

MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN DARK TOURISM ATTRACTIONS: THE CASE OF GHOST TOURS IN EDINBURGH AND TOLEDO

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This article explores the interpretative, managerial, and ethical issues present in dark tourism, namely ghost tours. Accordingly, a comparative case study of ghost tours in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Toledo, Spain, was conducted utilizing key informant interviews and participant observation. Because the academic literature on ghost tours is rather limited, this study presents unique findings in relation to managerial perspectives on issues of ethics, interpretation, and operations in ghost tours as a dark tourism activity. It also provides observational evidence on these aspects by means of participant observation in ghost tours. The study concludes with a note to possible future studies.

Dark tourism can be described as visitation to places that are related to death, war, the macabre, or the paranormal. Because of the sensitive nature of dark tourism, turning sites into tourist attractions poses challenges to practitioners. This article explores the main issues of interpretation, ethics, and management of dark tourism sites in general and how these issues are addressed in a specific type of dark tourism, i.e. ghost tours. Ghost tours were chosen for this study because ghosts provide a metaphysical interpretation of real human tragedy and thus turn the experience of visitation of dark tourism sites into a "thrilling" experience. As Thompson (2010) stated, ghost tours "hinge on humanity's near-universal fascination with the spirit world" (p. 79). Tour operators may sideline the real history and human tragedy behind these sites in favor of thrilling tour experiences. It is important to explore how managers of these sites interpret dark tourism, in general, and their sites, in particular, to understand how they strike a balance between ethics and running a commercially viable operation. These issues will be explored in a comparative case study of ghost tours in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Toledo, Spain.

DARK AND GHOST TOURISM LITERATURE

Foley and Lennon (1997) were among the earliest contributors to the dark

tourism literature. Even though their work was significant in identifying specific issues related to dark tourism sites, they focused mainly on concentration camps and battlefields leaving aside many other seemingly lighter entertainment activities, such as ghost tours. More recent studies provide a thorough discussion of creation, marketing, and management of traditional and new forms of dark tourism sites. For instance, Stone (2009a) explored re-created dungeons, namely the London Dungeon Experience (also in Edinburgh and York), as a lighter form of dark tourism experience or attraction. These lighter experiences include ghost tours and are part of what Stone (2006) called dark fun factories, "which predominately have an entertainment focus and commercial ethic, and which presents real or fictional death and macabre events" (p. 152).

Ghost tourism refers mainly to 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. Blain, Hallam, and Cornish (2007) defined ghost tourism as "engagement with places and other worlds...that range from the thrills of a ghost walk or a haunted house, to potentially transformative experiences sought through journeying to pertinent graves" (p. 133). They added that these activities may necessitate "commodification, rationalisation, conservation and sacredness, and

contested interpretations of place and experience" (p. 133). Seeman (2002) agreed that ghost tours are commoditized and argued that the proliferation of ghost tours has led to homogenization regardless of the location. He asserted that all ghost tours "follow a fairly standard format ...where the guide tells you ghost stories while taking you on a short stroll" (para. 9). Although Curran (1978) concluded that "tours are people, and just as no two people are exactly alike, neither are two tours" (p. 5), as a commercial product, all ghost tours and their narrative and physical performances are designed and performed mainly by the providers. In that respect, the whole paranormal experience is predictable and repetitive. This is what makes it commercially viable and manageable.

From the consumer perspective, participants engage in ghost tours with varying motivations. When people take a ghost tour, they know there is a possibility that they might be frightened and even disturbed by the tour performance; however, it is the anticipation and then perhaps the realization of these feelings that makes the experience all the more enjoyable. Some might take ghost tours in an attempt to find an answer to the question of whether ghosts exist or to force an encounter with ghosts (see Guiley, 2008; Radford, 2007). It is from that will to encounter ghosts that the "tours build a performance to entertain their audiences" (Thompson, 2008, p. 1). Ghost tour narratives are used to create an expectation of paranormal activity. This narrative can be presented in a fun or serious manner; however, the use of humor extends the entertainment aspect of the tour (Thompson, 2010) and is part of its main appeal. In line with what Campbell (1987) argued about greater pleasure potential from negative feelings, ghost tours are consumed as a form of entertainment for the ultimate goal of having a pleasurable experience that engages with visitors' negative emotions, namely fear. However, the fact that dark tourism sites deal with human emotions raises questions about not only the ethicality of exploiting them for commercial purposes but also how they are managed and presented to visitors. This is an issue that is likely to be present in every dark tourism site including ghost tours.

GHOST TOURS IN EDINBURGH AND TOLEDO

Inglis and Holmes (2003) explored the role of ghosts in Scottish tourism as a marketing tool. They found that this type of tourism has been firmly established in the country and has increased the appeal of Scotland as a tourist destination for the paranormal. In comparison, despite a rich history of the macabre, Spain's image as a tourist destination has been dominated by sea, sun, and sand (Bernier, 2006). Yet, there is a burgeoning ghost tourism scene in Toledo. The present study thus compares Edinburgh in Scotland, an established destination for ghost tourism, with Toledo in Spain, an emergent destination for this type of tourism. The purpose is to gain a cross-national perspective of ghost tours, understand how managers rationalize their commercial activity in terms of ethics, and identify specific management issues related to ghost tours.

Both Edinburgh and Toledo have a deep-rooted history of human tragedy. For instance, Edinburgh is considered one of the most haunted cities in the United Kingdom due to mass deaths and murders in the city over the centuries. According to Wade (2008, para. 7), "death is hard to avoid in Edinburgh. Over 1000 years of lively history will do that for a place, and wherever you turn there is another violent story waiting to be told." Inglis and Holmes (2003) observed that Edinburgh offers a wide range of ghost tours and walks. Toledo is also an important city in terms of dark tourism attractions in Spain. Bausá (2009) highlighted a few important sites including Table of Solomon, Holy Grail Trail, Templars, underground caves, and preserved mummies. Even though Toledo is one of a small number of cities in Spain, its burgeoning ghost tour industry offers tours on a regular basis.

METHODOLOGY

Most dark tourism research has been qualitative in nature (Wight, 2006) with little emphasis given to the meanings managers and visitors co-construct and attribute to dark tourism attractions. It is precisely those meanings that create and shape our experiences of them. Such a social constructivist approach aims to focus on the process of meaning construction by entering "the everyday social world [of relevant actors] in order to grasp these socially constructed meanings" (Blaikie, 2000, p. 114). In line with this methodological approach, this study conducts an exploratory and qualitative case study of

two ghost tour companies, one in Edinburgh and one in Toledo. The study employs different data collection methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews to ensure consistency of findings achieved by different methods (Denzin, 2006, pp. 471-2). Because the ghost tours in both cities are mostly delivered by companies for commercial purposes, two companies were approached to explore the following questions:

- What are the main features of each tour in terms of the tour content, delivery methods, number of tourists, and their profiles?
- How are the historical events that took place in each ghost tour site interpreted?
- How do managers handle the ethical issues surrounding their interpretation?
- What are the main management issues of creating and running a ghost tour?

In order to maintain the anonymity of the companies contacted, the ghost tour company in Edinburgh will be referred to as Company E, while the company in Toledo will be named Company T. In the same manner, the manager of the first company will be Manager E (Edinburgh) and the latter, Manager T (Toledo). Company E has 10 permanent and several other part-time staff, while Company T is run and managed by two permanent employees that also act as tour guides.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with tour managers in Edinburgh on July 16, 2009, and Toledo on June 19, 2009. Both interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. The interviews were conducted in the native language of each country, being Spanish in Toledo and English in Edinburgh. The researcher, who is fluent in both languages, later translated the transcript of the interview with Manager T into English. The interviews lasted approximately one hour each and the questions asked covered the following topics: company's objectives and profile; tourists' profile; tour content and narratives used; devising the tour route; and ethical issues.

Although the number of interviews may seem rather limited, both companies have a limited number of staff and executive decisions about content and delivery of tours are (co)made by the managers interviewed. After the interviews, a tour was taken on the same day

as a participant observer in both locations. Here photographs and notes were taken, as well as a video footage of the ghost tour in Toledo. The participation in the tours was important to collect data about the performance given by the guides during the tour. Being a participant observant differed from non-participant one because the researcher could assume a role in the situation (tourist) and get an insider view of events, and even contribute to the tour performance. The emergent themes in the interviews as raised by the informants were then compared with the observations made during the tours. This comparison helped find discrepancies between the official and/or managerial views on interpretation and ethics, and how these rationalizations were actually played out during the tours by the guides.

RESULTS

Several themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews and the participant observation of the ghost tours. These themes have been divided into four categories: structure of ghost tours, ethical issues, interpretation and narratives, and management issues. Both Edinburgh and Toledo seem to be very similar in most of the themes even though there are some differences in the tours themselves.

STRUCTURE OF GHOST TOURS

Both companies have a similar way of structuring the tours in terms of the number of visitors in each tour and the timing. The maximum number of people taken on a tour varies from 20 to 30 approximately. Manager E stated that it is important for a ghost tour to keep the numbers to this level as taking more visitors would jeopardize the quality of the tour. This was similarly reflected by Manager T who suggested that the quality, atmosphere, and even the tour guide performance would be affected if the tour audience was very large. Both companies suffer from seasonality, like any other tourism business, and so there would be times where they have only two to eight people in the tour. Manager E said, "It is harder to tell stories and frighten visitors when the tour is small [as the experience becomes] quite personal." When this happens, the tour guide has to make it clear that the tour is not going to be the same experience as when the group is bigger. According to Manager E, if the tour has 10 people or more then the guide can do a normal performance and try to frighten visitors with the stories.

Thompson (2010) claimed that ghost tours traditionally follow a guided walking

route, in which ghost or esoteric stories are told while stopping at important landmarks. This was also the case in Edinburgh and Toledo. Both tours have the same main structure, in which a group of guided people will walk around the city, stopping only at important places at which time a ghost story will be told. These tours are done in the evening when it is dark. This factor is very important for the ghost tour as it creates an atmosphere of fear straight away. According to Manager E, "It has to be dark to do the tour in order to create that scary feeling." Despite this, some tours have to be done early during the summer to accommodate larger numbers of visitors. All tours are done at night in Toledo; however, private tours may be conducted at earlier times.

The final walking tour route both in Edinburgh and Toledo is decided according to the stories that are told. Once the stories take form, then the landmarks in the walking route are decided, choosing, whenever possible, the original places where actual events in the story took place. When this is not possible, the managers look for a landmark that would approximate the actual scenery in the original story. Despite both tours being quite similar in the way they are devised and created, the walking distances differ quite significantly. Both tours are around two hours in length; however, the walking route in Edinburgh is much shorter than that of Toledo. Company E does a ghost tour only around the old town of Edinburgh, specifically around the Royal Mile and some side streets. In Toledo, the route is much longer, which means that a significant part of the tour is spent walking from one site to another. Consequently, it was observed that in Toledo some visitors were quite exhausted at the end of the tour.

The visitation to "spooky" places is an essential component of both tours, such as the Edinburgh vaults or the underground caves in Toledo. Company E has the sole rights for the commercial use of the vaults and so it is one of the key attractions to take their tours. On the other hand, Company T has to share the use of the underground landmarks with other competitors in the city. Regarding this issue Manager T stated, "The main difference between us and the other companies is that we tell a real story, based on real facts inside the caves. We do not invent spooky stories just to scare people."

In relation to the reasons why visitors might take a ghost tour, both managers stated that most take a ghost tour when they have extra time and once they have visited other important landmarks in the

city. The main audiences identified by both managers are adults, day visitors, or short-break vacationers. However, Manager T further explained that they distinguish between three types of visitors that they encounter in almost every tour. These are "curious," who are somewhat interested in the occult and the paranormal; "bored," who just want to do something in their free time; and "passionate," who are really interested in the paranormal. Due to this varying audience interest in the ghost tours and the fact that ghost tours are not a main attraction compared to other more established landmarks in the city, such as the Edinburgh Castle or the Toledo Cathedral, the tour companies have to put in a lot of effort to market their businesses.

In Edinburgh, all the ghost tour companies have some sort of advertising concentrated on the Royal Mile. This comprises a permanent display board on which tourists can read about various ghost tours offered by the different ghost tour companies, including Company E. Moreover, Company E has permanent employees that walk up and down the Royal Mile distributing flyers to people passing by. This person is casually dressed unlike the employees of other ghost tour companies who do the marketing as such in a costume (for example dressed as The Reaper or a witch). Company T relies mostly on flyers distributed by a casually dressed employee and word-of-mouth. This is because the Toledo City Council does not allow the placement of permanent advertisements on the street. However, the city council promotes Company T in the council's tourism office by handing the company's flyers to tourists when asked for a ghost tour. Despite the limitations of offline advertisement, both managers pointed to the great importance of internet marketing to promote ghost tours. Both companies have web pages where potential visitors can read about the different ghost tours, about the company itself, and the context in which they are set (Toledo or Edinburgh). In this respect, both managers stated that there had been an increase in visitor numbers in recent years in line with the advent of internet advertising, and this also improved their business.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Dealing with the past is a laborious task as sufferings of real people are involved and not everyone accepts that stories about atrocities should be told to tourists just for the sake of entertainment. Charging money for telling horrible and macabre stories is also believed to be wrong by many, as grief is transformed

into a commodity just to please the increasing number of tourists. However, when the managers were asked what they thought of such points of view, they both had the opinion that it was an exaggeration and it was taking ghost tours totally out of context. They were of the view that ghost tours are mostly an activity for entertainment purposes, and to some extent an educational one, and, as any other service commodity, money was charged for this service.

Both managers insisted that the tours were kept on the "ethical side" by basing their stories and tours on facts. They argued that nothing in their tour stories were invented or changed in order to please the tourist, perhaps only embellished slightly. Manager T stated that "doing a tour in which real stories are told, however horrible they might seem, should not offend anyone" and that "talking about our past proves to be a necessity. There is no point in denying history." He also boasted about the endorsement by the Toledo City Council in the form of flyer distribution and explained "this is because we are the only ones that do not come up with random invented stories but base them entirely on facts."

The importance of telling the history, no matter how macabre it is, was similarly reflected by Manager E, who suggested that the stories told were part of the city's past and that "there is no harm in talking about them, even though they might be horrible." Such ethical issues were further addressed by trying to create a ghost tour that would not only entertain the visitors, but also perhaps educate them about the city's past and "hopefully [avoid] anything like that happening in our time." Despite all these justifications presented by the managers, the narratives and interpretation of events might also affect the ethicality of the tour.

INTERPRETATION AND NARRATIVES

Interpretation of dark tourism sites creates different dilemmas for managers mainly because of the persistent tension between creating entertainment but at the same time educating visitors. As discussed previously, both managers claimed that they ensure the veracity of stories and that in no moment during the tour the suffering of the people is diminished. Both managers confirmed that the stories and places behind the tours were thoroughly researched by historians and experts in the field. In the case of Edinburgh, Manager E briefly explained that all the stories told in the tours were researched and verified by Scottish historians but she gave no specific names. In Toledo, the stories behind the tours were researched

by the managers who described themselves as “passionate experts and researchers” of the city’s history and its esoteric past. Both managers were of the view that the quality of the tours depended mainly on this research and the further interpretation of events. For this reason, both tours used a historical approach for the interpretation of events.

The tours differed in style and tone in that the Toledo tour was solemn, while that in Edinburgh was almost comical. A probable reason for this difference is that children were allowed in the tours in Edinburgh, while in Toledo they were aimed only at adults. This does not mean that adults taking the tour in Toledo did not want to be entertained, but this was delivered in a more complex and sophisticated way compared with entertaining children. The entertainment factor was delivered by addressing the curiosity of adult visitors about paranormal events. According to Manager T, the stories told during the tour would also be hard to comprehend by children and younger visitors because of the complexity of the language used (e.g., necromancy). He added that although the main purpose of the tour was not to frighten anyone, it was possible that some children might also find the places and the stories scary. On the other hand, Company E guides used simple language easy to understand by all audiences. This was done intentionally as their tours were mainly aimed at families and included re-enactments of events that created an opportunity for kids to get involved in the action and learn history in a fun way.

Each tour has a different approach as to how the guide has to address the audience and in which tone. In Edinburgh the tour is almost a comedy performance by the guide, a tour in which the audience will be laughing most of the time and having a good time listening to the gore stories being told in amusing ways. Related to amusement, Company E does not offer any technological devices or paranormal evidence to consolidate the stories told during the tour. In contrast, Toledo delivers a humorless type of entertainment, a walking tour in which the audience listens to the guides almost in an academic way. At one point in the tour, Manager T (who was also the guide) played a tape recording he claimed to be psychophony. According to Manager T, psychophonies are voices or sounds from ghosts or spirits that can only be heard after they have been recorded by an electronic device. After explaining this to the group, the guide played the tape on a portable stereo. The group was kept at this particular place for a long time while

the guide explained how the recording was done, what equipment was used, the specific dates of recording and so on. It should be noted that Manager T stated that the tours “do not try to educate people; they just want them to have a good time and learn something about the esoteric side of the city.” Although everybody seemed very interested in the technical explanation, after a while it was observed that the audience seemed to be losing interest in the less “scary” stories and started looking around for some other form of entertainment (i.e. talking to each other or looking at people passing by instead of the guides). The loss of interest can also be attributed to the way stories were delivered. The guides in Toledo told several stories in the same site. Whereas in the tour in Edinburgh, the audience was constantly moved on the tour route while a new story was introduced.

Another key component of the narratives used in each tour is the way they involve the audience with the stories and the places visited. The tour in Edinburgh involves the audience in a constant manner during the whole tour, by engaging with the audience during every story told and in every landmark. People are taken to pose and act as they were being tortured while the rest of the tour cheers for it. In Toledo, the audience is rarely addressed as part of the story and it seems they are treated as mere listeners. During the observed tour, the audience was addressed directly two or three times by the guides to ask questions as in a lecture format (e.g., Does anyone know why this is named Devil’s Alley?).

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

One of the management issues raised in both locations was competition and differentiation in the ghost tour market. There are multiple companies offering ghost tours or walking tours, even for free, in both cities. As a strategy to deal with competition, both managers mentioned their uniqueness in the market by stressing their intellectual investment in different aspects of the tours. Manager E stated that their company is different because they have a unique approach to storytelling from that of their competitors. This uniqueness comes from the training of their guides and that their overall walking route is more extensive than any other ghost tour around the city. Manager T argued that what makes their tours special are the “aesthetics, the contents of the tours, and the general approach of the company towards the paranormal theme in the city of Toledo.”

As ghost tours are an open air walk and mostly done in the usually crowded

city center, it is sometimes possible for other people to sneak into the tour without paying. When this happens, the guide will try to persuade the “intruders” to leave by staring at them in a subtle manner, and if necessary a quiet comment will be made such as “excuse me...this is a private tour.” The fact that the walk is done outdoors brings other concerns for the managers, such as the weather. In Edinburgh and Toledo, it was hard not to bump into other ghost tours from other companies that stopped at the same spots. During the observation, it was clear that the guide in Company E tried to pull the group away to find a more secluded spot to continue the talk. In Toledo the same problem was observed during the tour and also mentioned by the manager during the interview. In both companies, the guides of the tours are given flexibility to change the route of the tour slightly as they go along to avoid such situations.

DISCUSSION

The main aim of ghost tours and of the interpretation of dark sites relies on the idea of entertainment. Ashworth (2004) and Stone (2006) believed that the key factor of dark tourism is the entertainment factor. Thompson (2010) argued that the main entertainment of a ghost tour is precisely the fact that it incorporates humor into it. The use of humor was very evident in Edinburgh’s ghost tours but not in Toledo. Both managers referred several times that the overall aim of the ghost tour was to allow visitors to have a good time. However, the notion of entertainment or having a good time as understood by the managers had direct effect on the way the tours were delivered. As was evident in the Toledo tour and contrary to what Manager T claimed, the entertainment was provided with a more educative approach than that of the Edinburgh tour. Therefore, it is not plausible to expect uniformity in the understanding of entertainment from a managerial perspective when it comes to ghost tours.

In terms of ethical issues in ghost tours, it seems that there are two strands of concern in the literature, namely paying for entertainment in places of death and macabre, and the translation of human suffering into entertainment. In relation to the first concern, there are different normative views in the literature about the ethics of people paying for visiting places of death and the macabre (see Ashworth, 2004, and Lennon & Foley, 2000, for opposing views and Stone, 2009b, and Wight, 2009, for a general discussion on the morality and ethics of dark tourism

from the perspectives of consumers, managers, and stakeholders). The managers in this study believed their ghost tours are services just like any other tourist activity for entertainment. Furthermore, they viewed their tours as an indirect way of preserving local history and a way to prevent such sufferings taking place again. These points seem to be offered as a way of justifying and legitimizing ghost tours. Nevertheless, the actual delivery of the tours, which is shaped by concerns about entertainment or education, may contradict such normative aims. This was observed in the Edinburgh tour's overreliance on gore to entertain and in the Toledo tour's focus on the paranormal to educate people about Toledo's history.

With regard to the managerial issues in interpretation of the past and creating a tour from it, the findings somehow contradict previous arguments such as that of Lennon and Foley (2000) that correct interpretation will determine not only the success of a dark site as a tourist activity, but also will contribute to diminishing possible unethical practices. In the ghost tours studied, as well as in most dark tourism activities, it is not certain whether all the stakeholders are taken into consideration while researching and devising the final product. Moreover, there is no mechanism in place that would make sure that interpretations made by each tour company are "correct" and ethical. Despite these uncertainties, both companies have been in business successfully for a considerable time and both managers pointed to the recent surge in visitor numbers. In terms of the entertainment factor in ghost tours, both managers prioritized entertainment over more normative aims such as educating the visitors. Nevertheless, they resorted to those normative aims when it came to legitimizing or justifying the seemingly unethical practices such as "bad" interpretation or charging a fee for the tours that might be seen as thriving on human suffering.

Dealing with the past is complicated, but dealing with people is harder as far as the managers are concerned. The managers are more concerned with entertaining the customers and catering a product for all tastes than they are with delivering the *right* history. Although the managers claimed that the interpretation used in the ghost tours was based on historical facts, meaning that the events and people are real, some scholars such as Uzzell (1989) believe that in some dark tourism sites, facts might have been changed in order to give visitors a lighter version of human suffering. This study observed that in the case of Edinburgh,

stories of human tragedy are used for entertainment and engaging the audience in amusing ways whereas in Toledo, they were presented in quite graphical ways without any concern for audience amusement. Despite this difference, from the perspective of a participant, it seems like both tours aim to ameliorate the human suffering and gore by linking them to the paranormal. It can thus be concluded that the very nature of talking about ghosts or paranormal trivializes the facts about the horrible pasts of both cities despite any wish on the part of managers to the contrary.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

In terms of generalizability, it is important to mention that since the study explored interpretations about history and ethics in two specific sites, it is hard to generalize the research findings to other contexts as each dark tourism site may have its historical, administrative, and marketing peculiarities. However, it can be argued that commercial concerns shape the interpretations of tour managers and override concerns about ethics or historical accuracy. As this has been observed in both Edinburgh and Toledo, one can transfer this specific conclusion about the nature of interpretation with stronger confidence to other dark tourism sites. The overall generalizability of this study however should be explored in future studies of ghost tours. With regards to reliability or whether the study can be repeated with the same research design and research results, qualitative studies cannot be subject to credibility tests (Bryman, 2004) such as reliability designed for quantitative studies (Adams, Khan, Raeside, & White, 2007).

It can be said that further regulation of or changes in perceptions about dark tourism and ghost tours in the future may affect the findings of a similar study conducted in the same sites and with the same companies. However, this does not compromise the overall quality of this study since it aims to explore the issues of interpretation and ethical concerns from the managers' perspectives which are time specific and open to change.

Future studies about ghost tours or other forms of dark tourism attractions can use similar methodology and data collection techniques as those used in the present study in order to explore more about the actual practices of ghost tours and contribute to the current knowledge about them. Additionally, topics such as how cultural differences shape the management styles of a tour or how the

organizational structure of ghost tour companies affect the tours' overall success can be explored by in-depth case studies and comparative methods. It will also be of benefit for the industry and academic literature if future researchers look at the management issues, but from visitors' perspective as this aspect has yet to be fully explored. Yet, the current state of literature on ghost tours in Edinburgh and Toledo and other locales may prevent establishment of meaningful conclusions about the topic. Hence, this justifies the need for further exploratory studies on the topic and specific sites.

CONCLUSION

This paper has contributed to the existing literature on dark tourism by exploring ghost tours as sites for dark tourism and demonstrating the main issues faced by the managers of such sites in two exemplary cases. The main issue with ghost tours seems to be the tension between education and entertainment as the historical material on which these tours are based is mainly related to human suffering. From the interviews with the managers and the observations of two tours it can be concluded that the ghost tours appear to be somewhat educational, but at the end of the day their final purpose is entertainment as a commercial activity. The managerial challenge of such tours comes mainly from ethical, interpretative, and operational considerations. This study has also demonstrated that the problems encountered by ghost tour managers in Edinburgh and Toledo are similar regardless of nationality, historical period, or time in business. This may imply that in the long run, burgeoning ghost tourism sites such as Toledo will resemble more established and commercially successful sites like Edinburgh in terms of managerial challenges. As demonstrated, this is mainly due to the nature of ghost tours or dark tourism, which thrives on the trivialization of gore and human suffering via their commoditization. However, more research on ghost tours is necessary to further explore and explain the above mentioned aspects and challenges of ghost tours.

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