

Ghost seeing in dark places: the allure of dark tourism.

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Ghost Seeking in Dark Places

The Allure of Ghost Tourism



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Ghost Seeking in Dark Places – A brief history



The Cock Lane Ghost -
1762



Fox Sisters and the rise of
Spiritualism - 1848



Spirit photography – 1860s

Stories, Place and Supernatural Mystery



“Nessie” – since George Spicer 1933



Sir Walter Scott - Abbotsford



The Big Grey Man
of Ben MacDhui

*“belief in supernatural beings and in supernatural forces
that affect nature without obeying nature’s law will erode
and become only an interesting historical memory”*

Anthony Wallace, 1966

In reality...

- ▶ Over 50% of Americans (Chapman University 2015) and 52% of people in the UK (YouGov 2013) hold at least one supernatural belief
- ▶ Others suggest higher (68% - Bader, Mechen and Baker, 2010, and 73% - Moore, 2005)
- ▶ In the UK, two fifths of population have had a paranormal experience (Castro, 2014)
- ▶ In the USA, more believe in the supernatural than global warming or that humans evolved through natural processes
- ▶ Popular culture a significant indicator of the continued interest and engagement with the supernatural

Supernatural Media



“As paranormal beliefs become part of popular culture, the meaning of the paranormal changes from something extraordinary to something more ordinary...Thus, new forms of cultural practices emerge which emphasise personal experience as proof of the paranormal. And in the cycle of culture, new products, services and events connect with a never-ending search for unique experiences” (Hill, 2010: 64)

The Growth of Supernatural Tourism

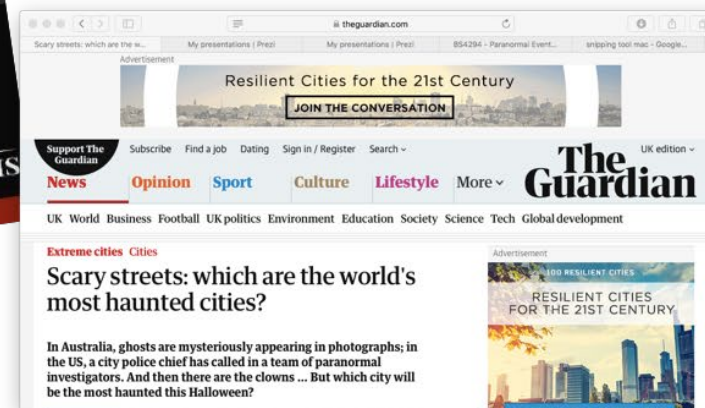


- Dracula tourism attracts 250,000 visitors to Romania annually (Jamal & Tanase, 2005)
- Loch Ness monster is worth £25m to local economy (Scotland Sets Up, 2014)
- Ghost tours in USA cater to over 100,000 visitors each year (Saladino, 2015)

Ghost Tourism

“the desire to encounter ghosts, interest in the supernatural, and visitation of places associated with the spirit world such as cemeteries, haunted houses, castles, and historic towns” (Garcia, 2012: 14)

- Haunted destinations
- Ghost tours
- Ghost hunting events
- Haunted hospitality
- Haunted road maps
- Haunted attractions



In Scotland...



Understanding Ghost Tourism

Ghost tourism as commercialised legend-tripping

...an excursion to places where something uncanny has allegedly occurred with the intention of experiencing something supernatural (Ellis, 1996)



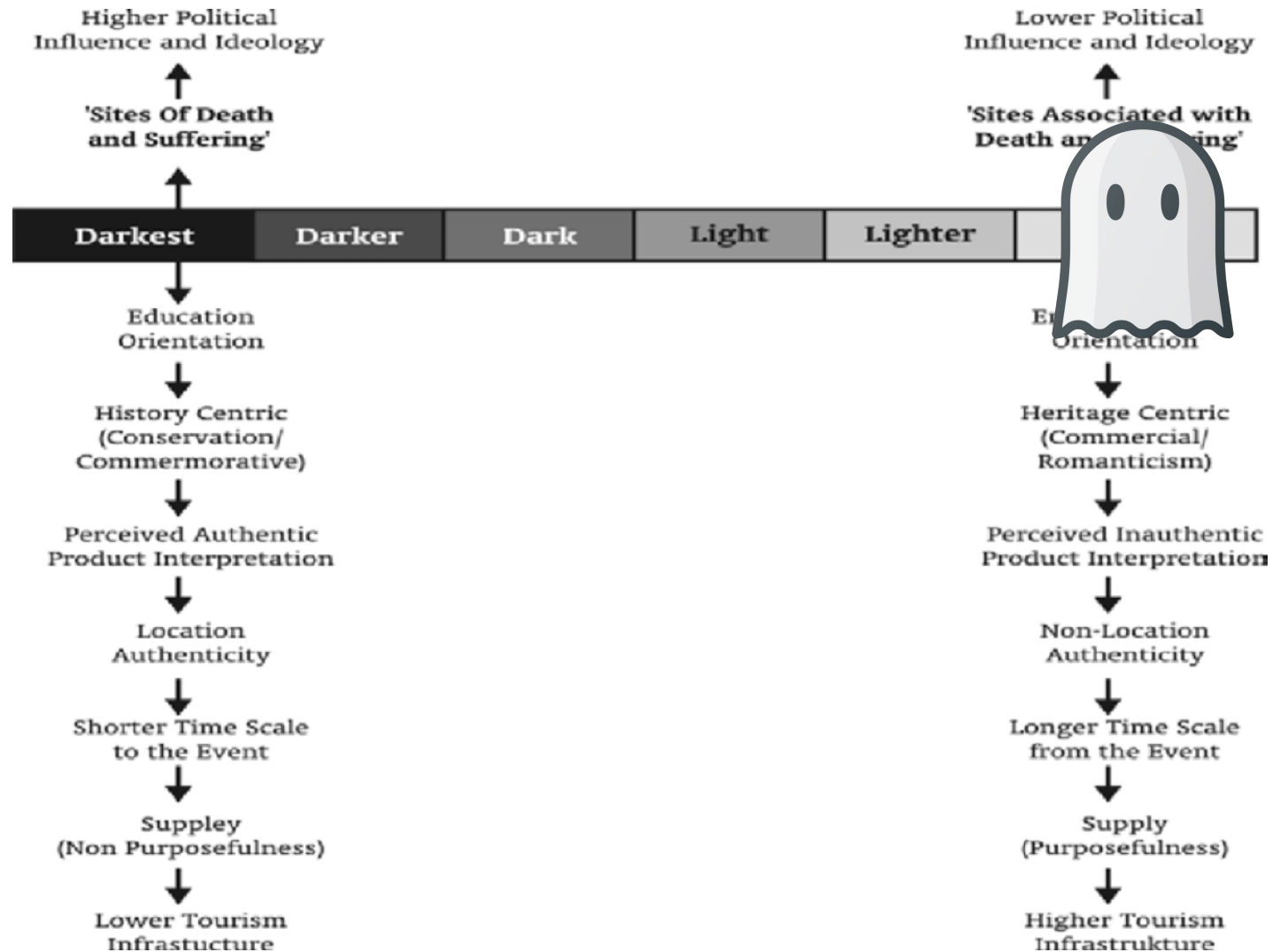
“Bluidy Mackie, come oot if ye daur,
lift the sneck and draw the bar!”

Understanding Ghost Tourism

Ghost tourism as dark tourism

Stone's Dark Tourism Spectrum

“sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre” (Stone 2006: 146)



Understanding Ghost Tourism

Ghosts tell us about history and heritage

Ghost stories are often morality tales

They are a way to confront and mediate the topic of death

Ghost tourism may provide a mechanism to explore 'belief' in a non-structured environment

They explore 'possibility' and can reenchant place

People have 'experiences' and ghost tourism may provide a way to understand and share these



The Challenges of Ghost Tourism

You can't guarantee a ghost!

Ghost hunting 'creates' ghosts – the authenticity of stories/ experience

It represents place in a certain way

The presentation of 'ghosts' can be gimmicky

There are issues when morality and death confronted, potentially exploited for financial gain

When is it okay to talk about ghosts? (Peterhead Prison)



The Ingredients of Successful Ghost Tourism

It's all about *possibility*

Authentic environment (not gimmicky)

Engaging storytelling and 'authentic' guide

A learning experience

An entertaining experience

An extraordinary experience



A final thought...

