Rubbernecking or Rejuvenation: Post Earthquake Perceptions and the Implications for Business Practice in a Dark Tourism Context

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ABSTRACT:

Understanding consumers during turbulent times is a key charge for consumer research; in this research we explore how residents of Christchurch, New Zealand negotiate the balance between being the subject of unwelcome tourist gazing and commencing the path towards economic and social recovery from the devastating earthquake. We do this by mapping the residents' perceptions at this point in time (within a close chronological distance to the event) and understand the implications for economic and social recovery. The research has practical implications for business managers operating in this complex environment as they attempt to provide business supply that reduces the inherent tensions of both residents and tourists and meets economic recovery objectives. We also contribute towards Stone's (2006) Dark Tourism Spectrum by offering insights into 'purposeful business supply' of such complex products. We found that residents understood the fascination that death and disaster might exert over visitors and should not be ignored as confrontation with death allows for catharsis, acceptance and a means of grieving. We advocate a framework of practices that finds balance between the many tensions

Understanding consumers during turbulent times is a key charge for consumer research; this research explores how residents of Christchurch, New Zealand negotiate the balance between being the subject of unwelcome tourist gazing and commencing the path towards economic and social recovery from the devastating earthquake that hit the city on 22nd February 2011. We seek to map the residents' perceptions at this point in time (within a close chronological distance to the event) and understand the implications for economic and social recovery. The research has practical implications for business managers operating in this complex environment as they attempt to provide business supply that reduces the inherent tensions of both residents and tourists and meets economic recovery objectives. We also contribute towards Stone's (2006) Dark Tourism Spectrum. This theoretical framework offers insight into the perceived product features of dark tourism supply within a lightest to darkest categorisation. This research provides detailed insight into one area of the model, purposeful business supply. We explore how Christchurch residents perceive the creation of businesses opportunities (purposeful supply of dark tourism products) in the aftermath of the Canterbury earthquake. Although literature suggests that the supply side of dark tourism has received significant attention, the social component, the response to the commercialisation and supply of dark tourism by local residents, in a re-emerging tourism economy has received little consideration (Causevic & Lynch, 2008; Pezzulo, 2009; Stone & Sharpley, 2009).

The Event

"New Zealanders have woken to a tragedy unfolding in the great city of Christchurch. The earthquake that struck the Canterbury region at ten to one yesterday has wrecked death and destruction on a dreadful scale .There is no reason that can make sense of this event. No words that can spare our pain. Today I want Christchurch to hear this message: You will get through this. Though your buildings are broken, your streets awash, and your hearts are aching, your great spirit will overcome. This devastating event marks the beginning of a long journey for your city. It will be a journey that leads us from ruins and despair to hope and new opportunities. From great hardship will come great strength. It will be a difficult journey, but progress is certain, things will get better, Christchurch will rise again."

-John Key, Prime Minister 2011

On the 22nd of February, 2011 New Zealand's third most populated city of Christchurch experienced a devastating magnitude 6.3 earthquake which shattered buildings, destroyed businesses and took the lives of 185 individuals (Heather, 2012; Stevenson, Kachali, Whitman, Seville, Vargo, & Wilson, 2011). The immediate and immense financial implications have been felt not only regionally, but also nationally with the estimated cost of damage predicted to exceed NZ $15 billion (Stevenson et al., 2011). Tourism, New Zealand's top export accounting for 8.7% of national GDP, has been disrupted with the loss of heritage sites and infrastructure, damage to well-known attractions and limited accommodation seen as the main drivers (NZIER, 2011).

Dark Tourism

A societal fascination with site of death and destruction is neither new nor a specifically western phenomena, attending public executions has long been a popular outing. The term 'dark tourism' was coined to describe "the phenomenon that encompasses the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commoditised death and disaster sites" (Lennon & Foley, 1996, pp. 198). Touristic visitations to sites of death and disasters are becoming a pervasive feature of modern society (Stone, 2010) examples include the Killing Fields of Cambodia, the ruins of Hurricane Katrina and the site of Ground Zero, where commercial journeys and experiences are provided to individuals wishing to interact with the macabre (Stone, 2006). There is a substantial body of literature on this topic (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Seaton, 1996; Sharpley, 2005; Stone, 2006; Stone & Sharpley, 2008; Tarlow, 2005), however understanding of the concept remains fragmented and unclear and a number of fundamental issues persist, including whether dark tourism is demand- side or supply- side driven (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). For although dark tourism is a facet of society, implications from the demand side of the phenomena impact substantially at the business operational level. Understanding dark tourism has led to the organisation of subsets based largely upon the nature of the tourist site and the motivations of the tourist; e.g. grief tourism, poverty tourism, suicide tourism and disaster tourism (relevant to the topic of this research), which refers to an influx of visitors to a site following a natural disaster (Kendle, 2008; Obrien, 2011; Van Hoving & Docrat, 2010).

Most debate has centered upon ethical dilemmas regarding tourist motivations. Curiosity towards death has been presented as the major motivation for dark tourism engagement; authenticity, the need to help, homage and remembrance have similarly been identified (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Rittichainuwat, 2008; Stone, 2006). Consequently ethical tensions also exist for businesses that provide commercial experiences to satisfy these motivations, as these would appear to prey on the misfortunes of others, particularly residents of these sites. Stone argues that prior to considering the fundamental question as to why consumers are motivated to engage with dark tourism sites, a detailed understanding of supply is needed to aid in the "identification and subsequent research of potential visitors " (2006, pp. 147). Thus, Stone's 2006 model, The Dark Tourism Spectrum provides the theoretical framework that offers insight into the perceived product features of dark tourism within a lightest to darkest categorisation.
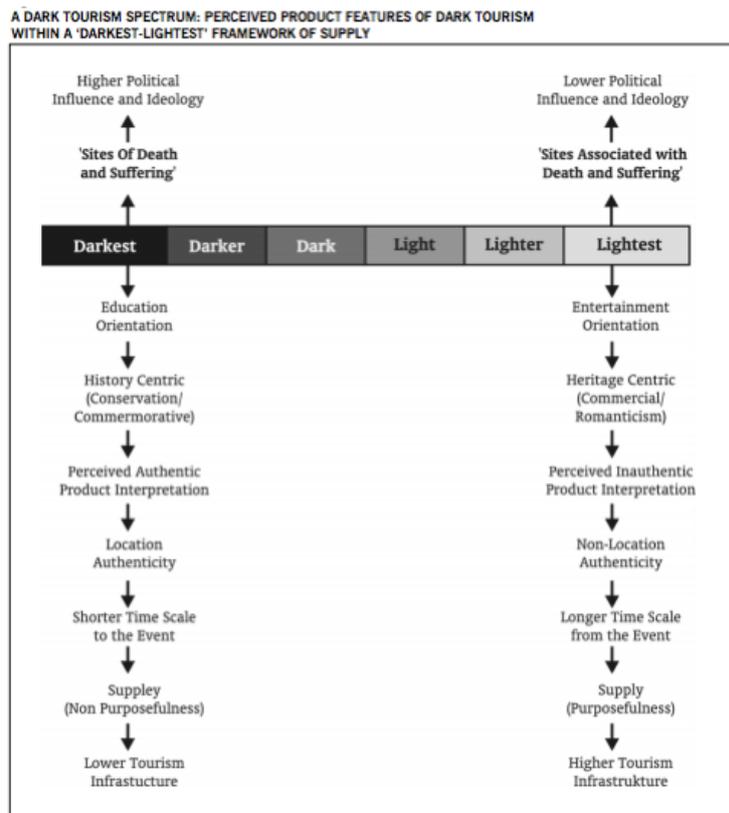

Figure 1: Stone's (2006) Dark Tourism Spectrum

The identification of distinguishing features allows for the classification of products, events and experiences to be placed loosely along the "fluid and dynamic spectrum of intensity (Stone, 2006, pp. 145)." Identified product attributes include:

The spontaneity in development of the site of death or suffering in comparison to intentional visitation to organised attractions or exhibits.

The extent to which the site has been purposefully constructed to reflect events or acts associated with death and suffering, in contrast to non-purposeful or otherwise accidental supply which has occurred because of an individual's relationship with the seemingly tragic event.

Whether or not the dominant reason for attending a site has been spurred by one's interest in death and suffering, and the extent to which supply has been used to enhance and satisfy this interest. This includes the difference between sites *associated* with death and suffering and sites *of* death and suffering (Miles, 2002).

Lastly, the reasons for the supply of dark tourism products; including, but not limited to educational reasons, political reasons, historical reflection, entertainment or economic gain (Stone, 2006).

Products generally move along the spectrum from darkest to lightest over time, the speed of the progress is highly individual (Seaton, 1996).

Residents' and tourists' ability to gaze at authentic areas of destruction at a close chronological distance, and events which remain present in the living memory of survivors and witnesses may be labeled as darker than events which have "descended into the distant past" (Lennon and Foley, 2000; Miles, 2002; Rittichainuwat, 2008; Stone, 2006). We are currently two years since the earthquake, combined with the close spatial affinity of New Zealand's highly connected population (NZIER, 2011), results in a positioning of the Canterbury Earthquake at the darker end of the spectrum at this moment in time.

Nonetheless, plotting the Canterbury Earthquake is made more complex by the fact that supply is currently both non-purposeful and purposeful. Consumers can engage with

non purposeful supply (non commercial experiences) by walking around the Red Zone cordon (earthquake damaged CBD which was the area of maximum destruction and death), this has been defined by the literature as darker in nature, for it possesses location authenticity and limited infrastructure (Miles, 2002; Stone, 2006). The emerging purposeful supply of commercial products, in particular the Red Zone bus tours will, according to Stone's (2006) framework, result in a shift towards the lighter end of the scale over time due to the commercialisation of the product which often leads to greater acceptance. Ultimately it is the combination of the level of fascination with death or disaster on the part of the tourist, as well as the extent to which supply has been developed and designed in order to address this fascination, that determines the shade of darkness (Sharpley, 2005; Stone, 2006).

The tension

Rejuvenation of the city requires the re-establishment of business as usual. Tourism was a substantial industry within Christchurch and most of the tourist attractions have now been destroyed. However, both tourists and residents are motivated to engage with the disaster site for different reasons. Hence, the demand exists to support a purposeful business based upon a dark tourism product which will generate revenue and move towards regeneration of the city. As a result, a range of services including the recently commercialized resource, the Red Zone bus tours around the cordoned Christchurch CBD have been established. This service provides the specific context for our research. We seek to examine the tensions between residents who feel that any business that seeks to profit from the disaster is unethical and insensitive against recognition of the need to encourage tourism as a means of stimulating the economy and encouraging tourist visitation.

Existing literature concludes that without the provision of purposeful supply, consumers will use their own means in order to engage with the tourism product (Stone & Sharpley, 2009). Thus, the Red Zone bus tours around the earthquake damaged CBD provide suppliers with a means of managing the consumption of the dark tourism product, while simultaneously discouraging inappropriate behavior of tourists; such as breaking through the Red Zone cordon. The Red Bus tours were previously incarnated as the government-established organization, CERA's Red Zone tours which allowed over 30,000 tourists and residents to view the damaged city for merely a gold coin donation. In July 2012

these tours began operating as a commercial venture. Resonating with the citywide theme of rebirth and rebuilding, these tours were designed to give people an insight into the impact of the earthquakes on Christchurch, the support the city received from other communities after the quakes, and the recovery effort (Pezzullo, 2009; Red Bus Ltd., 2012).   However, for the tourist industry, reconciling the rhetoric of an extraordinary crisis with that of getting back to "business as usual" is a precarious balancing act (Pezzullo, 2009, pp. 102), and this tension has been well expressed in local media.

Although a rationale to provide a service that meets both the demand and the regenerative agenda does exist, businesses risk the very real dilemma of being accused by the media as insensitive and profiting from misery. Therefore, the Canterbury Earthquake and, specifically, the Red Zone tours, provide a compelling environment in which to understand the social and ethical dilemmas associated with the supply of dark tourism products. From a managerial perspective, this context allows for the development of guidelines which can be used by businesses as a means of understanding how to best manage supply in such circumstances. Hence, it is hoped that the findings from this research project may be useful to the case in question (Christchurch), but also have application on a wider scale.

Research question

How do Christchurch residents perceive the purposeful supply of dark tourism products in the context of the Canterbury Earthquake?

Methodology

We used an exploratory and qualitative method to achieve a deep understanding into the emotions and views of participants (Edmonds, 1999). Previous research regarding consumer perceptions tends towards the use of qualitative approaches due to their ability to "delve into meaning, and the critical or interpretive ways of thinking" (Daymon & Holloway, 2010, pp. 5).

Our main method was focus groups, which allowed for "the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Morgan, 1997 p 55). Given the topic under investigation, we were

particularly interested in gaining insight into the collective attitudes and beliefs of the participants and the interaction between group members when they discussed this highly emotive life changing event and after effects. As Morgan (1998) identifies capturing the interaction between highly engaged individuals can elucidate the 'why' behind the 'what; in participant perspectives. Discussion topics relating to the appropriateness of the Red Zone tours as a mean of rejuvenating the city were juxtaposed with each focus group informant's personal experience of the earthquake and their existing attitudes, values and beliefs. This allows us, as researchers, to experience a wide variety of perspectives and articulations through the dynamic group interaction, often revealing perspectives that would be difficult to anticipate or capture via another means. Different media sources reflected a variety of emotional responses to the proposed Red Zone Bus Tours, the choice of focus groups as a method allowed us to understand the extent that these perspectives resonated with our informants, thus naturalistically reflecting discourse that was occurring in the city every day.

However given the complex and subjective nature of the perceptions that were being investigated, we also used an ethnographic emic approach as we were insiders in the culture under study and experienced the Canterbury earthquakes. Additional data sources were used to add richness to the understanding gained, including news articles and media releases and participation in the actual tour used as the focus of this research. These many information sources added to the richness of the investigation and aided the thematic analysis. Therefore, analysis reflects the informant's view of reality and is interpreted from the inside perspective influenced by our beliefs and perspective as a members of the Christchurch society (Morey & Luthans, 1984). Such an approach allowed for greater knowledge of subject understandings, perceptions, meanings and intentions and was suitable for this situation as we used an exploratory approach and observed a single defined cultural group (Morey & Luthans, 1984; Morris, Leung, & Lickel, 1999).

We conducted six focus groups with Christchurch residents aiming to understand their perceptions and gain insight from their collective discussion as they revealed the fundamental differences and similarities of opinions amongst group members (Morgan, 1997). Convenience sampling was employed in order to recruit participants who had lived in the city for a period, both pre and post earthquake. A range of suburbs were represented and each group had between 6 – 8 members. Despite the range of locations, experiences

and ages within our sample of informants we did not note a bias towards a specific view within any group, each focus group discussion contained heated exchanges and occasions of empathy and agreement. The table below details each focus group.

Table 1: Focus group participants

	Suburb	Capacity know to each other	Method of recruitment
1	Club situated in Eastern Suburbs (badly damaged area)	Members of tennis club	Personal contact in club distributed and endorsed invitations
2	Mostly from Fendalton & Ilam (less damaged area).	Teaching and administrative staff at local school	Personal contact in school distributed and endorsed invitations
3	Wide variety of suburbs and experiences.	Friendship group of University students (local residents)	Known to researcher. Personal contact through phone calls and Facebook invitations.
4	Variety of suburbs and experiences.	Friendship group of young professionals	Personal contact in Christchurch business organised group. Invitations sent through email with endorsement.
5	Mostly from Fendalton (less damaged area).	Members were not known to each other. Family friends and four younger participants (Under 22).	Known to researcher. Personal contact and calls made to invite family friends and others they knew who may be free.
6	Approx 50% from damaged hill suburbs (Cashmere) and 50% less damaged suburbs (Ilam, Riccation, Burnside	Friendship group ages over 45 years who have lived in chch for entire lives. Members knew of each other but not well.	Known to researcher. Personal contact and calls made to invite members.

Data was transcribed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, which is an appropriate analysis tool for this research, as it systematically evaluates the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communications (including transcripts of focus group discussions). This allowed for the identification, analysis and reporting of recurring themes within the data set in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes are produced inductively and not restricted to pre-determined codes (Creswell,

2003), hence providing a more accurate interpretation of the data. The focus group transcripts were used as the primary source for analysis, each was treated individually and we considered conflicts, tensions, content and consensus expressed between and from focus group members. As researchers, we individually mapped each focus group before collaborating and collating themes, then moving to the next focus group transcript we repeated the process. Next, we iteratively revisited the transcripts and through discussion, the number of themes was reduced and became more specific and defined. As our interpretation unfolded, we applied our emergent themes across all our data sources (transcripts, media reports, field notes etc). Our aim was to identify the most recurrent and robust themes and congruency across all our data set. Our system of peer coding ensured trustworthiness; through these processes a deep understanding was gained and the findings are outlined and explained in the following section.

Findings

Informants continuously differentiated their experiences and feelings resulting from their direct experiences, from their perceptions of outsiders. Hence we have organised the findings into an *"us"* and *"them"* perspective (*"them"* being how residents perceive potential tourists/visitors to Christchurch may view the phenomenon). However the theme of profit was not articulated in this manner and sits apart from the subsequent themes. The diagrams associated with each section provide a graphical representation of the environment and relationships between themes, presented from both perspectives. The quotes included for each theme are by no means representative of all informants' views but are selected to give particular insight about the range of tensions experienced and strength of emotion expressed.

Themes from the "Us" Perspective: Residents

This diagram represents how each theme has changed since the earthquake in the perceptions of the residents; some have changed radically and reached a point of stasis others have not changed. The blue spot on the black time arrow represent the point at which data was collected. Previous research identified curiosity towards death, authenticity, the need to help, homage and remembrance as motivations for dark tourist whereas these

themes reflect how residents view purposeful business supply but also give insight into their personal journey since the earthquake and have some elements of the above motivations. Our findings expand upon these elements and we have renamed and developed the themes to reflect their perceptions at this point in time.
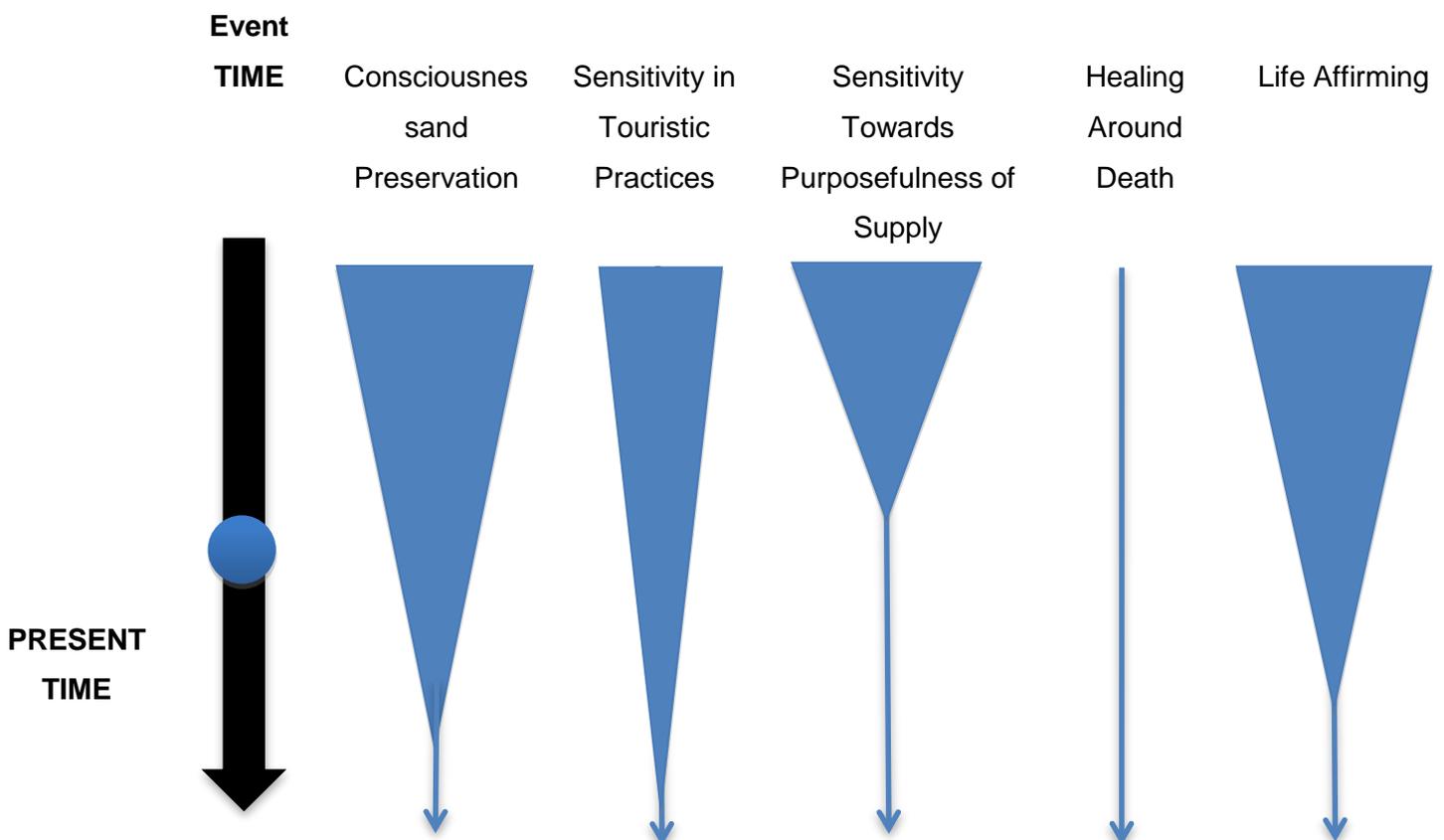

Figure2: Themes From the "Us" Perspective: Residents

Consciousness and Preservation

Immediately following a disaster the media spurs interest and mediates exposure of the event across the globe. Maintaining focus and facilitating public interest, through constant communications and the provision of supply, becomes a subsequent issue (Lennon & Foley,

2000). The Christchurch Earthquake featured at a global level at the time of the event but two years later residents feel as though the Canterbury Earthquake had already left the consciousness of many New Zealanders and thus agreed that the Red Zone tour would be a means of maintaining the disaster in the consciousness of national and international visitors. There is a degree of recognition amongst residents that Christchurch is still represented in some media but they largely feel forgotten. These quotes represent the ways in which residents feel forgotten by the media and why it matters to them.

Table 2: Consciousness and Preservation

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*"But it also keeps, oh, it sounds awful doesn't it, to say to keep it alive…the more outsiders who are coming in and realising what we are living the better. They go away and are talking about it so that people will continue to help. We need help."*
Quote 2	*"I think it is important, as a tourist thing,…you do need that in the future too. This happened, this was huge and it hugely affected the people of Christchurch. So, to just let it go in the future, to just be buried in the ground …it's got to become a part of history and with that there is an element of that dark tourism. Just as we go to Auschwitz now and walk through for an hour or two, It's quite respectful."*
Quote 3	*"We don't want to be forgotten either, because a disaster happens, yes, it's in the news and our local paper all the time, but if you look in the Sunday Times, if you look nationally, then it's not in there all the time. There are small snippets, but it does bring peoples' knowledge to it and it keeps it in the forefront so that they do have an understanding that everyone's been so put out by it……. For that reason, I think it's a good thing to have it. I mean, it must be quite sobering to go around and have a look, as a person in from outside, I mean, it certainly is for us to do it…and I would like to do it but I just don't know if I'm up to it. But it does keep it in the forefront, doesn't it?"*

The quotes resonate with a sense of resentment for being forgotten, by the media and 'the rest of the world'; hence, demonstrating a sentiment that would support the Red Zone bus tours by addressing this perception positively. One participant suggested leaving certain buildings in ruins to preserve the memory of this disaster, thus aligning with literature which states that the integrity of important sites is often guarded by residents and preserved as part of the commodification process, in order to reinforce and represent the disaster (Lennon & Foley, 2000). Over time, as buildings are repaired and new infrastructure established, our informants feel that the dark nature of the event will be diminished or forgotten and somehow their suffering is also diminished by this process. Figure 1 maps the large media coverage at the time of the event and its rapid subsequent reductions, at this stage it is still observably in local media but diminishing.

Sensitivity in Touristic Practices

Residents were sensitive about the possible exploitation and 'rubbernecking' that could occur around the city of Christchurch. Particularly, some participants expressed their concerns regarding the act of taking photos.

Table 3: Sensitivity in Touristic Practices

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*"You're talking about Les mills aren't you? See, that's interesting because I go there as well and it's right by the CTV building. - well, where it used to be. And I'm constantly running into tourists and they are actually out there taking photos and standing where the CTV building was. They are fossicking around and I don't like them for that. I mean, I have nothing to do with that building. There's no personal attachment there until it was gone and until what happened. But I see these people there and it's like – "Go away, that's where 115 people died. You're standing next door to that much death and destruction and you've actually just come to have a look."*

| Quote 2 | *"For me, I'm in the middle of it still. I'm not distancing myself from it. I'm living it. And basically you're coming to look at what makes me sad. And that's what gets me. I don't like that. "* |
| Quote 3 | *"So I guess the one thing that I can say, personally, from my tour, when it went past the CTV building there were some people who took photos. But what I took from it, from my personal journey, was the horror that so many people died in such a tiny site. I couldn't comprehend it. "* |

These quotes reflect the raw hurt and emotion being experienced by residents and how they are responding differently, to some the act of taking a photo is offensive, and to others it is cathartic. Over time as the areas of destruction become less visible, it is likely that the act of taking photos will become less sensitive as there will not be a physical sight worthy of photography. Figure 1 shows the current position that residents are still sensitive to some touristic practices (taking photographs) but this is reducing as time passes.

Sensitivity towards Purposefulness of Supply

Post-disaster organisations face the dilemma of determining the point at which is becomes acceptable to provide purposeful touristic experiences. However, acceptance is largely subjective, governed by one's own experience, involvement and emotions regarding the event. A general agreement between participants and literature alike, nevertheless, suggests that the closer the chronological distance to the event, the greater the degree of empathy and emotion between sightseer and product (Lennon & Foley, 2000). These informant's quotes add to existing knowledge by confirming the existence of a relationship between time and emotion. As yet Christchurch does not appear to have reached a point in time in which the purposefulness of supply has become acceptable to all for, this disaster is "*still going on, it is fresh*" and *"it's not something that will just suddenly end."* This impression is supported by the continuing aftershocks that regularly occur.

Host communities often feel greater emotional connections to the event in contrast to tourists and therefore the point at which supply is acceptable may vary greatly between these parties. For many of our informants, the provision of the Red Zone bus tours seemed

more appropriate than the previous CERA earthquake tours. The principle of regeneration, profit, motivation and the intended target audience all played a role in this perception, thus highlighting the difference in meaning between similar experiences. The following quotes elucidate the interplay between these tensions and highlight the complexity. While the previously run CERA tours may have been aimed at residents and provided for only a gold coin donation, the Red Zone bus tours are aimed equally at both residents and tourists, and are more developed, requiring a larger entrance fee, providing a commentary, and using visual displays. Such features, in combination with the overriding time difference between the two services, may explain the changing views of participants.

Table 4: Sensitivity Towards Purposefulness of Supply

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*"You can't wait for it (the disaster) to finish because it doesn't have like a solid end date. I guess that makes it different to events like wars. There is an end date for wars and after that you can start establishing places like memorials where people can go to pay their respects. With the earthquake, it could be years but people want a way to reflect on the event now. Especially since it's a natural disaster, it's really fascinating to people to see what has happened because it was so unexpected and devastating."*
Quote 2	*"It's quite difficult though because I think if it was any sooner, it would be too soon to make something an attraction that people could go and look at. Because it's too related to what happened on that day. But now it seems too late, so maybe it's pointless. There's probably not a best time at all."*
Quote 3	Participant who had seen the CBD for the first time following the earthquake, through taking part in a Red Zone tour: *"I thought it was phenomenal, it was part of my grieving and I recommended it to other people. But I warned them to be aware that it was really emotional and they had to be ready for it, but I thought it was brilliant."*

Quote 4	*"My big problem with the first one (the original bus tours run by CERA) was it was so close. And you were seeing the rubble, now you're seeing empty lots and hearing about what was there. You don't have that devastation on your face anymore, so I think the timing has worked."*

Evidently, the Red Zone bus tours may be plotted at the darker end of the Dark Tourism Spectrum, for they are yet to move from living memory into history (Lennon & Foley, 2000). From both the residents' perspective and supporting literature, it appears that the sensitivity towards purposeful supply will decrease over time but is strongly individual and our informant's attitude towards the 'right time' was linked closely to their personal journey. We support and reconfirm the importance of purposeful supply and time scale included in Stone's Dark Tourism Spectrum (2006). Hence, we have mapped residents' attitude towards purposeful supply on Figure 1 as showing acceptance towards the concept but the practice remains complex.

Healing Around Death

Residents felt as though outsiders may be engaging with sites of death due to their curiosity with the macabre, whereas in contrast residents' visitation to sites of death focused around remembrance and confronting death as part of the grieving process. This set of quotes reflect a surprising sense of empathy regarding touristic practices (which is quite different from concerns regarding the act of taking photographs), which links closely to the theme of catharsis, for engaging in visiting such sites may allow for a strong emotional release. The quotes also give depth and dimension to the perception of difference between residents and tourists.

Table 5: Healing Around Death

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*"I think tourists would want to know that (about the sites of death).., That is macabre and we know, and it's a different feeling for us, it is real sadness. Whereas, I think, to tourists, they might not understand. It's a sensationalist sort of thing."*
Quote 2	*"Yeah, I think if I was visiting Christchurch then it would be of interest to me. Yeah, I do think that. I think it would be interesting, just because it's a natural disaster and what it can do to a major city. I think I would be interested in seeing it. But I think having lived here; it's a bit of a grief process isn't it?"*
Quote 3	*"I definitely think it is different if you are a local than a tourist. It would be like us going overseas and all we'd want to know really was where and how many people died."*
Quote 4	*"I chose not to go on it (the tour) because of the darkness of it really, because there was all that death and dying and the grief associated with it, and I can't quite get my head around that whole people going on the bus thing, on a tourist bus to look at it, really. I can't get my head around it. I mean, I understand from the grief perspective that it can be very sobering and this allows people to process it, but I still wrestle with it."*

Overall, residents were concerned with the way in which death was interpreted and re-presented to audiences with one participant mentioning *"it is okay as long as they don't make it personal."* Participants continually suggested that there was no point in denying what had occurred; therefore the reality of death should be included in the tour. Therefore we have mapped this perception as not really changing since the disaster occurred.

Life Affirming

Dark tourism experiences have the ability to stimulate questions and produce anxieties concerning humanity and the modern world (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Stone, 2010).

Particularly for survivors, experiencing such an event can make one question the reasons for one's survival, while simultaneously installing feelings of guilt for those who were not so fortunate. This theme was demonstrated strongly in analysis and the following quote summarises well the implicit support for the Red Zone tours by recognising the affirmation of having "*lived through it*". In relation to time, it is difficult to anticipate how this theme will change as it a very personal construction. Literature suggests that constant reinforcement of the situation through the continuing aftershocks, combined with media exposure, may have an effect on consciousness, which subsequently may continue to re-affirm one's survival (Stone & Sharpley, 2009). Thus, as time progresses the ability of such events to continue to be life affirming is likely to decrease.

Table 6: Life Affirming

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*"I think it's humans measuring their humanity, actually. We measure our humanity against these sights, whether they're natural disasters or whatever they are. We sort of take ourselves as a little chunk of humanity and we gaze. We make some sort of links, whatever that link is. Like you've got to not do this. It's all about the humanity of it. So I think it's natural that we do this. It's like you look at a big mountain, you're measuring yourself against this, against the big mountain."*

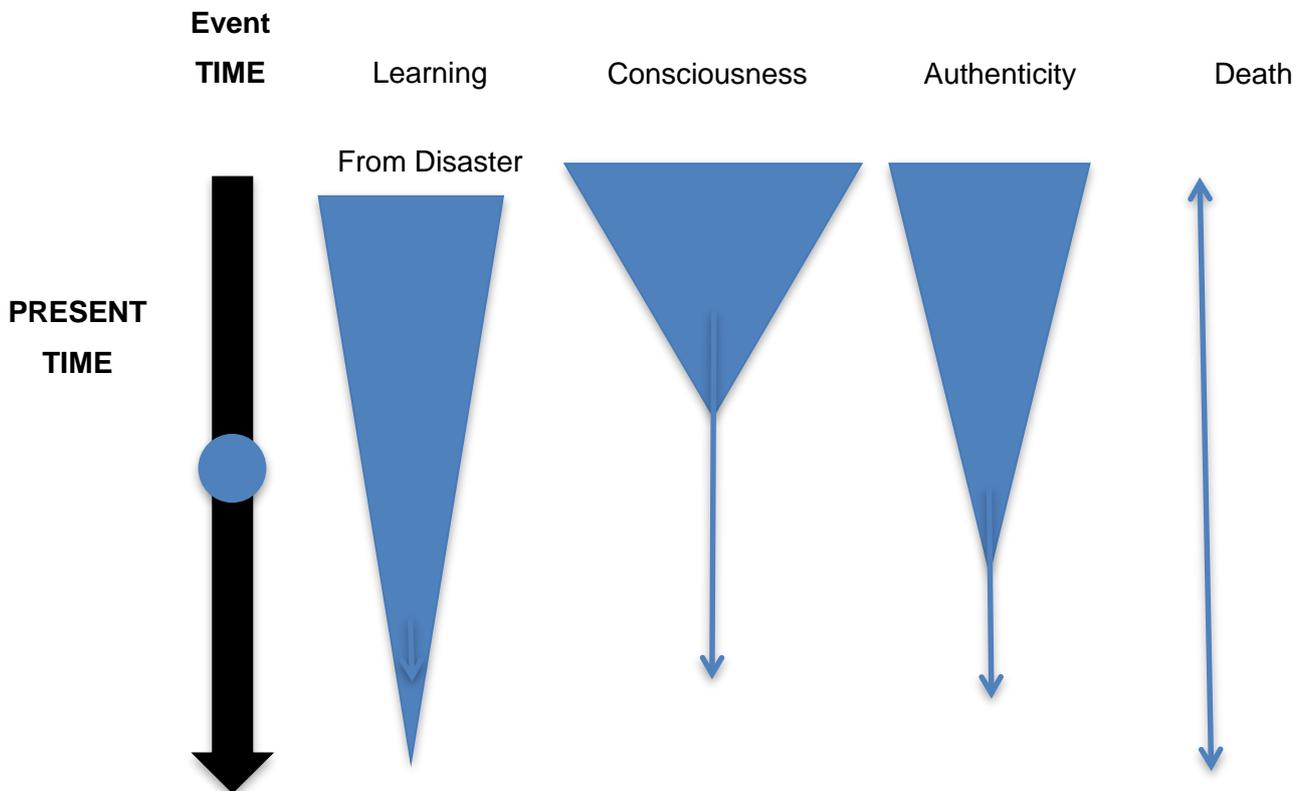## Themes from the "Them" Perspective: Tourists

Figure 3: Themes From the "Them" Perspective: Tourists

Learning from Disaster

Educating outsiders on how to effectively function within a post-disaster environment was seen as a positive consequence of disaster. It is acknowledged that people who engage with a site in the aftermath of a disaster, may gain a greater understanding of why such a disaster occurred, and consequently learn how to prevent such catastrophes in the future (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Ryan, 2007). Participants reflected this idea in their comments by making comparisons to past events to provide evidence regarding how society has learnt from our errors. Thus, participants believe that communicating an education centric message would allow for an increase in knowledge for outsiders, particularly with regards to safety. It was understood that such knowledge could then be dispersed "*throughout the world*" to benefit future generations. Much learning has already taken place and been communicated to the

wider audience but the proposed Red Zone tours were seen as a way of continuing that learning, hence the mapping of this theme is shown as having an enduring affect.

Table 7: Learning From Disaster

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*"And the other side of that is, the other side of WW2 and Vietnam is that we never want those things to happen again. That is where these tourism things are important because it shows what can happen if you let things get out of hand. Even with natural disasters it reminds people that they are not in control."*
Quote 2	*"The conviction that was burning inside of me, that we must not ever allow buildings to be built like that ever again...It is critical that we make sure the laws in our country protect anything like that ever happening again."*
Quote 3	*"You can bring into it how to behave in a disaster too. You can bring in your safety information and why there was a loss of life…you can bring all those aspects into it too, as a learning aspect."*
Quote 4	*Participant 1: "I went to a Helen Clark talk the other day and there was an engineer there who was talking about the remarkable work NZ had done in comparison to other places like Haiti, where a phenomenal amount of people died. So that education, that goes out throughout the world."* *Participant 2: "Well, a perfect example is the tsunamis; the whole of the Pacific Basin now has a tsunami warning system, which it never had before. "*

These quotes illustrate our informant's belief that the earthquake has similarities with other tragedies and education may prevent future similar events occurring. The implication is that the proposed tours would assist with that goal. Literature suggests that there is a fine line between education and entertainment (Walsh, 1992). Our informants did not address any concept of entertainment as being relevant for visitors. However as history suggests, events

may be transported from educational-orientated to entertainment-orientated as time progresses, evidently allowing events to shift from the darker to lighter ends of the Dark Tourism Spectrum. Therefore, although the Canterbury Earthquake is yet to be overshadowed by entertainment value, it is likely that this will change, to some extent, over time.

Authenticity

Literature outlines the problems associated with the media's portrayal of dark events including its tendency to focus on the most sensational parts of the phenomena. Tourism suppliers, faced with this dilemma of deciding upon which and whose history prevails in interpretation, are often blamed for the supposed inaccuracies and biases which tend to surround the supposed representation of reality (Lennon & Foley, 2000). Our informants spoke of the importance of allowing outsiders to view the destruction for themselves, to fully experience the reality of the situation. In contrast to historical sites, Canterbury Earthquake's close chronological distance means that consumers have the unique ability to gaze at evidence. This displays an unravelling reality that is yet to be overshadowed with potentially inaccurate representations (Lennon & Foley, 2000). However, residents voiced concerns regarding the future authenticity of the site and urged suppliers to "*not wait too long*", for evidence of the destruction is rapidly diminishing. Providing videos and photos throughout the tour to show the past infrastructure, as well as the recently cleaned up areas of destruction, may improve the authenticity of the interpretation and experience.

Table 8: Authenticity

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*Participant 1: "The Red Zone's shut, isn't it? There are mostly only empty lots there now."*
	Participant 2: "And, actually, in some ways that might not actually make people realise what we've been through because most of it is cleaned up now and the empty lots don't compare to the crumbled

	buildings. They don't really show the impact. People will just see the empty space and think "Aw, that was nothing."

Residents similarly felt that participating in a Red Zone tour may only enable tourists to view a fraction of the complete situation, as some areas are "neither presented or paid similar reverence, as official sites of remembrance" (Lennon & Foley, pp. 166). Residents felt as though outsiders, who were not presented with a view of the suburbs, may lack some understanding in regards to the magnitude of this disaster. Although our informants felt that going to the suburbs would be a much more authentic experience it was felt to be unacceptable to have tourists *"rubbernecking over our misery and that is where the real misery is, in the suburbs".* These quotes elucidate well the conflict felt my many residents of wanting to share their experience but having a visceral response to being the subject of touristic gaze which was mostly negative.

Table 9: Authenticity

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*"In a way, I feel like going to the suburbs could be like using it in a different way, like shellshock for people to show them how lucky they are, and to show them how they can help. But yeah, it's not the same type of thing. It's the more real side of it."*
Quote 2	*"I know people after that first one were saying, "people just need to get over it, to get on with it" but when they come and see it with their own eyes, then it's a different reality. Compassion comes in, and empathy. "*
Quote 3	*"It's good for outsiders to have a view of what has happened…It was interesting last week when the mayor had 11 or 12 mayors came down and in the newspaper article it actually said how emotional it was for them because they just couldn't comprehend the extent of the damage."*
Quote 4	*"There are people who come to visit that want to be shown around the city, but they are detached from all their emotions really aren't they, it's different. I guess they've only heard about it on the news."*

As literature and research suggest, authenticity is likely to decrease over time, as real sites of disaster are replaced with representations (Stone, 2010). Managers must ensure that interpretation and design of the service reflects the 'reality' of the situation, in order to mitigate the conflict existing between residents and tourists.

Death

Comments surrounding death, particularly sensitivities regarding its interpretation, may be explained by the Western modern ideals, which view death as somewhat privatised (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Thus, although participants acknowledged a fascination with death (and destruction) they tended to reveal this inadvertently through referring to others (Preece & Price, 2005), as revealed in quote 1 and 2. Respondents believed that outsiders would be interested in hearing about death, spurred by curiosity and a fascination with mortality; what Stone refers to as the "pornography of death" (2006). Whereas quote 3 hints at a more complex understanding of death, as though a well known landmark has an appeal that can equal the darker attraction of being a 'death site'.

Table 10: Death

Quote	Comment
Quote 1	*"Now, you know what, I bet you it's that kind of information that people want to know. They wouldn't admit it, but it's the kind of thing people are interested in, isn't it?"*
Quote 2	*"People are interested only because people have died."*
Quote 3	*"I think when it involves historic landmarks like the cathedral, people from overseas relate to that. All the churches really, because they were the most significant buildings in the earthquake originally, that came down. It wasn't because there was loss of life but just how lucky we had been at that stage. So, I think even if we hadn't had loss of life in the CTV and Pynes building, people would still go in to look at the damage. "*

The discursive technique of using 'the other' as the subject does reiterate that residents understand and emphasise with the touristic fascination with death.

Profit

The contentious issue of financial business profit summarises the central tension that emanate from the need for the city to regenerate, against the perception of profiteering from misery and others' misfortunes. As expected a range of perceptions were expressed which sat on a clear continuum ranging from negativity towards profiting from the disaster, to the need to commercialise in order to rejuvenate and stimulate the economy. At the midpoint of the continuum, respondents felt that services such as the Red Zone tours could have a positive effect on the community, however most agreed that a portion of the profit should be put back into aiding the recovery. Although this may seem an obvious finding, negativity towards profit is not unique to this situation, with moral criticism regarding the commercialisation of death and destruction, largely evident at sites such as Auschwitz and Westminster Abbey, in which the decision to charge an admission fee has been seen as contentious (Stone & Sharpley, 2009).

Table 11: Attitudes towards Profit

Quote	Comment
Negativity	*"No. I don't like the idea. It's not fair for people to come in and make money out of this. It just is not right."*
Portion of profit donated to recovery	*"I don't think a business from our own city should be making money off this unless they are giving something back. They could easily give some of it back to CERA, but I think it would be best to give it back to the people who are still without homes."* *"I don't have an issue with paying the money. I mean, I'd pay 20 or 30 dollars for it but my issue is that some of that should go back, like a charitable donation. It's the gesture of it."*

Rejuvenation	*"Overall it could be a good source of revenue for the city. It gives tourists a reason to stay and not just pass through. "*
	We're an international port. We've got tourists coming in all the time and they've just been turned away. We really need something like that (the Red Zone bus tours) here to keep people interested.

A majority of informants' attitudes towards the profit-making venture occupied the middle ground; profit-generating business activity related to viewing the site of the disaster was acceptable if there was a financial contribution towards the recovery; without such a donation, residents felt as though they were "*being taken advantage of"*. Literature regarding the provision of Katrina tours around Hurricane-damaged areas of New Orleans illuminated an analogous issue. It was perceived that the problem was similar, not in the revival of tourism, but rather in the way funds are unfairly allocated following major disasters (Pezullo, 2009). Diminishing the tensions of sensitive residents, while pleasing stakeholders, requires consideration of fund distribution. An obvious solution would be increasing the price in order to appear charitable. A significant number of participants stated they were willing to pay more than the current tour price if a portion of their fund was donated to earthquake recovery. From a positive perspective, participants discussed how tourism services may aid in stimulating the revival of the Christchurch tourism industry and economy by providing employment and allowing innovative businesses to emerge. Participants viewed the supply of tourism services focused around natural disasters in a more positive light than man-made events such as the war on terrorism, for natural disasters were seen as uncontrollable events, previous literature has not make this distinction. Making the most of a difficult situation was seen as a justification for the supply of commercial services in the post-earthquake context.

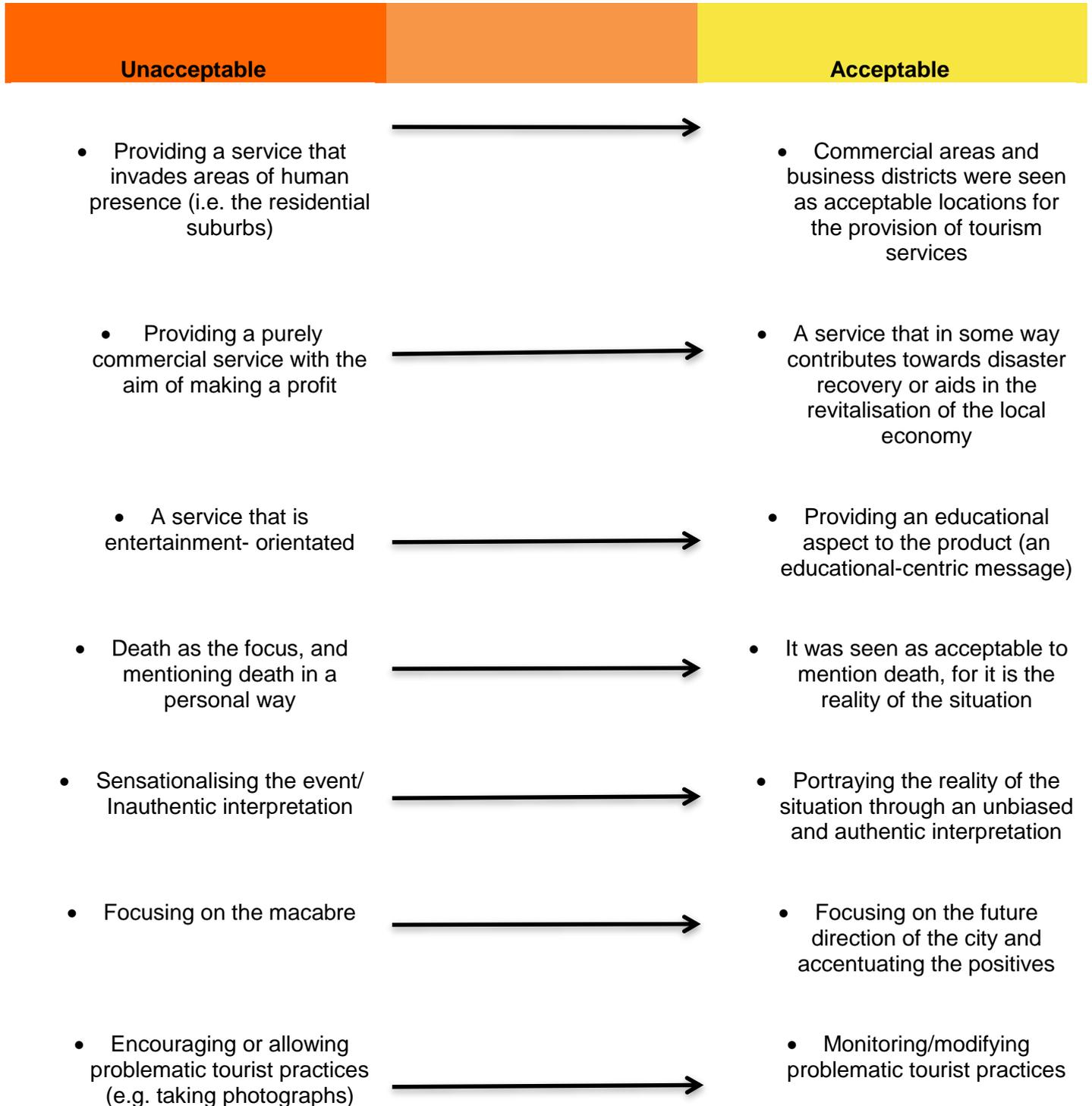### Interpretation and Application of Findings

The previous section has mapped residents' perceptions at this point in time, from both the "us" and "them" perspectives; by doing this we have added to Stone's (2006) Dark Tourism Spectrum by providing detailed insight into one area of the model, purposeful business supply in the context of the Christchurch Earthquake. Our research findings also have

practical implications for business managers attempting to formulate strategy in the dark tourism context. The following framework outlines our applicable key findings and their managerial implications. We are not proposing that these findings are fixed and applicable in all scenarios; rather we seek to use the consumer research we have conducted during these turbulent times to create a means of finding balance between the many tensions. The passage of time will modify where unacceptable practice lies (Stone 2006), in the interim a thorough understanding of the following factors can aid in minimising the aspects of tension, which currently prevail.

Residents comments suggest that the provision of tourism services in locations of commercial activity, for instance the CBD of Christchurch, are more acceptable than entering areas of human presence such as the severely damaged Eastern suburbs. Whilst engaging with areas of human presence may reflect the reality of the situation which allows outsiders to comprehend the magnitude of the disaster, such activity remains far too sensitive at this point in time. Another obvious application of this research would be an increase in the tour price to enable a contribution towards earthquake recovery initiatives, possibly contributing directly to the declared Christchurch business objectives of restoring the site, benefitting the community and employing local people. The application of such initiatives also requires clear communication to the polemic audiences, engaging and facilitating dialogue that allows residents to process these initiatives, not just as part of the recovery but part of their personal experience of the disaster and its aftermath.

Figure 4: Application of research findings to business practice

Unacceptable		Acceptable
• Providing a service that invades areas of human presence (i.e. the residential suburbs)	→	• Commercial areas and business districts were seen as acceptable locations for the provision of tourism services
• Providing a purely commercial service with the aim of making a profit	→	• A service that in some way contributes towards disaster recovery or aids in the revitalisation of the local economy
• A service that is entertainment- orientated	→	• Providing an educational aspect to the product (an educational-centric message)
• Death as the focus, and mentioning death in a personal way	→	• It was seen as acceptable to mention death, for it is the reality of the situation
• Sensationalising the event/ Inauthentic interpretation	→	• Portraying the reality of the situation through an unbiased and authentic interpretation
• Focusing on the macabre	→	• Focusing on the future direction of the city and accentuating the positives
• Encouraging or allowing problematic tourist practices (e.g. taking photographs)	→	• Monitoring/modifying problematic tourist practices

We also strongly advocate the consumer research undertaken here should be iterative throughout the recovery process. We believe that tensions will always exist in such situations but the nuances and depth revealed by the residents' responses demonstrate that tensions do not always represent disagreement between varying stakeholders. This is exemplified by the insights gained around the representation of death. Resident's understood the fascination this might exert over visitors but to represent death in a personal way or as the focus of the service was seen as unacceptable among residents. Tourism managers should restrain from revealing personal details of the deceased as well as information regarding how deaths occurred. However, it is suggested that death should not be ignored as confrontation with death allows for catharsis, acceptance and a means of grieving. Engaging with sites of death, (for example the CTV building) allows visitors to comprehend the disaster and remember the lives lost. Residents and tourists alike are fascinated with this concept and therefore death should be mentioned in an appropriate manner. Identifying what is defined as appropriate, particularly in this time of heightened sensitivity, requires further investigation.

Rather than sensationalising the event, management must focus on portraying the reality of the situation through an unbiased and authentic interpretation in order to engage the visitors and affect the emotional responses towards a dark site. Tourism managers should utilise multimedia, such as videos and photos throughout the experience they provide. Residents want visitors to observe past infrastructure, for the city is drastically changing through demolitions and rebuilding and the evidence of the disaster is quickly disappearing. Residents are concerned that only a fraction of the situation is presented to outsiders, therefore using visual interpretation would improve the authenticity of the experience for the visitors and enable them to appreciate the magnitude of the disaster. Lastly, managers must control problematic tourist practices such as taking photographs for this is a contentious issue for the host community. Red Bus Red Zone tours must ask participants to refrain from taking video footage at the CTV building and other sites of mass death as this emerged as an unacceptable touristic practice. Managers must continue to assess perceptions and listen

to feedback to reduce the potential conflict at dark tourism sites. The presented framework outlines recommended strategies and provides managers with a guide which may aid in anticipating the potential areas of conflict likely to stem from the polysemia of opinions surrounding the dark tourism product.

We take the stance that our consumer research benefits from having a practical application, as illuminated by our informants in this research who implore that we must *learn* from dreadful events such as the Christchurch earthquake. We do not propose that practical contributions are privileged over theoretical; rather we draw attention to times of turbulent change and identify that we are driven by a sense of responsibility as researchers to bring our skills to ameliorate the outcomes of this catastrophic event. If this research helps in any small part to Christchurch's recovery, we feel very happy that it should do so.

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