

**The Cornish church heritage as a tourism attraction: the visitor
experience**

Volume 1 of 2

**Submitted by Graham Donald Busby, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for
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Abstract

The principal aim of this thesis is to examine the relationship between visitors and the Cornish church heritage. From the tourism literature, the concepts of the marker (MacCannell 1976), collage tourism (Rojek 1997) and the romantic gaze (Urry 1990) are considered within the motivational and information-seeking elements. Additionally, a range of literature from history, geography, sociology, Cornish studies and the emerging tenets of tourism research is utilised. Historic sources, such as guidebooks and postcards, illustrate the nature of the visitor experience in previous decades and foreground the contemporary review. The latter comprises an analysis of visitors' books and a face-to-face survey with 725 respondents at three churches.

From this data, a cross-profile of the Cornish church visitor is created, identifying multiple motivations which include a search for 'roots' and Celtic elective affinity, besides spiritual support and aesthetic satisfaction. Socio-demographic and socio-economic indicators segment the church visitor population although lifestyle is argued to be as significant. There is a clear distinction between the visitors and the national average across a number of practices, including television viewing and holiday-taking. A distinction also exists in terms of educational qualifications and membership of heritage organisations. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital acquisition is posited as an influential determinant for a number of visitors.

Conflating the multiple motivations for first-time and repeat visitors, a classification of purposive, incidental, and accidental Cornish church visitors is created. A small number are frequent visitors to churches whilst, for the majority, the experience is just one element in the overall visitor experience. It is apparent that the extant Cornish church heritage forms a key attraction in the county's destination image.

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