



MANAGING HERITAGE TOURISM

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Abstract: This article discusses the findings of a Delphi survey of owners and managers of historic properties, officers of heritage-based organizations, consultants, and academics from across the United Kingdom. The purpose of the study was to investigate the major constraints and imperatives relating to the long-term management of built heritage attractions. Three related issues were assessed: the fundamental mission of heritage attractions; the factors which impact upon decisions relating to charging for tourist entry; and the perceptions of heritage managers as to the respective roles of such attractions and public agencies in funding tourism management and heritage conservation programs. The paper then considers the significance of these issues in assessing potential strategies for moving heritage tourism toward sustainability. **Keywords:** heritage tourism, Delphi technique, mission, pricing, funding, sustainability, United Kingdom. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: La gestion du tourisme patrimonial. Cet article discute des résultats d'une enquête Delphi parmi des propriétaires et gérants des propriétés historiques, des comités directeurs d'organisations patrimoniales, des consultants et des universitaires de partout dans le Royaume-Uni. L'objet de l'étude était d'examiner les contraintes et impératifs liés à la gestion à long terme des attractions patrimoniales construites. On évalue trois questions apparentées: la mission fondamentale des attractions patrimoniales, les facteurs qui influent sur la tarification et les perceptions des gérants au sujet du rôle des attractions et des organismes gouvernementaux pour le financement de la gestion du tourisme et des programmes de sauvegarde. On considère ensuite l'importance de ces questions pour évaluer des stratégies éventuelles pour faire progresser le tourisme patrimonial vers la durabilité. **Mots-clés:** tourisme patrimonial, technique Delphi, mission, tarification, financement, durabilité, Royaume-Uni. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

The recent literature of tourism studies has been captivated with the notion of sustainable tourism. Rarely before has one single dimension of this research attracted so much attention and raised so much controversy. Indeed, a great many academic textbooks and journal articles focusing on the concept of sustainability have emerged over the past decade, some conceptualizing the main issues (Clarke 1997; Hunter 1995, 1997; Krippendorf 1987), some

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generally endorsing the concept (Cater and Goodall 1992; Eber 1992; Hunter and Green 1995; Inskip 1991; Middleton and Hawkins 1998), and others censuring it (Hughes 1995; McKercher 1993; Wheeler 1994). There has also been a large number of collected works published on the theme of sustainable tourism (Bramwell, Henry, Jackson, Prat, Richards and van der Straaten 1996; Bramwell and Lane 1994; Briguglio, Archer, Jafari and Wall 1996; Cater and Lowman 1994; Hall and Lew 1998; Priestley, Edwards and Coccossis 1996; Stabler 1997).

Given this context, it is perhaps surprising that the heritage tourism sector has received relatively little attention from scholars interested in the concept of sustainable tourism. With a few notable exceptions (Anfield 1994; Cope 1995; Croft 1994; Johnson and Thomas 1995; van der Borg, Costa and Gotti 1996), the academic literature has preferred to concentrate on the cultural, educational, and practical conservation aspects of heritage tourism. Yet the heritage sector represents a highly significant component of tourism in many developed economies. In the United Kingdom, for example, the heritage sector has been described as "a major strength of the British market for overseas visitors" (Markwell, Bennett and Ravenscroft 1997:95) and is estimated to generate around 28% of all UK tourism expenditure annually (Carr 1994). The heritage sector has also been vaunted as a major potential growth area for tourism in the UK (Prentice 1993a). In view of the economic significance of heritage as a tourism "product", it is curious indeed that so little interest has been shown in assessing the conditions that must be met in order to secure its sustainability.

It is surprising that so little academic attention has been paid to exploring the relationship between heritage tourism and sustainability because the two concepts evidently share a common theme. Sustainable development has been defined as a process which ensures that "we pass onto the next generation a stock of [natural and built] capital assets no less than the stock we have now" (Pearce 1992:4). Heritage tourism, meanwhile, has been viewed simply as "tourism centred on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery" (Yale 1991:21). The pivotal concept in both of these definitions is clearly that of "inheritance", yet the connection between heritage tourism and sustainability still remains largely unexplored.

The purpose of this article is to investigate some of the possible reasons for this disparity. In particular, it is hypothesized that the notion of sustainable tourism is an "essentially contested concept" (Hall 1998), meaning that its definition and use is inherently a matter of dispute. As such, the term sustainable tourism has come to mean a great number of different things, according to the differing backgrounds and perceptions of those who are defining and employing it. This much is widely acknowledged in the literature (Garrod and Fyall 1998; Hunter 1997; McKercher 1993). However, the particular contribution of this article is to apply this analysis to the context of built heritage tourism. In short, it sets out to determine

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