Tapping into Mammon: stakeholder perspectives on developing church tourism in Dublin's Liberties

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Abstract

Purpose
The purpose of this paper is to explore attitudes among church administrators to church tourism, and the vexing challenge of categorizing church properties as tourist attractions for the city visitor. Furthermore, it seeks to ascertain if in the current economic climate, evidence of a collaborative inclination exists between core and peripheral supply-stakeholders towards delivering a church tourism trail in this visitor-rich area of Dublin city.

Design/methodology/approach
Data were gathered to coincide with the busiest period of the tourist season. Using a qualitative methodology involving a series of semi-structured interviews, initial research concentrated on attitudes to church tourism among both church administrators and church visitors. Subsequent interviews with key informants from both core and peripheral stakeholder groups focused on their attitudes to stakeholder collaboration in the development of a localized church tourism trail.

Findings
The findings of this paper would suggest broad support among most church administrators towards tourism and contextualising church properties as heritage attractions. However, operational dissonances associated with “church ethos” and “collaborative engagement”, particularly when embedded within individual fears of being associated with an official “tourist trail” were viewed as collaborative impediments among some traditional and peripheral stakeholders.

Originality/value
As international competition for the urban tourist intensifies, this paper, in adopting a supply-sided perspective has, through counterpointing psychological barriers to the development of a church tourism product, with the absence of collaboration champions in the area, highlighted a number of limiting factors to adding value to the visitor experience in Dublin's Liberties. Challenges abide!

Keywords
Ireland  Tourism  Churches  Heritage  Church tourism  Heritage tourism  Supply-stakeholder collaboration

Citation

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Stakeholder management provides us guidelines on how to evaluate and assess the impacts of conflicts of interest between different stakeholders. They are considered possible risks that may threaten the success or completion of a project. However, can you readily assess whose interests should prevail? What should be your guiding principle in determining which stakeholder value should be given importance? By stakeholders, the first sector that usually comes to mind is that of the shareholders, whose interests have always been regarded as first and foremost by virtue of business traditions and norms. In managing this issue, however, project managers today should be aware that many CEOs have come to regard the concept of shareholder value management as a thing of the past. In 1988 Dublin celebrated its 1,000th birthday and was designated European City of Culture in 1991. Many visitor attractions throughout the city show its fascinating history. There are a variety of museums, art galleries and visitor attractions for every taste and age-group. Take a walk along one of the many Heritage trails or follow the City's Rock 'n' Stroll trail which tells a myriad of facts about the many famous musicians who have come from this city. If the hustle and bustle of the city proves too much you can always take a trip along Dublin's coast!

Tapping into Mammon: Stakeholder perspectives on developing church tourism in Dublin's Liberties. June 2013 · Tourism Review. Tony Kiely. Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore attitudes among church administrators to church tourism, and the vexing challenge of categorizing church properties as tourist attractions for the city visitor. The study reported in this paper represents one of the first attempts at exploring the perspectives of the local communities on the designation of Langkawi Island in Malaysia as a UNESCO Global Geopark. It is premised on the widely acknowledged assertion that the local communities constitute an important group of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of development activities. Hence