Dark Tourism and World Heritage Sites: A Delphi Study of Stakeholder Perceptions of the Development of Dark Tourism Products

Authors' accepted version of the manuscript – please visit the Journal of Heritage Tourism website to access the published version:

https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjht20/current

James Kennell, Department of Marketing, Events and Tourism, University of Greenwich, United Kingdom[1*]

Raymond Powell, Department of Marketing, Events and Tourism, University of Greenwich, United Kingdom[2]

[1]University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College, Park Row, London, SE10 9LS.
j.s.kennell@greenwich.ac.uk

[2] University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College, Park Row, London, SE10 9LS.
r.powell@greenwich.ac.uk

[*]Corresponding author

Dark Tourism and World Heritage Sites: A Delphi Study of Stakeholder Perceptions of the Development of Dark Tourism Products

Abstract

Dark tourism has attracted increasing academic attention, but the extent to which it exists as a separate form of tourism from heritage tourism is not yet clear. Despite the growth of UNESCO World Heritage Site designations, little research has considered the relationship between dark tourism and World Heritage Sites. Because the development of dark tourism is beset with ethical concerns, heritage professionals can have negative perceptions about the acceptability or attractiveness of it for the sites that they are involved in managing. This research used a qualitative Delphi Panel method to evaluate stakeholder perceptions of the potential development of dark tourism to the Greenwich Maritime World Heritage Site in London, United Kingdom. The findings show that stakeholders are broadly supportive of tourism to the site and positive about future tourism growth. Despite this, they did not support the development of dark tourism to the site because it was perceived as inauthentic, tacky and sensationalist. In order to address this issue, recommendations are made that future attempts to develop dark tourism at WHS should involve enhancing the knowledge of stakeholders about dark tourism, and of the resources within their sites that could be included in a dark tourism offer to tourists.

Keywords: dark tourism, heritage, world heritage site, London, stakeholders

Introduction

Despite twenty years of academic research into the nature and practices of dark tourism (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015), and its emergence in popular culture (e.g. Fryer, 2018), the extent

to which it exists as a separate form of tourism is still contested (Light, 2017). It is not clear whether visitation to sites and attractions associated with death, disaster and suffering is something new, or simply a reframing of well-established heritage offerings by a ghoulish and attention hungry media (Roberts, 2018). Because of this, dark tourism can suffer from negative perceptions from heritage tourism professionals, who worry about the dangers of promoting their products in a way that attracts sensationalist attention from tourists. The aim of this research was to assess stakeholder perceptions of dark tourism at a World Heritage Site (WHS), with a view to assessing its acceptability and viability in an established heritage setting.

To this end, this study critically examined these tensions through a case study of the Maritime Greenwich UNESCO World Heritage site in London, United Kingdom: a tourist destination that receives in excess of nineteen million visitors every year, including over one million overnight stays (Visit Greenwich, 2018). The site is diverse, containing military, religious, scientific, natural and architectural heritage, as well as being home to two universities and a national museum (Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, 2019). This research applies the Delphi study technique (Lin & Song, 2015) to survey the views of these stakeholders on the acceptability of dark tourism, and ways in which this could develop in the future. Over three rounds of questions, a panel of stakeholders were asked to define, explore and forecast the role of dark tourism on the site.

Literature Review

Dark Tourism in Context

Despite the years of research into dark tourism (Dale & Robinson, 2011; Lennon & Foley, 2000; Stone, 2013; Tarlow, 2005) and the growth of the dark tourism market (Biran & Hyde, 2013; Biran *et al*., 2011; Stone 2005; Stone & Sharpley, 2008;), and the academic interest in this field (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015) there has been little interest shown in understanding the

relationship between dark tourism and other forms of tourism. As Light (2017, p. 275) notes: "…two decades of research have not convincingly demonstrated that dark tourism and thanatourism are distinct forms of tourism, and in many ways they appear to be little different from heritage tourism".

Dark tourism is frequently described as having a spectrum of darkness (Stone, 2006; Miles, 2002). At the darkest end of the spectrum, sites are categorized largely on the basis of recent and actual suffering and death. There is usually an educational and commemorative rationale which underpins these sites, which very often is the authentic place of suffering. At the lighter end of this spectrum, tourism products are associated with 'fright tourism' (Bristow 2020). This includes haunted houses, ghost tours, and scary stories, for example, with an entertainment, rather than educational or commemorative rationale. As Bucior (2019) has shown in a study of the interpretation of the Gettysburg battlesite in the USA, however, these two poles are not mutually exclusive. Interpretive tools such as ghost tours can provide alternatives to the 'Authorized Heritage Discourse' of dark sites, especially where these involve contested narratives. The notion that the diversity of sites in dark tourism can be categorized using a straightforward scale has been substantially critiqued (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015; Dale & Robinson, 2011; Ivanova & Light, 2018); most frequently this has been due to subjective classifications of sites and histories as 'dark', but the persistence of the spectrum in the literature indicates its enduring utility as a descriptive tool.

Dark Tourism and Heritage Tourism

Whilst a subset of heritage tourism may be considered dark, there is no readily distinguishable divide between aspects of heritage tourism and aspects of dark tourism *per se.* Richards (2001) says it is necessary to broaden the categorization of heritage attractions to include intangible ideas, including those that relate to the ideas such as statehood, history and struggle, often typical of dark sites (Murtagh *et al*., 2017). There is a clear link between

heritage tourism and dark tourism, theoretically inextricable in the majority of cases (Hartmann, 2014), and the term 'dark heritage' (Kamber *et al.*, 2016) is already in use to capture these associations.

Biran *et al* (2011) identify that the experience of visitors is important to the conceptualisation of dark tourism, which is largely the product of on-site interpretation, and it is unlikely to be simply a fascination with death which encourages visitation to dark sites. It is not necessary to have a morbid interest in death to be fascinated by aspects of death, especially when such narratives have personal or national significance. For example, "...Australians and New Zealanders visiting Gallipoli are enaged in a profound heritage experience and are not intetested in death itself" (p822). Other motivations for visiting dark sites, such as a desire for novelty, nostalgia, curiosity, entertainment and pilgrimage are the same as motivations for visiting heritage sites (Stone & Sharpley, 2008; Ashworth, 2004; Tarlow, 2005; Biran, Poria, & Oren, 2011; Hyde & Harman, 2011). The motivation of pilgrimage is particularly relevant for many dark tourism sites, when expanded to include more secular definitions of the term, where religious motivations are less important than other commemorative aspects of visitation and the sense that these are sites which 'add meaning to life' (Collins-Kreiner, 2016: 1187).

Postmodern contexts for the growth of dark tourism (Powell & Kennell, 2016) offer competing conceptualizations of this, in the context of increasing interest in utopian and dystopian visions of the world (Farkic, 2020; Podoshen *et al.*, 2015). There is no agreement in the literature about the categorizations of dark tourism motivations, and all that can be certain is that there are a wide variety of these (Raine, 2013; Isaac & Cakmak, 2014).

The dark tourism literature demonstrates the current inadequacies and impreciseness of definitions of dark tourism to date. Dark sites are perceived as being associated with death,

disaster and frequently genocide, yet many dark sites are also dynamic and elevating, structured servicescapes (Magee, 2018). Thus it would be wrong to assume that dark tourism is only concerned with the macabre. Undoubtedly that remains a fascination, but as the development of dark attractions is a relatively new phenomenon (Sharpley, 2005), notwithstanding the long established practice of travelling to sites of suffering since medieval times (Stone, 2005), sites at the darkest end of the spectrum are only a fraction of sites which record the history of humanity and as dark histories are intermingled inextricably with all aspects of human history, the significance of dark tourism motivations may be overestimated by researchers.

There can be squeemishness around the commercial exploitation of dark sites. Dann (1994) identifies that there is the potential to capitalise on the "product of dark tourism" and "milk the macabre" (p. 61). Ethical considerations abound when establishing attractions with dark themes (Stone and Sharpley, 2008). WHS need to consider the authenticity of new tourism offers, to avoid accusations of commercialisation and "cashing in", which may complicate any desire to increase revenue. Dark and heritage attractions cover a wide spectrum of authenticity, and the perceived authenticity of a site is important. Attractions at the lightest end of the darkness spectrum (Stone, 2006) do, however, attract visitation without being authentic.

Dark tourism sites and attractions are often significant in the forming of national stories and identity and an understanding of often contested history (de-Miguel-Molina & Barrera-Gabaldon, 2019; Kennell, Šuligoj & Lesjak, 2018; Lemelin *et al.*, 2013) and the 'history wars' that can take place over such sites (Boyle, 2019). For WHS, there is a tension between the notion of 'universal' value, which is a condition of WHS status, and such 'contested' heritage, which implies the absence of a settled interpretation of a site (Rakic & Chambers, 2008).

Tourism to World Heritage Sites

In order to protect and preserve cultural and natural heritage from a range of threats, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) instituted the World Heritage Convention in 1972 (Leask & Fyall, 2001) and have since designated 1121 properties as WHS, of which 869 are cultural, 213 are natural and 39 are mixed in nature (UNESCO, 2020). The official designation of a heritage site as of particular value can often lead to a rise in tourism (Dans & Gonzalez, 2019; Kwiatek-sołtys & Bajgier-kowalska, 2019), and the award of WHS status can be transformative for many destinations in this respect (Cassel & Pashkevich, 2014), notwithstanding more broad critiques about the overall benefits of WHS inscription for tourism growth, on which evidence is mixed (Gao & Su, 2019; Mariani & Guizzardi, 2020).

Concerns about the authenticity of tourism offers at heritage sites feature prominently in the literature (Katahenggam, 2019; Yi *et al*., 2018; Nuryanti, 1996). A distinction should be drawn between the tangible heritage of the site and its value as assigned by its custodians, and tourist and resident perceptions of authenticity (Yi *et al*., 2018), as the tension between these two poles is often at the root of conflicts about tourism at WHS (Kim *et al*., 2017). As Dans & Gonzelez (2019) have argued, the social value of heritage sites should be taken into account along with their economic, aesthetic and other values. Imon (2017) highlights that this can be a particularly pertinent issue for heritage sites within urban settings, where competing social and cultural values co-exist, necessitating integrated tourism planning and development activities in order to ensure that tourism to WHS is sustainable. In the case of China, Gao & Su (2019) found that WHS inscription functioned more effectively to preserve sites rather than to promote them as tourism destinations, showing that not all sites approach

this dilemma from the same position, with some choosing not to invite the management challenges that come with increased visitation.

Tangible heritage resources are not a sufficient precondition for the development of tourism to WHS, it is still the case that other conditions must be met to develop a tourism destination using the WHS, including successful marketing campaigns (de Fauconburg *et al.*, 2018), the inclusion of the resources within creative, dynamic experiences that attract tourists (Cassel & Pashkevich, 2014) and effective governance, including stakeholder management (Landorf, 2009; Su *et al.*, 2017). Governance arrangements for WHS show considerable national variation, as it is the responsibility of states, and not UNESCO itself, to manage WHS (Ashton Adie & Amore, 2020; Su & Wall, 2012). A core function of WHS governance is the management of the interests and activities of diverse sets of stakeholders (Evans, 2002), which can include representatives of governments, cultural and heritage bodies, business, local communities, and users of the sites (Davey & Gillespie, 2014). Successful stakeholder engagement has been identified consistently as a pre-requisite for sustainable tourism development in a variety of types of heritage contexts, and national settings (Timothy & Boyd, 2003; Li *et al*., 2020; Liburd & Becken, 2017; Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2017). This research examines the potential for the development of dark tourism in a WHS destination, a type of tourism that can be accused of commercialising and trivialising more 'serious' heritage (Stone & Sharpley, 2008) and of 'milking the macabre' (Dann, 1994). Because of these concerns, it is vital to engage stakeholders at the early stage of potential product development, in order to evaluate the sustainability of any future tourism growth in this area.

Methodology

To this end, this study critically examined these tensions through a case study of the Maritime Greenwich UNESCO World Heritage site in London, United Kingdom: a tourist

destination that receives in excess of nineteen million visitors every year, including over one million overnight stays (Visit Greenwich, 2018). For the purposes of this research, the Maritime Greenwich UNESCO World Heritage Site in London, United Kingdom was chosen to carry out research into stakeholder perceptions of the potential product development area of dark tourism. There were two reasons why this location as chosen. Firstly, the site is very diverse and contains numerous potential resources for a dark tourism product to draw upon. These include: the National Maritime Museum for the United Kingdom, which contains numerous artefacts, archives and artworks linked to the history of naval warfare and the colonial expansion of the British Empire; The Old Royal Naval College, which was the site of a historic Royal palace where King Henry VIII and Elizabeth I were born, before becoming the training academy for the Royal Navy, as well containing the chapel where Admiral Lord Nelson lay in state after his death at the Battle of Trafalgar; St Alfege's church, the site of the martyrdom of an early English Christian saint; as well as numerous memorials, statues and collections and burial spaces linked to themes from across the dark tourism spectrum (Stone, 2006; Miles, 2002) , some of which are interpreted through guided and self-guided tours (Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, 2019).

Secondly as an urban WHS, this location presents an opportunity to survey the view of a wide range of stakeholders, who are likely to have competing priorities because urban heritage site are subject to multiple uses by users with often competing priorities (Imon, 2017). This research applied the Delphi study technique (Lin & Song, 2015) to survey the views of these stakeholders on the acceptability of dark tourism, and ways in which this could develop in the future. Over three rounds of questions, a panel of stakeholders were asked to define, explore and forecast the role of dark tourism on the site. Because of the diverse nature of the site, and the broad range of stakeholders involved in its operations and governance, this

site provides a setting from which conclusions can be drawn that may be useful for future research and product development in other WHS contexts.

The Delphi method is a forecasting technique that has been in use since the 1950's when it was developed by researchers at the RAND Corporation (Habbibi *et al*., 2014). It was informed by the pragmatist approach to knowledge, which bridges the interpretivist and post-positivist paradigms to provide practical guidance in decision making in complex scenarios (Day & Bobova, 2005; Brady, 2015). It makes use of anonymous, expert opinion from a panel to consider the options for dealing with a complex problem, in order to build knowledge from consensus positions, which can avoid the problems caused by power-dynamics involved in face-to-face situations (Habbibi *et al*., 2014). Avella (2016) explains that the Delphi method can be particular advantageous when researching issues that are multi-disciplinary, involving lots of uncertainty and where anonymity is beneficial. Given the nature of dark tourism, it is likely that the research process will require participants to engage with complex issues with psychological, personal and social dimensions, suggesting that a qualitative Delphi technique may provide a forum for panellists to respond anonymously, and in depth, without fear of judgement from other participants.

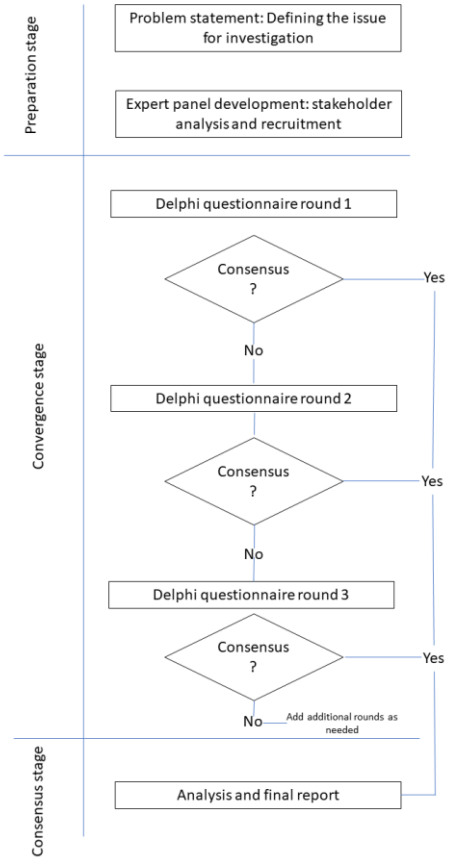
The Delphi method has been applied in hugely diverse contexts meaning that it has been criticised for its methodological heterogeneity (Day & Bobova, 2005; Habbibi *et al.,* 2014), but there are accepted general principles for qualitative Delphi designs, which are: purposive sampling; emergent design; anonymous and structured communication between participants and; thematic analysis (Brady, 2015).

This research utilised a conventional design, using multiple iterations to eventually allow for a consensus position to evolve from the panel, where the responses of the panel to each round of questions are analysed, summarised, and reflected back to the panel, along with a set of follow-up question, in a series of rounds. This process of asking for, analysing and

reflecting is a reflection of the interpretivist approach that underpins the Delphi technique (Avella, 2016; Sobaih *et al.*, 2012).

This research follow the process set out by Donohoe & Needham (2008), who reviewed the application of Delphi techniques in tourism and suggested a process that is summarised in figure 1.

Figure 1 - Delphi process (adapted from Donohoe & Needham (2008))



Round 1 contained four open questions, designed using themes from the literature review aligned with the aims of the study, and each of the following two round of questions were then iteratively designed following the process of data analysis described below. The first round of questions firstly sought respondents' views on the resources available on the WHS for the development of a dark tourism product, and also whether they were aware of

any current dark tourism offers on the site. These questions were posed to help the researchers to evaluate both respondent's knowledge of the site, but also to be able to place elements of the site on continuum of dark tourism experiences (Stone, 2006; Miles, 2002). Questions were also asked about the respondents' views on the appropriateness of dark tourism as a new product offering, and whether they believed there was a market for this. These questions were designed to elicit responses relating to the ethical (Stone and Sharpley, 2008) issues associated with the development of dark tourism, and also to the commercialisation and development of tourism to WHS (Katahenggam, 2019; Yi *et al*., 2018; Nuryanti, 1996), particularly in regards to the authenticity of the tourism offer. Following the iterative design principles of Delphi studies (Avella, 2016; Donohoe & Needham, 2008; Sobaih *et al.*, 2012) the two following rounds of questions were designed after reflecting on the answers from the first round and critically analysing them along with the literature on this topic, to elicit further responses and to examine areas of consensus or dissensus. For example, a question in the second round asked about what kinds of tourism activities (other than dark tourism) panellists through would be acceptable to develop locally. This helped to probe further into their views on tourism development to the WHS, given a strong negative response that emerged in the first round when asked about the development of dark tourism.

After each round of questions, a short report was sent to all participants outlining the findings of the analysis of that stage, and at the end a more substantive report was sent outlining areas of consensus, to which participants were invited to send any additional points or to highlight any disagreements. At this final stage, no participants added additional information to the research. Each round of questions were sent out with two week gaps, using Microsoft Forms for data collection and email for distribution of the survey links.

Panel membership is a key consideration for Delphi studies. This is an area in which the potential for researcher bias can be particularly high, as panellists must be chosen for their expert qualifications, ability to communicate on a topic, and willingness to participate in the study, which the researchers may not be best placed to evaluate, especially in advance (Avella, 2016; Sobaih *et al*., 2012;). Sobaih *et al* (2012) highlight that the criticisms of the Delphi method apply to all interpretive studies, despite this method's claims to provide some certainity, and that recognising and accounting for the subjectivity inherent in a Delphi design helps to add to its rigour. In the case of this study, the researchers have an excellent knowledge of the case, being members of the local community, as well as employees of an institution within the World Heritage Site itself.

Costa (2005) suggests that the accuracy of results from a Delphi panel increases as its size increases above 11 members, and that 15-20 may be an optimal number. Day and Bobova (2005) report that most studies use between 15 to 35 people. In a study of stakeholder perspectives on interpretive methods for Canterbury Cathedral, part of a WHS in the United Kingdom, the panel was made up from ten respondents, and the findings were deemed to be rigorous given the expert nature of the respondents and their organisational attachments to the site. Using Mitchell *et al.'s* (1997) initial categorisation of stakeholders as *financial, moral, actual* and *potential*, a list of forty-seven possible participant organisations was created. These were further categorised, according to the same approach as *individuals, groups, neighbourhoods, organisations, institutions and societies*. Individuals were then identified who the authors believed would be best placed to give their opinions on the research, given their involvement in tourism or interpretation within the WHS. Fifteen participants were recruited for the first round of the study. Anonymised details of the respondents are given in table 1.

Table 1 - Participant information

Participant number	Organisation	Position
1	National museum	Commercial Development Manager
2	Local history society	Principal
3	Open spaces management authority	Development Manager
4	University on the WHS	Commercial Director
5	Major commercial landlord	Marketing Manager
6	WHS managing authority	Development Director
7	University on the WHS	Tourism Researcher
8	Resident Association 1	Spokesperson
9	Tour Guide Business	Senior Manager
10	N/A	Maritime Historian
11	Destination Management Organisations	Senior Development Officer
12	Major Visitor Attraction within the WHS	Interpretation professional
13	Local Authority Heritage Organisation	Senior Manager
14	Transport provider	Manager
15	Resident association 2	Spokesperson

With all Delphi studies, analytical techniques should be developed that meet the requirements of the study; there is no rule-book for data analysis. However, the nature of the method dictates that analysis should be iterative, as the 'waves' (Brady, 2015: 4) of data collection progressively inform the process of identifying consensus from the panel. To carry out this process, framework analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) was used as an appropriate analysis technique for relatively unstructured qualitative data. The framework approach involves four analytical steps: familiarisation with the data; identifying a thematic framework; applying the framework to the data; then interpreting the data afresh using this framework. This process is repeated until theoretical saturation occurs. This process leads to the identification of a final set of organising 'frames' for the analysis, which have been developed iteratively through immersion in, and analysis of, the qualitative data. In order to reduce bias in the analysis and increase the rigour of the findings, especially in terms of dependability (Walters, 2016), the process was followed independently by both authors, who then critically compared their analysis at each stage in order to deal with potential disagreements in interpretation. At the end of this framework analysis process, three frames of analysis were derived, which are used to structure the findings and discussion section, below.

Findings and Discussion

Each of these frames of analysis derived from the methodology explained above is dealt with in turn in this section, where they are presented in a critical comparison to the literature reviewed for this research, in line with Hasson and Keeney's (2001) recommendations for increasing the rigour of the findings from qualitative Delphi panel studies. In the presentation of these findings, care has been taken not to identify the respondents in order to

preserve the benefits of the anonymity offered by the Delphi approach, which can support respondents to engage with contentitious or controversial concepts, such as dark tourism (Avella, 2016; Habbibi *et al*., 2014). The principle of anonymity is particularly important in a WHS site context, where multiple stakeholders are likely to be known to each other given the bounded nature of WHS designations.

F1: Perceptions of Dark Tourism's authenticity and suitability for the WHS

This first frame relates to the concerns expressed by respondents about the suitability of the development of dark tourism at the Greenwich WHS, because of the likelihood that it would not be authentic in nature (Katahenggam, 2019; Yi *et al.,* 2018; Nuryanti, 1996). There was a general consensus from this Delphi panel that this was a major impediment to the development of dark tourism. One respondent explained that "Promoting something less than truly authentic wouldn't stand up to much scrutiny…why do it somewhere like Greenwich with so much to offer that is both unique and authentic." (P8). Another respondent said "Not sure what there is that is authentic – it's not a battlefield or something like that" (P2). Respondents viewed the development of dark tourism as being a difficult interpretive challenge due to the lack of what they saw as authentic local dark heritage: "You would need to develop some good story telling around dark tourism for WHS, I am not aware of any suitable stories or links to this for the site" (P13).

In line with Dann's (1994) and Stone & Sharpley's (2008) arguments about the sensitivities involved in developing dark tourism products, respondents expressed strong views about the suitability of dark tourism for the site. The WHS itself was perceived as being a serious place and not suitable for "silly stories" (P2), with agreement that the "lighter more entertainment orientated aspects of dark tourism would not have a place" (P7). Where respondents were more positive about future developments of this type, they were keen to

explain that “the most appropriate form of dark tourism for a WHS would be the ‘dark side of existing history’ type – i.e. authentic and place-based stories rather than the more generic ghost story/horror themes” (P7). Primarily though, despite some positive comments, there was a consensus that dark tourism would be ‘Totally inappropriate” (P5) and “certainly not something for families and children” (P13). It became apparent that the dark tourism products and experiences that the panel disliked were those at the lighter end of the dark tourism spectrum (Stone, 2006; Miles, 2002), and, more specifically, those with a more ‘fright tourism’ (Bristow, 2020) feel.

Respondents did not associate dark tourism with ideas of contested history or alternative interpretations of the site, which had been identified in previous research as being one way in which dark tourism can make a positive contribution (de-Miguel-Molina & Barrera-Gabaldon, 2019; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Lemelin *et al*., 2013). Panelists discussed the “proud history” (P7) and “rich history” of the site and the “the main important attractions” (P11) that were the backbone of the visitor experience. Positive comments about dark tourism were most often qualified by saying that it should be kept separate and “not infringe on the more mainstream offers or affect people’s living and working environment” (P11). Specific suggestions were given for how this could be done such as: “dark tourism experiences may be seen as more appropriately offered as a tailor made product for special groups” (P7). Research has previously explored tensions between the universal value attributed to WHS and contested local and other narratives for the heritage involved (Rakic & Chambers, 2008), but this panel presented a fairly orthodox interpretation of the Greenwich WHS, within which there is no obvious ‘authentic’ fit for dark tourism. This specific aspect of the panel’s response is dealt with in more detail in F2.

F2: Specialist knowledge of the World Heritage Site

Panellists expressed very variable levels of knowledge about the heritage resources of the WHS and the different experiences that were available to tourists, as well as of the purpose of the site itself. This appeared to lead to differing attitudes to what was possible and desirable in terms of local tourism development. Despite the consensus in F1 on the dominant narratives and institutions of the site, there was little consensus evident on the more fine grained detail of the site and its history, or of the purpose of the WHS itself.

When responding to questions about the possible dark tourism products or experiences on the WHS, some respondents were able to give detailed lists of specific sites and objects, and to draw links to phenomena such as the trade in slaves and sugar that characterised the British Empire during the time the site was built. These included executions and autopsies performed on site (P3); burial sites underneath buildings (P4) and in locations just outside the WHS boundaries (P7) and the bloodstained jacket of Admiral Nelson (P1), for example. However, most respondents discussed the WHS in more general terms as having a "focus on maritime history" (P1) or being "so rich in history and heritage" (P9). Many responses can be summed up by the statement: "My history knowledge of the site is poor, but…" (P4). Where respondents expressed a more detailed knowledge of the site, they tended to have a more positive perspective on the possible future development of dark tourism, but this was a minority view.

Community organisations and other stakeholders who are not located within institutions on the WHS itself were keen to highlight, throughout the rounds of questions, other, less-dominant local historical narratives. These included demands for "more about the real, non-Royal Greenwich – less fluff" (P2), often with a focus on the industrial heritage of the area which includes telecommunications, shipping and shipbuilding that was linked more to the lives of residents and businesses.

The diversity of responses gathered together within this frame were successively probed through three rounds of questions, without a consensus developing in terms of content, but demonstrating the importance of understanding different stakeholders knowledge and valuation of the site. Dans & Gonzalez (2019) argue that the successful management of tourism to heritage sites must include the balancing of competing views and values and Imon (2017) noted the challenges of doing this in a an urban setting, such as this, where competing interpretations of cultural values co-exist. For future tourism development of any kind on the site to be viable, it is important that stakeholders share an understanding of the nature and heritage of the site. Although this research focused on dark tourism, any tourism developments which involved fresh interpretations of the site, or which focused on exploiting non-obvious locations or objects, would meet similarly diverse levels of support. Successful stakeholder management (Evans, 2002) of sites such as this is a pre-requisite for their effective management, and for the sustainable development of tourism (Timothy & Boyd, 2003; Li *et al.*, 2020; Liburd & Becken, 2017; Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2017).

F3: Specialist knowledge of local tourism

The final frame that was developed through the analysis of this panel's responses concerned respondents' specialist knowledge of the scope and scale of local tourism development. This emerged as a topic during the iterative process of questions, analysis and reflection outlined in the methods section, above. A number of panellists' responses in the first round of the research suggested that there were negative perceptions of tourism development *per se*, which were not expected given the fact that all of the respondents were stakeholders of a WHS that formed a significant international tourism destination. Through successive rounds of questions, it became clear that panellists' level of knowledge of the nature of local tourism tended to affect their views on whether *any* form of tourism development locally was

desirable. Tourism is a core element of the WHS programme (Cassel & Pashkevich, 2014), and, with some significant exceptions, the panel expressed consensus that it was important locally, when this topic was investigated through successive rounds.

As you would expect from the stakeholders of an international tourism destination, panellists expressed some detailed knowledge about the current levels and qualities of local tourism. There was a consensus that the market is "dominated by heritage visitors" (P4), which would be expected for a WHS, but that the offer of the site "currently meets a limited demographic" (P6) who are very present on the site during the day, but that the destination is much quieter at night "when tourists don't visit so much or residents go elsewhere for the evening" (P11). Mostly, the core museum and attractions of the site were mentioned by panellists, although there were occasional mentions of the other service offered to tourists such as the "shops, markets and restaurants" (P9).

From a minority of respondents, the main issue that they were keen to put forward as a reason for not developing dark tourism on the site was not the nature of dark tourism itself, but a more general concern about the quality and volume of tourism to the WHS. Although no panellists used the term, these were concerns about overtourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019) that are common to many heritage tourism destinations (Aide *et al.*, 2019; Seraphin *et al.*, 2018). Stakeholders who did not represent institutions from within the site claimed that "most of what tourists are told is populist" (P2) and that "The tourist offer is at times already pretty debased and aimed at the lowest common denominator" (P8). This was clearly a critique of a perceived "mass tourism model that cheapens the offer for tourists and has alienated residents" (P15). Much of this response was related to tourist numbers and the pressure this puts on local residents and services. One panellist stated that: "There is a tipping point where the numbers begin to have a negative effect on the experience for all. At times Greenwich is already there" (P8). Another said that "Public realm esp. planting is very

poorly maintained, rubbish provision inadequate given the amount of street food. Provision of power points for food stalls in Cutty Sark Gardens also insufficient necessitating the need for diesel generators. This is all in the main entry point for tourists" (P15). One respondent posed the question: "Bring in another area of tourism to what is already a very busy tourism site and destination?" before criticising the idea of developing dark tourism offers locally. However, it was not the case that there was a consensus against developing any new form of tourism at all. As shown in F1, it was dark tourism that attracted particularly negative opinions, but the importance of tourism was very well recognised by the panel, and a number of suggestions were made about how this could look. Panellists with a close connection to the tourism industry expressed often quite well thought-out suggestions for new forms of tourism to deal with the perceived biases and deficiencies of the current offer, as well as new demands from tourists:

"younger generations love to have access to many new experiences - immersive and interactive, exclusive (e.g. fine dining, sleepovers, etc.) that they can't access anywhere else but this is not something, which has been developed in Greenwich yet to a degree that it can offer quality and is available all your round" (P12).

"Here is opportunity to grow the offer for families with teenage children and young adults - especially in the evenings when there isn't much to do for younger people currently. There is also room to grow the offer for the more adventurous tourist - incl. physical experiences such as climbing, ice skating and other sports." (P11).

Other suggestions from panellists for future tourism development included wellness tourism, the MICE market, festivals and an enhanced food tourism offer.

Conclusions

This research has shown that, in the case of the Greenwich Maritime WHS, stakeholders do not favour the development of dark tourism. The analysis of these stakeholders' responses revealed three main issues that helped to explain this. Firstly, respondents tended to hold very negative views about dark tourism as a phenomenon. This meant that, when asked about the appropriateness of developing this type of tourism locally, or to identify potential resources that this offer could be built on, the most frequent response was that it should not take place at all, and that there would be very little of interest for dark tourists on the site, in any case. Probing this perspective, it became apparent that this was mostly influenced by panellists' perceptions of dark tourism as being dominated by fight tourism (Bristow, 2020) products such as ghost tours and escape rooms, and a sense that this lighter end of the dark tourism spectrum (Stone, 2006; Miles, 2002), was not in keeping with the more serious purpose of the site. This mirrors the findings of previous research (Dann, 1994; Stone & Sharpley, 2008) in which concerns have been raised about 'cashing in' on an expanding dark tourism market, and not dealing appropriately with the ethical issues this could raise. For the sustainable development of tourism at this WHS and in other similar locations, successful stakeholder engagement has been identified as a pre-requisite (Timothy & Boyd, 2003; Li *et al*., 2020; Liburd & Becken, 2017; Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2017). When developing dark tourism, it is clear that stakeholder education and familiarisation would be necessary, to help stakeholders to understand the different shades of dark tourism, to make a more balanced judgement on their acceptability.

The second frame of analysis, however, saw a less consensual perspective emerge, relating to respondents' specialist knowledge of the WHS. When stakeholders had a more detailed knowledge of the heritage resources of the site, they were more able to consider linking these to potential dark tourism. Within this frame of analysis, the main issue affecting perceptions of dark tourism development at the WHS was the 'fit' of the

developments with the identity of the site. This was not expressed using the 'universal' values of the WHS, as had been identified in previous research (Rakic & Chambers, 2008), instead it related to orthodox interpretations of the site as being concerned with royalty, the Navy and national prestige. These were the 'authentic' (Katahenggam, 2019; Yi *et al.*, 2018; Nuryanti, 1996) values of the site, which dark tourism was seen as either undermining or contradicting. This frame showed that stakeholder perspectives on the potential development of dark tourism to complex, urban WHS with multiple heritage resources within it, are dependant on the level of knowledge that stakeholders have of these complex resources, and also on the dominant narratives of the site. This supports the views of Imon (2017), who argued that complex urban WHS present particular stakeholder issues and Dans & Gonzalez (2019) who drew attention to the intricacies of balancing competing values in heritage tourism development.

The third frame of analysis was concerned with stakeholder attitudes towards tourism development at the WHS more generally. Two clear stakeholder perspectives emerged. Panellists who did not represent institutions within the WHS voiced concerns about potential overtourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019) impacts from developing additional tourism to the site. These included worries about congestion, pollution, litter and overcrowding, as well as negative resident attitudes. However, the majority of panellists were very positive about local tourism growth, and were keen to suggest types of tourism that they saw as suitable. Although the impact of WHS status on tourism growth is mixed, mixed (Gao & Su, 2019; Mariani & Guizzardi, 2020), it is clear from this research that WHS stakeholders had a mostly positive attitude towards tourism and saw the growth of tourism locally as important for the future of the site. These more general attitudes towards tourism and its impacts were seen to have as important an influence over whether panellists were supportive of the idea of developing a new dark tourism offer, as perceptions of dark tourism itself.

Although effort was made to engage a wide range of stakeholders in this research, this qualitative research did not seek to gain universal coverage of stakeholders at the WHS, if this were even possible. Instead, the study sought to develop insights into the potential development of dark tourism which could be useful for other researchers in the fields of dark tourism and WHS tourism. Additionally, no national or international stakeholders were included in the research, to avoid large disparities of power or resources, but future research into dark tourism to WHS could include these powerful voices who can have a significant influence over tourism development. The WHS chosen for this research is in an urban setting, with multiple stakeholders from the visitor economy, but also from other sectors. Because of this, the findings of this research may have particular value for other WHS with complex stakeholder relationships.

The findings of this research will be valuable to heritage tourism professionals considering the possible future relationship between dark tourism and heritage. In particular, this research is placed into a WHS context, meaning that it has international implications for the future management of tourism to many sites associated with 'dark' pasts. For researchers, this study provides a consensus view from a significant group of heritage tourism stakeholders on the relationship between dark tourism and heritage.

Stakeholders of a WHS in a significant international tourism destination understand the importance and value of tourism to the site, and are keen to see this grow in the future. Despite this positive orientation, dark tourism was not viewed as an appropriate or attractive new offer. The reasons for this mostly arise from perceptions of it being an inauthentic, entertainment-based tourism offer, which conflicts with the serious and important purpose of the WHS. Although there was some dissent from this broad consensus point, it is clear that significant work would need to be done with stakeholders on the nature of dark tourism, and

the resources upon which it could be developed, in order for this form of tourism development to be welcomed and sustainable.

References

Adie, B. A., Falk, M., & Savioli, M. (2019). Overtourism as a perceived threat to cultural heritage in Europe. Current Issues in Tourism, DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2019.1687661

Ashworth, G. (2004). Tourism and the heritage of atrocity: managing the heritage of South Africa for entertainment, in Singh, T.V. (Ed.), New Horizons in Tourism: Strange Experiences and Stranger Practices, CAB International, Wallingford, pp. 95-108.

Ashworth, G. J., & Isaac, R. K. (2015). Have we illuminated the dark? Shifting perspectives on 'dark' tourism. Tourism Recreation Research, Vol. 40, No.3, pp. 316-325.

Avella, J. R. (2016). Delphi panels: Research design, procedures, advantages, and challenges. International Journal of Doctoral Studies, Vol. 11, No.1, pp. 305-321.

Biran, A. & Hyde, K. F. (2013). New perspectives on dark tourism. International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp.191-198.

Biran, A., Poria, Y. and Oren, G. (2011). Sought experiences at (dark) heritage sites. Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 820-841.

Boyle, E. (2019, July). Borders of memory: affirmation and contestation over Japan's heritage. In Japan Forum (Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 293-312). Routledge.

Brady, S. R. (2015). Utilizing and adapting the Delphi method for use in qualitative research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, Vol. 14, No. 5.

Bristow, R. S. (2020). Communitas in fright tourism. Tourism Geographies,

Bucior, C. (2019). History's priests, history's magicians: exploring the contentious relationship between authorized heritage and ghost tourism in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Journal of Heritage Tourism, 1-13.

Cassel, S. H., & Pashkevich, A. (2014). World Heritage and tourism innovation: Institutional frameworks and local adaptation. European Planning Studies, Vol. 22, No.8, pp. 1625-1640.

Collins-Kreiner, N. (2016). Dark tourism as/is pilgrimage. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *19*(12), 1185-1189.

Costa, C. A. (2005). The status and future of sport management: A Delphi study. Journal of sport management, Vol. 19, No.2, pp. 117-142.

Dale, C., & Robinson, N. (2011). Dark Tourism. In Robinson, P., Heitmann, S., & Dieke, P. (Eds.) Research Themes for Tourism, Vol.38, No.1, pp.193-209.

Dann, G. (1994). "Tourism the nostalgia industry of the future". In W. Theobald (ed.). Global Tourism: The Next Decade. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann. pp. 55–67.

Dans, E. P., & González, P. A. (2019). Sustainable tourism and social value at World Heritage Sites: Towards a conservation plan for Altamira, Spain. Annals of Tourism Research, Vol.74, pp. 68-80.

Davey, M., & Gillespie, J. (2014). The great barrier reef world heritage marine protected area: valuing local perspectives in environmental protection. Australian Geographer, Vol.45, No.2, pp. 131-145.

Day, J., & Bobeva, M. (2005). A generic toolkit for the successful management of Delphi studies. The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methodology, Vol.3, No.2, pp. 103-116.

de Fauconberg, A., Berthon, P., & Berthon, J. P. (2018). Rethinking the marketing of World Heritage Sites: Giving the past a sustainable future. Journal of Public Affairs, Vol. 18, No. 2, e1655.

de-Miguel-Molina, M., & Barrera-Gabaldón, J. L. (2019). Controversial heritage: the Valley of the Fallen. International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research.

Dodds, R. and Butler, R. (2019), "The phenomena of overtourism: a review", International Journal of Tourism Cities, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 519-528.

Donohoe, H. M., & Needham, R. D. (2009). Moving best practice forward: Delphi characteristics, advantages, potential problems, and solutions. International Journal of Tourism Research, Vol.11, No.5, pp. 415-437.

Evans, G. (2002). Living in a World Heritage City: stakeholders in the dialectic of the universal and particular. International Journal of Heritage Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 117-135.

Farkic, J. (2020). Consuming dystopic places: What answers are we looking for? Tourism Management Perspectives, 33, 100633.

Fryer, P. (Producer). (2018) The Dark Tourist. [Television Series]. Auckland. New Zealand: Netflix.

Gao, Y., & Su, W. (2019). Is the World Heritage just a title for tourism? Annals of Tourism Research, 78, 102748.

Habibi, A., Sarafrazi, A., & Izadyar, S. (2014). Delphi technique theoretical framework in qualitative research. The International Journal of Engineering and Science, Vol.3, No.4, pp. 8-13.

Hartmann, R., (2014). Dark tourism, thanatourism, and dissonance in heritage tourism management: new directions in contemporary tourism research. Journal of Heritage Tourism Vol.9, No.2, pp.166-182.

Hasson, F., & Keeney, S. (2011). Enhancing rigour in the Delphi technique research. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, Vol.78, No.9, pp. 1695-1704.

Hyde, K.F. and Harman, S. (2011). Motives for a secular pilgrimage to the Gallipoli battlefields, Tourism Management, Vol.32, pp.1343-1351.

Isaac, R.K., and Çakmak, E. (2014). Understanding visitor's motivation at sites of death and disaster: the case of former transit camp Westerbork, the Netherlands, Current Issues in Tourism, Vol.17. No.2, pp. 164-179.

Imon, S. S. (2017). Cultural heritage management under tourism pressure. Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes.

Ivanova, P., & Light, D. (2018). 'It's not that we like death or anything': exploring the motivations and experiences of visitors to a lighter dark tourism attraction. Journal of Heritage Tourism, Vol 13, No.4, pp. 356-369.

Kamber, M., Karafotias, T., & Tsitoura, T. (2016). Dark heritage tourism and the Sarajevo siege. Journal of tourism and cultural change, Vol.14, No.3, pp. 255-269.

Katahenggam, N. (2019). Tourist perceptions and preferences of authenticity in heritage tourism: visual comparative study of George Town and Singapore. Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change, 1-15.

Kim, H., Oh, C. O., Lee, S., & Lee, S. (2018). Assessing the economic values of World Heritage Sites and the effects of perceived authenticity on their values. International Journal of Tourism Research, Vol. 20, No.1, pp. 126-136.

Kwiatek-Sołtys, A., & Bajgier-Kowalska, M. (2019). The role of cultural heritage sites in the creation of tourism potential of small towns in Poland. European Spatial Research and Policy, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 237-255.

Landorf, C. (2009). Managing for sustainable tourism: a review of six cultural World Heritage Sites. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol.*17, No.*1, pp. 53-70.

Leask, A., & Fyall, A. (2001). World Heritage site designation: Future implications from a UK perspective. Tourism recreation research, Vol.26, No.1, pp. 55-63.

Lemelin, H., Whyte, R., K., Johansen, K., Higgins Desbiolles, F., Wilson, C., & Hemming, S. (2013). Conflicts, battlefields, indigenous peoples and tourism: addressing dissonant heritage In: Warfare tourism in Australia and North America in the twenty-first century. International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research. Vol.7, No.3, pp. 257-27.

Lennon, J., & Foley, M. (2000). Dark Tourism: the attraction of death and disaster, Thomson, London.

Light, D. (2017). Progress in dark tourism and thanatourism research: An uneasy relationship with heritage tourism. Tourism Management, Vol.61, pp.275-301.

Li, Y., Lau, C., & Su, P. (2020). Heritage tourism stakeholder conflict: a case of a World Heritage Site in China. Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change, 1-21.

Lin, V. S., & Song, H. (2015). A review of Delphi forecasting research in tourism. Current Issues in Tourism, Vol.18, No. 12, pp. 1099-1131.

Mariani, M. M., & Guizzardi, A. (2020). Does designation as a UNESCO world heritage site influence tourist evaluation of a local destination? Journal of Travel Research, Vol. 59, No.1, pp. 22-36.

Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site (2019). Home page. [online]. Available from: http://www.greenwichworldheritage.org/ . Accessed 28/06/2019

Magee, R. (2018) Servicescape management at heritage tourism sites: from dark tourism sites to socially-symbolic servicescapes. PhD Thesis, University of Ulster.

Miles, S. (2002). Auschwitz: Museum Interpretation and Darker Tourism. Annals of Tourism Research, Vol.29, pp. 1175-1178.

Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. Academy of management review, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 853-886.

Murtagh, B., Boland, P., & Shirlow, P. (2017). Contested heritages and cultural tourism. International Journal of Heritage Studies, Vol. 23, No.6, pp. 506-520.

Nuryanti, W. (1996). Heritage and postmodern tourism. Annals of tourism research, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 249-260.

Podoshen, J. S., Venkatesh, V., Wallin, J., Andrzejewski, S. A., & Jin, Z. (2015). Dystopian dark tourism: An exploratory examination. Tourism Management, Vol. 51, pp. 316-328.

Rakic, T., & Chambers, D. (2008). World heritage: Exploring the tension between the national and the 'universal'. Journal of Heritage Tourism, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 145-155.

Raine, R. (2013). "A dark tourist spectrum", International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 242-256.

Rasoolimanesh, S. M., & Jaafar, M. (2017). Sustainable tourism development and residents' perceptions in World Heritage Site destinations. Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 34-48.

Richards, G. (Ed.) (2001). Cultural Attractions in Europe. CABI publishing, Wallingford.

Ritchie, J. & Spencer, L. (1994). Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research by Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer in A. Bryman and R. G. Burgess [eds.] 'Analysing qualitative data'. London: Routledge, pp. 173-194

Roberts, C. (2018). Educating the (Dark) Masses: Dark Tourism and Sensemaking. In The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies. Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 603-637.

Seraphin, H., Sheeran, P., & Pilato, M. (2018). Over-tourism and the fall of Venice as a destination. Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, Vol. 9, pp. 374-376.

Sharpley, R. and Stone, P. (2009). The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism, Channel View Publications, Bristol.

Slade, P. (2003). Gallipoli thanatourism: The meaning of ANZAC. Annals of Tourism Research, Vol.30. No. 4, pp. 779–794.

Stone, P. (2006). A Dark Tourism spectrum: towards a typology of death and macabre related tourist sites, attractions and exhibitions. Tourism, Vol. 54, No. 2, pp.145-160.

Stone, P. (2013). Dark tourism scholarship: A critical review. International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 307-318.

Stone, P. and Sharpley, R. (2008). Consuming dark tourism: a thanatological perspective. Annals of Tourism Research, Vol 25, pp. 202-227.

Su, M. M., Wall, G., Wang, Y., & Jin, M. (2017). Multi-agency management of a World Heritage Site: Wulingyuan Scenic and Historic Interest Area, China. Current Issues in Tourism, Vol. 20, No. 12, pp. 1290-1309.

Tarlow, P. (2005). Dark tourism: The appealing 'dark' side of tourism and more. Niche tourism: Contemporary issues, trends and cases, pp.47-57.

Timothy, D.J., and Boyd, S.W. (2003). Heritage Tourism. Pearson Education Ltd. Harlow.

UNESCO (2020). World Heritage List. Available from: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/ Accessed 3rd March 2020

Visit Greenwich (2018). Annual Report 2017-18. London. Visit Greenwich

Walters, T. (2016). Using thematic analysis in tourism research. Tourism Analysis, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 107-116.

Yi, X., Fu, X., Yu, L., & Jiang, L. (2018). Authenticity and loyalty at heritage sites: The moderation effect of postmodern authenticity. Tourism Management, Vol. 67, pp. 411-424.