Local Heritage
As a Participatory Digital Culture:
The Rise And Fall of
“Anglesey: A Bridge Through Time”
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Bangor University, Wales
My Position as Researcher

American, living in North Wales 12 years

Journalist (New York City)

Masters of Divinity (Harvard)
   Minister, community-building

Editor, Consultant
   Consumer psychology

PhD Student: “Digital Media & Anglesey Tourism”
Knowledge-transfer scholarship
Stipulates partnership with local industry

Funded by ESF

My partner
UK Tourism

Worth £127 billion to UK
  - 4 times the size of farming
  - £257 billion by 2025

- Fastest-growing Industry in employment
  - 3.1 million jobs, 9.6% of all

- £45 billion by UK residents on day trips
North Wales Tourism

- £1.8 billion per year
- Supports 37,500 jobs
- 8 million staying trips
- 17 million day-trips
- 90% from the UK
Anglesey?
Anglesey: Ynys Môn
Anglesey

- One of the poorest-performing economies in the UK
- Second-lowest Gross Value Added in the UK in 2009
  - 57.2% of the UK average
- Lost 2000 jobs since 2003
- Lost 1300 people of working age since 2004
  - -3.3% population
- Poorly run: 2011, WAG took over executive functions, put in “special measures”
So the question becomes:

Q: How can we utilize heritage as a tourism resource for Anglesey?

A: Digital Media
My Methodological Journey

Design Practice
Menter Model
Funders
Stakeholders
Communities
Ripple effect

Design Exploration
Critical Heritage Studies
Participatory Models
Democratisation/Engagement

Design Studies
Critical Heritage Studies
Media Theory
Evolution of “Heritage”

Traditional
Material
Object-focus
Tangible
Authorised
Heritage
Discourse

Product

New
People-focus
Intangible
Multivocal/polysemic

Process
Lit Review:
Participatory Heritage
Lit Review: Participatory Heritage

GLAM sector
Lit Review: Participatory Heritage

Independent
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions vs. Independents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agendas</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Complementing collections</td>
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<td>furthering goals</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
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Theoretical Framework

From media studies, heritage studies, and "state of the art":

1. Participation feeds engagement
Theoretical Framework

Critical Heritage Studies

2. Heritage is a process, not a product

- Multivocal
- Polyseemic
- Community involvement, growth
3. Distributed Co-curation

Recruited local heritage enthusiasts

- Guide Development
- Contribute content
- "Your Host"
- Moderate comments
- Generate conversation
- Promote website & events
Theoretical Framework

From consumer psychology, journalism and narrative studies:

4. people-centred imagery
   people-centred narrative
   audience-focused
   sociable “warm” content

Rice and Case, 1983; Steinfield, 1986; Yoo and Alavi, 2001
Esp.: Hassanein and Head, 2007
Approach

Build:

- Participatory, community-based
- Multivocal
  - Co-curators
- “Warm,”
  - Person-centred narrative, images
- Stakeholder Issues
  - vetted – not community archive
council fears over UGC
Testing the Website

1. User engagement


2. Destination brand personality


3. Intention to visit recommend
Welcome to the Isle of Anglesey

Anglesey is a place where you can get away from it all. Relax, enjoy the hospitality and lose yourself in the island’s winding lanes or on its spectacular coast. There’s also plenty to do for all the family with events, attractions and outdoor activities all set in beautiful scenery.

BEAUMARIS CASTLE

It was the 13th century equivalent of a spaceship landing on Anglesey. No wonder it attracts 80,000 visitors every year.

EATING OUT

Search through our Food and Drink section for details of a wide selection of cafés and restaurants.

Members Forum

Register on our forum to contribute and have your say.

Planning a Visit?

Why not search through our events calendar to see what’s happening on Anglesey?
Testing the Website

Participatory website outperformed council's website on all 6 factors.

Felt Involvement

- Researcher's Website
- Council Website

Focused Attention

- Researcher Website
- Council Website

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
Testing the Website

Destination brand personality

“Spirited”
82.4% new website

63.6% council

“Daring”
35.3%

15.2%

“Original”
67.6%

42.4%
Testing the Website

"I would like to visit."

"I will recommend Anglesey"

- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neutral
- agree
- strongly agree

- Researcher's Website
- Council website
- No website
Limits of Research

Not enough testing
  Not big enough sample
  No web analytics

Not enough design experience
  Better participation platforms available

Not enough community involvement

Not enough time to develop relationships
Results: “The Fall”

At launch local council . . .
Citing possible legal repercussions over possible inappropriate content

**Despite**
Powerful Disqus filters
Moderators vetted and trained
Having signed off on the design many times over 18 months

**Disable volunteer access to backend including researcher**

- moderate Comments
- update the website
- Google analytics

Only employees can do this. As a result
- Additions don’t follow design, e.g., no hosts
- No comments have been accepted
- No videos or photos have been accepted

Social media and social content effectively disconnected = Web 1.0 website
Related Research

Tourism Planning Demands Collaboration, Coordination
Timothy, 1999; Aas et al, 2005;
Schism between Heritage and Tourism agencies
Nuryanti, 1996; Garrod and Fyall, 2000

Local museums need websites independent from local authorities
Collections Trust. Poole, Nick. 2007

Local Authorities have been slow to understand and adapt to Web 2.0 across the E U

Cooperative Behaviour Theory in Destinations: Local tourism planning dominated by informal, “kinship” relationships, dependencies
Beritelli, Pietro. 2011
Conclusions

Fractured, disorganized atmosphere
  Little stakeholder collaboration, esp heritage tourism
No consumer focus
Poor understanding of Web 2.0
  Disdain for / Fear of social media
Authorised Heritage Discourse
Local culture of informal dependencies
No institutional support, no museum or established group.

**Digital heritage innovators face significant institutional roadblocks, especially at the local level.**
Thank you for your attention

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