

<b>Institution:</b> York St John University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 36 Communication, Cultural, and Media Studies, Library and Information Management)
<b>Title of case study:</b> Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Engagement
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Dr Watson's research is concerned with the understanding of heritage as a cultural phenomenon and the ways in which this is represented in tourism and in public engagement. The research has focussed on a re-theorisation of issues such as visibility and representation in the public sphere of cultural and heritage tourism and the ways in which this is implicated in modalities of marketing, destination development and the community management of cultural heritage resources. He has sought opportunities to apply this thinking in the real experience of tourism management and marketing in the City of York, one of the world's foremost heritage tourism destinations.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Dr Watson's interests in this field were motivated by his doctoral research, carried out at the University of York, 2000-2007, which employed sociological perspectives in understanding the representation of heritage places in touristic contexts. The study involved an examination of heritage buildings in both urban and rural locations and led to the concept of the 'rural-historic' as a key marketing element in English tourism and part of an authorised discursive domain in heritage that had been established by his PhD supervisor, Laurajane Smith, in the highly influential book <i>The Uses of Heritage</i> (2006). This research was later written up as 'Country matters: the rural-historic as an authorised heritage discourse in England' (see below for details). His interest in the ways in which culture and heritage are used in tourism extended into the community management of heritage and tourism resources, and he has actively sought opportunities to apply this knowledge in practical situations through engagement with tourism and heritage operators in the geographical region within which he is based. The starting point for these applications of theory is the ways in which heritage and culture can be embedded in tourism governance, the strategic management of tourism and the modalities of tourism marketing.</p> <p>On the basis of these interests Dr Watson has co-edited five books (which include chapters written by him), and co-authored a fifth. He has also edited a special edition of a journal and co-authored a journal article exploring these themes in detail. A recent edited book, co-edited with colleagues in Australia, <i>Heritage Tourism: Place Encounter Engagement</i> (Routledge, 2013) explores the ways in which representational practice and touristic engagement reflect wider concerns with politics and identity. Each of the four edited books contains chapters that he has either authored or co-authored. His forthcoming co-authored book, <i>The Semiotics of Heritage Tourism</i> (Channel View, 2014) examines in detail the narratives and discourses involved in the marketing of heritage attractions. The first book, <i>Culture Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visibility and the Past</i> (Ashgate, 2010), co-edited with Emma Waterton at the University of Western Sydney, is an examination of visual culture in the context of heritage tourism and draws on a wide variety of mainly UK and European-based case studies. His own chapter deals with the representation and marketing of heritage tourism on the Greek island of Rhodes. The second book, edited with Emma Waterton, <i>Heritage and Community Engagement: Collaboration or Contestation</i> (Routledge, 2011), is an examination of the ways in which heritage is managed and displayed at the level of community action and draws on case studies from Australia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. A key feature of the book is the challenge it makes to conventional views of community heritage as a fully achieved goal within the sector and the ways in which communities in their various forms might be more effectively engaged. The third book, edited with Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith, <i>The Cultural Moment in Tourism</i> (Routledge, 2012), is an examination of the individual and subjective aspects of engagement with cultural tourism and again draws on international case studies, from the United States, Europe, South East Asia and Australia. This book was inspired by a Visit York Board meeting when directors were discussing how visitors engage subjectively with</p>

the city's heritage and how this engagement could be developed in marketing attractions. One of Dr Watson's recent journal articles, co-authored with Emma Waterton, 'Reading the Visual: Representation and Narrative in the Construction of Heritage' (see below for details), draws on case studies in the United Kingdom and Greece to demonstrate the centrality of visual representations in the marketing of heritage attractions, and the ways in which these are linked with dominant discourses about the past and about identity.

The common thread running through Dr Watson's work is an abiding concern with the role that cultural heritage plays in the development of communities and the strategic marketing of destinations and, accordingly, the challenges these pose for an effective, balanced and inclusive perspective on the way the past is constructed through heritage narratives relating to issues such as tourism, identity, sense of place and development.

### 3. References to the research

Waterton E. and Watson S. (eds) (2010), *Culture Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and Past*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Watson, S. (2010) 'Constructing Rhodes: Heritage Tourism and Visuality', in E. Waterton and S. Watson (eds) *Culture Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and Past*, Farnham: Ashgate, 1-16.

Waterton, E. and Watson S. (eds) (2011) *Heritage and Community Engagement: Collaboration or Contestation?* London: Routledge.

Watson S. and Waterton E. (2010) Reading the Visual: Representation and Narrative in the Construction of Heritage, *Material Culture Review*, 71, 84-97.

Smith, L, Waterton, E. and Watson, S. (eds) (2012) *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, Advances in Tourism Research, London: Routledge (in press).

Watson, S. (2013) 'Country matters: the rural-historic as an authorised heritage discourse in England', in R. Staiff, R. Bushell and S. Watson (eds) *Heritage and Tourism: Place, Encounter, Engagement*, London: Routledge.

### 4. Details of the impact

Dr Watson's reputation as a leading expert on the role that cultural heritage plays in the development of communities and the marketing of destinations has led to a degree of recognition beyond the operational contexts of cultural tourism in Yorkshire and the North of England. His knowledge of representational practices in marketing has enabled him to make a very significant contribution to the way that the City of York has understood the needs of its visitor segments, developed products to meet these needs and helped to place culture and heritage at the centre of the city's evolving tourism strategy. This recognition led to the appointment of Dr Watson, in 2009, as a non-executive Director of Visit York, the private sector company that manages and markets tourism in the City of York and the surrounding area in North Yorkshire. He was re-elected for a second term as a Director in 2012.

He has also convened and chaired the Director's Research Committee of the same organisation. This involved developing the organisation's overall competence in visitor research and its integration within the strategic marketing process through identification of new market segments using SPSS software. A key part of these developments has been to integrate the business's research activity with other aspects of its marketing activity, including segmentation, product development, campaigns and evaluation. The segmentation analysis has benefitted in particular from Dr Watson's research collaboration with the University of Seville.

Latterly, the work on representational practice, destination marketing and community heritage has found another application in the development of a new strategy for tourism for the City of York. The City Council in partnership with Visit York engaged Dr Watson not only to help in developing the strategy itself but also to seek his advice on the crucial issues of stakeholder involvement in these

processes and the inclusion of local communities and communities of interest in formulating the strategy. In order to achieve this he organized three consultation workshops that were carried out at the City Council's headquarters and involved residents, local businesses, politicians, members of the arts community, the hospitality industry and attractions providers. As well as organizing these events Dr Watson used group facilitation techniques in order to establish the views and priorities of those involved.

In providing advice and support to the City Council and Visit York for the strategy process Dr Watson organised a conference at the University where he used his knowledge and research in the heritage and cultural sector to facilitate discussion and further consultation with residents, representatives of community groups and leaders in the local cultural industries sector. This activity has had a major impact in terms of the integration of academic and practitioner activity that has been fully recognised in the sector and which has provided stimuli for tourism development – particularly cultural tourism – and contributed to the overall quality of the tourist experience in the city and its surrounding area. This has been testified to as follows:

“ ... your involvement in the development of the new tourism strategy at the City of York Council has made a key contribution to the advancement of tourism in the City. York is a recognized international destination with a complex stakeholder community. Your work in developing consultation processes with this community has been key to the process, and your further involvement with myself, other Council officers and members in the development of our strategy and our approach to strategic thinking is also acknowledged. This collaboration has made a significant impact on the development of strategy in a city that is recognized for its good practice in the strategic management of tourism.” *C. Croft, Assistant Director, Communities, Culture and Public Relations, City of York Council, 15.10.2013.*

“I can confirm that your involvement over the past three years has been instrumental in the development of research at Visit York and the integration of this with the process of strategic planning for tourism in the city. In particular I would like to draw attention to the way that the University and the Business School have played a major part in the stakeholder consultations that have been carried out as a part of the strategy process. Your facilitation of these events and your further involvement in framing the strategy as a non-executive director of Visit York have been a key part of what has been achieved. Your participation has demonstrated that such activity informed by academic research has made a significant impact in an organization that is recognized nationally for its excellence in destination management.” *Jane Lady Gibson, Chair of the Board of Visit York, 15.10.2013*

“Your contribution as a non-executive director of Visit York, has over the past four years made a significant impact on the way that the research function of the company is perceived at Board level. As you know our research capability has developed over time so that it now supports both marketing and strategic objectives and your experience and knowledge have been instrumental in facilitating these developments.” *Kate McMullen, Head of Visit York, 21.10.2013*

##### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

Letter from the Assistant Director, Communities, Culture and Public Real, City of York Council, 15.10.2013.

Letter from the Chair of Visit York, 15.10.2013

Letter from the Executive Head of Visit York, 21.10.2013

“The Cultural City”, New Cultural City Colloquium, York St John University, April 3, 2008.

With Emma Waterton “Session address – Community Engagement, Collaboration or Contestation”, World Archaeological Conference, University College Dublin, July, 2008.

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

“Destination Image and Tourist Behaviour”, Advances in Tourism Marketing Conference, University of Bournemouth, September, 2009.

Presenters from BBC Radio York, 20 Bootham Row, York, YO30 7BR.