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Beyond Downton Abbey: Remembering the Great War's Fallen Through Education and Marketing

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Abstract – This paper explores the expanding marketing and education mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). Superintendents at overseas cemeteries and battle sites must continue their job of “keeping the headstones white and the grass green” but also must market specific events such as the 70th anniversary of D-Day at the Normandy location and an upcoming 100th anniversary of the end of the *Great War* in 2018. Part of the effort is passing the memory on to the next generation via materials relevant to young people today. U.S. history teachers who received ABMC grants to travel to Meuse-Argonne in France (the resting place of the most U.S. fallen of any overseas cemetery) to prepare materials to teach World War I served as one of two samples for empirical data. Another sample was drawn from battlefield tourists who visited the Normandy World War II beaches on the 70th anniversary of D-Day. Results show “maintaining the memory”, “telling others,” and “simple connection to values/heritage” are key phrases chosen by the respondents on a battlefield tourism survey. From both groups, “I feel proud to visit” was important. “Pilgrimage” is more relevant for the older D-Day group than the young teachers, but both groups indicated that direct interaction with the veterans who were there (Canadian D-Day vets, or in the case of World War I, the teachers spent time with children of WWI soldiers) were major highlights of the trip. Future research will investigate whether these themes are still important motivators once the era of anniversaries is over.

Keywords – Thanatourism, Battlefield tourism, Commemorations, American Battle Monuments Commission, Place-based perspective, Teaching the Great War, Poppy symbol, D-Day

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and/or Practitioners - In this era of battle anniversaries (e.g., 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I, 70th anniversary of D-Day) battle sites and monuments are faced with expanding their missions beyond simply keeping the “headstones white and the

grass green.” A marketing professor and an education professor report on projects using empirical data generated from past marketing battlefield tourism studies, e.g., Clarke and Eastgate (2011) and the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) funded efforts to generate modern teaching materials about the *Great War*. Both the history teachers and tourists on a trip to the D-Day beaches on the 70th anniversary provided empirical data in regard to motivations and perceptions of battlefield tourism. Marketing academics can learn how public sector entities (such as government military cemeteries) must balance the various aspects of their mission and in this case, ABMC benefits from the expertise of marketing and education specialists. This preliminary investigation is perhaps one of the few research projects to combine the fields of marketing and education to “market” remembrance to future generations.

Introduction

August 4 of 2014 marked the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I for Britain. To commemorate, Highclere Castle in England, the location of the very popular British Edwardian television series, *Downton Abbey*, hosted “Heroes at Highclere” a Great War commemoration and charity fundraising event for military families (hence the title for this paper). As the fictional *Downton Abbey* is in the series, Highclere really was transformed into a hospital during the First World War. If one has traveled in Britain recently, that person is aware of other official commemorations of the beginning of the war. In December of 2013 watching a debate in the House of Commons on British television, one of the authors remembers one politician, when discussing the importance of WWI commemorations, said words to the effect of “this is not *Downton Abbey*, we have to be authentic and get it right.” The commemoration of the war is very much in the public consciousness in Germany too, according to one German professor on visiting assignment in the U.S. (Wendler, 2014). How is the United States honoring the commemoration?

The two authors of this paper (one a marketer, one an education professor) met through separate projects involving American Battle Monuments Commission. Since 1947, ABMC has served to oversee American memorials and cemeteries around the world. These projects focused specifically on the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery near Verdun, France. This World War I cemetery contains the most fallen of any U.S. cemetery in Europe. In 2013, ABMC provided funding for a team of scholars and in-service K-12 educators to design open educational resources that aimed to leverage the physical, geographic, cultural, and historical view of the ABMC and surrounding areas in order to underscore the importance of WWI in US history curricula. This project endeavor included firsthand experience at the Meuse-Argonne site in France in July 2014.

The marketing professor author of this paper became involved with Meuse-Argonne as part of a battlefield tourism project (battlefield tourism is part of thanatourism—dark tourism—and much of this literature applies here) (Clarke

and Eastgate, 2011; Clarke and McAuley, 2013). Qualitative findings show that visitor motivations vary when visiting battle sites and cemeteries, narratives are changing, and segmentation and branding strategies are increasingly important, especially with important anniversaries of the start of World War One and the 70th anniversary of D-Day in June of 2014 and the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in the summer of 2013.

Superintendents vary in their backgrounds and training, hence the approach varies with regard to visitor motivation perceptions and the implementation of the branding mission of the monuments. Some staff are ex-military, some are engineers, etc. They all are charged with “keeping the grass green, the headstones white,” commemoration ceremonies, and interpretation (Winter, 2011). But the idea of interpretation is changing away from helping family members to more of a “telling of a story” and segmentation, branding, and other marketing efforts are becoming more important, even though no commercial activities (e.g., gift shops) are allowed on ABMC premises. Visitors have a wide variety of “stories” and motivations for visiting and in preparation for the WWI centenary, Meuse-Argonne is preparing a new visitor center to accommodate the visitors and their varying reasons for visiting. The marketing professor found it interesting to investigate just how marketers might help when no commercial marketing activities are allowed.

It makes sense that current military personnel visit these sites to learn history and tactics. But non-military students do as well and many groups of local and foreign schoolchildren visit each year. “As the temporal distance between the current generation the war extends, education has become an increasingly important aspect of the services provided” (Winter, 2011: 173). In addition to discussing how understanding marketing principles research can help those charged with the mission of maintaining the memory, this paper focuses on a current project heavily involved with education – that of helping teachers develop curriculum to better teach World War One in America’s classrooms.

Background and Literature Review

Thanatourism (or “dark tourism” or “remembrance tourism”) is an increasing subsegment of the tourism industry (Dunkley et al., 2011). It can range from the macabre such “haunted” tours of large European cities (Krisjanous and Carruthers, 2013), to those who wish to pay respects to sites such as the September 11 Memorial in New York and war battlefields. While such sites and museums in general are being told that they must attract more young people, most tourists at many of these sites are often elderly. Qualitative or observation research is most often used to gather visitor data, but even that is problematic as venues limit research access because of the sensitive nature of many of these sites.

Thanatourism is defined as “travel undertaken to visit places associated with violent death. A subset of “dark tourism ” (Define Thanatourism, nd). Dark

tourism is a recognized academic field, according to “The Institute for Dark Tourism Research (iDTR), based at the University of Central Lancashire, England. According to “Where there is Darkness there is Light,” “If you have ever visited a Holocaust museum, taken a tour around former battlefields, or had an excursion to Ground Zero, then you've participated - perhaps unwittingly - in dark tourism. The term applies to the increasingly popular pursuit of travelling to sites where people have suffered or died in tragic or violent circumstances.”

The author says it best: “Of course, some dark tourism products may be perceived 'darker' than others, and this raises concerns about exploiting tragic history for entertainment or education. Questions are often raised about the justification of such dark sites, attractions and exhibitions.” Of course any use of tragic history must be treated with care and balance approaches must be taken to achieve both the educational and remembrance objectives of the site.

Stone (2012) describes the 9-11 Ground Zero site as a “mixture of media alchemy and Hollywood simulacra means that touristic consumption of tragedy” and “is perceived, to some at least, of questionable social value.” But, tourists at Ground Zero “assume a central function in constructing ‘dark’ tourism and, as such, play a key role in both the literal and symbolic creation and maintenance of the (death) site.” And, of course, the monies that tourists bring in help to preserve the sites.

There is a wide range of thanatourism, ranging from visits to somber sites such 9-11 Ground Zero, the Holocaust museums, and battlefield cemeteries and monuments, to hokey ghost tours through “haunted” old neighborhoods of today’s modern cities (Krisjanous and Carruthers, 2013). This paper focuses on those sites which honor those who fought and those who died in the world wars of the 20th century.

Battlefield tourism is a large subsegment of thanatourism and battlefield tourists are “possibly the most visible of all special interest thanatourists” (Dunkley et al., 2011: 865). Clarke and McAuley (2013) found that some suggest that “sites or destinations associated with war represent the largest single category of tourist attractions in the world” (4), but that battlefield tourism might best be described “through the concepts of nationalism, genealogy and reflexive nostalgia” (14). Of course, there are many battlefields and cemeteries around the world which cover the span of centuries. One example is the Battle of Bannockburn in Scotland, where 700 years ago in 1314, the Scots defeated the English. Not coincidentally, in 2014, 700 years later, Scotland is celebrating a large marketing-laden Homecoming and also the September 18th vote on modern day independence from the UK (results were very close until the final tally with 45% of Scots voting yes for independence and 55% voting to remain in the United Kingdom). Obviously, marketers and politicians take note of these centuries old battles and the sites at which they were fought.

Battlefield Tourism: Pilgrimage and the Commemoration of the Great War in Britain, Australia and Canada, 1919-1939, (Lloyd, 1998) details “the wave of tourists and pilgrims” who visited “the battlefields, cemeteries and memorials of the war [...] which shows how the phenomenon served to construct memory in Britain, as well as in Australia and Canada” (back cover page). *Bodies of War: World War I and the Politics of Commemoration in America, 1919-1933* (Budreau, 2010) concerns “the nationalizing of grief” (back cover page). Both Lloyd and Budreau are historians; others, including marketing researchers, have written about battlefields, government policy towards, and the resulting tourism effects too.

Winter (2011) discusses how many have made a clear distinction between “pilgrim” and “tourist” in battlefield tourism, but her research indicate that the two groups exist on a continuum and the lines between them are blurred. Still, the word “pilgrim” is used often to describe a person who visits battlefields.

Hyde and Harman (2011: 1343), when reporting on visits to the Gallipoli battlefields (an important World War I battle, especially meaningful to Australian and New Zealand citizens) discuss battlefield tourism as a pilgrimage, “a journey to a site that embodies the highly valued, the deeply meaningful, or a source of core identity for the traveller” “In an increasingly secular world, many non-religious people undertake journeys to sites of deep personal meaning.” These are secular pilgrimages and are an “under-researched phenomenon” (1343). For Australians and New Zealanders, a visit to Gallipoli is a “life event” and a “growing cultural expectation” (1345) that every Australian and New Zealander will visit Gallipoli “at least once in their lifetime.” Interest in achieving the life event can come and go over the generations and outside forces can influence too. In the 1980s, the movie *Gallipoli* seemed to increase interest (just as *Saving Private Ryan* created increased interest in visiting the U.S. Normandy WWII cemetery). Also mentioned is the fact that younger generations simply can get to these important sites more easily than could their parents and grandparents. A large portion of the visitors to Gallipoli today are youth and unfortunately, sometimes there are drunken parties at the site, which of course creates numerous management and marketing challenges for those trying to carry out the mission of remembrance. But, since the battlefields are important to the local economy, the locals might seem hesitant to crack down too heavily.

While battlefield tourism is included in the discussion of thanatourism, there are many deeper motivations for visiting such sites, than simply dark tourism motives. Hyde and Harman found from past qualitative research that motivation for visits to Gallipoli include national pride, honoring the war dead, making a family pilgrimage, and the desire to visit the site of an important historical event. And many of the youth reported above have very different reasons for their visits; their motivation is often more leisure oriented and less commemorative.

The empirical research Hyde and Harman conducted found that of their sample of 400 mostly Australian and New Zealand, but some British, citizens,

motivations such as “to pay respects to people who fought for our country,” “because I am proud of my country,” “to experience the actual place where important events happened,” “to experience the real Anzac Day” and “what happened at Gallipoli represents the best values of my country and my countrymen” were rated highly. The simple truth of “I wanted to see Turkey” was also a highly rated motivation.

Not surprisingly, there were some significant differences between visitor segments. The spiritual motives of Australians and New Zealanders were higher than any other national group and nationalistic motives were significantly higher for Australians than for New Zealanders. “Seeking friendship” was a reason for young visitors, showing that segmentation does play an important role in managing these sites. One limitation of the Hyde and Harman research that they reported is that no Turkish visitors were interviewed. This is similar to limitations with many battlefield tourism projects; often there is limited input from those who live in the country where the sites are located.

Labeled “warfare tourism” by Dunkley, Morgan and Westwood (2011), their article “Visiting the trenches: Exploring meanings and motivations in battlefield tourism” further explores the role that battlefield tourism has in thanatourism explaining that this form of tourism “turns conventional tourism on its head making it difficult to apply generic tourism motivational theories to its study” (p. 861). They also state that the different categories of motivations for visits are not mutually exclusive and that some visit the sites “not so much to see what it was like, as to celebrate what they already knew” (Dunkley et al., quoting Seaton, 1999: 152).

Their research is especially relevant to this paper, as their respondents visited the Somme and Ypres, not far from the World War 1 sites on which the current authors are focusing. The small qualitative sample (similar in size to the one reported by the current authors in this paper) found that reflection and commemoration driven by a moral obligation are important motivations. Visits also collectively mark the transmission of meaning from one generation to another.

Not all motives are collective ones. An obvious reason for visits has to do with personal family history (e.g., Clarke and McAuley, 2013), tying in to “roots,” “diaspora,” or “legacy” (McCain and Ray, 2003) tourism. Some wish to trace “a blood connection to WWI” (Dunkley et al., 2011: 863). Often the modern day visitor goes as a representative for a deceased family member who cannot make the trip. A visit enables the traveler to observe first hand “the scale” (861) of the trench warfare. At least one of their respondents who had a very specific interest in logistics, placed importance on the validation of what the locations (e.g., “no man’s land”) looked like, something one cannot achieve as well through simply reading about the war. The authors of this current paper found the same feeling of validation when one respondent said that it was one thing to know how important capture of a certain hill was strategically, but standing on the hill and

seeing the surrounding countryside makes the importance so much more understandable.

Clarke and Eastgate (2011) found that “religion meets commemoration” (31) during Australians’ visits to the Western Front of World War I. For Australia, the war was a nation building experience, so that national history can play a role in Australians’ motivations. They state that battlefield tours are more than tourism experiences, they are secular pilgrimages. Their respondents indicated the tour to be the achievement of long-held personal goals which created their own heritage to add to their family history. While the themes of pilgrimage and family history are reiterated in others’ research, Clarke and Eastgate are some of the few who point out that many of the preserved sites, while at authentic locations, have undergone “restoration, modernization and sanitization” (33) for visitors’ easy consumption and safety. The visit becomes “an epiphany moment of emotion and culture built upon memory, history and learning” (34). In the current research reported in this paper, the authors build on the “learning” aspect as teachers who will actually teach World War One to America’s young, travel to important World War I sites to experience the authenticity, even though the locations are restored and modernized for safety. Clarke and Eastgate emphasized the “state of education” (35) and how it contributes to “cultural capital” (35), which is learned (hence the important role of teachers).

Clarke and Eastgate also found that the rural setting is the “essence” (38) of the Western Front, which is relevant for the current research in that the Meuse-Argonne area of France where the young teachers were working, is also very rural. In contrast, the Normandy area where the D-Day visitors were touring is said by some to be over commercialized (Lest We Forget, 2013). (One of the current authors found a “D-Day Paintball” location being promoted in close proximity to the numerous authentic hallowed locations in Normandy.) The Clarke and Eastgate respondents indicated that enjoyment is related to self-definition and goal attainment and the entire group agreed that being with others who shared similar interests and experiences was important. “The overriding outcome was to tell others about the Western Front experience” (40). The teachers at Meuse-Argonne in the present research also mentioned that a highlight was being with others who share their passion.

Clarke and McAuley (2013) conducted research during a reinterment of Australian World War I soldiers who fought at the Fromelles battle. It was not until 2007 that a burial pit of over 500 was discovered and the tour was to commemorate the reburial. This particular site, especially because of the reinterment, is unique, but all sites of battles are unique in their own way. Clarke and McAuley refer to the sites important to the Australian narrative as “Australian sub-brands” (8), evoking the place branding that the marketing field can contribute.

The reinterment event was also described as a “hallmark event” (9) which means that one has to physically be present at these events to truly obtain the

complete experience. In the current paper, the hallmark event was the 70th anniversary of D-Day at Omaha beach in Normandy, most likely the last time D-Day veterans will be able to return for a major anniversary. Adding to the hallmark event for the Australians at Fromelles was the fact that it was a “remarkable ceremony for a generation far removed from the First World War era and actions” (11). Many nations are facing modern challenges of keeping the memory alive for today’s generations far removed from the First World War. Later in this paper, the authors report on young American teachers working to design school curriculum to keep alive the memory of the First World War.

Clarke and McAuley (2013) found that that respondents indicated that interacting with the French people “was a delightful outcome” (13). The group of D-Day tour respondents surveyed for the current paper also reported that the interaction with the French, especially French schoolchildren, who showed so much appreciation to the D-Day vets, was an important part of the tour.

ABMC (American Battle Monuments Commission – abmc.gov); Marketing and Education Challenges

The American Battle Monuments Commission, an agency of the executive branch of the U.S. government, was established in 1923. It maintains the U.S. cemeteries on foreign soil. Formally, the mission includes (About Us, 2014).

Designing, constructing, operating and maintaining permanent American cemeteries in foreign countries.

Establishing and maintaining U.S. military memorials, monuments and markers where American armed forces have served overseas since April 6, 1917, and within the United States when directed by public law.

Controlling the design and construction of permanent U.S. military monuments and markers by other U.S. citizens and organizations, both public and private, and encouraging their maintenance.

The informal mission in the past, as discussed below, has been “keeping the grass green and the headstones white.”

Recently, ABMC has opened new visitor centers at Point-du-Hoc, France and Cambridge, England. It was at Colleville-sur-Mer, where the U.S. cemetery at Omaha Beach is, that the official French-U.S. commemoration of D-Day was held (70th Anniversary of D-Day 2014). Imagine the logistics and marketing efforts which have to be successful to enable President Hollande of France and President Obama, D-Day veterans and visitors, to successfully and safely gather at such an important heritage site. And, this was on the same day that other official international ceremonies were happening, attended by other world leaders, such as the Queen.

In time for this, a new app was created. According to the company, NewCity, which created the ABMC app (American Battle Monuments Commission: Stories of the Ultimate Sacrifice, 2014)

ABMC has been flying under the radar for some time. Their primary mission was keeping the memorials in pristine condition and welcoming visitors, particularly the

friends and family of the fallen. While “Keep the grass green and the headstones white” has been an operating principle for a long time the leadership of ABMC decided it was time to take on a more powerful storytelling role.

One can see that AMBC is trying to keep up with the times and to use both marketing and education “to take on a more powerful storytelling role.” This current paper emphasizes this role.

AMBC faces numerous marketing challenges. First, no commercial activity (e.g., gift shops) is allowed on the sites. This is in contrast to equally sacred sites of other nations, which do have gift shops. While numerous researchers (some discussed in the literature review of this paper) have found significant differences between various demographic and psychographic visitor groups, no formal visitor research is conducted on the sites by ABMC. One superintendent informed the author that Lisa Budreau (2010) has visited Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and analyzed comments from visitor books from as far back as the 1930s, but that appears to be some of the most comprehensive visitor analysis undertaken.

At the ABMC, there is a recent effort to “brand” (their words) more. But, how can staff implement overall branding to all locations and not let the “rock star” (i.e., Normandy, the most well known and the most visited) control the branding for the entire organization? Of course, superintendents have their own public relations and marketing ideas. For example, one ex Air Force superintendent has reached out to a nearby U.S. Air Force base in Germany to coordinate spouses and family tours to his location and the Cambridge American Cemetery is on the city of Cambridge’s hop-on-hop-off tourist bus tour, providing a bit more marketing outreach to tourists.

The World Wars and their Commemorations

The centenary of the Great War and the 70th anniversary of D-Day both occurred in 2014. The nation of France, especially, is greatly affected by both, of course, but so are the numerous other nations whose citizens shed blood to protect their homelands’ way of life. Various departments of France have tourism to WWI and WWII sites and memorials as very high priority. Government Education ministers in Britain have decreed that every UK school child must visit the Western Front by 2020. Some wonder if France can logistically handle this for many of the sites are in very rural areas.

Arguably, the two distinct wars are said to be one long war in the 20th century. Certainly, events which transpired during World War I could be said to lead to World War II. While exploring the causes and tragedies of the two wars is beyond the scope of this paper, it is relevant to briefly explore how institutions in 2014 analyze and commemorate the wars. For example, the Wall Street Journal has a series, “100 years Legacies: Lasting Impact of WWI.” Some of the topics discussed are “Decline of the UK, Australian and NZ nationhood, Canada, Irish Independence, chemical weapons” among others. Some of these, the UK,

Australia, and Canada, along with France are discussed a bit more in depth below in terms of how they commemorate the wars, especially World War One.

Marketers are actively involved in war commemorations, even though working in the field definitely presents marketing challenges. One hundred years to the day (June 28, 2014) the Wall Street Journal reported tourists posing at the street corner in Bosnia which saw the start of WWI (Bendavid, 2014). A banner advertised “the street corner that started the 20th century.”

As August 4th 2014 approached in the United Kingdom, many national and local commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the Great War took shape. All of these events took marketing to get the word out. The following paragraphs detail only a few examples.

Sebastian Faulk’s popular book about World War I, *Birdsong*, became a play touring many UK cities. One of the authors of this paper saw the production in Dundee, Scotland and Swindon, England. Many more books about the war were written and sold around the country, especially in tourist spots (such as gift shops at heritage locations, including cathedrals and castles). In 1914 in Britain, Sir Edward Grey had said “the lamps are going out all over Europe.” Churches all over the UK had “lights out” ceremonies on August 4, 2014 (Engel, 2014), with a major one at Westminster Abbey.

An important military parade was led by Prince Harry at Folkestone on August 4th, near Dover. Folkestone was the port that the World War One soldiers left from to go to war. The “Step Short” commemoration route covered the steep hill from the town to the port on which soldiers received the order to “step short” as they made their way down toward the water (Prince Harry, 2014).

An impressive display of thousands of ceramic poppies at the Tower of London used the well known symbol of the war (the poppy) to honor the 100th anniversary of World War I (Engel, 2014). See a photo taken by one of the authors in Figure 1. British television had extensive coverage of Prince William and his wife Kate placing a poppy to add to the collection.



Figure 1: “Planted” red ceramic poppies at the Tower of London to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the entry of Britain into World War One. The exhibit remained until 11 November, Remembrance Day. Photo courtesy of the authors.

France and D-Day Droit

This term is taken from the French *droit de memorie* which was discussed quite a bit with the staff at the American cemetery at Normandy. To this day, residents of the Normandy area turn out for D-Day commemorations and even the school children get involved by “adopting” (i.e., maintenance, care) a grave of an American soldier killed during D-Day. There is a duty to remember, even if the dead are not fellow citizens. When interacting with D-Day Canadian and U.S. veterans on the 70th anniversary of the landings at Omaha Beach, one of the authors was impressed with the apparent sincerity of French schoolchildren approaching the veterans and thanking them.

The *droit* exhibit by French schoolchildren was on full display in June 2014 when the Canadian D-Day veterans traveling with one of the authors noted that they were greeted in every village by sincere young French (and even some Dutch) and thanked for their valiant efforts 70 years ago. Some vets joked that they had posed for photographs and given so many autographs that they needed to start charging for the pleasure! The veterans were impressed too and visibly touched.

This does not mean, that D-Day cannot be profitable and perhaps over commercialized. One of the authors remembers an anonymous paper she recently reviewed (Lest We Forget: Experiencing Remembrance Tourism) which analyzed the commercial aspects of D-Day related establishments in the area along commercial-noncommercial and sacred-profane axis a la Belk (1989).

Poppy Trail Tourism (see Figures 2 and 3 for example signposts in France which mark the “Poppy Trail”).



Figures 2 and 3: Poppy Trail markers in northern France. Photos courtesy of the authors.



Figures 2 and 3: Poppy Trail markers in northern France. Photos courtesy of the authors.

While driving through the Somme region of France, one of the authors was overwhelmed by the sheer number of various nations' cemeteries and memorials. Fortunately, most of them are well marked (e.g., "American Cemetery") but there is also a designated "Poppy Trail" set of markers to help visitors find their way while exploring WWI sites. Even in casual conversations with colleagues in France (conversations not particularly on this topic), the author learned that much of France's major tourism efforts go into the promotion of WWI and WWII sites, especially with the centenary of WWI and the 70th anniversary of D-Day in 2014.

On a personal note, walking in the preserved WWI trenches at the Canadian Newfoundland Beaumont-Hamel site was humbling and overwhelming; they were the first World War I trenches the author had ever visited. Within a year, she would learn much more about Canadian war efforts. The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, as is the rest of Canada, is commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Great War in 2014, as they entered the same time as the British did. (The Americans did not enter until 1917). In that Canadian War Museum, there is a major exhibit in tribute to well-known native son John McCrea, the surgeon from Toronto who wrote the famous World War I poem, "In Flanders Fields the poppies blow." Immediately after the October 22 2014 terrorist attack in Ottawa on Parliament, there was a push for the Royal Canadian Legion to start selling poppies earlier than normal for November 11 Remembrance Day (Yuen, 2014).

Canadians played an import role in this paper as the data collected from those on a 70th anniversary D-Day tour to Normandy included D-Day Canadian veterans. When one of the authors explained the honor she felt to have interacted with these Canadian veterans to one staff member at the Canadian War Museum, that staff member seemed genuinely interested and touched. In terms of international visitors, that war museum sees, of course, American visitors, but many French adults visit too, the staff member said, to express their *droit de memorie*.

Research Questions and Method

The first research question has to do with who visitors are and why they go to these commemorative sites of battles. While the superintendents have very good ideas of the demographic and motivational makeup of their visitors, they do no formal research. Visitor books and oral comments are about all of the customer feedback they get. This “who” question will be partially addressed by summarizing other authors’ battlefield tourism research and modifying past survey questions for use here.

The second question has to do with how best to continue and expand the sites’ mission for generations to come. Every nation cares about reaching the next generation and the tactics used at each site vary. For example, Britain has emphasized that by 2020 every schoolchild should visit the Western Front. The focus of this second research question in this paper involves young American teachers and their efforts to teach a new generation about the wars of the last century.

Other questions surfaced during the research. As one respondent wrote on a survey that a highlight was “seeing the differences in how different countries remember the fallen.” Certainly learning how different countries honor their fallen, but also strive to keep their mission to reach the next generation, can help all to maintain the memory.

Asking questions of battlefield tourists can be challenging. The researcher does not wish to interrupt an extremely moving and perhaps personal experience with survey questions. And, as Clarke and Eastgate (2011) and Winter (2011) discovered, respondents often have difficulty explaining their feelings and emotions while engaging in battlefield tourism and researchers have difficulty in framing the best questions. Empirical questions for this current project were modified from others’ successful battlefield tourism research (Clarke and Eastgate, 2011; Clarke and McAuley, 2013). The open-ended qualitative questions were based on the accumulation of many studies as reported in this paper’s literature review.

Two forms of data collection were utilized for this project. One, qualitative interviews were conducted with superintendents of ABMC sites and informal qualitative conversations with visitors to those sites added to the wealth of

responses to open-ended questions¹. Additionally, contacts of the authors who have participated in battlefield tourism were asked to provide insights. Two, battlefield tourism surveys based on Clarke and Eastgate 2011 and Clarke and McAuley 2013 were administered to visitors to D-Day tours on the 70th anniversary and to American teachers preparing curriculum to use to teach World War I. Experiencing the authentic landscapes by actually being at the sites was found to be important to respondents of past research (Dunkley et al., 2011).

Dunkley, et.al. found that this authenticity can sometimes prove challenging as these sites can have “contested memories” (p. 866). For example, Germans will have a different national memory of D-Day’s Omaha Beach than would Americans, even though German tourists often go to the American cemetery at Normandy. Acknowledging this possibility, only citizens of nations on the “winning” side of the two world wars were interviewed and surveyed for this paper.

Findings and Results

Superintendents

Superintendents vary in their backgrounds and training, hence the approach to visitor motivation perceptions and the implementation of the branding mission of the monuments varies. Some staff are ex-military, some are engineers, etc. They all are charged with “keeping the grass green, the headstones white,” commemoration ceremonies, and interpretation. But the idea of interpretation is changing away from helping family members to more of a “telling of a story” (interview, Conley, 2013). Therefore, the importance of returning to honor comrades and sharing the experience with a family member (e.g., words reported below from one battlefield tourist who went to Iwo Jima with his father) are still honored, but motivations and segments of visitors are changing too.

The telling of that story is to many different segments such as those who may have an ancestor buried at the site, those who are brought because they are on some general tour of Europe, and even those who stop because they hear the toilets are clean (several superintendents lamented that they hear this reason all too often). Managers must reach out to local groups and schools too. Some local residents have their very own personal ties (e.g., “Mom and Dad told me that this soldier stayed at our house”) Good segmentation strategies are essential, but few superintendents are trained in marketing.

¹ The following is a list of ABMC locations where superintendents and top staff were interviewed: Brookwood, England, Cambridge, England, Normandy, Colleville-sur-Mer France, St. Mihiel, France, Meuse-Argonne, France, Ardennes, Belgium, Luxembourg. Other sites where informal interviews were conducted with visitors: The Ulster Tower (memorial to 36th Ulster Division), Thiépval, France and the nearby Franco-British Memorial.

One family of visitors agreed to discuss at length their motivations. One woman's brother had done the work and found the grave sites of four WWII crew members of her father who did not survive (their father had survived but is now deceased). ABMC helped to find the graves. She agreed that it was very meaningful even though these were not graves of her relatives or anyone she know.

Another example of how family history research can lead to visitors was shown by a couple from Britain at the Franco-British Memorial in the Somme area. They had researched her family and learned cousins of her grandfather were buried nearby. It was very meaningful for them to take a picnic lunch out and "talk to them."

The modern day emphasis on tracing one's roots is not ignored. The exhibit at the Franco-British monument has "family trees" of one British family and one French family and how the Somme affected later generations, with short bios of real modern descendants listed on this family tree. "These family trees demonstrate the typical loss British and French families suffered during the Great War and how it has shaped today's generation." One author of this paper was told that more and more job responsibilities at headquarters ABMC are to help family history researchers determine if part of that history involves any relevance to ABMC sites.

Samples of Survey Respondents

One of the authors' brother-in-law was interviewed about a trip he took with his father (who fought at Iwo Jima during WWII) back to the battle site. His words about the motivations for such a trip provide a preview of the summary of general visitor motivations:

He returned by himself in 1995 on the 50th anniversary of its taking. He told me later he went back then for his "buddies". He was part of a 28-man machine gun unit and to his knowledge is the only one of them to get off the island alive.

We went back together in 2005. He said then that he wanted to go back that time for himself. He also said he did not think he could make the trip alone. Although we went in March of 2005 and he died on Feb. 26, 2006, I know he could have made the trip alone. But I was glad to go. I know he wanted me to go.

It meant a lot to be able to make sure my dad got to go back the second time for himself and it gave me a chance to learn directly from him and the other veterans how tough that war was.

Therefore, returning to battlefields for a veteran is for his/her buddies, for him/her-self, and for continuing the memory on to children. It seems to be a life event to accomplish before one dies.

Respondents in two separate groups were asked the same survey questions while on different tours (one to commemorate the D-Day landings and one to explore the important sites in the Meuse-Argonne region of France), with obvious modifications made (e.g., “the D-Day landings area is a celebration of survival” was changed to “the area is a . . .”—taking out the D-Day reference for those at the WWI site).

In the two groups (around 25 in each, six D-Day tourists responded and 10 teachers did), there were 11 men 5 women (males outnumbered females in both groups). There were no veterans other than the tour leader of the D-Day group and two Canadian D-Day vets who responded. Seven of 16 had a relative who had fought in “the war” (mostly WWII).

Most “occasionally” watch a military service on tv, and sometimes attend a parade/service as spectators. Some do take part in military parades and two do so every year. Five of 16 have the war interest going back over 30 years, rest of the possible options fairly evenly spread out in terms how long they have been interested in the war. All respondents were asked to select the one phrase for several questions which best describes their feelings. The questions and possible selections are listed in Table 1 with the most chosen response for each item highlighted.

Maintaining the memory, telling others, and simple connection to values/heritage are key phrases chosen by the respondents. From both groups, “I feel proud to visit” has the highest mean of Likert attitudinal questions with a 6.4 of 7 (7 being very strongly agree), followed by “memory of those served” at 6.3. Taking the two samples together, all means for all 32 Likert questions were above the neutral midpoint of 4. The lowest mean of 4.1 was for “a visit is a rite of passage for younger visitors”, which could mean that the sites have room for improvement in impressing the history and importance on young people. Of course, that is exactly what the teachers are trying to accomplish.

Table 1: Choice of “one phrase which most strongly describes your opinion for each item”

Survey items	Possible responses				
1. My visit to the site is	To increase my knowledge	To learn new things	To get a sense of WWI/WWII		
2. By participating in official ceremonies, our national government (British, American, Australian, Canadian, etc.)	Helps maintain dignity and purpose	Helps to maintain the memory	Is raising the profile of the Great War/Normandy Landings		
3. This tour means I am able to	Say I’ve been to the D-Day beaches/important WWI sites	Be with people who share my interests	Tell others about my experience	Recommend the sites to others	
4. The site	Represents values that relate to my identity	Is an expression of my heritage	Makes me feel connected to my heritage	Is a part of who I am	place with which I strongly identify

While both samples are extremely small and are not appropriate for much statistical analysis, a nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test was run to determine if any differences surfaced on these attitudinal variables. Of the 32 items, only four showed significant differences at the .05 level (1=very strongly disagree; 7=very strongly agree) between the two groups.

- “to immerse in the legends of the Allied actions”: teachers of WWI mean of 4.3; D-Day tourists and vets mean of 5.8.
- “to make a pilgrimage”: teachers of WWI mean of 3.6; D-Day tourists and vets mean of 5.8.
- “I feel very attached to the area as an icon important to my country”: teachers of WWI mean of 4.5; D-Day tourists and vets mean of 6.2.
- “the landscape has not succumbed to mass tourism and infrastructure development”: teachers of WWI mean of 6.3; D-Day tourists and vets mean of 4.6.

From the above, one could argue that the older group (mean age of the teachers is 31—range of 31-47; mean age of the D-Day group is 61 with a range 21-92; two were in their 90s), which included some veterans, have more emotional attachments to the legends and iconic representation of the troops. The “pilgrimage” is more relevant for the older D-Day group. The Normandy area has often been criticized for over commercialization, hence the difference in means between those on the D-Day beaches versus those in more rural northeastern France for the World War One cemetery and relevant locations on “the landscape has not succumbed to mass tourism and infrastructure development.”

There was one additional item on the D-Day group survey which was not on the other. A question was asked regarding with whom the respondent traveled, as per Clarke and Eastgate (2011). Only one respondent, other than the researcher, traveled alone. Most were with family (husband/wife/mother child), emphasizing the importance of sharing the experience with others.

Each group was asked to recount the highlights of their attendance at tour events. For the D-Day group who were with a “Sprit of Remembrance” tour out of England, most were Americans, a couple were British, and many were Canadian. Any veterans traveling with the group were Canadian vets. Highlights mentioned by the non-vets were often “meeting and interacting with the vets”. For the veterans, a highlight was going to the Canadian war museum on Juno Beach and attending the official 70th anniversary international ceremony attended by heads of state at Ouistreham. One listed “Seeing the differences in how different countries remember the fallen.” One respondent reported that the highlight was that the trip “enforced my debt to those who served and protected the life I know.”

When asked to list highlights, the teachers preparing WWI curriculum:

- 4 specifically mentioned a “highlight” as the interaction with and learning from David Bedford, Superintendent of Meuse-Argonne
- 4 mentioned importance of being with others who share their “passion” (word used by two respondents)
- “visiting the area where my great grandfather's division was located”
- “seeing first hand” (especially the trenches)
- “emotional resonance of place”
- “experiencing serenity of site”

The importance of being with others, while for educational reasons for the teachers, was also found for less noble reasons (partying, etc.) among the young people reported in the study by Hyde and Harman (2011). Wishing to see the site of where one’s grandfather fought with his division is representative of family history motivations often found in other studies and also represents the motivation of two sisters in their 80s who were with this group of teachers for a day, but did not respond to the survey. They had uncovered the World War I diary of the father (a diary he kept secret from authorities during the war) and

were making their way across the region of France where their father had fought. The entire group was quiet and emotions were high when after a hike by war trenches, a hill was reached and the Superintendent of Meuse-Argonne cemetery said to the sisters, “this is the ridge your father helped capture.” One of the teachers was filming the two women to show his class, saying that yes, young people would be interested in the women’s story. So it appears that the older generation can keep the memory alive by involving future generations.

Bringing the War Back Home



Figure 4: Group of American teachers at Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery July 2014. Photo courtesy of the authors.

“I understood before, but not like this”, remarked a young student to her teacher as they walked around the graves of a World War I cemetery in Belgium (Snelson 2007). The poignant words and understandings of a middle school student similarly mirror the sentiments of the twenty-four educators and scholars spent eight days exploring the narratives of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery as part of the Transatlantic Teacher Scholars Program (see Figure 4). Among the white marble gravestones of the cemetery to the quiet presence of the Douaumont Ossuary to the deep labyrinth of tunnels under Vauquois, these teachers explored the question: “*How should we remember war?*” As part of this program, 6th grade teacher Jared Morris talked of feeling a connection “with goose bumps going in and goose bumps going out” to an individual soldier who he had tracked from deployment in his native Pennsylvania to burial in the French countryside, while U.S. history teacher Kate Harris simply gasped as she first laid

eyes on the symmetrical beauty of the Meuse-Argonne. Their words and reactions illuminate the power of place and, more specifically, historic memorials to bring the symbolism and significance of past events to the fore, where the number of people's lives who were impacted at that point, never mind for generations to come, becomes visible, and themes of honor, competence, courage, sacrifice, commemoration, memory and history are made more meaningful.

For many Americans, the “War to End All Wars”, which included the Meuse–Argonne Offensive that Ferrell (2007) described as “America’s deadliest battle”, has slipped from the national consciousness. However, as Trout (2010) notes, recently there has been a “major revival of popular and academic interest that will, in all likelihood, only intensify as the one-hundredth anniversary ... draws nearer” (252). Within this context, the American Battle Monuments Commission’s Domestic Education RFP provided his assembled team of scholars and educators the support and access to landscape, personnel, and digital resources in order to recognize of the significance of World War I within American History in terms of America’s role on the World Stage in the early 20th century and beyond. Additionally, the RFP highlighted the need to support the professional development and experiential education of teachers in order to facilitate the design and distribution of curriculum materials to teach for deep content and empathetic understanding of World War I. In partnership with the American Battle Field Commission, the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill and Virginia Tech developed an experiential professional development program with a cohort of secondary level (6-12) teachers. Informed by the National Academies’ How People Learn (Donovan and Bransford 2005). Framework and Falk and Dierking’s (2000) Contextual Model of Learning, the Teacher Scholars program resulted in the development of digitally accessible innovative and interactive grade leveled teaching resources that will 1) serve as best practice models of “ambitious” teaching for secondary classrooms; and 2) complement the educational mission and visitor experience at ABMC sites with a specific focus on the Meuse –Argonne American Cemetery as a proof of concept.

The cultural, pedagogical, and content elements of the plan was supported and enhanced through the use of emergent digital technologies to develop critical thinking skills. The use of digital technologies will support the sustainability of this work with an evergreen digital collection.² The power of the program was based upon a recognition that the mechanism of teacher exchange and

² The ebooks the teachers prepared are available in the iTunes store. Go to Books and search “Bringing the Great War Home”. There are four volumes.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/bringing-great-war-home-volume/id977675965?mt=11>
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/bringing-great-war-home-volume/id977658035?mt=11>
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/bringing-great-war-home-volume/id977713134?mt=11>
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/bringing-great-war-home-volume/id977673798?mt=11>

collaboration will advance the essential goal of this project: to create a collegial, experiential relationship between educational leaders in two states in order to more deeply investigate a historic site of (inter)national prominence and relevance. See Figures 5 and 6 for photographs of site and superintendent, responsible for “keeping the headstones white and the grass green.”



Figures 5 and 6: Meuse-Argonne Superintendent David Bedford reflecting on the site. Photos courtesy of authors and photographer, Matthew Deegan.

“That work in progress includes breathing life into a history in which today’s students might feel distant and detached. You go from the overwhelming straight lines and manicured grass to the individual story. This is what we’re really concentrating on now – this guy’s story – trying to figure out who we were as Americans and bring that American heritage alive.” (David Bedford, July 2013).

Just as databases and archives are an essential tool to the study of text-based documents, Teacher Scholars were trained in the use of emerging technologies that reveal and retain these interpretations. These digital tools included geospatial technologies, and augmented reality presentations, and online coursework. These technologies will serve as instructional tools as well as gateways into more traditional, hands-on, inquiry based activities. The use of geospatial technologies allowed the interactions of place, space, time, and scale to be more obvious to teachers and students. Often there is an over-emphasis on the chronology of historical events and without a strong consideration for their connections to geography. We expect these technologies to raise the critical ability to answer not only the important of “where?” but also “why, there?”

Because of this emphasis on place-based perspective, the critical component of this project was an immersive research trip to the Meuse-Argonne in July 2014. Team members gained new and invaluable personal and professional reactions to the content by interacting directly with the contested landscape and the somber peace of the cemetery. In order to “bring the war back home”, teachers conducted research to capture these understandings through a variety of data collecting, including geospatial tags, oral histories, physical treks and hikes, 3D scanning of building and landscape, and many hours of discussion with ABMC personnel.

The organizers envision a well-connected global network of educators and teachers, all of whom are exploring their own unique history with the explicit goal of understanding, sharing, and learning. This collective work

- has created a stronger understanding of the complexity and interrelatedness of the United States and the world through the authentic use of ABMC sites and memorials
- has integrated the process of primary source analysis into the instructional memory and practice of existing educational organizations
- has supported partnerships between schools, universities, educators, and historians based on the intersection of work at the ABMC
- has extended critical intellectual growth into classrooms and affect student learning through the creation of interactive, inquiry-based curriculum
- has served as a model innovative form of global education in the 21st century
- has developed and fine-tuned a protocol for best history instruction that can be used in future professional development work
- has developed digital docents that complement the visitor to this ABMC memorial site

Conclusions, limitations and directions for future research

Anniversaries are important and nations around the world use them to especially honor war dead on sites where they fought, died and are buried. While we are losing members of the World War II “best generation” every day, some are still able to travel to places they fought many years ago. They do it for themselves, for their buddies, and for future generations. Those who were born generations later engaging in battlefield tourism are “proud” to make the visit and do it to honor those who served, but older ones are more likely to label the trip as a pilgrimage than are younger travelers.. While keeping in mind that various segments have different motivations, there are these motives in common and many other similarities. Going to the location is important; one can only obtain so much from reading. Those who manage these sites are becoming increasingly aware that marketing principles can help to achieve their mission, and “branding” is often used in the effort to “tell the story.” Strong effort is made to ensure that the “story” is passed on to future generations and many nations make this a priority. In the United States, a group of teachers learned firsthand about the Great War and developed curriculum materials as a model for American schools to use to effectively teach about the war 100 years later.

While this preliminary investigation is perhaps one of the few research projects to combine the fields of marketing and education to “market” the

remembrance to future generations, there are of course, several limitations to report. Samples were small, even though the total number of respondents providing empirical data resulted in sample sizes not that different from some other researchers. While citizens of more than one nation (i.e., the United States, Britain, and Canada) provided data, no citizen of nations which lost the world wars (such as Germany) was surveyed. And, no citizen of the local community (i.e., in France) is included, as is unfortunately the case with many studies (Clarke and McAuley, 2013). Including citizens of more affected nations and comparing responses should be an effort future researchers make. Future researchers will also wish to investigate whether the marketing and educational efforts of the governments involved in the commemorations have been successful in passing the spirit of remembrance on to future generations. The Australian government planned a four year effort for an Anzac trail of commemoration on the Western Front, which was predicted to “release the pressure on Gallipoli from over-attendance” (Clarke and Eastgate, 2011: 35). Do American teachers make use of the curriculum about World War 1 developed by fellow teachers? Have such efforts achieved their goals?

In summary, there are many (sometimes difficult to express) emotions and motivations involved with battlefield tourism and often these motivations differ depending on the segment of visitor. But in most cases, it all comes down to “just being there” (Clarke and McAuley, 2013: 15).

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