estimation of economic value [90,91], emphasizing the necessity of preserving historical architectural forms, cultural imagery, or heritage resources [92,93]. However, such approaches often lack in-depth quantitative analysis of public value perception and behavioral intentions, and they fail to systematically address the practical needs of different stakeholders in heritage revitalization. Existing evaluation systems are largely constructed from the perspective of experts [94–96], overlooking the essential role of the public as both recipients of value and drivers of action. This neglect makes it difficult to establish conservation priorities and resource allocation logic grounded in social consensus. To address this limitation, the present study introduces a multidimensional value identification system. By jointly analyzing public value perceptions and willingness to pay, it further clarifies the priority order of different value dimensions of former residences of historical figures within public preferences, revealing underlying tendencies and perceptual differences. Throughout the processes of indicator design, weight identification, and pathway construction, this study extensively incorporated public opinions, thereby achieving a methodological paradigm shift from expert-dominated evaluation to public-participation-oriented evaluation. By emphasizing a value assessment logic guided by public preferences, it effectively bridges the practical gap between cultural value perception and economic support behavior.

Although this study has made methodological and empirical progress in the evaluation of the non-use value of cultural heritage and the modeling of public willingness to pay, several limitations remain. The sample collection was mainly concentrated within a specific period in summer and limited to the urban area of Yangzhou. Since June–July coincides with the student summer vacation, and high temperatures reduce the frequency of travel among elderly groups, the sample contained a higher proportion of youth and students, resulting in an age structure bias. In addition, the distribution of samples across different occupational groups was uneven, with certain social strata underrepresented, which may have weakened the accuracy of reflecting group differences in cultural heritage perception and payment capacity. Future research should expand both the temporal and spatial scope of sample collection and appropriately increase the proportion of heterogeneous groups to enhance representativeness and robustness. Moreover, willingness to pay, as an outcome derived from hypothetical scenarios, is inevitably subject to influences such as information bias and hypothetical bias. Even though control measures were incorporated into the questionnaire design, these effects cannot be completely eliminated. The results of this study should therefore be understood more as providing an exploratory perspective and methodological framework, rather than as a precise depiction of the overall scale or public intentions. Future research should further refine valuation methods, broaden sample coverage, and incorporate multi-source data to conduct more comprehensive and robust examinations of willingness to pay. First, willingness to pay (WTP) could be combined with willingness to accept (WTA), using a bidirectional approach to compensate for the limitations of a single metric and to more fully reveal differences in public value attitudes between “willingness to contribute” and “demand for compensation”. Multi-bounded payment elicitation techniques may also be adopted to reduce questionnaire biases. Second, stratified random sampling strategies could be introduced, dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups to ensure representation across layers and avoid sample bias. Finally, when applying this approach to other regions or different types of cultural heritage, the value framework and models should be adjusted in light of local cultural contexts, socio-economic conditions, and governance models. In doing so, this research can provide

more universally applicable theoretical support and practical guidance for the conservation, revitalization, and sustainable use of former residences of historical figures and other forms of heritage.

6. Conclusions

This study employed the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) to systematically evaluate the non-use value of the former residences of historical figures in Yangzhou's Dongguan Street. The results show that the average maximum willingness to pay (WTP) was 60.07 CNY per person per year, with an annual total value of approximately 177 million CNY, highlighting their significant cultural value and social support potential in public perception. In terms of value identification, a "3 × 6" framework integrating Cultural Triad Theory with UNESCO's six heritage values was constructed. The findings reveal clear hierarchical differences in WTP: the cultural system (41.86%) ranked highest, followed by the architectural system (33.22%), and the institutional system (24.92%) ranked lowest. At the value dimension level, historical testimony and creativity were most highly valued. Analysis of influencing factors indicates that willingness to pay was not significantly associated with gender, age, monthly income, place of residence, or occupation. However, respondents with undergraduate and postgraduate (or higher) education were more inclined to pay than those in the baseline group, demonstrating stronger support from highly educated groups for the conservation of former residences. Furthermore, level of understanding, recognition of conservation concepts, enthusiasm for tourism, and visiting experience all had significant positive effects on willingness to pay, while satisfaction with the current condition showed a significant negative effect. For payment amounts, monthly income, educational attainment, recognition of conservation concepts, and cognitive level emerged as key drivers, whereas gender, place of residence, and occupation were not significant. Theoretically, this study is the first to organically integrate Cultural Triad Theory with UNESCO's heritage value standards, thereby proposing a "3 × 6" value identification framework. This framework overcomes the limitations of single-dimensional evaluation and deepens understanding of the hierarchical structure and cognitive mechanisms of the value of former residences. Practically, the evaluation results provide quantitative evidence for government resource allocation in heritage conservation. The observed differences in value highlight the need for differentiated conservation strategies, with priority given to strengthening cultural interpretation and public education, alongside improving architectural restoration and institutional safeguards. The significant role of recognition of conservation concepts suggests that cultural communication and education should be enhanced to foster social consensus and promote a "public participation" conservation model. Future research may be expanded in four directions: (1) overcoming the limitations of questionnaires by incorporating methods such as behavioral monitoring [97] and eye-tracking [98] to improve the objectivity and multidimensionality of value identification; (2) combining CVM with other valuation methods to conduct cross-validation and reduce bias; (3) paying attention to diachronic changes in value perception and exploring their effects on willingness to pay; and (4) applying the "3 × 6" framework to heritage practices in different cultural contexts to test its applicability and refine region-specific characteristics.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

CVM	Contingent Valuation Method
WTP	Willingness To Pay
WTA	Willingness To Accept

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