

# Heritage entrepreneurship

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## The issue

Many people who inherit country house estates have no prior experience or training in running a business, but feel an obligation to keep it going and hand it down to the next generation. This means that they find themselves required to create and/or sustain a profitable business out of their ancestral home. Heritage tourism is worth £20.2 billion a year to the UK economy and supports 386,000 jobs. Country houses are a major draw to tourists in this country and abroad. Stories are told to appeal to customers and engage them in various ways.

## Aim

To discover how English country house owners run their estates as business ventures, specifically which stories they use to brand, market and differentiate their Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) offerings, obtain funding and broker partnerships.

## Objectives

- To make an original contribution to the academic knowledge in entrepreneurship, marketing and heritage tourism.
- To produce findings and recommendations that will inform and assist country house owners with their entrepreneurial practice, and can also be applied in other sectors of the economy and in other types of organisations, such as family businesses.

## Initial findings

**Custodian entrepreneurship** – has specific boundaries and restrictions on: (a) who can be the custodian; (b) from what date; (c) what kinds of entrepreneurship can be carried out; (d) the type and extent of changes that can be made to the enterprise; and (e) the themes, stories and characters which must be built upon and, in some cases, deferred to by the business.

**Typology of income-generation activities** – these can be organised according to physical areas, products and services, users, stakeholders and tactics. Five main facets of country house entrepreneurship are: Visitors, Venue, Estate, Schemes and Channels.

**Appropriateness in heritage souvenirs** – the unspoken expectations, norms and boundaries of souvenirs sold at historic houses.

## Methodology

Case study of six country house estates which are: in England, owned by private individuals for more than two generations, and carry out entrepreneurial activities to generate income.

*Fieldwork* – what entrepreneurial activities are the owners currently doing, which heritage stories are they telling, and how and why are these being used to achieve desired outcomes?

*Semi-structured interviews* – why have owners chosen particular stories to tell, e.g. for internal reasons such as familiarity, or external factors like funder pressures to tell more inclusive and diverse stories?

*Reflection* – what other stories are not being told, and why not?

## Questions

**How do English country house owners use storytelling as a tool to achieve business outcomes?**

1. What entrepreneurial activities are currently being undertaken at the six selected English country houses?
2. What stories are evident in their marketing, selling and engaging activities?
3. How are these stories used to achieve business outcomes, and what are these outcomes?
4. What other stories are well-known about the six properties, but are missing from their business activities?
5. What entrepreneurial support do the owners use in their business endeavours?



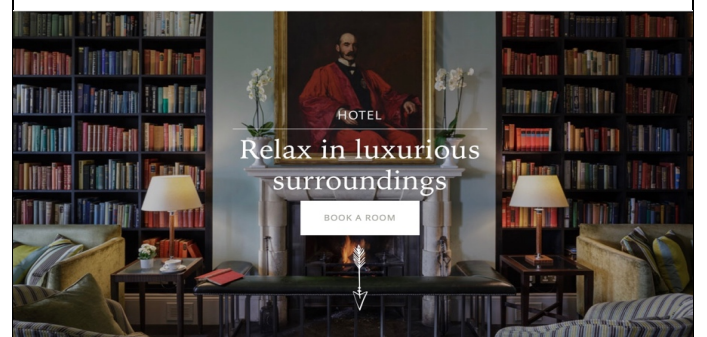
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