Interpretation Design and Management:

Creating Dark Heritage Edutainment Experiences

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Abstract

Existing tourism literature has explored the tourist experience through various aspects of interpretation, including its use for creating the visitor experience, visitor management, stimulating visitor interest and learning, and also the challenges in balancing interpretation efforts with concerns for historical accuracy. These efforts have provided a strong understanding of interpretation as a concept and practice, specifically in relation to natural and heritage tourism, and within museums. However, research remains under-developed in relation to interpretation of dark heritage. This chapter therefore reviews the development and processes of interpretation. It further reviews how interpretation is designed and managed within dark heritage attractions considered *lighter* due to their edutainment interpretation agenda. In doing so, this chapter contributes to both the research and practice of interpretation within both heritage and dark heritage contexts.

Keywords: Interpretation; Interpretation design; Edutainment; Lighter dark heritage attractions; Dark tourism

Introduction

Rooted in the ancient practice of storytelling, interpretation is an essential component of creating visitor experiences. For heritage attractions, it is a technique used to inform and inspire audiences in a manner in which they may develop knowledge, understanding and appreciation for heritage and history on display (Kavanagh, 1996; Wyatt, 2019). Drawing on tangible and intangible resources, interpretation serves as a communication process, linking heritage and tourism through a packaged reconstruction of the past for the present (Nuryanti, 1996). With such significance, interpretation is understandably a prominent area for scholarly study across interdisciplinary fields, including heritage studies, heritage tourism, and museum studies.

Key to interpretation is its design and understanding the influences that underpin it. Designing interpretation is a large-scale, complex, interdisciplinary practice that relies on a creative human-centred approach. Practitioners are supported with a range of guides and information relating to the processes for designing interpretation. However, these have largely been developed within the fields of creative design, natural tourism, and museum studies. This chapter therefore discusses interpretation and its design process before

exploring them within the context of dark tourism – a niche form of heritage tourism, defined as the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering, and the seemingly macabre (Stone, 2006). More specifically, this chapter addresses the design and management of interpretation for experiences at *lighter* dark heritage attractions – recognisable for their higher tourism infrastructure, commercial focus, and use of edutainment interpretation agendas (Wyatt et al., 2020). In doing so, this chapter sheds light on the design and management of interpretation, and in particular lighter dark heritage visitor experiences.

Interpretation

Interpretation is a complex, dynamic concept, applied to numerous contexts (e.g., communication, education, user experience, conversation, emotion, relationships) and understood through a variety of meanings and applications. While varied in its contemporary use, its meaning is rooted in much older civilizations and the practice of storytelling. In ancient Greek, for example, interpretation was referred to as *hermenuein* – to translate or interpret (Lawn & Keane, 2011), as well as *periegete* – to guide something or someone (Stewart et al., 1998). Also, in Latin, the concept is understood as *interpretari* – to expound or explain (Wadensjö, 1998). The commonality among these variations is that interpretation is understood to be an action of translating or explaining information. Despite its ties to ancient practices, its contemporary use for tourism is recognised to have developed largely from within the natural heritage and museum sectors, further evolving as a process for experience design across the $20^{th} – 21^{st}$ centuries alongside the changes in the wider heritage tourism industry.

Given its known complexity and dynamic nature, to date, there is no universally accepted definition for interpretation. However, within heritage tourism, it is traditionally understood as 'an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experiences and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information' (Tilden, 1977, p. 8). This suggests that interpretation is an activity used to create understanding and appreciation among visitors for the natural environment, which would subsequently prompt their desire to

protect it. Similarly, others have defined interpretation as an activity, but one that assists in the enhancement and management of visitor experiences (Moscardo, 2000; Sharpe, 1976).

Interpretation has also been described as a planned effort (Alderson & Low, 1985), a communication approach (Ham, 1992), and a method (Beck & Cable, 1998) that helps to create meaningful, emotionally engaging experiences relating to the place, heritage assets or culture on display. Additionally, interpretation has been described as a process (AHI, 2018; Cater et al., 2015) built on the interactions between heritage attractions and visitors, thereby creating emotional and intellectual connections between the meanings inherent in heritage assets and visitors' knowledge, interests and personal values (Carr, 2016). Most recently, interpretation has been defined as a strategic effort, encompassing both process and activity, with the aim to educate and inspire audiences about heritage through provoking and engaging experiences that employ a variety of practical methods and media (Wyatt, 2019).

The Role of Interpretation.

Interpretation is key to the management and operations of heritage attractions, and therefore maintains several important roles. It is charged with the task of enhancing visitor understanding through thought-provoking displays that encourage visitors to be less passive in their visits (Smith, 2016). This process helps to facilitate and evaluate the overall visitor experience by addressing visitor expectations and organisational goals (Van Dijk et al., 2012). It also helps to support visitor management (Loulanski & Loulanski, 2011) and reduce negative impacts on conservation and presentation issues (Merriman, 2005). This is possible by communicating messages and designing experiences that encourage visitor mindfulness and acceptable visitor behaviour (Moscardo, 1996; Tubb, 2003), which is extremely important for natural or fragile in-situ heritage attractions.

Through interpretation, visitors have the opportunity to connect their memories, knowledge, and interests with the history and heritage on display. This connection can be an emotional, educational and/or entertaining experience (Kavanagh, 1996). Thus, as a way

of enhancing heritage attractions with value-added components, interpretation serves as both educator and entertainer (Harvey, 2008), with the goal of communicating the significance and meaning of heritage to visitors (Grimwade & Carter, 2000). Also, interpretation allows visitors to utilise their understandings of the past in order to make sense of their visitor experience (Kidd, 2011).

Interpretation Methods.

With the aim to enrich visitor experiences and promote heritage understanding, interpretation efforts at heritage attractions have largely moved away from delivering formal learning (i.e., curriculum-based) experiences that rely on non-personal (i.e., static, passive) methods to informal learning (i.e., non-traditional) experiences that utilise personal or interpersonal (i.e., interactive, innovative) methods. While informal learning experiences have been criticised for being uncontrollable and unpredictable (Robb, 1998), studies suggest formal learning experiences do not provide visitors with enough opportunities to fully engage, understand and become inspired about heritage (Museums Association, 2017). In fact, visitor feedback has demonstrated an overwhelming preference for experiences that not only incorporates informal learning experiences but also allows for experiences to be customised (Poria et al., 2009; Smith, 2016). To this end, a number of interpretive methods may be used.

Non-personal interpretation methods are generally static, one-way communication techniques (Cooper, 1991). These include text panels, signs, publications (e.g., leaflets, brochures, maps, guidebooks), self-guided tours, visitor centre displays, audio-guides and static exhibitions. Although generally limited in their ability to adapt to changing contexts and audience needs (Munro et al., 2008), signage, exhibitions, and self-guided tours are often preferred methods for heritage attractions because of their relatively lower purchase and maintenance costs (Hughes, 2004).

Personal methods, on the other hand, are interactive, two-way communication methods used to deliver more active, engaging and immersive experiences (Cooper, 1991). These

interpretation methods include guided tours, talks, demonstrations, re-enactments, live performances, and immersive technologies. Personal methods often have higher purchase and maintenance costs, particularly if involving innovative technologies or require training and/or expert consultation (Hughes & Morrison-Saunders, 2002; Munro et al., 2008). However, personal methods are generally more flexible and can adapt to changing contexts and diverse audience needs (Munro et al., 2008).

The use of either non-personal or personal methods, or a mix of the two is dependent on the purpose of the visitor attraction and intended audience experience. These factors can be synthesised as the interpretation agenda, which can be to create a commemorative, educational, entertaining or edutaining experience.

Interpretation Agendas.

Traditionally, interpretation at heritage attractions has followed an educational agenda, which is largely rooted in general theories of education and museum philosophies (Grenier, 2008). Through educational agendas, heritage attractions have traditionally relied on non-personal methods to display artefacts, relics, commemorative artworks, photographic imagery, and text panels (Seaton, 2009). However, with technological advancements and the recognition that visitors want to be actively engaged in their experiences, heritage attraction management has come to acknowledge that learning can be fun. With this acknowledgement, entertaining activities and media have become more widely used for interpretation in order to enhance visitor experiences in a way that they are interesting, engaging and memorable. This blending of education and entertainment techniques is generally referred to as edutainment – an interpretation approach to producing educational entertainment or entertaining education.

It is possible to define edutainment as simply the mixing of education and entertainment. However, more formal definitions for edutainment suggest it is an approach that uses innovative and engaging methods to create memorable experiences that are both educational and entertaining (Wyatt, 2019). Whilst the identification of who coined the

term 'edutainment' is contested, its concept is generally attributed to Walt Disney. This is because following his denouncement of the long-standing outmoded tradition of amusement parks being purely for entertainment, Disney, in 1954, argued education and entertainment share commonalities in terms of material and methods of presentation. Guided by his imagination and experience in film and set design, Disney used theming, storytelling and technology to blend educational and entertainment activities and created the first fully edutainment tourism experience – Disneyland. In addition, Disney also developed the concept of EPCOT Centre, which brought together innovative technology, entertainment, education and cultural learning to create the ultimate edutainment experience (Wyatt, 2022). Through these efforts, Disney's true legacy is that he developed the practice of edutainment, which has been observed across the wider tourism industry as an effective way to focus visitor attention, maintain their interest and foster deeper learning experiences.

Within the tourism industry, and in particular, the heritage tourism sector, edutainment is recognised as an interpretation approach that comprises theming, storytelling, technology, set design, and both non-personal (i.e., static, passive) and personal (i.e., interactive, innovative) interpretive methods (Wyatt, 2022). Together, these factors help to create edutainment experiences that are either immersive or interactive. Through edutainment, audiences are able to actively participate in their experience (e.g., hands-on activities, live-action role-play) or take part in the spectatorship of live shows, performances, and/or film (Rapeepisarn et al., 2006).

Edutainment has become popular among heritage attractions as it helps to transform how visitors engage with the past, thereby creating memorable encounters with heritage (Little et al., 2020). At the core of edutainment is theming, which may be defined as a staging process that uses overarching themes to create coherence and added value for visitor experiences (Wyatt, 2022). Guiding the narrative and design of visitor experiences, theming helps bring history to life with the use of technology, live actors and/or staged sights and sounds reminiscent of specific themes in order to create interactive or immersive

recreations of the past (e.g., The Real Mary King's Close, Edinburgh, UK; Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, US; Edo Wonderland, Nikko, Japan).

As reflected in Figure 1, edutainment utilises personal interpretive methods, and therefore is distinct from strictly educational interpretation, which traditionally relies on non-personal interpretive methods. The difference between educational experiences and edutainment experiences is, however, becoming more difficult to distinguish, as changes in post-modern consumption habits have increased the demand for more engaging active learning experiences. Consequently, tourism suppliers have become forced to adapt and integrate forms of entertainment into their education interpretation designs (Wyatt, 2022).

Figure 1. Edutainment interpretation
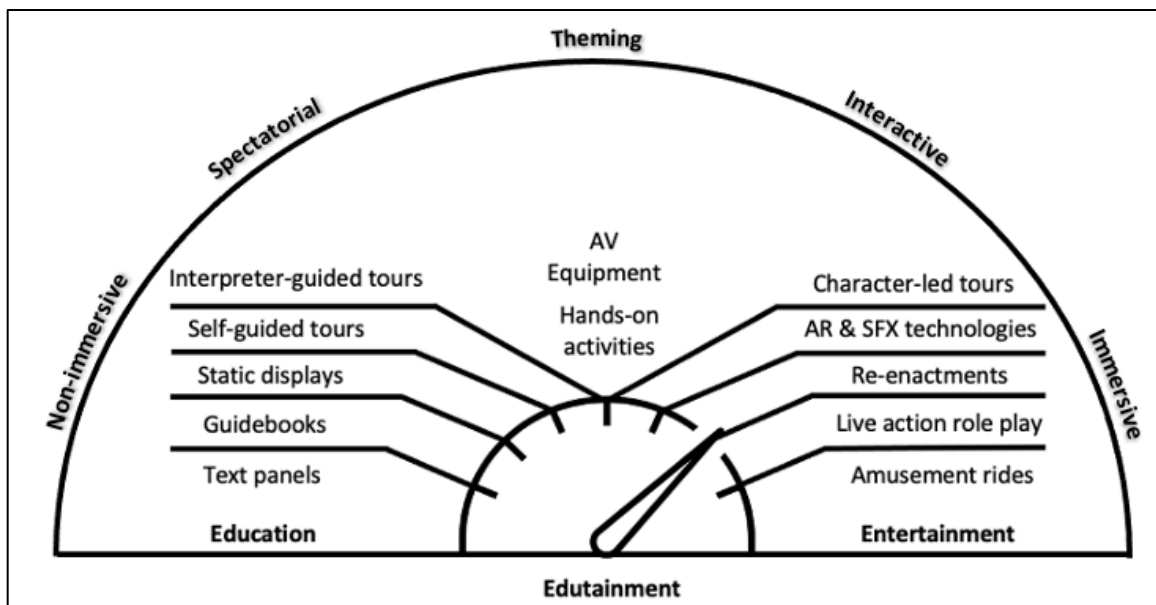
(Source: Wyatt, 2022)

Despite its popularity, edutainment is highly debated within heritage tourism research, particularly due to its Disney origins. As such, edutainment is often criticised as a method for trivialising histories and producing frivolous experiences (Wyatt, 2022). This criticism is even more stringent in relation to its application at dark heritage attractions– places associated with and representative of historical tragedies, death, and macabre events (Wyatt, 2019). Because dark heritage attractions traditionally provide commemorative,

cathartic or educational experiences, the use of entertainment to create visitor experiences is often perceived as immoral and inappropriate. Light (2017) explains this is largely because of the commercial impact edutainment has. This consequently raises concerns of narratives being softened, resulting in historical facts becoming misrepresented or omitted completely. For this reason, edutainment is often associated with the terms 'Disneyfication', 'Disneyfied' and the 'Disney effect', which are largely observed in a negative light. Challenging these criticisms, a few studies have not only demonstrated an overwhelming visitor acceptance, and at times, preference for edutainment experiences (Ivanova & Light, 2017), but have also shown edutainment is often used to create authentic experiences that promote historical facts in order to bring history to life in a very real way (Wyatt, 2019). Thus, the real issue of edutainment is arguably that it challenges the established cultural elitism and traditions of static, formal learning experiences designed with high-culture institutional thinking that have stereotyped edutainment experiences as being frivolous and exploitive (Hertzman et al., 2008). Consequently, the growing use and popularity of edutainment continue to challenge traditional interpretation practices within both heritage and dark tourism.

Interpretation Design

Heritage attractions, more often than not, have moved beyond strictly non-personal static exhibitions to include more complex, open-minded agendas that actively respond to the needs and interests of varied audiences (Bridal, 2013). Interpretation has thus become more visitor-focused in its design efforts, aimed at attracting, engaging, and provoking visitors (Forrest & Roberts, 2014). Key to interpretation, and subsequently the overall visitor experience, is the interpretation design (Roberts, 2014). Interpretation design is the hybrid function of interpretation and design, charged with the task of communicating interpretive plans into tangible form (Woodward, 2009).

Guided by theoretical and empirical studies of interdisciplinary fields (e.g., natural heritage, education, museums, communication, psychology, tourism), Tilden (1977) argued designing interpretation should be guided by six principles: 1) it should relate to

visitors; 2) it is not just delivering information; 3) it is an art; 4) it should be provoking; 5) it should be holistic; and 6) it should be appropriate. According to these principles, interpretation must relate that which is being displayed to the personality or experience of the audience. Without this action, interpretation may be ineffective for the visitor experience. It is thus not merely the delivery of information. Rather, it is the revelation of information through teachable, provoking experiences that present the whole story. Finally, it must be designed for all audiences – children and adults alike. This may require separate programmes or methods of delivery. Accordingly, interpretation should provide opportunities for visitors to find meaning and appreciation of the heritage and history being presented in varying audience experiences.

In applying these principles and philosophy of heritage interpretation, interpretation design is the strategic application of one or more design forms that shape visitor experiences, which communicate specific ideas, values, and messages (Roberts, 2014). Through this effort, interpretation design supports visitor understanding of object displays, and contributes to meaningful visitor experiences (Roberts, 2015). While interpretation is perceived as the foundation of the visitor experience, design is the supporting effort that physically creates the experience. Drawing on interdisciplinary practices (e.g., graphics, interiors, exhibitions, textiles, production, education, performance, music, technology, art, architecture, communication), interpretation design communicates content to shape the visitor experience (Roberts, 2014). As such, it is the underpinning tool for interpretation development, integrating the intellectual and physical elements of interpretation for the creation of holistic visitor experiences (Wyatt, 2019).

The effectiveness and success of an interpretation design are dependent on its careful and thorough planning and design. The planning and subsequent design are often influenced by a variety of factors, including the involvement, communication and collaboration of the numerous stakeholders (e.g., historians, archaeologists, visitor studies consult, content specialists, educators, curators, architects, archaeologists, researchers, construction teams) who bring with them individual experience, knowledge and preferences, as well as conservation concerns, authenticity, access and spatial restrictions, relevance of

information, the availability of resources, budgets and financial implications, time constraints, approval processes, audience development research, and the local community's consultation (Garrod & Fyall, 2000; Roberts, 2014; Woodward, 2009).

Despite the need for careful and thorough planning, there is no universally accepted framework for designing interpretation. This is because designs are often specific to the needs of individual attractions. This fact leaves interpretation design open to the notion of 'it depends', which implies interpretation designs are not only dependent on varying external and internal factors that influence the final visitor experience but are also created on a case-by-case basis. As such, interpretation design does not always result in a complete and final visitor experience. Rather, it is an ongoing process of recorded decisions and evaluations of factors that influence implementation processes (Black, 2005).

A few scholars, including Boyle (2016), Wells et al. (2016), Woodward (2009) and Wyatt (2019), have provided step-by-step guides for interpretation design processes in varying experiences (e.g., creative design projects, museum exhibitions, natural heritage places, heritage visitor attractions). The commonality between these guides is the inclusion of audience perspectives in the planning developments to ensure the interpretation outcome meets audience expectations. In addition to this, the guides each call for the early inclusion of a trained designer. Designers are able to recognise unrealistic plans or potential ideas that may be hindered by constraints of time, space, limited resources, or budget, and other elements (e.g., structural features, access limitations, location of toilets, location of food and drink services, location of the entrance and exit, time and distance between exhibitions, air conditioning and heating, acoustics, and lighting) that may impact the overall visitor experience (Kossmann et al., 2012; Mclean, 1999; Moser, 2010).

Planning for an Interpretation Design.

In commencing the planning for an interpretation design, the first necessary task is to identify the situation and need, which can be influenced by the history and ethos of the heritage attraction; the value and uniqueness of heritage asset(s); political, social or

economic impetus; budget and timeframe; the nature of the proposed space; the purpose and goals for the intended interpretation; and how the design will impact the local community (Black, 2005; Wells et al., 2016). This should then be filtered by the interpretation's purpose and goals for the audience experience. Once this frame has been established, an inventory of existing and needed resources should be conducted. While this does include identifying the heritage assets, the budget, available building materials staffing, etc., it should also identify any conservation concerns that may be impacted from, for example, required demolition, repair, electrical wiring, and general maintenance. Within the inventory process, audience development research is advisable, which addresses what is already known about the current or intended audiences, what can still be learned, and why they have this demand. Through such efforts, the designer can better understand the visitor needs and determine how the intended design might be received, or if it could cause visitor confusion, frustration, or alienation (Visocky-O'Grady & Visocky-O'Grady, 2017).

Following the inventory analysis, key themes and audience experiences need to be identified. While themes are typically the driving influence for an interpretation design, the audience experiences are the ways in which visitors will access, engage with, and enjoy the experience in a way that creates understanding and appreciation (Black, 2005). It is within this planning stage that discussions of the appropriate interpretation methods (personal and non-personal) would be addressed and selected.

Implementing and Interpretation Design.

To communicate the plans into a physical form, it is advisable that visual representations of the plans are created using storyboards, texts and graphics. Visuals will help to identify the most appropriate colour and lighting schemes, display elements, object placement, and spatial arrangements. These visuals, along with art files, proofs, and related materials with the print specifications, are required for the commissioned sub-contractors (e.g., graphic designers, photographers, illustrators, construction team, architects) to commence work on physically creating the planned design (AGDA, 1996).

For heritage attractions that use live re-enactment or character actors, performance development is also necessary at this stage. This requires decisions to be made concerning elements of theatrical design (e.g., scenery, costumes, lighting, sound, multimedia). Theatre design consultants (e.g., dramaturges, lighting specialists, sound designers, projection specialists, scene designers) may also be commissioned to help bring the performance space to life (Malloy, 2015). In addition, a trained scriptwriter may further be required to help establish the scripts and narratives required for performances and guided tours.

Managing and Interpretation Design.

Once the design is installed, a soft opening, pilot test or dummy run should occur to allow the designer and management team an opportunity to address any necessary changes before the experience is made available to the general public. Following, the design will need to be managed through ongoing evaluative measures to ensure it is continually meeting and/or exceeding audience needs and expectations. This can require the observation of visitors during their visitor experience, collecting visitor feedback through media and questionnaires, and discussing the effectiveness of the design with staff who are charged with the task of mediating the visitor experience (Boyle, 2016; Walhimer, 2012). In addition, management challenges (e.g., security, building fabric, mechanical and electrical issues, cleaning and refurbishment issues, sourcing additional funding, staffing issues) that can influence the delivery of a design also require evaluation. Through these efforts, the design can be successfully managed and evaluated for its effectiveness over time and in relation to social, cultural, and political changes (Visocky-O'Grady & Visocky-O'Grady, 2017; Walhimer, 2012).

Through the ongoing management of an interpretation design, heritage attraction management is often challenged by the need to balance authenticity and conservation requirements with commercialisation and engaging interpretive methods. These issues are of particular concern for heritage attractions that promote experiences relating to histories

of, for example, state collapse, war, ethnic conflict, tyranny, oppression, crime and punishments, outbreaks of disease, and poverty. These 'dark' heritage attractions are more commonly referred to as dark visitor attractions, which sit within the realm of dark tourism–a form of heritage tourism based on the packaged representation of historic tragedy, death, or macabre events (Wyatt, 2019).

Dark Heritage Interpretation

As large memory vessels (Wyatt et al., 2020), dark heritage attraction management is often challenged by interpretation designs and questions concerning authenticity, the appropriateness of preserving such memory, whose right it is to interpret it, and how truthful should the interpretation be (Bajc, 2006). In many cases, these attractions are often criticised for distorting, softening or omitting the truth to create more palatable versions of history for their audiences. Underpinning these decisions are often questions of if the history should be fully recognised and packaged as a tourism product (Weaver, 2011), if the full history would lead to bad press, and if the full history conflicts with the institution's brand or identity (Cossons, 1989).

While some argue that no account can reconstruct the totality of past events (Staiff, 2014), others have commented that incomplete reconstructions can skew the way in which historic events and heritage are understood (Park, 2014). What is more, when narratives move so far beyond facts, the meaning and value of history can become altered, causing the truth to become unrecognisable and eventually forgotten (Silverman, 2011). These concerns are more commonly associated with dark heritage attractions that promote edutainment interpretation agendas. According to Stone's (2006) Darkness Spectrum (used to help identify dark visitor attractions based on their characteristics and darkness intensities), these attractions are commonly referred to as *lighter* dark heritage attractions due to their higher tourism infrastructure, commercial focus, and use of edutainment agendas. As such, they are often criticised for being less concerned with authenticity due to their perceived trivialisation and often-sanitised interpretations of historic tragedies. Examples of these

include the Dungeon Experiences, Jack the Ripper tours, ghost walk tours, and haunted houses.

For lighter dark heritage attractions, interpretation design is pivotal for both creating the visitor experience and managing visitor behaviour. In many cases, to stimulate empathy and understanding, these attractions use educational methods that include static exhibition displays of artefacts, relics, commemorative artworks, photographic and/or filmic imagery, and text panels, as well as roped off staged scenes of period-inspired props and mannequins. The use of mannequins is a controversial method for dark heritage attractions as it provides hyper-real depictions of tragedy, often provoking feelings of shock and/or remorse (Skipalis, 2012). Additionally, technology, such as hand-held audio devices, touch screen technologies, and lighting and sound effects, may also be used to promote an interactive learning environment. However, as these attractions more generally employ some form of entertainment, they are also known to use theatre and performance techniques (e.g., live acting; character re-enactment, costuming, props, lighting, sound and special effects, graphic imagery, smell pods, speech manipulation). Further, augmented reality and simulation technologies have more recently become preferred methods to create sensation provoking experiences that engage audiences on a deeper level. Examples of these experiences include Eden Camp–a living history museum of wartime Britain, Tallin Legends–an interactive and theatrical museum of medieval Estonia, the London Dungeon–an interactive and theatrical tour of London's dark history, and Branson's Titanic Attraction–an interactive experience that blurs the history and film (Wyatt, 2019).

While these and other lighter dark heritage attractions may appear shocking and tasteless to some, they are often promoted within their local communities, and largely prompted by increased visitor interests in opportunities to re-live and engage with dark heritage (Hodgkinson, 2015). Still, given their controversial nature, interpretation for lighter dark heritage attractions is often challenged by tensions between ethical concerns and commercial needs, balancing the complex relationship between authenticity and interpretation, and the selection and framing of history.

Design Challenges for Lighter Dark Heritage Interpretation

Interpretation design for lighter dark heritage attractions is a complex and challenging practice. These attractions are prone to challenges relating to their content, particularly given the complex tensions between maintaining authenticity and the perceived exploitative agendas for tourism activities. Because of this, some practitioners deny any association of their attraction with the concept of dark tourism, further arguing they are instead a social history attraction. Yet, others accept their labelling and association with dark tourism in recognition of the proliferating market and commercial benefits.

The manner in which interpretation is designed at lighter dark heritage attractions is largely dependent on their ownership (e.g., private, profit, government), which is generally in control of its operational management, including interpretation. In many cases, the owner or management will facilitate and/or dictate the image of the attraction through interpretive decisions (Bright et al., 2016). This can sometimes create design challenges, as other stakeholders (e.g., designer, consultants, management, staff, community) may have differing interests, preferences and perspectives for how to best design the interpretation and overall visitor experience. Thus, reconciliation of all stakeholder interests is crucial, and in particular, for attractions that use edutainment methods like re-enactment and live performances to depict histories still tied to contemporary social issues, such as US southern plantations and colonial sites (e.g., Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, US). Adding to this, the audience is an essential stakeholder to involve, as dark heritage may appeal differently to different audiences who bring with them varying perspectives or personal connections to the content (Stone, 2018).

The complex relationship of interpretation and authenticity has led to further discourse relating to concerns for selecting interpretation methods and developing narratives. Understandably, the selection of methods is dictated by a variety of factors, which include the ownership, interpretation purpose, themes, agenda, and nature of the content. For lighter dark heritage attractions, these factors support the aim to either educate and create appreciation through more interactive and entertainment-based methods (e.g., The Real

Mary King's Close, Edinburgh, UK; Salem Witch Museum, Salem, US), or to shock and thrill audiences through more fun-centric and innovative methods (e.g., Amsterdam Dungeons, Amsterdam, NL; Gravedigger Ghost Bus Tour, Dublin, IE).

Selecting the most appropriate methods is often challenged by the need to enhance visitor experiences with some form of entertainment or interactive activity, such as augmented reality experiences and live re-enactments. Augmented reality and simulation technologies have become more prevalent in recent years (e.g., Battle of Bannockburn Memorial and Museum, Stirling, UK; Titanic Museum and Attraction, Branson, US) as they can function as tour guides, delivering information upon visitor request and minimising irrelevant information, information overload and the costs of hired tour guides (Kounavis et al., 2012). In addition, augmented reality and immersive technologies offer experiences where visitors are fully immersed in virtual environments with less interaction with the real world (Guttentag, 2010). These experiences are further enhanced with live re-enactments, which, although controversial at times, is a popular method for lighter dark heritage attractions as it helps to educate and facilitate engagement between visitors and heritage (Kidd, 2011). Attractions that use re-enactment (e.g., Eden Camp, Malton, UK; Kawanakajima Battle Experience, Yamanashi, Japan) rely on period-inspired props and costumes, narrative, and the passion of actors for the history and their commitment to selling the history.

The use of simulation technologies and re-enactments is also a challenge for lighter dark heritage attractions in terms of authenticity and perceived appropriateness. In many instances, these attractions have been criticised for being heavily scripted, poorly designed, and provide faulty information through over-acted or dull performances (Potter, 2016; Silverman, 2011). They are further criticised for their immersive and provoking interpretation, as it is argued they create idealistic versions of tragic events, manipulating truths into palatable histories for camera-wielding tourists (Best, 2010; Jovicic, 2016).

Drawing on the challenges of selecting the most appropriate methods is the issue of remaining ethically sound whilst running a commercially viable operation. This issue is further exacerbated by the need to cope with increasing competition within the wider

tourism market. As such, these attractions must design unique experiences, employ revenue generating activities, establish strong media and marketing campaigns, and when able, capitalise on film associations. To meet these demands and appeal to a vast array of visitors, many attractions are not only using a variety of interpretation methods, but are also using a triangulation of creative practices, including storytelling, thematic utilisation of architecture, innovative technologies, interactive engagement, and exhibition design (Oren & Shani, 2012; Stone, 2005). Such activities are often criticised for their likeness to Disneyland, and are thus dubbed a 'Disneyfication' experience of dark heritage (Heidelberg, 2014). With these criticisms, there are growing concerns relating to the use of sensory stimulation and provocative interpretation, as these strategies may be preventing meaning-making among audiences (Heidelberg, 2014). However, it is argued that these creative practices, specifically theming and newer technologies, can help to keep visitors engaged and from becoming overwhelmed with information. It can further be argued that these types of experiences are preferred among audiences because the portrayal of historic tragedies has long been a staple of heritage and folk stories, as well as a popular theme in film and television (Harlan, 2015). As a result, through media and cultural connections, audiences have become desensitised in many ways to the presentation of historical death and tragedy (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2010). Thus, these attractions provide opportunities for audiences to re-live and engage with dark heritage, but in a more meaningful way.

To ensure precautions and necessary steps are taken to safeguard historical truths and a sense of authenticity, studies have shown that lighter dark heritage attractions will conduct thorough research and consult relevant historians and other experts in the planning and design of their interpretation (Wyatt, 2019; Wyatt et al., 2020). At the Sick to Death Museum in Chester, UK, for example, a paleo-demographer who specialised in the medical history of the Black Death was brought on as a content consultant to ensure the narrative of the plague for the visitor experience was as accurate as possible (Wyatt, 2019). As some attractions are set within original spaces, architects and archaeologists are also often consulted to help assess the structural integrity of their sites, specifically concerning how the sites might be impacted by increased visitation, and to assess the areas of human activity that could be used as part of the attraction's narrative (Wyatt, 2019). For example, at the

Real Mary King's Close in Edinburgh, UK, conservation measures were taken in consultation with a team of historians, archaeologists and architects in order to make the 400-year-old building safe for visitors, whilst preserving the original material from being damaged in the attraction development (Wyatt, 2019).

While these attractions do seek to educate audiences about the history and heritage they portray, they do so in a way that will entertain. Thus, for attractions that use performance and re-enactment, these attractions also rely on experts of theatrics and stage design, including lighting and special effect companies, dramaturges, and scriptwriters. These experts not only help to create the staged scenes, but also help train the actors in voice inflexion, improvisation and use of props. In some instances, such as the Gravedigger Ghost Bus Tour in Dublin, attractions may also refer to film and popular media for inspiration of theming, atmosphere and sound design (Wyatt, 2019). Despite this influence, it has been revealed that lighter dark heritage attractions that use edutainment interpretation do not seek to create gore for the sake of gore, and they do not purposefully seek to trivialise history (Wyatt et al., 2020). Rather, they seek to provide a real and raw version of the history that is as accurate as possible.

Management Challenges with Lighter Dark Heritage Interpretation Designs

Managing interpretation is often associated with ensuring it remains relevant and in line with audience needs and expectations. Such management requires regular summative evaluations that can be conducted through the observation of visitors during their experience and collecting visitor feedback through media outlets and on-site questionnaires (Boyle, 2016; Walhimer, 2012). Conducting such evaluations not only helps to assess the relevance of a design, but also determines how effective the design is over time and in relation to social, cultural, and political changes (Visocky-O'Grady & Visocky-O'Grady, 2017; Walhimer, 2012). Despite these benefits, studies have shown that not all attractions conduct formal observations for this purpose (Wyatt, 2019). What is more, while visitor feedback is understood as essential for understanding the effectiveness and quality of interpretation, not all attractions utilise visitor feedback to inform their interpretation

management. Rather, the perception of interpretation management often appears to follow the age-old saying 'if it's not broke, don't fix it'. In fact, for lighter dark heritage attractions that are owned by larger companies, often the decisions relating to needed interpretation changes and refurbishments are not made on-site. Rather, these decisions are made among senior-level decision makers who are rarely on site (Wyatt, 2019). This system of interpretation management relies on the effective reporting of on-site management to demonstrate the need for interpretation developments. However, it also creates tensions between the staff who are charged with the task of delivering the interpretation and the management who are responsible for the interpretation decisions.

Given the range of stakeholders involved with the design and operations of lighter dark heritage attractions, one of the underpinning challenges in managing interpretation is managing the inclusion of all relevant voices. Many scholars (e.g., Ababneh, 2018; Bryon, 2012; Levy, 2002; Potter, 2016) have argued the inclusion of staff in the design and management discussions of interpretation is essential, as they have the responsibility to create visitor learning and understanding through script, performance and engaging with visitors to create meaningful heritage experiences. Yet, in most cases, staff are not formally consulted in the design or management of the interpretation. Rather, studies have shown that staff are only able to provide their feedback on how the interpretation is working in real-time during staff meetings (Wyatt, 2019). Because of this structure, staff feedback and observations are not formally recorded, which consequently means their voices go unheard among the senior-level decision-makers. This not only creates tensions between the senior management and staff, but it can also result in ineffective visitor experiences due to senior management teams not always being on-site to observe and verify the effectiveness of the interpretation. Thus, it is recommended that staff be consulted in the on-going management of the interpretation, as they can provide valuable, first-hand information relating to how a design is or is not effectively meeting visitor needs and expectations.

Adding to the management of stakeholder inclusion, studies have shown that interpretation designers are often absent from the ongoing management of interpretation (Wyatt, 2019). This again appears to be associated with the accepted belief, 'if it's not broke, don't fix it'.

However, studies have demonstrated that interpretation is a transient activity, and designers must be involved to make necessary recommendations for change when the original design is becoming outdated or is no longer relevant to current demands (Wyatt, 2019).

As lighter dark heritage attractions are largely commercial operations, the underpinning issue in managing interpretation effectively is time and money. In order to make necessary changes, the business requires closure. However, closure can lead to profit losses. Consequently, for some attractions, particularly those that use guided tours, the interpretation design of the physical attraction is left untouched, and instead, the narrative or script is rewritten (Wyatt, 2019). This can be consequential in extending the tensions between staff and senior management decision makers, as the quality of the visitor experience is reliant on the staffs' ability to sell the new scripted experience in the existing physical setting. This situation is further complicated by return visitors who are able to recognise the experience is inherently the same, but with a new storyline. Consequently, the notion of the experience being a new tour is not necessarily met, which can lead to poor visitor feedback and a tarnished reputation.

Conclusions

For lighter dark heritage attractions, there is a strong recognition of the importance in providing fact-based visitor experiences. Despite using edutainment, having a higher tourism infrastructure, and employing commercial elements, lighter dark heritage attractions generally provide academically grounded recreations of history that are delivered through engaging and interactive experiences, further able to provoke visitor learning and appreciation. While criticisms of lighter dark heritage attractions are largely focused on their use of edutainment methods, it is clear from their continued proliferation and increasing visitor numbers that there is a demand for the experiences they offer. This demand, and the want to experience versions of history that are closer to the truth, may be a direct result society's desensitisation to such accounts as a consequence of film and mass media. However, this chapter lends itself to a greater and ongoing conversation of how society continues to require such provocative experiences.

Disclosure statement

Data availability

The data that support the content of this chapter are openly available in Edinburgh Napier University Research Repository at http://researchrepository.napier.ac.uk/Output/2455103, 338.4791 Tourist Industry.

Notes on author

Brianna Wyatt is a Lecturer for Oxford Brookes University. Her PhD thesis (Edinburgh Napier University, 2019), explored the influences on the design and management of interpretation at lighter dark visitor attractions in the UK and Ireland, with an aim to extend knowledge and contribute to professional practice.

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