

## INTRODUCTION

If we think of **Church/Cathedral tourism as a service operation**: that implies customers, service standards and service delivery systems, and that is uncomfortable terminology for church people. Also all churches have capacity constraints (historical, architectural and philosophical) which are reflected in the need to *control* demand and *relate* it to fixed capacity.

If we think of **Cathedral Tourism as a service operation**:

tourism is not the core business of the attraction;

service provision is product led;

there is heavy reliance on volunteers;

the "product" is judged by visitors on pre-visit knowledge as well as on visitor experience.

**You may not know that** visitors recognise but often dislike "outmoded" behaviour norms (look-don't touch, keep voice low, wear appropriate clothes, show respect, don't eat or drink). First time and repeat visitors have different visitation patterns.

Some 50% of our visitors are first timers. A **first time visitor pattern involves**.....

Stage 1 (orientation) 4 - 10 minutes                      Stage 2 (intensive look) 15 - 40 minutes

Stage 3 (cruising) 20 - 45 minutes                      Stage 4 (leave-taking) 3 - 10 minutes

any praying/meditation usually takes place in Stage 3

any purchasing/making donations usually takes place in Stage 4

**Managing visitors to churches/cathedrals is complicated because....**

There is a need to maintain a balance between preservation of property and provision of service quality

there is a reluctance or inability to devise "products" for sale;

and it is impossible to predict levels of "customer" demand.

There is poor visitor database and research is of variable quality,

the necessary co-operative mechanisms are not easy to achieve,

there is a poor capital base to develop facilities,

and there are the constraints of fabric, history and politics.

## VISITING CATHEDRALS

## Visitor Figures (1997, BTA/ETB)

Westminster Abbey	2,500,500	Durham	495,000
St Paul's	2,000,000	Exeter	400,000
York Minster	2,000,000	Westminster Cath.	400,000
Canterbury	1,613,000	(Southwell)	120,000)
Chester	1,000,000		
Salisbury	600,000	London Zoo	1,002,104
Norwich	550,000	British Museum	6,228,275

The largest section in terms of visitor numbers consists of cathedrals and greater churches. 70% of cathedrals estimated that their visitors increased in 1997, by an average of 11%.

**The changing functions of a cathedral**

Stage 1. (Medieval cathedral, focus of community life, with only the sanctuary area considered holy)

Stage 2. (Sanctification extended to the whole building after 17th century)

Stage 3. In the 20th century tourists outnumber communicants, with moves to revert to Stage 1 model for more flexibility. The cathedral is now

A place for worship and community focus

Museum/ tourist attraction/ centre for scholarly activity/ storage for precious artefacts and records

and a Centre for Pilgrimage.

### **Service quality in cathedrals**

The experience of being there was as important as the final outcome.

The more frequently someone attended church they more difficult to please they become.

Females are more critical of service quality than males.

People earning upwards of £30,000 a year demand a high quality of service.

### **Cathedrals could get more visitors by**

Improved marketing

Extra facilities or attractions

Special events

Having a website

But visitor demand is reduced by bad weather, repairs and a strong pound.

When we take tours or show visitors round it is worth considering that

#### **A recent study of cathedral visitors showed that**

low priority is given to acquiring knowledge DURING the visit

the greatest motivator was "the experience of the building"

people only wanted to learn if it was related to their profession or hobby

most preferred to learn AFTERWARDS

most preferred the visitor centre/ bookshop to be separate from the main building

most considered that music enhanced the atmosphere

more people are interested in HOW rather the WHY

A survey of **SOUTHWELL VISITORS** a few years ago showed that

21% came from high income families

19% lived with a short distance (less than 10 miles)

the average travel distance was 52 miles

they came mainly in small groups, were mainly middle aged or older, and were white collar workers; there was no gender bias.

50% were visiting the cathedral for the first time

less than 50% were frequent church attendees.

### **Cathedral Tourism - weaknesses**

Seasonal changes in visitor numbers

unreliable visitor data

little pro-active marketing

the secularisation of society

little information available on other local heritage attractions.

### **Cathedral Tourism - Opportunities**

Impetus from Heritage and Renewal (1994)

Mission

development of overseas and youth market

consider items/events for sponsorship

exploit rise in over 45's leisure time.

### **Cathedral Tourism - Threats**

Financial pressures of fabric maintenance and restoration

need for admission charges?

conflict management

physical erosion and crime

competition.