

PARANORMAL TOURISM  
STUDY OF ECONOMICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

by

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## **Abstract**

Humanity's belief in the paranormal has shaped cultures, folklore, religion, and influences the arts, customs, politics, and economics. In the modern era, paranormal belief continues to capture public interest, often fueled by popular entertainment and media. With belief in the paranormal on the rise, so are the social and economic implications. Literature and data also shows that paranormal niche tourism is becoming increasingly popular and have an effect on the tourism sector, yet it is poorly understood. The purpose of this study is to ask, "how does paranormal niche tourism affect and relate to local economics and public policy?" New Orleans serves as the subject city due to its rich paranormal history and folklore and thriving tourism economy. I divided data collection into two main phases: 1) surveying paranormal tourists and 2) surveying and interviewing paranormal-related businesses including tour companies, retail and services, and hotels.

I distributed online surveys to paranormal tourists to collect data pertaining to demographics, education, employment, belief, belief influencers, travel habits, and costs. In addition, I conducted online surveys and personal interviews with businesses relating to paranormal tourism in regards to business model, marketing, revenue, employment, local community impact, and public policy impacts. A site visit provided further insight and immersion into paranormal tourism itself. Results indicate that paranormal tourism is positively impacting local communities and that public policy in New Orleans has both positively and negatively affected tourism. The results from this research provide insight in how other communities can accommodate paranormal tourism through policy and how businesses can also capitalize on this growing trend.

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## I. Introduction

Since the dawn of humanity, fascination with the paranormal and supernatural has shaped entire cultures, folklore, religions, and influenced everything from architecture and customs to economics and politics. The belief in the supernatural and otherworldly is nearly universal, with many cultures sharing similar beliefs and also completely divergent viewpoints. Whether one shares in these beliefs or not, the influence they have over societies, cultures, and economics is unquestionable.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the paranormal continues to capture humanity's attention and fascination. Whether it is in the media and entertainment, cultural and religious beliefs, urban legends, and local folklore, the paranormal has a strong hold on the public's imagination and beliefs. In fact, according to sociologists Christopher Bader, F. Carson Mencken, and Joseph O. Baker, authors of the book *Paranormal America*, more than 68 percent of Americans hold at least one paranormal belief.<sup>1</sup> This statistic is also supported by a 2005 Gallup Poll study where 37 percent of respondents in the United States answered affirmatively in the belief of haunted houses, while belief in Britain was higher at 40 percent.<sup>2</sup> Belief in various paranormal phenomena vary, however, but these beliefs tend to be on the rise. A later 2009 Pew Research Survey found positive change in specific paranormal beliefs from 1990-1996 and 1996-2009, as seen in **Table 1.1**.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Bader, et al., *Paranormal America* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 129.

<sup>2</sup> "Paranormal Beliefs Come (Super) Naturally to Some," *Gallup.com*, accessed September 13, 2015. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/19558/Paranormal-Beliefs-Come-SuperNaturally-Some.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> "Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths," *Pew Research Center*, December 9, 2009, accessed March 24, 2016 from <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/12/09/many-americans-mix-multiple-faiths/#ghosts-fortunetellers-and-communicating-with-the-dead>.

**Table 1.1: Supernatural Experiences of Americans:** Conducted through a course of three periods, results indicated an increase in specific paranormal beliefs. Results collected from a total of 3,012 respondents.

<b>Supernatural Experience</b>	<b>Believe:</b>	<b>June 1990</b>	<b>Sept. 1996</b>	<b>August 2009</b>
% In Touch with Someone Deceased	Yes	17%	18%	29%
	No	82%	81%	69%
	Don't Know	1%	1%	2%
% Seen or Felt a Ghost	Yes	9%	9%	18%
	No	90%	89%	80%
	Don't Know	1%	2%	2%
% Consulted a Physic or Fortuneteller	Yes	14%	17%	15%
	No	85%	83%	85%
	Don't Know	1%	0%	1%

Source: Pew Research Center

Although these results indicated only a small portion of the population holds these specific paranormal beliefs, it alludes to an overall increase in paranormal belief in the United States. Other results from this same survey indicated that a large portion of Americans believe in other paranormal phenomena such as reincarnation, astrology, and spiritual energy.<sup>4</sup> Altogether, the survey found that 65 percent of adults report having at least one paranormal belief.<sup>5</sup> A later 2011 poll and extensive study by LiveScience indicated that 71 percent of respondents have had an alleged paranormal experience.<sup>6</sup> This change suggests an increase in belief in the paranormal, which some argue is strongly influenced by popular media and personal spiritualism. Bader et al. argue that paranormal belief continues to increase in America as, “Americans have been fed a steady diet of fictional shows with paranormal beliefs,” which have successfully disseminated paranormal beliefs.<sup>7</sup> Paranormal belief extends broadly across socio-economic, education, ethnic, and age groups, although younger people are typically more open to the paranormal than older generations.<sup>8</sup> Once considered taboo, belief in the paranormal is becoming more

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Staff, Live Science, “Americans’ Beliefs in Paranormal Phenomena (Infographic),” *LiveScience.com*, accessed September 13, 2015 from <http://www.livescience.com/16748-americans-beliefs-paranormal-infographic.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Bader, et al., 5.

<sup>8</sup> David Briggs, “Paranormal is the new normal in America,” *Association of Religion Data Archives* (January 31, 2011), accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://blogs.thearda.com/trend/featured/paranormal-is-the-new-normal-in-america/>.

acceptable, evidence of the growing numbers of those who believe in the supernatural and paranormal.<sup>9</sup>

It can be argued that growing belief in the paranormal and spiritual is affecting many facets of life and culture. One such impact is the emerging niche paranormal tourism market. Paranormal tourism, as defined by the Travel Channel, is “the niche within the travel industry where tourists attend paranormal-themed conventions and festivals, investigate famously haunted locations, and join ghost tours or haunted pub crawls through cities.”<sup>10</sup> I believe the definition is broader and is simply traveling to any locale for paranormal purposes, whether for leisure, investigation, services, products, or conventions. Niche tourism itself, or adjectival tourism, is a set of subsectors of the larger tourism industry described as being, “tailored to meet the needs of a particular audience/market segment.”<sup>11</sup> The tourism industry as a whole is growing throughout the United States and internationally. The World Travel and Tourism Council reports that in 2015, tourism directly contributed \$458 billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the United States or 2.6 percent of total GDP. Tourism contributed another \$1,402.6 billion to GDP in indirect contributions, or 8 percent of total GDP. The tourism industry also directly provides 5,302,000 jobs or 3.6 percent of total jobs in the United States. Furthermore, tourism, in total, supports 13,652,500 jobs or 9.3 percent of total employment in the United States, both directly and indirectly.<sup>12</sup> Niche tourism is vast and includes many subsectors including the more well-known agritourism, cultural and heritage tourism, ecotourism, religious tourism, and wine tourism and less-known niches such as dark tourism. Niche tourism also provides a viable economic base for many communities that otherwise lack

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Hanks and Nicole Saidi. “Paranormal Activity Finds Mainstream Acceptance,” *CNN* (2010), accessed September 14, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/10/27/ghosts.go.irpt/>.

<sup>10</sup> Aaron Sagers, “Paranormal Glossary,” *Travel Channel*, accessed March 24, 2016 from <http://www.travelchannel.com/interests/haunted/articles/paranormal-glossary>.

<sup>11</sup> J.M. Ali-Knight, “The Role of Niche Tourism Products in Destination Development” (2011), accessed March 8, 2016 from [http://researchrepository.napier.ac.uk/5376/1/Full\\_thesis.pdf](http://researchrepository.napier.ac.uk/5376/1/Full_thesis.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Rochelle Turner, “Travel & Tourism: Economic Impact 2015 United States of America” (2015), *World Travel & Tourism Council*, accessed March 8, 2016 from <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/countries%202015/unitedstatesofamerica2015.pdf>.

any or serves as an ancillary tourism activity in large tourist destinations, such as New Orleans.

Paranormal tourism, as a niche tourism, is relatively new in its modern incarnation but has existed since the beginning of humanity in different guises, mainly pilgrimages. Today, paranormal tourism is stimulated by the media, formal and informal marketing, word of mouth, historical folklore, and a plethora of websites and articles listing allegedly haunted sites, hotels, attractions, and tours that cater to paranormal tourists. Many communities and cities throughout the United States, “have learned to capitalize on their mysteries,” to attract tourists and stimulate the local economy.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the sociologists Bader, Baker, and Mencken argue that “the paranormal has become another tourist stop, another source of entertainment available in that vast consumerist marketplace.”<sup>14</sup> What was once considered fringe and underground, the paranormal is now out in the open, generally more accepted, and part of the popular culture. This report seeks to understand how this emerging form of tourism is affecting local communities economically and policy-wise by studying New Orleans’ successful tourism market and providing suggestions for other communities, drawn from the conclusions of the research.

To understand what exactly qualifies as paranormal in tourism, the term paranormal itself must be understood. Webster defines paranormal as, “not understandable in terms of known scientific laws and phenomena.”<sup>15</sup> Paranormal is a vast, catch all term that includes religions, ghosts and spirits, extraterrestrial life forms, witchcraft, and the supernatural, among many others. However, in order to qualify as paranormal, the activity or phenomena must meet three criteria developed by Dr. Jerome Tobacyk, professor of psychology at Louisiana Tech University: (1) phenomena cannot be explained by current science, (2) phenomena can be explained only by major revisions in basic limiting laws of science, and (3) phenomena are incompatible with normative

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<sup>13</sup> Bader et al., 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>15</sup> “Paranormal,” *Merriam-Webster*, accessed March 24, 2016 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paranormal>.

perceptions and expectations about reality.<sup>16</sup> Tobacyk also developed The Paranormal Belief Scale (PBS) which identifies seven major categories of the paranormal and supernatural: Traditional Religious Belief, Psi (Physic Phenomena), Witchcraft, Superstition, Spiritualism, Extraordinary Life Forms, and Precognition.<sup>17</sup> For the purpose of this study, the two terms will be grouped together under the term “paranormal” for ease of understanding and simplicity.

It is also important to stress the term “alleged” since few, if any, paranormal events have been scientifically proven, confirmed, or explained. The purpose of this study is not to prove the existence of paranormal events or activity nor even analyze these events themselves but to focus on how these events influence tourism and affect local economics of communities.

### **Purpose and Connection to Planning**

The purpose of this report is to ask “how does the paranormal tourism affect local economics and public policy?” Subsidiary questions include what public policies influence paranormal tourism and how planning and policy can encourage the economic benefits of paranormal tourism?

Relating to economics, paranormal tourism is of great interest to particular population groups. This is evident by its growth and extensiveness. Paranormal and ghost tours are becoming increasingly popular, particularly, “ghost walk tours,” although tours also use many modes of transit such as trolley, bus, boat, and carriage.<sup>18</sup> The growth of paranormal tourism is fueled by the public’s insatiable appetite for the paranormal which is, in turn, fueled by paranormal-related media and entertainment.<sup>19</sup> Alleged paranormal phenomena attract visitors to communities that may have few other attractions. It can also

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<sup>16</sup> Mehmet Sen, Ezgi Yesilyurt, “The Development of Paranormal Belief Scale (PBS) for Science Education in the Context of Turkey,” *Middle East Technical University*, accessed September 13, 2015 from [http://www.academia.edu/6626919/The\\_Development\\_of\\_Paranormal\\_Belief\\_Scale\\_PBS\\_for\\_Science\\_Education\\_in\\_the\\_Context\\_of\\_Turkey](http://www.academia.edu/6626919/The_Development_of_Paranormal_Belief_Scale_PBS_for_Science_Education_in_the_Context_of_Turkey).

<sup>17</sup> Jerome J. Tobacyk, “A Revised Paranormal Belief Scale,” *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 23, no. 23 (2004): 94–98.

<sup>18</sup> Gentry, Glenn W, “Walking with the Dead: The Place of Ghost Walk Tourism in Savannah, Georgia,” *Southeastern Geographer* 47, no. 2 (November 2007): 222–38.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, Robert C., “‘Am I Going to See a Ghost Tonight?’: Gettysburg Ghost Tours and the Performance of Belief,” *The Journal of American Culture* 33, no. 2 (June 2010): 79–91.

serve as supplementary attractions in larger tourist cities and destinations. This study will not only focus on tours but also hotel and hospitality, shops, and services that relate to the paranormal for economic livelihood.

Public policy and involvement relating to alleged paranormal activity is very closely related to tourism, although there are special exceptions. For example, San Francisco requires practitioners to acquire a permit for fortunetelling.<sup>20</sup> New Orleans Municipal Code forbids magic and fortunetelling, except for medical and religious purposes.<sup>21</sup> This project is related to Planning in that many cities and local businesses in the United States and throughout the world depend on and use their unique culture identities to reap economic benefits. Planners are often tasked with improving economic and social conditions within communities, whether through economic development, social programs, or capital improvements. Whether one believes in supernatural activity or not, the economic, political, and social implications are still of interest and importance to planners who can capitalize on this alleged phenomena and accompanying industries to improve a city's economy through tourism and public policy. Conversely, if the alleged activity is perceived to have a negative effect on a city's reputation and economy, planners and local leaders must identify the harmful implications of the industry and what can be done to mitigate

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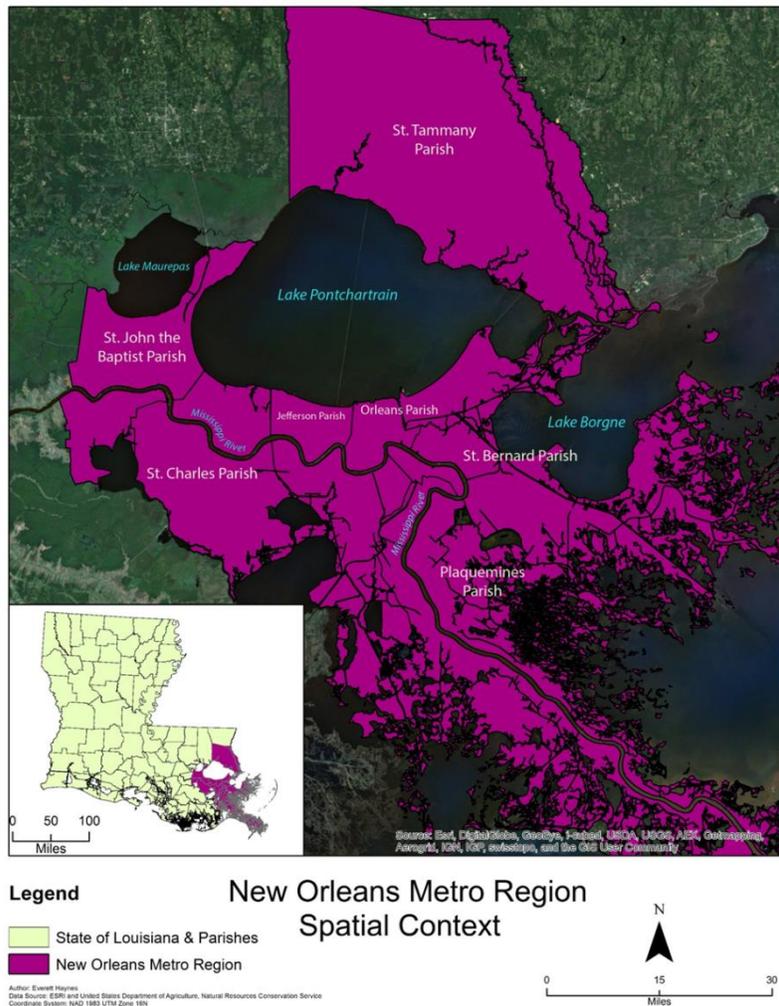
<sup>20</sup> San Francisco Municipal Code. Article 17.1: Regulations for Fortunetelling; Permit and License Provisions.

<sup>21</sup> City of New Orleans Code of Ordinances. Sec. 54-312. Code 1956, 42-91, accessed September 14, 2015, Municode.

these harmful effects and ideally improve the industry as a positive asset to the local and regional economy.

## Parameters and Subject Sites

The subject site of this investigation and study is the New Orleans Metropolitan Area, Louisiana (**Figure 1.1**). New Orleans is the subject of intense paranormal folklore and alleged supernatural phenomena throughout its long and colorful history and is considered by some to be the “most haunted city in America.”<sup>22</sup> Coupled with its vivacious entertainment scene and conventions, the city manages to attract 8.5 to 9.5 million visitors every year.<sup>23</sup> Tourism is an important and



**Figure 1.1: New Orleans Metro Region**  
 Located in the Mississippi Delta Region, New Orleans is one of the country’s and the South’s major ports and economic centers (Source: United States USGS)

<sup>22</sup> Kelly Schulz, “Tourism, Hospitality and Cultural Economy Fact Sheet,”(August 2010), *New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.*, accessed October 26, 2015, [http://www.neworleansonline.com/pr/releases/releases/Tourism,%20Hospitality,%20and%20Cultural%20Economy%20Fact%20Sheet\\_1.pdf](http://www.neworleansonline.com/pr/releases/releases/Tourism,%20Hospitality,%20and%20Cultural%20Economy%20Fact%20Sheet_1.pdf).; Cari Roy, “Top 7 Reasons Why New Orleans is America’s Most Haunted City,”(October 1, 2014) *Paranormal New Orleans*, accessed November 9, 2015 from <http://paranormalneworleans.com/article/the-7-reasons-why-new-orleans-is-americas-most-haunted-city/>.  
<sup>23</sup> “Mayor Landrieu Touts New Orleans 2015 Success in Tourism, Cultural Economy, and Film (December 30, 2015), *City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office*, accessed April 18, 2016 from <http://www.nola.gov/mayor/press-releases/2015/20151230-eoy-culture-tourism/>.

powerful component in the local economy, generating more than \$6 billion in revenue and employing more than 82,000 in the hospitality industry.<sup>24</sup>

The New Orleans metropolitan area consists of seven parishes and includes a total population of 1,262,888.<sup>25</sup> The metro parishes include the core parishes of Jefferson, Orleans, and St. Bernard as well as the outlying parishes of the Plaquemines, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. Tammany (See **Figure 1.1**). The focus and bulk of the research for this report will be conducted in the city of New Orleans although several other prospective sites and establishments outside the city limits will be considered for data collection.

Surveys and interviews were the two dominant methods of obtaining data for this study. I administered two sets of interviews and surveys. The first survey targeted paranormal tourists themselves to better understand basic demographic, education, employment, travel habits, and travels costs of those partaking in paranormal tourism. The second survey asked businesses relating to paranormal tourism about their business history and model, customer demographics, revenue and employment, local community impact, and effects of public policy. These include businesses were classified into three different categories:

1. Paranormal Retail and Service Establishments
2. Paranormal Tour Operations
3. Hotels, Inns, Accommodations

I also visited the New Orleans metro region as a subsidiary form of data collection. Data collected from this site visit included personal interviews and discussions with business owners, tour guides, tourists, and other tourism officials. Personal participation on paranormal tours, visits to shops, and visiting sites of paranormal significance provided further insight into this niche tourism market as well as how it operates within the city and interacts with the local community.

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<sup>24</sup> Division of Business and Economic Research, "Metropolitan Report (April 2015), *The University of New Orleans*, accessed April 18, 2016 from <http://www.uno.edu/coba/DBER/UNOMetroMarch2015.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> "Population July 2015 Estimates" (July 1, 2015), *Louisiana State Census Data Center*, accessed March 24, 2016 from <http://louisiana.gov/Explore/Estimates/>.

I analyzed the results of these surveys, interviews, and the site visit and compared to public economic statistics within of the New Orleans metro area to ascertain if paranormal-related businesses and services do indeed have a significant impact on the city's tourism and local economy, whether through employment, wages, total generated revenue, or attracting visitors which may also impact other related tourist businesses such as food and drinking establishments, retail, accommodation, transportation, or guided tours.

## **Outcome Summary**

Results indicated that paranormal-related businesses and tourism activities positively affect the local New Orleans economy by providing specialized jobs and employment opportunities, secondary economic support, unique tourist activities, fostering entrepreneurship, and encouraging historic preservation. Results from both surveys indicated that paranormal belief continues to rise and is indeed affecting local economies and markets, specifically tourism markets. A summary of each data collection method is summarized below as well as the conclusions reached by this research.

### Tourist Survey

Results from the tourist survey concluded that paranormal tourists hail from a diversity of backgrounds but share some common traits such as high levels of education (college degree), age, belief, and belief influencers. Paranormal tourists predominantly fell within the middle-aged adult cohort (45-65 years of age) and younger adult cohort (18-24 years of age) with fewer reporting belief in the between age cohorts, suggesting a generational gap in belief. Furthermore, more than 60 percent indicated they hold paranormal beliefs with personal experience (70 percent) and popular media (46 percent) being the major influencers of paranormal belief.

Results also indicated that 42 percent of paranormal tourists participate in paranormal tourism once per year, on average, often spending one day for a trip associated with paranormal tourism and spending less than \$300 on total trip expenses. This suggests that many trips taken for paranormal tourism are day trips to local sites within driving distance. However, 44 percent indicated that they traveled primarily for paranormal or

spiritual reasons while 38 percent indicated they partook in paranormal tourism as a side activity while traveling to or visiting a destination.

64 percent of respondents indicated that they have taken paranormal tours while 42 percent indicated they had visited a paranormal-related attraction or site. Paranormal tourists were more likely to participate in organized paranormal tourism rather than independent tourism, such as unorganized exploration and investigation of sites. This supports the notion that businesses relating to paranormal are increasing in popularity and have a growing customer base.

### Business Survey

Results from the business survey indicated that the majority of paranormal-related businesses were locally owned, established in the late 1990s and becoming more common in the 2000s and 2010s. All businesses indicated that a growth in market demand was the primary influencer in creating the business while education also played a major role. When asked about customer demographics, respondents provided responses similar to those derived from the tourist survey. Respondents also indicated that their customer base continues to grow, specifically within the last decade. Many contribute to this increase of interest to popular media.

Respondent businesses were a diversity of sizes, generating a wide range of revenue and employees, although the majority employed between 11-15 employees. Paranormal-related businesses also employed those with specialized skill sets that otherwise may not be able to use their skills, talents, and gifts elsewhere. In regards to wages, all businesses exceeded the federal and local minimum wages, often relatively high-paying in a tourism market that otherwise is known for its low-paying jobs. Most employees also worked full-time (40 hours per week), working approximately 8 hours per day.

In regards to community impact and public policy, the majority of respondents indicated that the local community has responded positively to their business and paranormal tourism, although there are some exceptions and conditions. Public policy and the local government has mainly affected paranormal tourism by regulating tour group

size, tour guide licensing and testing, time restrictions, and through district or location regulations.

### Site Visit

Results and observations from the site visit to New Orleans and the surrounding areas indicate that paranormal tourism is a very apparent and strong part of the tourism economy of the region. Merchandise, services, and sites relating to the paranormal are ubiquitous throughout the city. Many local residents support tourism and are accepting of paranormal niche tourism because of the city's rich history and their own personal experiences with alleged paranormal phenomena.

### Conclusions

Conclusions from the results suggest that while paranormal tourism has positively affected the New Orleans tourism economy, it requires special conditions and parameters to be met. These include public and community support, a strong and rich cultural and historical background, a focus of alleged paranormal activity, and respect at the local government level. A variety of tourism activities are also beneficial as it helps bring tourists to a particular destination for a variety of reasons and improves the chances of them partaking in paranormal tourism, as well as diversifying the economy. Paranormal tourism also provides benefits to the local government through taxation, generated revenue, and marketing but also concerns addressed through regulations. Additional concerns that communities must also address are respecting and accommodating paranormal tourism and paranormal businesses in general. This can be accomplished through diligent community involvement and acknowledging the cultural and economic importance of these activities. These conditions help foster paranormal tourism in a community, which can serve as a subsidiary economic activity for communities that lack other options.

## II. Background

Literature and research regarding the paranormal and its connection to tourism and pilgrimage is not a new phenomenon. However, what is new is its modern incarnation and revived paranormal belief that has permeated into so many facets of 21<sup>st</sup> century life in the United States and throughout the world, both in developed and developing nations. Much of this resurgence of interest and fascination is thought to be attributed to the media's portrayal and proliferation of paranormal themed subjects, whether it be documentaries, books, magazines, films, scripted television shows, video games, or marketing. This section's intent is to provide a background and foundation on the rise of paranormal belief in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America and throughout the world and how paranormal tourism has arisen to become a major sector of the larger tourism industry, specifically in New Orleans.

### Popular Culture and Background

It could be argued that the dramatic rise of interest in the paranormal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is attributed to popular media and entertainment influences including television, film, books, and the Internet.<sup>26</sup> Popular scripted television shows including *Charmed*, *Supernatural*, *The Walking Dead*, *Game of Thrones*, *True Blood*, *Medium*, and *Once Upon a Time*, among many others, have popularized witchcraft, magic, supernatural beings, fantasy, and ancient folklore and mythology.<sup>27</sup> While these shows are purely fictional and have many absolute fantasy elements, they do provide a glimpse into the world of the paranormal that has fascinated humans since the beginning of our existence. In addition, the media has taken the paranormal to the reaches of reality television with many television shows devoted to paranormal and ghost investigation. Ghost hunting programs such as *Most Haunted*, *Ghost Hunters*, *Ghost Adventures*, *Scariest Places on Earth*, are just a sample of many other reality and investigative television programs that relate to the

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<sup>26</sup> Bader et al., 5.

<sup>27</sup> "IMDb: Highest Rated Fantasy TV Series With At Least 1,000 Votes" and "Paranormal TV Series," IMDb, accessed October 27, 2015, [http://www.imdb.com/search/title?genres=fantasy&num\\_votes=1000,&sort=user\\_rating,desc&title\\_type=tv\\_series](http://www.imdb.com/search/title?genres=fantasy&num_votes=1000,&sort=user_rating,desc&title_type=tv_series).

paranormal.<sup>28</sup> These investigative programs seek to gather evidence of the paranormal through parascientific means.

An equally endless list of films has had the same if not more potent impact on the popularization of the paranormal. Films such as *Twilight*, *Paranormal Activity*, *The Conjuring Amityville Horror*, *The Exorcist*, *Paranormal Activity*, *The Shining*, *Signs* and *The Sixth Sense* have popularized the paranormal and brought the theme into the view and scrutiny of mainstream society. *Twilight*, in particular, has had many economic and tourism impacts in Forks, Washington, the setting of the story. The town features tours, stores, and relics inspired by the book and film franchise.<sup>29</sup>

The rise and proliferation of the Internet has played a vital role in the rise of belief and fascination with the paranormal in the modern era.<sup>30</sup> The internet allows ease of communication and sharing unprecedented in known human history. This has also allowed paranormal folklore, personal stories, footage, products, and services to be shared and commodified like never before.

Paranormal tourism itself is not a new phenomenon. Paranormal tourism has existed since ancient times, although it took more of a form of religious pilgrimage. Ancients partook in pilgrimages and traveled to sacred and alleged supernatural locales to immerse themselves in the sacred and otherworldly. The sacred Greek city of Delphi was home to the Oracle at Delphi who was purported to have the gift of foresight. Diverse groups of people ranging from Greek and foreign dignitaries to common folk traveled to Delphi and paid great sums for oracles.<sup>31</sup> So powerful and prominent was the oracle at Delphi that the priests often had power over political, cultural, and economic affairs within Greece and Mediterranean world. During the Victorian era, coinciding with the rise of Spiritualism, paranormal tourism existed within Europe and the United States. Haunted

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<sup>28</sup> "IMDb: Paranormal TV Series" (May, 7, 2013) IMDb, accessed October 27, 2015, <http://www.imdb.com/list/ls051930158/>; Annette Hill, *Paranormal Media* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 48-55.

<sup>29</sup> "Twilight", *Forks Chamber of Commerce*, accessed October 27, 2015, <http://forkswa.com/twilight/>.

<sup>30</sup> Marc E. Fitch, *Paranormal Nation* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 316-321.

<sup>31</sup> "Delphi," *Ancient-Greece.org*, accessed November 10, 2015 from <http://ancient-greece.org/history/delphi.html>.

locations were often advertised as tourist attractions in Victorian travel guides, such as Harriet Martineau's *Guide to the Lake District* (1858) as well as advertising places mentioned in Walter Scott's popular Scottish novels, which were often paranormal themed.<sup>32</sup>

The growth of paranormal tourism in the modern era is unprecedented and unique in that it focuses less in the religious and more in the occult, aliens, ghosts, and demons. However, it cannot be refuted that religion still plays an important role in paranormal-related tourism. Millions flock to religious centers every year, often spending vast sums of money on transportation, accommodations, admission, souvenirs, and other goods and services.<sup>33</sup> The haj, a religious pilgrimage that is a central tenet in Islam, generates more than \$16.5 billion in the Saudi Arabian economy.<sup>34</sup> Religious tourism is also important and essential to the economies of Jerusalem; Rome; Varanasi, India; Lhasa, Tibet; and Guadalupe, Mexico. New Orleans is renowned for its unique form of Voodoo, an Afro-American religion derived from the Yoruba religion brought to the New World by slaves. Voodoo has helped make the city a popular tourist destination, both for religious and entertainment purposes.

### **Audience & Demographics**

Identifying paranormal believers and asking why they believe is the first key step to understanding paranormal economics and tourism. Some demographic groups are more inclined to believe in the paranormal and thus travel to paranormal hotspots. It could be assumed that in order to justify paying, a tourist must have some measure of interest or belief in the paranormal. However, it has also been noted that skeptics and the mildly curious also partake in paranormal tours out of curiosity or entertainment. Thus,

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<sup>32</sup> Fitch, 185.

<sup>33</sup> "The Importance of the Religious Tourism Market," *Tourism and More* (November 2014), accessed November 10, 2015 from <http://www.tourismandmore.com/tidbits/the-importance-of-the-religious-tourism-market/>.

<sup>34</sup> "Pennies from Heaven," *The Economist*, October 12, 2013, accessed November 10 2015 from <http://www.economist.com/news/business/21587806-pilgrimages-are-big-businessand-getting-bigger-pennies-heaven>.

paranormal tourism has several roles: a role as a serious activity for those who truly believe and an entertainment role for believers, skeptics, and those who are just curious.

### Statistics

Firstly, it is important to understand what percentage of the population holds paranormal beliefs or interest. However, hard statistics are often elusive and contradictory. According to the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey, 68 percent of respondents indicated that they held at least one paranormal belief.<sup>35</sup> A Gallup study in the same year found that 73 percent of respondents believe in at least one paranormal belief, as indicated on their question options.<sup>36</sup> This survey compared to an earlier 2001 survey where belief in some phenomena declined while others increased. The results also showed that both religious and non-religious people hold paranormal beliefs. A 2009 Pew Research Survey found that 65 percent of Americans hold paranormal beliefs, an increase from earlier survey results from 1990 and 1996 (See **Table 1.1** for full results).<sup>37</sup> The 2015 Chapman University Survey on American Fears found that Americans are more likely to hold some paranormal beliefs, such as that positive thoughts can influence the physical world, than others, such as astrology.<sup>38</sup> A considerable number of Americans believe that spirits and ghosts can haunt locations while few believed Bigfoot or astrology were real, as seen in **Figure 2.1**.

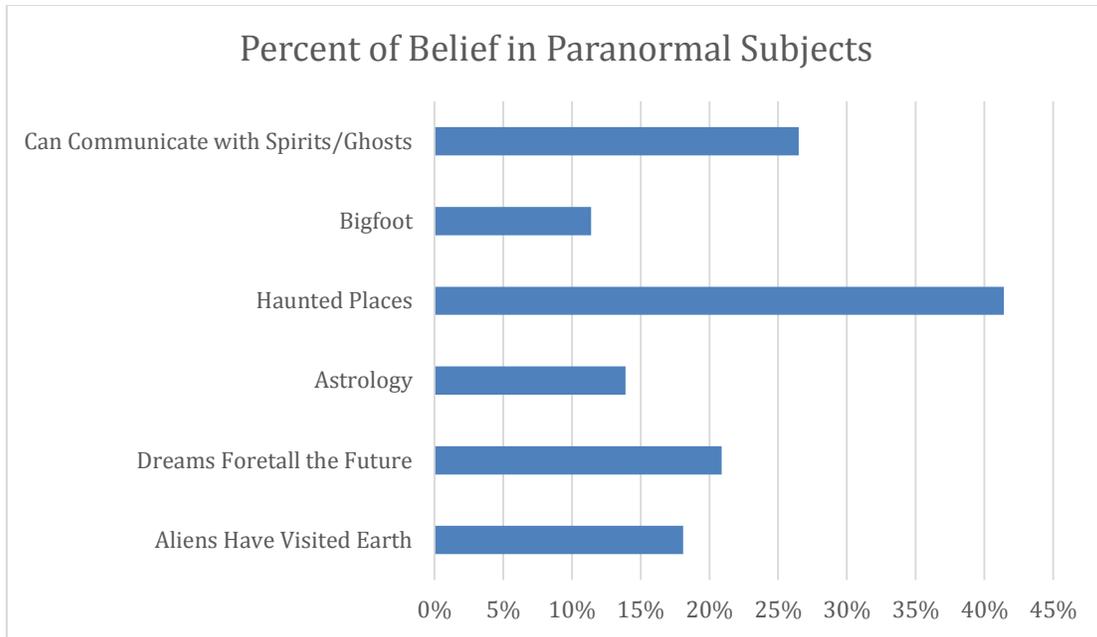
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<sup>35</sup> Bader et al., 130.

<sup>36</sup> David W. Moore, "Three in Four Americans Believe in the Paranormal," *Gallup* (June 16, 2005), accessed April 6, 2016 from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/16915/three-four-americans-believe-paranormal.aspx>

<sup>37</sup> "Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths."

<sup>38</sup> Christopher Bader, Edward Day, and Ann Gordon, "The Chapman University Survey of American Fears, Wave 2," *Chapman University* (October 15, 2015), Orange, CA: Earl Babbie Research Center, accessed April 6, 2016 from [http://www.chapman.edu/wilkinson/\\_files/fear-2015/codebook.pdf](http://www.chapman.edu/wilkinson/_files/fear-2015/codebook.pdf).



**Figure 2.1; Percent of American's Belief in Different Paranormal Subjects:** Based on a sample of results collected from 1,541 respondents, Americans tend to believe to certain paranormal phenomena as opposed to others, as provided in this sample of results. *Source:* Chapman University Survey on American Fears, 2015.

This collection of results and comparisons generally conclude that paranormal belief and interest is increasing, albeit in certain categories and subjects while it is decreasing in others. However, it must also be noted that while these polls are from reputable sources and show somewhat similar levels of belief, there is incomplete agreement about the level and kinds of paranormal beliefs present in the United States.

Education and Socio-Economic Status

Historically, it was generally believed that lack of education, ignorance, and poverty positively correlated with paranormal and spiritual belief while education and higher socio-economic status negatively correlated with paranormal belief. Philosophers and economists like Karl Marx argued that religion and spiritual belief provided comfort to less powerful and downtrodden while keeping the upper classes in power.<sup>39</sup> Others supported this argument that those with, “good education, a high-paying, ‘respectable’ occupation, and a stable family life are apt to feel in control of their lives,” and thus have less belief in the

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<sup>39</sup> Bader et al., 53.

paranormal.<sup>40</sup> This lack of internal locus of control is believed to effect women, the impoverished, those with low levels of education, and racial or ethnic minorities as they are perceived to have less control over their lives and, consequently, hold paranormal and superstitious beliefs. However, this is not simply the case as many members of many different groups believe in the paranormal, regardless of race, gender, income, and education. While it is indeed true that there are differences of belief between the genders, ethnic groups, education levels, and classes, it should be noted that they express their beliefs differently rather than the simple conclusion of believers versus non-believers.<sup>41</sup>

While some academics may argue that paranormal belief correlates with a low internal locus of control, it should be noted that many elite members of societies throughout history have been the first to adopt paranormal or religious beliefs. Bader, Baker, and Mencken describe them as, “early adapters,” and are typically the first to be exposed to new ideas and concepts due to their social linkages, high income, and high education.<sup>42</sup> Those of the elite classes are typically innovators, seekers, adapters and were historically the first to adopt new religious and paranormal beliefs. In the modern era, the Scientology religion, considered fringe by some, is heavily ranked with elite members of society, especially celebrities.<sup>43</sup> Again, this is not to say that all or most members of the elite and creative classes are believers in the paranormal but rather that paranormal belief extends to a variety of people, regardless of socioeconomic status.

Socioeconomic status weighs very little in belief in the paranormal as a whole but what about educational attainment? More recent scientific studies have shown a mixture of complex and opposing results. Kia Aarnio and Dr. Marjaana Lindeman found in their 2005 study of a Finnish university that subjects in varying majors hold different levels of paranormal belief, depending on their degree of critical analysis skills and intuitive thinking skills. However, even within these studies there were multiple results and conclusions, often contradictory and very complex. Their preliminary research and

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Bader et al., 54.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 71.

literature reviews dating back to the 1960s found complex and contradictory data with paranormal beliefs being less prevalent among more educated participants but also at par with those with less formal education.<sup>44</sup> However, previous research also found that beliefs and degree of belief varied between majors and studies, with students in the natural and social sciences typically having less paranormal beliefs than those in the arts and humanities. However, subsequent research studying those educated in the social and natural sciences had contradicting results either having more, less, or equal amount of beliefs as opposed to other fields of study and among the non-educated. Overall, they concluded that, “skepticism towards paranormal beliefs is mostly acquired before higher education.”<sup>45</sup>

Andrew Teesdale reports in the thesis, “Deprivation model of paranormal belief: Mediation by religiosity and church involvement,” that, “no significant direct or indirect relationship was found between education and classical paranormal beliefs.”<sup>46</sup> However, this new data also differs from past studies performed by Carl Sagan and Jon Miller in which those with higher levels of education had lower levels of paranormal belief.<sup>47</sup> Both Sagan and Miller argue that as education progresses so will paranormal beliefs, effectively expelling and eliminating them. The 2005 Baylor Religion Survey also supports the conclusions of these other studies in which those without a high school diploma do have a higher tendency to believe in some paranormal phenomena such as psychics, astrology, and ghosts but are not more likely or less likely to believe in UFOs or Atlantis when compared to those with higher levels of educational attainment.<sup>48</sup>

In conclusion, it cannot be decisively confirmed that education and socio-economic status correlates with belief in the paranormal as a whole but does influence what types of

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<sup>44</sup> Aarnio, K., & Lindeman, M. (2005). Paranormal beliefs, education, and thinking styles. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 39(7), 1227-1236, November 2005, doi:<http://dx.doi.org.er.lib.k-state.edu/10.1016/j.paid.2005.04.009>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Teesdale, “Deprivation model of paranormal belief: Mediation by religiosity and church involvement” (master’s thesis, Iowa State University, 2011), 20.

<sup>47</sup> Erich Goode, January 2002, Education, scientific knowledge, and belief in the paranormal. *The Skeptical Inquirer*, 26, 24-27, accessed March 16, 2016 from <http://search.proquest.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/docview/219300144?accountid=11789>.

<sup>48</sup> Bader, et al., 58.

paranormal beliefs one may hold. Rather, paranormal belief is a complex phenomenon that is attractive to a broad range of people and while education and socio-economic status may play a minor role, it is not the decisive factor in belief or skepticism. Yet even though paranormal belief exists in all groups, there are still some inherent risks such as being labeled a deviant and stereotyping, and in some cases, losing social status and standing.<sup>49</sup>

### Types of Beliefs and Perceptions

There is a vast and myriad collection of paranormal beliefs, with some being more accepted and popular than others. Foremost, belief in the paranormal was not always accepted and, in some cases, is still taboo. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and persisting into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, negative stereotypes and attitudes were attached to those with paranormal beliefs and were sometimes outcasts.

A broader stereotype is often applied to paranormal believers—people who believe in or have experienced the paranormal are ‘different.’ People who do not believe in the paranormal are perceived to be normal; those who believe in paranormal topics are considered weird, unconventional, strange, or deviant.<sup>50</sup>

Even with growing acceptance, stereotypes still persist and even believers attach negative connotations to believers of certain paranormal phenomena. This is particularly relevant in that 68 percent of Americans believe in at least one paranormal phenomena but it can be more accurate to distinguish by, “how much of the paranormal they find credible,” or accept.<sup>51</sup> Certain types of paranormal phenomena and beliefs are more accepted by the general public and considered more mainstream than others. Generally accepted and harmless beliefs include:

- Psychic Practices
- Acupuncture
- Feng Shui

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<sup>49</sup> Bader, et al., 70-71.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

- Homeopathy
- Yoga

Conversely, occultism, Satanism, black magic, Ouija, and witchcraft are considered fringe and have a negative connotation.<sup>52</sup> This is pertinent to this study as it is important for successful and savvy business owners to structure their operation to as wide of an audience as possible. However, there are still businesses that do cater to a specific demographic rather than a widespread audience or to those fulfilling a “dark” curiosity. This leads to a clash between conventional and deviant beliefs. While belief in the paranormal as a whole was once considered deviant, it is now more mainstream and conventional. However, there are many beliefs considered deviant or conventional within the paranormal sphere as well. Belief in the paranormal still runs some inherent risks. Returning to the elite class who typically were and still are the first to adopt new beliefs, they also have a higher social risk of being labeled strange or deviant for adhering to a particular belief. They typically have more to lose in social standing than those of lower classes.<sup>53</sup>

In the New Orleans tourism economy, there is a struggle between deviant and conventional beliefs and how they are marketed and tailored to specific demographics. Butler’s dissertation, “The Other Kingdom: New Orleans Voodoo and Tourism,” focused on how some pre-Katrina voodoo businesses catered to a specific demographic seeking thrills and authenticity, often using theatrics and employing brooding employees to exude a discomforting and apprehensive environment.<sup>54</sup> This created a form of authenticity as, “authenticity itself moves to inhabit mystification.”<sup>55</sup> Likewise, mystification lends to authenticity. This creates a distinction between the more generic, souvenir and tourist oriented shops within the French Quarter and the actual Voodoo stores and botanicas where the religion and craft are taken seriously and openly practiced. This relationship is important to convey to the target audience and demographic as it creates a paranormal

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<sup>52</sup> Annette Hill, *Paranormal Media* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 40-41.

<sup>53</sup> Bader, et al., 71.

<sup>54</sup> Brooke Butler, “The Other Magic Kingdom: New Orleans Voodoo and Tourism (doctorate dissertation, University of California Davis, 2011), 122-123.

<sup>55</sup> Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999) 93.

experience or at least lends to the overall experience. Business owners want their wares and services to appear authentic and so theatrics and mystification are often employed to do just that. In the course of her research, she interviewed the owner of Reverend Zombie's and Marie Laveau's Houses of Voodoo Andy Antippas where he, "admitted that he intended the shops to 'perpetuate the commonly held Hollywood version of Voodoo, but at the same time suggest that there's a profounder end of it by offering books and scholarly materials.'"<sup>56</sup> This is not true for all Voodoo and paranormal-related businesses within the city. Others invite and encourage customers to touch and experience the products and services and eliminate the mystification of the shop and religion.<sup>57</sup> This different business model intends to dispel the misunderstandings and stereotypes about the religion and encourage customers to familiarize themselves with the faith. These two opposite forms of business have been successful in their own right and expose tourists to Voodoo and the paranormal in different ways.

### **New Orleans Economy & Tourism**

Tourism is a growing industry throughout the United States, providing more than 15 million jobs, \$141.5 billion in direct taxes, and contributing nearly \$2.1 trillion in spending by domestic and international visitors in 2014.<sup>58</sup> In fact, tourism and travel is "among the top ten industries in 49 states and D.C. in terms of employment," ranking at number seven in terms of employment compared to other major private industry sectors.<sup>59</sup> The growing importance of tourism as an economic powerhouse and employer cannot be ignored, especially within the New Orleans Metropolitan region. Tourism contributed more than \$6.8 billion to the local economy and accounted for nearly 85,200 jobs in the area.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Andy Antippas, interview by Brooke Butler, "The Other Magic Kingdom: New Orleans Voodoo and Tourism (doctorate dissertation, University of California Davis, 2011), 125.

<sup>57</sup> Butler, 127.

<sup>58</sup> "U.S. Travel Answer Sheet," *U.S. Travel Association*, 2014, <https://www.ustravel.org/answersheet>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> "Mayor Landrieu Touts New Orleans 2015 Success in Tourism, Cultural Economy and Film," *City of New Orleans Mayor's Office* (December 30, 2015), accessed April 6, 2016 from <http://www.nola.gov/mayor/press-releases/2015/20151230-eoy-culture-tourism/>.

New Orleans is dominated by four major industries: oil, natural gas, minerals production; refining; chemical and petrochemical manufacturing; and tourism.<sup>61</sup> The oil industry dominated the New Orleans economy in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century yet began to decline in the 1980s. While the oil and petroleum industries remain major employers and economic generators for the city and region, tourism continues to eclipse both as a major employer and economic generator.<sup>62</sup> Between October 2014 and October 2015, the Leisure and Hospitality sector created 4,700 jobs in the New Orleans MSA.<sup>63</sup>

Unemployment has plagued New Orleans for many years, specifically after the oil bust of the 1980s. However, post-Katrina New Orleans has seen a resurgence and revitalization that seems to be reversing the city's decline and economic downturn. Still, the city suffers from relatively high unemployment and low-wage jobs. Unemployment in the New Orleans area as of January 2016 was 5.8 percent, higher than the national rate at 4.9 percent and slightly lower than the state's rate at 5.9 percent.<sup>64</sup> New Orleans has long suffered from high unemployment. Even before the 2005 Hurricane Katrina, unemployment rates remained high between 5 and 5.9 percent. Hurricane Katrina caused unemployment rates to jump over 15 percent. Since Katrina, the city and state have made great strides to rebuild the economy. While at 5.8 percent as of January 2016, this is a decrease from 6.9 percent of January 2015.<sup>65</sup> Job growth in the metro region exceeded 5 percent in 2014, exceeding the national growth rate of 1 percent, a sign of improving conditions within the region.<sup>66</sup> Growth in the tourism sector continues with employment in

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<sup>61</sup> Office of Lieutenant Governor Department of Culture, Recreation, & Tourism, Calendar Year 2014 Louisiana TravelsAmerica Visitor Profile Report, (May 29, 2014), accessed October 26, 2015 from <http://www.crt.state.la.us/tourism/louisiana-research/latest-research/index>.

<sup>62</sup> United States Department of Labor, "New-Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA Economy at a Glance" and "New Orleans Economy at a Glance," *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, (February 2016), accessed March 28, 2016 from [http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.la\\_neworleans\\_msa.htm](http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.la_neworleans_msa.htm).

<sup>63</sup> "New Orleans Regional Economic Index," *New Orleans Regional Council for Business Economics* (December 2015), accessed March 25, 2016 from [http://www.norcbe.org/images/THE\\_NEW\\_ORLEANS\\_REGIONAL\\_RECOVERY\\_INDEXOCTOBER\\_2015.pdf](http://www.norcbe.org/images/THE_NEW_ORLEANS_REGIONAL_RECOVERY_INDEXOCTOBER_2015.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> United States Department of Labor, "New Orleans Area Economic Summary," *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, (February 23, 2016), assessed March 28, 2016 from [http://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/summary/blssummary\\_neworleans.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/summary/blssummary_neworleans.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Vicki Mack, Allison Plyer, and Nihal Shrinath, "The New Orleans Index at Ten: Measuring Greater New Orleans' Progress toward Prosperity," *The Data Center*, (July 31, 2015), accessed November 10, 2015 from [http://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports\\_analysis/new-orleans-index-at-ten/](http://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/new-orleans-index-at-ten/).

Leisure and Hospitality numbering over 85,100 as of February 2016, an increase of just under 1 percent from January 2015.<sup>67</sup> However, while growth in this sector is positive, there is little to no data that depicts how paranormal-related tourism operations are influencing the overall industry sector, whether through employment, wages, or total generated revenue.

### Wages and Income:

New Orleans ranks second in the nation for income inequality with high poverty and unemployment.<sup>68</sup> The average hourly wage in the New Orleans metro was \$20.71 as of May 2014, lower than the national average of \$22.71.<sup>69</sup> The Living Wage Ordinance, implemented January 1, 2016, requires that all employees of certain companies operating in the city to be paid a minimum \$10.55 an hour.<sup>70</sup> These include:

- All City and Municipal Employees
- Employees working under a city contract or contracts worth more than \$25,000
- Work for a company that receives economic incentives or tax breaks worth more than \$100,000 a year

This does not apply for all businesses within the city which are still beholden only to the federal minimum wage requirements of \$7.25 per hour.<sup>71</sup> The average annual household income in New Orleans was \$36,964 as of 2014 with an average per capita income of \$27,255.<sup>72</sup> This is lower than the average national household income of \$53,657 and average per capita income of \$28,555 as of 2014.<sup>73</sup> Tourism related jobs are often low-wage and fall well below the metro's average annual wage, particularly those in the food

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<sup>67</sup> United States Department of Labor, "New Orleans Area Economic Summary."

<sup>68</sup> Jessica Fisch, Marla Nelson, and Laura Wolf-Powers, "New Orleans' Economic Resurgence: Policies for Improving Earnings for the Working Poor," *The Data Center*, (August 5, 2015), accessed December 8, 2015 from [http://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports\\_analysis/low-wages/](http://www.datacenterresearch.org/reports_analysis/low-wages/).

<sup>69</sup> United States Department of Labor, "Occupational Employment and Wages in New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner," *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, (May 2014), accessed March 28, 2016 from [http://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages\\_neworleans.htm](http://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages_neworleans.htm).

<sup>70</sup> Sec. 70-806.1 Living Wage Required, City of New Orleans Municipal Code, M.C.S. Or. No. 26521, 1, 8-6-15, accessed March 16, 2016.

<sup>71</sup> United States Department of Labor, "Minimum Wage," *Wage and Hour Division*, accessed March 28, 2016 from <http://www.dol.gov/whd/minimumwage.htm>.

<sup>72</sup> "QuickFacts: New Orleans City, Louisiana," *United States Census Bureau*, (2015), accessed March 28, 2016 from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/2255000>.

<sup>73</sup> "QuickFacts: United States," *United States Census Bureau*, (2015), accessed March 28, 2016 from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/00>.

service and restaurant industry.<sup>74</sup> Approximately 60,000 people are employed in the food, beverage processing, and distribution industry with an average yearly wage of \$26,712 and earning approximately \$9.93 per hour, falling below the national average of \$10.57.<sup>75</sup> This is higher than the average yearly wages for hospitality employees who earn, on average, \$18,019 while the national average annual wage is \$18,570.<sup>76</sup> **Table 2.1** depicts and compares the average hourly and annual incomes of the various tourism related occupations in New Orleans, compared to the national averages, accompanied by the reporting date.<sup>77</sup> It should be noted that occupations within the tourism, leisure, and hospitality field typically pay, on average, an annual wage of \$24,344, approximately fifty percent of the MSA average \$48,437.<sup>78</sup> While the sector continues to exponentially grow annually, it is actually depressing the MSA average pay as occupations in this sector are often low paying.

**Table 2.1: Selected Tourism-Related Occupation Average Wages**

Occupation	Approx. # of Employees	Hourly Pay (Local)	Annual Income (Local)	Hourly Pay (National)	Annual Income (National)
Cashier (5/15)	18,850	\$9.15	\$19,030	\$10.09	\$20,990
Retail Salesperson (5/15)	18,430	\$12.46	\$25,910	\$12.38	\$25,760
Food and Beverage (5/15)	61,100	\$9.93	\$20,660	\$10.57	\$21,980
Leisure and Hospitality (2/16)	84,600	N/A	\$18,019	\$14.59	\$18,570
Tour Guides (5/15)	430	\$12.63	\$26,270	\$12.56	\$26,120

Source: United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

<sup>74</sup> Fisch, et al.

<sup>75</sup> United States Department of Labor, "Occupational Employment and Wages in New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner," *Bureau of Labor Statistics* (May 2014), accessed March 28, 2016 from [http://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages\\_neworleans.htm/](http://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages_neworleans.htm/).

<sup>76</sup> Leslie Eaton and Cameron McWhirter, "New Orleans's Uneven Revival in Decade After Katrina," *The Wall Street Journal* (August 26, 2015), accessed December 8, 2015 from <http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-orleans-economy-ten-years-after-katrina-1440628953>.

<sup>77</sup> United States Department of Labor, "New Orleans Area Economic Summary," *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, (February 23, 2016), assessed March 28, 2016 from [http://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/summary/blssummary\\_neworleans.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/regions/southwest/summary/blssummary_neworleans.pdf).

<sup>78</sup> "New Orleans Regional Recovery Index."

The city and region continue to rebuild since Hurricane Katrina and an influx of young professionals and entrepreneurs are helping to improve economic conditions within the city. Little to no information exists pertaining to wages and income in the paranormal-related subsector of the larger tourism and hospitality industry. The purpose of this report is to better understand wages and income within this subsector and compare with both local and national averages to ascertain if this subsector is positively affecting employment and income within the New Orleans area.

### Tourist Enclaves:

New Orleans's neighborhoods, filled with architectural splendor and history, are some of the primary tourist attractions. The French Quarter, Garden District, Central Business District, and the Treme neighborhoods all function as tourism hotspots. The French Quarter, in particular, serves as the city's primary tourist enclave with a high concentration of tourism related businesses and attractions including hotels, restaurants, retail and novelty stores, guided tour businesses, museums, and entertainment venues.<sup>79</sup> The Garden District and other outlying districts are also major tourist hotspots but are primarily residential in land use and do not support the sheer size of tourist activity that the French Quarter does. These enclaves serve as important economic generators for the city where hospitality has filled the void left by the departure of the manufacturing and shipbuilding industries.<sup>80</sup> Noticeable features of these enclaves are their walkability, mixed land uses, and focus of tourist activities. From observation, many paranormal businesses are focused in these enclaves, specifically the tour companies and retail establishments. It can be assumed that these enclaves provide a steady stream of customers as well as a focus of activity for paranormal tourism.

## **Paranormal Economics in New Orleans & Background**

Using the paranormal for economic gain is also not a new phenomenon in New Orleans. Since the 1700s, denizens of the city have used the paranormal for supplementary

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<sup>79</sup> Kevin Fox Gotham, Tourism Gentrification: The Case of New Orleans' Vieux Carre (French Quarter), *Urban Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 7, 1099-1121 (June 2005).

<sup>80</sup> Eaton, et al.

income, including slaves who would perform Voodoo rites and dances for curious onlookers for income that otherwise would not have been available. This practice was encouraged as a means to buy one's freedom for over a century.<sup>81</sup> Marie Laveau, the city's most famous "Voodoo Queen," enjoyed a prestigious and modest lifestyle in the city by performing rituals, divinations, spells, and selling charms and *gris gris* bags.<sup>82</sup> Voodoo remains one of the most enigmatic and misunderstood of all paranormal and spiritual practices in the city, if not world. Its hold over the public's imagination continues to be unshakable and many businesses have not ignored this opportunity. Within New Orleans's most notable tourist enclave, the French Quarter, there are numerous retail and service establishments relating to this religion and practice. The most notable, and oldest, are Marie Laveau's House of Voodoo and Reverend Zombie's House of Voodoo which opened in the 1980s.<sup>83</sup> These two businesses make use of theatrics and atmosphere to create authenticity that often lures tourists into these establishments to purchase a variety of products and services.

In 21<sup>st</sup> century, more businesses relating to the paranormal and spiritual have sprung up throughout the city. Forbes contributor, Guy Martin, reports that the city's unique paranormal history has increasingly being marketed towards a tourist audience quoting Finis Shelnett, a New Orleans real-estate dealer and tour operator, "'ghosts are big business down here.'"<sup>84</sup> Martin also elaborates that New Orleans is successful as a paranormal tourist destination because of its uniqueness and history and that such an economic model would not work everywhere.

Currently, there are over 60 business establishments within the City of New Orleans relating to the paranormal, according to Yellow Pages.<sup>85</sup> These include tour groups, retail and service establishments, attractions and museums, and hotels. New Orleans' unique

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<sup>81</sup> Butler, 118.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>84</sup> Guy Martin, "Who You Gonna Call: 'Ghostbusting' Tourism in New Orleans," *Forbes*, May 31, 2015, accessed March 16, 2016 from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/guymartin/2015/05/31/who-you-gonna-call-ghostbusting-tourism-in-new-orleans/#395922574178>.

<sup>85</sup> New Orleans Paranormal, *Yellow Pages* (2015), accessed December 8, 2015 from [http://www.yellowpages.com/search?search\\_terms=Paranormal&geo\\_location\\_terms=New%20Orleans%2C%20LA&page=2](http://www.yellowpages.com/search?search_terms=Paranormal&geo_location_terms=New%20Orleans%2C%20LA&page=2).

history and folklore are often employed by tourism marketing and businesses since, “New Orleans is ‘America’s Most Different City,’ its attractions have to be unique. In order for the tourist object or site to be considered worthy of attention, it must be outside of the tourists’ everyday experience.”<sup>86</sup>

#### Tour Groups:

Paranormal tours are perhaps the most obvious economic activity relating to the paranormal. Across the United States and world, cities and communities have developed ghost tours as part of their tourism industry.<sup>87</sup> Many of the city’s paranormal tours also have arrangements with other paranormal-related retail and service establishments.<sup>88</sup> These include, “rest times,” and stops at restaurants, bars, and retail establishments during the tour where tourists can spend additional money in these other businesses. Tours are often focused within the tourist enclaves of the city including the French Quarter and the Garden District but also within some areas outside these enclaves, most notably the city’s famous cemeteries. This is attributed to the majority of the city’s historic sites being located within these areas but could also be attributed to security reasons and proper tourist accommodations that simply do not exist or be sufficient outside these enclaves.

#### Retail and Service Businesses:

Paranormal-related retail and service establishments are numerous and difficult to categorize but are a fixture in the New Orleans economy and culture. Retail and service operations include psychics, palmists, fortunetelling, botanicas, supply shops, souvenir and novelty shops, voodoo establishments, and book and media stores. While such establishments are found throughout the United States, New Orleans has a high concentration of these establishments. As previously discussed, Voodoo establishments are some of the most popular and prolific within the city. However, many other establishments exist throughout the city, catering both to locals and tourists alike.

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<sup>86</sup> Butler, 124.

<sup>87</sup> Fitch, 189.

<sup>88</sup> Butler, 144.

### Accommodation and Hospitality:

The hotel and hospitality sector has also joined the fray in marketing the paranormal for economic gain. Throughout the country, famous, large hotels and small, locally owned bed and breakfast inns alike are taking advantage of alleged paranormal activity at their establishments to attract tourists. Countless hotels throughout the United States and world market their history and alleged paranormal activity to increase business and revenue. Many websites such as *Haunted Rooms*, *The Travel Channel*, *Haunted Houses*, and many news websites list allegedly haunted hotels for curious tourists to stay at. *Haunted Rooms* provides the most comprehensive list with hotels organized by state and by major city. The website also allows users to check availability and book accommodations at these websites while also providing a brief history and description of the establishment.<sup>89</sup> This list includes famous and legendary establishments such as the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado; Hotel del Coronado in San Diego; and the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Honolulu all known for alleged hauntings and supernatural activity. It also includes lesser known hotels such as Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs, Arkansas and Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans, both also known for famous hauntings.

The Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado, in particular, was made famous for being the inspiration for Stephen King's *The Shining* although it purportedly has a paranormal history dating back to its construction. The hotel began to lose business and prestige in the 1970s, a trend that was reversed with the release of *The Shining*. Today, the hotel embraces its paranormal lore and offers ghost tours as well as a special, "Ghost Adventure Package," that includes a guaranteed 4<sup>th</sup> floor room, allegedly the most paranormally active area in the hotel, as well as special souvenirs.<sup>90</sup> Room rates are among some of the highest in Colorado, starting around \$200 per night and the hotel remains the most popular in the city.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, the hotel plans to open the Stanley Film Center which would become the home of the, "world's first horror themed museum, film archive, and film production

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<sup>89</sup> "Haunted Places to Stay," *Haunted Rooms* (2016), accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://www.hauntedrooms.com/haunted-places-to-stay>

<sup>90</sup> "Stanley Hotel Specials: Ghost Adventure Package and Doctor Sleep Package," *The Stanley Hotel* (2015), accessed November 9, 2015 from <http://www.stanleyhotel.com/specials>

<sup>91</sup> "Estes Park Lodging and Accommodations," *The Stanley Hotel* (2016), accessed April 20, 2016 from <http://www.stanleyhotel.com/accommodations>.

studio,” to further capitalize on its paranormal heritage and lore.<sup>92</sup> The hotel has applied for an \$11.5 million credit through the State of Colorado’s Regional Tourism Act to help offset the total estimated cost of \$24 million. The Regional Tourism Act (RTA) provides, “local governments the opportunity to apply with the Economic Development Commission for approval of a large scale Regional Tourism Project that is of an extraordinary and unique nature, is anticipated to result in a substantial increase in out-of-state tourism, and that generates a significant portion of the sales tax revenue by transactions with nonresidents of the zone.”<sup>93</sup> The Stanley Hotel offers a unique case in how a hospitality business has embraced the paranormal for revitalization, revenue, and employment purposes.

Pertaining to New Orleans, there are several hotels and inns that market alleged paranormal activity to tourists. These include the local boutique hotels of Hotel Monteleone, Le Pavillon, Bourbon Orleans, Dauphine Orleans, Andrew Jackson, and the Bienville House.<sup>94</sup> These hotels advertise their alleged paranormal phenomena on their websites while they are also marketed on tourism websites and independent, paranormal themed websites. Most noticeably absent from lists are major chain hotels and therefore it is primarily locally owned boutique hotels who are marketed as having paranormal phenomena. Hotel Dauphine Orleans offers special paranormal hotel packages and accommodations including haunted tours with various companies. Many paranormal tour companies also feature various hotels in tours, and some have special contracts allowing tour groups to enter the premises for tours.<sup>95</sup>

### Popular Media and Paranormal Tourism

Another interesting and growing economic activity that is marginally related to the paranormal is the Motion Picture and Sound Recording Industry in New Orleans as “the

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<sup>92</sup> Genevieve Brown, “World’s First’ Horror Museum Could Be Housed in ‘The Shining’ Hotel,” *ABC News* (October 27, 2015), accessed November 9, 2015 from <http://abcnews.go.com/Travel/worlds-horror-museum-housed-shining-hotel/story?id=34763984>.

<sup>93</sup> “Regional Tourism Act (RTA),” *Colorado Office of Economic Development & International Trade*, accessed November 9, 2015 from <http://www.advancecolorado.com/funding-incentives/financing/regional-tourism-act-rta>.

<sup>94</sup> Cari Roy, “Haunted Hotels,” *Paranormal New Orleans*, accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://paranormalneworleans.com/haunted-hotels/>.

<sup>95</sup> Tour Company C Representative, interviewed by author, February 24, 2016, Telephone Call.

paranormal economy is most obvious in the film, television, and book industries.<sup>96</sup> This also may explain the growing belief in the paranormal within the United States and other developed nations. Fitch argues that since we are often exposed to these forms of media at a young age, they create a tendency towards belief in the paranormal from an early age.<sup>97</sup> Several television series and films are fully or partially filmed in the New Orleans area related to the paranormal include *American Horror Story: Coven*, *The Originals*, *Interview with the Vampire*, and *The Skeleton Key*. The film industry has contributed \$583 in direct spending in the economy.<sup>98</sup> While the purpose of this report is to not examine the economic impact of paranormal-related entertainment filming, it does present an additional tourism attraction to the city as fans of these popular films and programs may visit the city to tour the sites featured in these stories.

## **Public Policy**

Public policy regarding tourism abounds but there are few examples of public policy, government subsidies, and incentives aiding paranormal-related tourist industries specifically.

Colorado's RTA may play an important role in the construction of the Stanley Film Center which, if approved, is expected to attract out-of-state tourists including those interested in the paranormal and film fans. The act, "provides a mechanism for local governments to undertake a regional tourism project to attract out-of-state visitors, to create a regional tourism zone in which the project will be built, and to create a regional tourism authority with the power to receive and utilize the increment of revenues derived from the state sales tax collected in the zone, that is above a designated base amount, to be used to finance eligible improvements to the project."<sup>99</sup> Requirements for approval dictate:

- That a project must be of an extraordinary or unique nature and is reasonably anticipated to contribute significantly to economic development and tourism in the state and communities where the project is located,

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<sup>96</sup> Fitch, 178.

<sup>97</sup> Fitch, 179.

<sup>98</sup> "Mayor Landrieu Touts New Orleans 2015 Success in Tourism, Cultural Economy and Film."

<sup>99</sup> "Regional Tourism Act (RTA)".

- Result in a substantial increase in out-of-state tourism,
- Significant portion of sales tax revenue generated by the project is reasonably anticipated to be attributable to transactions with nonresidents of the zone,
- Local government must provide reliable economic data demonstrating that in the absence of state sales tax increment revenue, the project is not reasonably anticipated to be developed within the foreseeable future,
- Local government must approve to undertake the regional tourism project,
- Area must be a regional tourism zone.<sup>100</sup>

New Orleans has many organizations relating to tourism, both private and public. Many of these organizations and policies are designed to attract conventions, visitors, and investment to the city which fuels the city's tourism economy which has become one of the city's four major economic sectors.<sup>101</sup> New Orleans does have one peculiar law on the books explicitly relating to the paranormal (Sec. 54-312). This law forbids "any person to advertise or engage in, for monetary compensation, the business of fortunetelling and magic."<sup>102</sup> While this law is somewhat archaic and still on the books, it is largely ignored as many physic and fortunetelling businesses operate for monetary compensation.

New Orleans also has many laws and ordinances relating to tourism as a whole, not particularly paranormal tourism. The city requires tour guides and planners to pass a written exam to attain a license (\$50 for guides and \$500 for tour planners), pay a biennial renewal fee of \$20 for guides and annual renewal fee of \$500 for tour planners, display their license at all times, and tour planner applicants must be a resident of the parish and maintain a business office within the parish.<sup>103</sup> The written exam for tour guides is particularly interesting in that it is designed to test "the applicant's knowledge of the historical, cultural and sociological developments and points of interest of the city."<sup>104</sup> The exam is quite comprehensive and is designed to ensure the historical, cultural, and social

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

<sup>102</sup> City of New Orleans Code of Ordinances.

<sup>103</sup> Secs. 30-1511-1557 Article XXI: Tour Guides and Tour Planners, *City of New Orleans Municipal Code*, accessed April 6, 2016.

<sup>104</sup> Sec. 30-1553 Requirements, *City of New Orleans Municipal Code*, M.C.S., Ord. No. 24435, 6-2-11, accessed April 6, 2016.

accuracy of the tours to prevent misconceptions and the spread of false information. The city delineates rules and groups for suspension of a license in the Code of Ordinances. Walking tour groups must also maintain a distance of 50 feet from other tour groups, limited to 28 patrons per tour, cannot use voice amplifiers on walking tours, and must be disbanded by 10:00 pm throughout the city and concluded by 6:00 pm in the Garden District.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Sec. 30-1489 Walking tour guide rules and regulations, *City of New Orleans Municipal Code*, M.C.S., Ord. No. 21187, 7-17-03, accessed March 14, 2016.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **Research Question**

With belief and interest in the paranormal rising along with tourism, the primary question arises: how does paranormal tourism affect local economies and public policy, specifically in the New Orleans metropolitan area? To answer this question, the data collection for this project was divided into two phases: 1) surveying paranormal tourists and 2) surveying and interviewing paranormal-related businesses including tour companies, retail and services, and hotels.

1) Surveying paranormal tourists provided further insight into paranormal niche tourism by collecting education, employment, belief, demographic, travel habits and costs information from tourists to better understand the market from a tourist standpoint. Respondents of this survey were also asked if they have traveled to New Orleans and partook in paranormal tourism while visiting the city to better understand the economic implications in New Orleans and quality factors.

2) Surveying and interviewing businesses relating to the paranormal, particularly paranormal tourism, provided key data regarding business model, customer demographics, employment, generated revenue, community impact and relations, and impacts of public policy and planning. Subsidiary questions addressed the influences on paranormal tourism and how planning and policy can encourage the economic benefits of paranormal tourism.

#### **Parameters & Methods**

The focus of this research is to collect and analyze data relating to revenue, employment, community relations, and public policy impacts of paranormal-related businesses within the New Orleans metropolitan area. New Orleans was chosen as the subject community because of its vast and growing tourism sector and storied paranormal folklore and phenomena. New Orleans continues to undergo an interesting economic and demographic change with growing and declining industries, volatile employment rates, social and economic inequality, population rebound and reconstruction post-Katrina. The major method to collect data for this report was administering interviews and surveys.

Interviews and surveys were administered to business owners and representatives of paranormal-related businesses and tourists themselves. Paranormal-related businesses were the main focus of this report's research although supplemental information obtained from tourists was essential in painting a broader picture of paranormal tourism in New Orleans and other communities.

Foremost, it is essential that the subject be related to the paranormal in some way in order to qualify for investigation and research. To do this, I used the Paranormal Belief Scale composed by Dr. Jerome Tobacyk, Professor of Psychology at Louisiana Tech University to categorize how the subject matter pertains to the paranormal. This scale was originally constructed to identify different types of related paranormal phenomena as well as scoring belief if administered in a survey. For the purpose of this study, the scale was not used to score the beliefs of the subjects but rather to classify and categorize whether their business operation related to the paranormal. The following table (**Table 3.1**) includes the seven categories of paranormal phenomena and belief compiled by Tobacyk.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Jerome J. Tobacyk, "A Revised Paranormal Belief Scale," *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 23, no. 23 (2004): 94–98.

**Table 3.1: Categories of Paranormal Belief and Phenomena**

<b>Paranormal Subcategory</b>	<b>Definition and Related Phenomena</b>
Traditional Religious Belief	“Belief and worship of god(s) that often is/are considered having control over the elements and matters of life. A system of religious beliefs and practices.”
Psi	“Physic Phenomena, extrasensory perception and psychokinesis”
Witchcraft	“Use of sorcery or magic. Invocation of and interaction with spirits, shamanism, healing, spellcasting, can be considered good or evil.”
Superstition	“A belief not based on reason or knowledge, in or of the ominous significance of a particular thing, circumstance, occurrence, or proceeding. A notion, act, or ritual that derives from such belief.”
Spiritualism	“The belief or doctrine that the spirits of the dead can and do communicate with the living, especially through a person (medium) particularly susceptible to their influence.”
Extraordinary Life Forms	“Composes of extraterrestrial beings and cryptozoology. Cryptozoology being defined as the study of and search for animals, especially legendary animals, in order to evaluate the possibility of their existence. Bigfoot/Sasquatch, Yeti, Loch Ness Monster”
Precognition	“Knowledge of a future event or situation, especially through extrasensory means. Foreknowledge of an event, especially foreknowledge of a paranormal kind.”

*Source: Jerome Tobacyk “A Revised Paranormal Belief Scale”*

Contacts serving in the public sector need not believe or do business with any business relating to any of the phenomena within this classification system as they were contacted for information regarding public policy about tourism in the city and public institutions rarely, if ever, relate to the paranormal. Only businesses and tourists that serve as potential subjects must meet these requirements in order to effectively narrow the data down to paranormal-related tourist economic activity and relate the results to the mission of the research question.

Secondly, the subject businesses must relate to the tourism industry in some capacity. This is very broad and malleable as many businesses relate to tourism to some degree. To make selection simpler and more accurate, businesses and establishments located within or near New Orleans' tourist enclaves, namely the French Quarter, were selected. It is assumed these businesses cater to tourists in some capacity as they have chosen to locate to these tourist hotspots and profit from tourism.

### **Sources & Subjects**

Potential research subjects include those who are involved in paranormal tourism. The subjects were divided into two groups: 1) potential paranormal tourists and 2) businesses, experts, and public officials relating to tourism and the paranormal. Tourists were contacted via personal networking, word of mouth, social media, and email. Social media pages and paranormal websites were invaluable in reaching potential subjects as they provided a community of paranormal enthusiasts and potential paranormal tourists. This was not a random sample of individuals but was rather a voluntary sample focused on paranormal tourists and those who have partaken in paranormal tourism. Overall, fifty tourist respondents completed the online survey option.

Secondly, experts on paranormal tourism, business owners, and public officials related to paranormal tourism and economics were placed upon a potential contact list. These subjects were discovered through web searches, literature review process, word of mouth, and advertising. This contact list was developed to determine what experts, businesses, and public agencies would be the most relevant and best to contact and also fall within the categories laid for by Dr. Tobacyk's Paranormal Classification Scale (**Table 3.1**). During data collection, not all sources could be contacted but the list nonetheless guided the selection of the final subjects and contacts. Altogether, twenty potential subjects were contacted with eight agreeing to participate in the research, three declining, and nine unresponsive to email and phone requests.

The focus of this project is to collect and analyze economic data relating to the paranormal. To obtain the most broad and comprehensive understanding of paranormal-

related businesses I interviewed businesses from the three major categories that I have delineated:

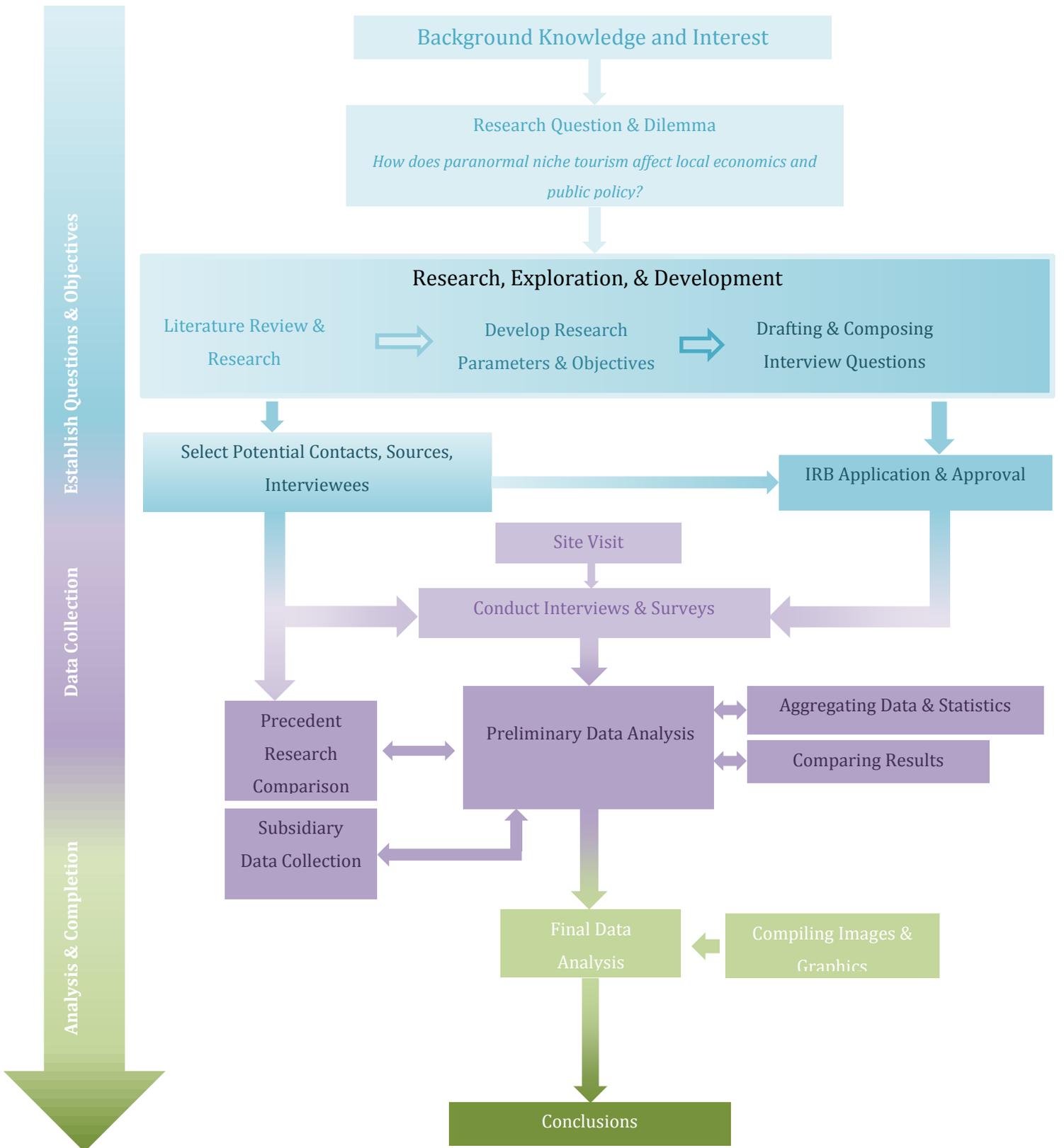
1. Paranormal Retail and Service Establishments
  - a. Supply Stores/Botanicals/Spiritual Shops
  - b. Souvenir Shops & Stalls
  - c. Service Establishments (Psychic, Tarot Card Readings, Mediums, Voodoo, Practitioner)
  - d. Attractions and Museums
2. Paranormal Tour Operations
3. Hotels, Inns, Accommodations

Potential subjects were originally contacted via email which contained a brief description of the research, intent of survey, a link to an online survey, contact information, and a request to respond if the subject was interested or uninterested in participating. If the subject did not respond to the email within one week, I attempted to contact them via phone calls. Some did not respond to repeated email and phone call requests, chiefly public officials and some of the larger businesses.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process was divided into three phases, (1) surveying paranormal tourists and (2) conducting interviews and surveys with business owners and representatives of paranormal-related businesses, specifically those connected to the city's larger tourism economy, and (3) site visit and personal immersion. Surveys and interviews were the primary form of data collection for this study. Subjects were given the options of completing an online survey, scheduling a phone, skype, or in-person interview, depending on their preferences and what is most convenient for them. In addition, I intended to interview public & tourism officials and tourists to serve as supplemental data in order to gain further insight and data regarding the paranormal's influence on local tourism economics; however, the public agencies and tourism organizations contacted did not respond to survey requests. The process of research, data collection, and analysis is shown in **Figure 3.1**.

**Figure 3.1: Methodology Process.**  
*Source: Author.*



Potential paranormal tourists were contacted and reached via personal networking and social media. Permission was granted from administrators of various Facebook pages and groups pertaining to the paranormal to allow me to post a short description of the research and a link to the online survey. These groups included paranormal investigation, enthusiasts, and spiritual groups such as the Kansas Paranormal Research Society, Paranormal Investigations, Paranormal Addicts, and Paranormal and Beyond. Personal communication and networking was also employed in order to gain more respondents for the survey. Potential paranormal business subjects were initially contacted via email inquiring if they wished to participate in the research. A sample contact email is provided in **Appendix 2.1**. Respondents who did not reply to the email within a seven day period were called via telephone to confirm if they were interested or disinterested in participating in this research.

Subjects from both the tourist and business surveys and interviews were asked between 30-40 questions further organized into subsections. For the tourist survey, these sections included demographic background, education, employment, travel costs and habits, and a special section pertaining exclusively to paranormal tourism within New Orleans in which respondents were asked a series of questions in regards to their travel experiences while participating in paranormal tourism in the city. Paranormal tourists were asked to provide basic demographic information such as age, purposes of traveling, belief influencers, birthplace, travel companionship, and what type of paranormal tourism they participated in. In regards to education, respondents were asked their highest level of completed education in order to better understand how education influences paranormal beliefs. In addition, respondents were also asked to indicate what has influenced and affected their belief or disbelief. In the employment section, respondents were asked to indicate their employment status and occupation to determine if there is a correlation between paranormal belief and particular job fields. In the travel habits and costs section, respondents were asked to indicated total travel expenses for paranormal trips, expenses for just the paranormal-related travel activity (such as ticket prices, souvenirs/products, services, or haunted hotel room), length of trip, and how they were informed about these particular paranormal-related sites and attractions, whether it be by advertising, popular

media, historical folklore, or word of mouth. See **Appendix 1.2** for the full listing of questions asked to paranormal tourist respondents.

The business survey and interview process was divided into five sections including business background and model, customer and tourist demographics, revenue and employment, local community and tourist economy impact, and public policy impact. Businesses relating to the paranormal were first asked to provide information regarding their business's history and model such as year of establishment, reasons for establishment, and how the business relates to the paranormal. Under the customer and tourist demographics section, respondents were asked to indicate to whom their business was tailored to in terms of age and demographics, average customer age range, amount of customers annually served, and peak business seasons in the year. Respondents were then asked to provide information pertaining to the business's annual generated revenue and percent of revenue attributed to the paranormal component of the business. Respondents also provided data pertaining to employment numbers, required employee skills, wages, and hours worked. The local community impact section involved how the business is perceived by the local community, how popular media has affected sales and interest, and arrangements with other businesses within the community. The last section, public policy and local government impact, asked respondents to provide information to how public policy has affected business, how tourism organizations have made an impact, use of incentives/subsidies, and if respondents believed there could be any planning and/or public policies that would assist their business and other paranormal-related businesses within the local community. See **Appendix 1.1** for the full listing of questions asked to paranormal business respondents.

For most respondents, the online survey process took between 15-20 minutes to complete. Respondents from the business survey and interview processes were given the option to remain anonymous or provide their business's name and job title for this research. Those who wished to remain anonymous were substituted with generic placeholder names to protect their identity and still provide an identifier when referencing that particular business's data in the results section. All tourist respondents from the

tourist survey are anonymous, by default, as they were not asked to provide their name or any personal identifiers, except for their occupation title.

A site visit to New Orleans from March 10 to March 12, 2016 was also conducted to offer additional insight and opportunities into the city's larger tourist economy and niche paranormal tourist economy. The site visit provided an important opportunity to conduct face to face interviews with some business owners and representatives and provided more in-depth conversations and data. The site visits also provided a critical opportunity for immersion and personal participation in the subject matter, such as visiting paranormal-related shops and services and participating in paranormal tours.

## **Data Analysis**

Following data collection, data was analyzed and compared not only to current New Orleans economic data and tourism statistics, but also to one another to determine in paranormal-related businesses do indeed play a major role in the city's tourism economy and how these results also pertain to other communities throughout the United States who relate to paranormal tourism. Results from the tourist survey were compared to results from the business survey to determine if there is indeed a correlation between age groups and average expenses on paranormal-related tourist activities. Furthermore, results garnered from the tourist survey were compared to data gathered from the literature review to ascertain if these results matched those in earlier studies.

In regards to employment, as stated in Chapter II, many jobs in the tourism, hospitality, and restaurant industries are low-wage yet this employment sector continues to grow, resulting in a high concentration of low-paying jobs within the New Orleans metro region.<sup>107</sup> The low-paying tourism industry, some argue, has, "failed to create a solid middle class in a city riven by some of the worst income inequality in the country."<sup>108</sup> The data collected from the business respondents is used to determine if paranormal-related businesses and operations fall within the larger tourism economy's trend of low-paying

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<sup>107</sup> Robert McClendon, "New Orleans' tourism industry booms but income inequality remains entrenched," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, October 28, 2014, accessed November 10, 2015 from [http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/10/new\\_orleans\\_tourism\\_industry\\_b.html](http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/10/new_orleans_tourism_industry_b.html).; Mack, et al.

<sup>108</sup> McClendon.

jobs or if they differ and rather provide higher paying employment opportunities. Furthermore, the research will determine if paranormal businesses require or pursue potential employees with particular skills. A skilled employee base is indicative of economic success and prosperity and often equates to higher wages and standard of living.

Data obtained from the site visits and immersion is more qualitative in nature and thus serves a more supplemental role in the results of this report. However, several key discussions with locals and guides provided further insight into paranormal tourism and its economic impacts within the community.

## **IV. Results**

Three main phases of data collection were conducted: (1) Paranormal Tourist Surveys, (2) Paranormal Business Surveys and Interviews, and (3) New Orleans Site Visit. An additional survey process was anticipated for public and tourism officials but none responded who were contacted. Results from the surveys are discussed in the following sections and are designed to provide further insight into how this growing niche tourism correlates with the larger tourism industry, affects local economies, and influences public policies.

### **Tourist Survey**

The first phase of data collection was contacting those who have potentially partaken in paranormal tourism. Surveys designed to gather demographic, education, employment, travel preferences, and travel costs were distributed to tourists who have partaken in paranormal tourism in some form. The purpose of this survey was to better understand the participants of this niche tourism to provide multiple perspectives in this research.

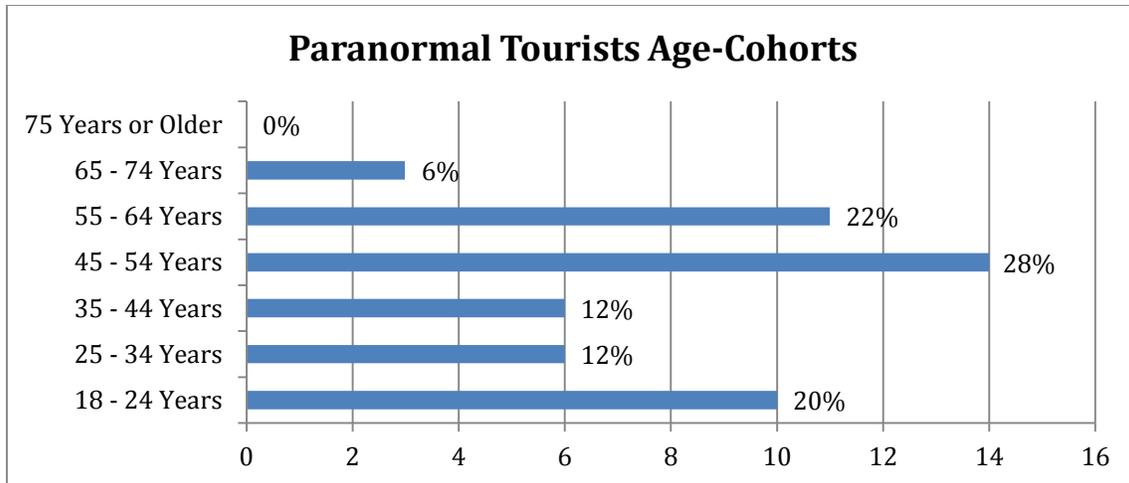
The survey was initially activated February 4, 2016, and closed March 8, 2016. Overall, 50 respondents completed the online survey. The following are results from each of the major categories in the survey. All questions and answer options can be reviewed in **Appendix 1.1** with the provided survey copy. Results indicated that paranormal tourists are quite diverse in regards to employment, belief influencers, and travel habits but have some commonalities such as educational achievement and belief. In summation, paranormal tourists are typically believers in paranormal phenomena with belief most often influenced by personal experience and popular media, highly educated, and spend typically less than \$300 on total travel expenses for paranormal tourism, with trips lasting one day or less. Results also indicated that the many tourists fall within the young adult age cohort (18 to 24 years of age) and middle-age adult cohort (55-64 years of age), suggesting generational gaps in interest and belief.

## Age and Demographics

Results indicated that those who participated in the survey ranged from 18 to 64 years of age. The largest cohort of respondents fell within the 55-64 years of age with four respondents. The second largest age cohort was that of 18-24 years. While all age groups between 18 to 64 years were represented, these two outliers could point to generational beliefs and also renewed beliefs in the younger generation. Full results are seen in **Figure 4.1**. This also matches New Orleans tourist age statistics in which the 2014 New Orleans Area Visitor Profile Report found that 36 percent of visitors were fell within the 50-64 age cohort, followed by 35-49 age cohort (28.1 percent), and 65 and older cohort (14.1 percent).<sup>109</sup> In regards to age of paranormal believers, the results from this data show that the majority fall within the 45-64 years age cohorts while the second largest is the younger age cohorts from 18 to 24 years of age. This alludes to the fact that paranormal belief goes through generational cycles with Baby Boomers having strong interest in the paranormal while interest diminishes in the middle generations while it once again spikes with younger generations. It should be noted that 8 percent of respondents indicated that they were skeptics/non-believers but still partook in paranormal tourism because of curiosity and of those 8 percent, they fell within the middle age cohorts (25-44 years).

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<sup>109</sup> "New Orleans Achieves 9.52 Million Visitors and Record-Breaking Visitor Spending in 2014," New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, 9 March 2015, accessed March 7, 2016 from: [http://www.neworleansonline.com/pr/releases/releases/2014%20Visitation%20Release\\_1.pdf](http://www.neworleansonline.com/pr/releases/releases/2014%20Visitation%20Release_1.pdf).



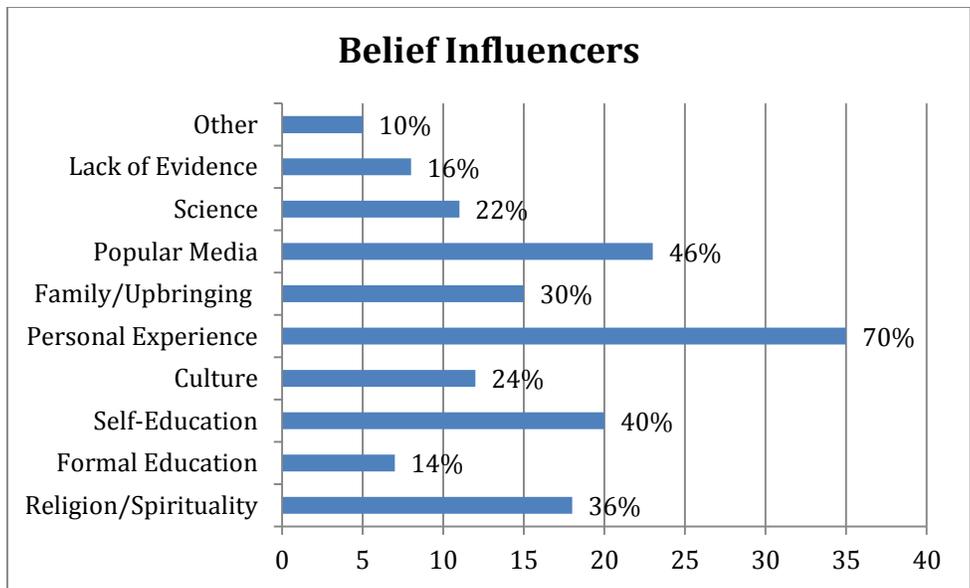
**Figure 4.1: Paranormal Tourist Age Cohorts:** A larger portion of respondents were middle-aged and older adults ranging from 45 to 64 years of age. Young adults were the third largest age cohort from 18 to 24 years of age. *Source:* "Paranormal Tourist Survey," Author.

### Paranormal Beliefs

In regards to paranormal beliefs, results indicated that the majority of the respondents (60 percent) were believers in some form of the paranormal as defined by Tobacyk's Belief Scale. 8 percent indicated that they were skeptics and do not believe in the paranormal. One respondent indicated that they were once a skeptic but then became a believer. Ten options were provided to respondents for the question "What has affected your belief (or disbelief) of the paranormal and/or spiritual?" Religion (43 percent), self-education (57 percent), personal experience (64 percent), and popular media (43 percent) were the four largest contributing factors affecting respondents' beliefs of the paranormal. Full results are shown in **Figure 4.2**. This is in accordance with data derived from the literature review in that popular media and personal experience are contributing factors in the influx of belief in the paranormal in the developed world.<sup>110</sup> However, respondents were also asked about disbelief in the paranormal and many cited science as being the primary reason for disbelief or questioning the existence of the paranormal.

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<sup>110</sup> Hanks, et al.



**Figure 4.2: Belief Influencers of Paranormal Tourists:** The majority of respondents of the paranormal tourist survey indicated that personal experience has been the most impactful on belief in the paranormal. *Source:* "Paranormal Tourist Survey," Author.

Respondents were also given the option to further elaborate on how these factors have affected their beliefs. Answers widely varied but did provide key insight into how beliefs originate and have evolved. The following are a few selected responses from surveyed tourists that are of particular interest:

"I watch a lot of paranormal shows and have had many unexplained things happen to me that spike my curiosity."

"Lived in haunted house as a child, like watching Ghost Adventures."

"I have seen and heard things that cannot be explained in any way."

"In my home, growing up, we spoke of death openly and without any taboo. It's going to happen so why not be creative and imagine what might happen next. I've always like ghost stories and entertainment so believing in the paranormal wasn't frowned upon. Television and Ghost Hunters really sparked my interest. What I took away from that show allowed me to decipher some things I experienced growing up as normal sounds in a house

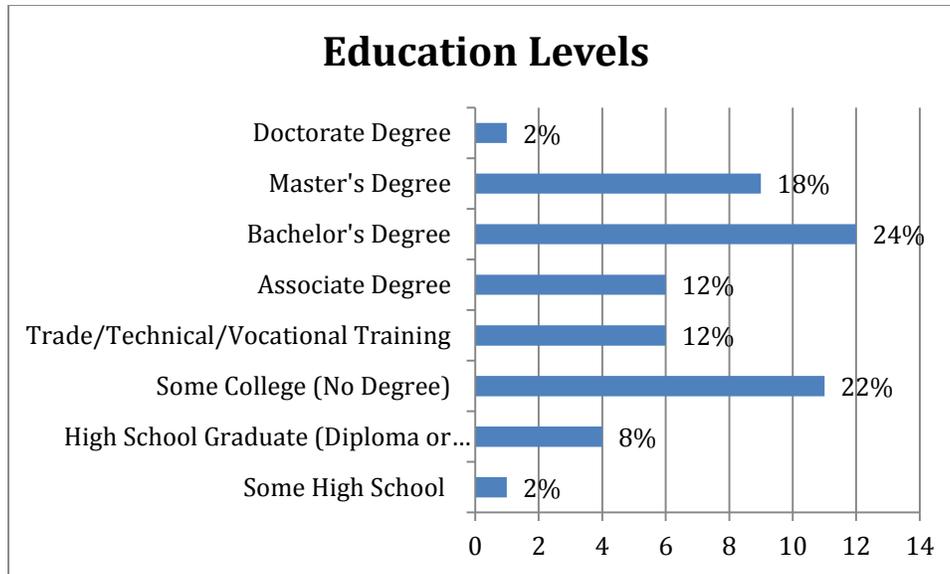
and helped me confirm that I did see an apparition...one my dad had seen but which neither of us talked about until years later.”

“Living in the South means you start hearing ‘ghost stories’ at about birth. The paranormal is a big part of our culture.”

### Education

20<sup>th</sup> Century attitudes towards those who believed in the paranormal that did not conform to mainstream religious belief was negative. However, paranormal belief is more generally accepted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is assumed education has an effect on belief in the paranormal and subsequently an individual’s level of curiosity and motivation in partaking in paranormal tourism.

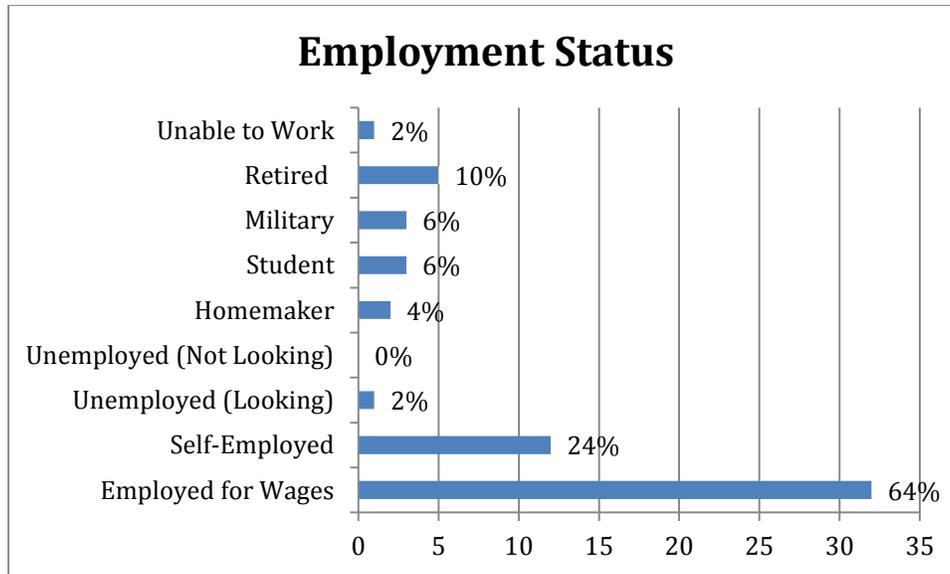
Results from this survey show that the majority of respondents (56 percent) have a college degree with 12 percent holding an Associate’s, 24 percent a Bachelor’s, 18 percent a Master’s, and 2 percent a Doctorate. Of the other 44 percent, 12 percent have trade/vocational training, 22 percent have some college but no degree, 8 percent have a High School Diploma or GED, and only 2 percent having only some high school. This data is interesting as it seems to contradict notions that those who with higher levels of educational achievement have lower paranormal beliefs and interest. This is not the case as beliefs are actually on the rise despite education levels increasing in the United States and other developed nations. It can be concluded that educational levels do not play a major or direct role in paranormal belief but rather personal experience and effects of popular media. However, results of this particular survey found that the majority of respondents hold a college degree of some type and tend to be highly educated.



**Figure 4.3: Respondent Levels of Educational Attainment:** Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of educational achievement. The majority of respondents hold a college degree, contradicting past preconceptions about paranormal believers being uneducated or ignorant. *Source: "Paranormal Tourist Survey," Author*

### Employment

Basic employment statistics were gathered from respondents, including employment status and occupation. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option when asked their employment status. The purpose of this was to take into account that some respondents may have multiple statuses, such as being employed for wages while simultaneously being a student or self-employed for supplemental/secondary income. The majority of respondents indicated they were employed for wages at 64 percent. The second largest category is those who identify as self-employed at 24 percent. Retirees ranked third at 10 percent which differs from mainstream tourism data which reports that retirees typically make up a large percentage of tourists. An additional 6 percent were students. **Figure 4.4** depicts the full results of employment status.



**Figure 4.4: Employment Status:** Respondents were asked to select which options best matched their employment status(es). The majority indicated that they were employed for wages while none indicated that they were unemployed and not looking for work. *Source:* "Paranormal Tourist Survey," Author.

Respondents were asked to provide their occupation title, anonymously. Occupation types included managers, military officers, public officials, educators, accountants, artists, counselors, cosmetologists, professors, business owners, and healthcare providers. Some indicated that they were directly employed or self-employed in paranormal-related occupations, such as mediums, spiritual healers, and therapists. This corresponds to educational statistics in which the majority of respondents had a college degree or some college education. Employment is also a critical factor in tourism in general as it is the method of which those who partake in paranormal tourism fund their travels. It also helps dispel myths and misconceptions that those who hold unorthodox beliefs are social vagabonds and pariahs but rather contributing members of society. Returning to Aarnio's and Lindeman's study of paranormal belief and education, they hypothesized that students in certain degrees, such as arts and humanities, have more paranormal beliefs than those in STEM fields as those in arts and humanities lack critical analytical skills. Again, this is not necessarily the case and their research came to this conclusion. The data collected from this research does not support the notion that those with occupations in STEM associated fields have less paranormal beliefs or interests but people from a variety of educational and employment backgrounds share paranormal beliefs and interests. This includes both high paying and lower paying jobs with a mixture of skill sets.

## Paranormal Travel Habits

44 percent of respondents indicated that activities that qualify as paranormal-related were the primary purpose of their travels, with 38 percent indicating that they were side attractions on their travels. 18 percent indicated other with various text responses including an amalgamation of both. Some respondents also indicated that they have partaken in paranormal tourism for investigations, paranormal groups, and even field trips. Respondents were also asked if they traveled alone or with others when traveling for paranormal purposes. The majority of respondents indicated that they travel with a group of 3 or more, at 49 percent. However, a significant portion of respondents also indicated that they have partaken in paranormal tourism as a family unit. **Table 4.1** depicts the full results of party sizes.

**Table 4.1: Paranormal Tourism Party Size:** Respondents were asked to select all the different party sizes they have partaken in paranormal tourism with. The majority indicated as a group (non-family unit) but a significant amount indicated as a family unit.

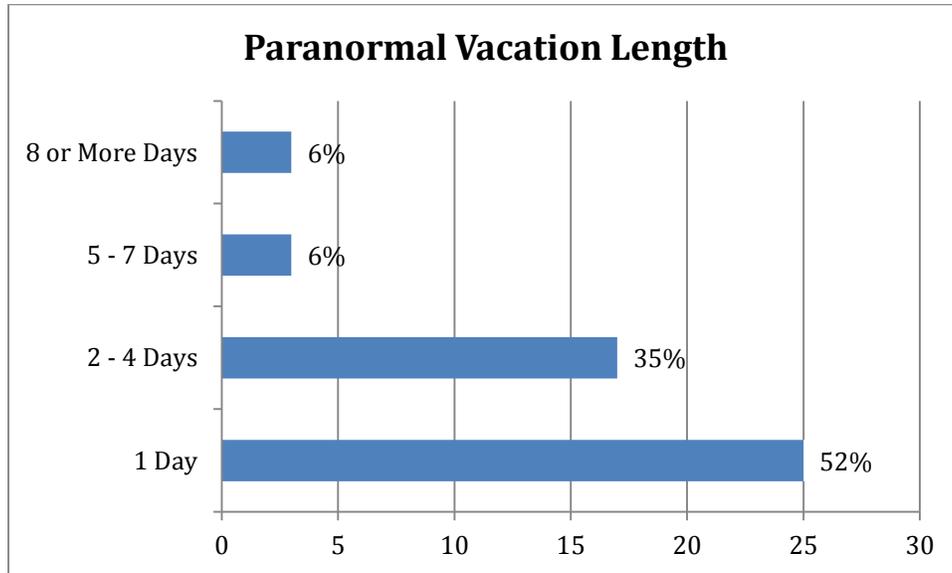
<b>Party Size</b>	<b># of Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Alone	10	20%
Family Unit	19	39%
Group (3 or More)	24	49%
Other	5	10%

*Source: "Paranormal Tourist Survey," Author*

In reference to how many times a year respondents partook in paranormal tourism, 42 percent indicated once per year, 32 percent indicated that they partook 2-3 times a year with another 20 percent indicating that they partook 4 or more times a year. When asked how many days they take for paranormal-related travel and vacations, the majority of respondents indicated they spent one day or less for paranormal tourism, as seen in **Figure 4.5**. This corresponds with data derived from Statista in which family domestic trips with children averaged more than 3 trips per year while domestic trips without children averaged 2 trips per year.<sup>111</sup> The results from this research indicate that those who partake in paranormal tourism are more likely to go with a group of non-family members than

<sup>111</sup> "Average Number of Trips per U.S. Household," *Statista*, May 2015, accessed March 16, 2016 from <http://www.statista.com/statistics/470360/number-trips-per-household-usa/>.

those with family members and children, although a considerable portion partake in paranormal tourism as a family unit.



**Figure 4.5: Paranormal Vacation Length:** Over half of respondents indicated that they spent approximately 1 day on paranormal trips/vacations, alluding that many paranormal trips are day trips to sites in close proximity to one’s home.  
*Source: “Paranormal Tourist Survey,” Author.*

The majority of respondents indicated that they take only one day for paranormal and/or spiritually related vacations and trips. This departs from research broadcasted by CBS in which the average American spends just over four days on vacation at a time.<sup>112</sup> While few credible studies have been completed on average vacation length, the data alludes that the majority of paranormal-related vacations are short day trips, most likely to sites in close proximity to one’s home.

<sup>112</sup> “By the numbers: The American Vacation,” *CBS News*, August 3, 2014, accessed March 15, 2016 from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/by-the-numbers-the-american-vacation/>.

In relation to what type of paranormal tourism respondents partook in, the results indicated the following, as seen in **Table 4.2**:

**Table 4.2: Paranormal Tourism Categories & Tourist Responses:** This question was a “select all that apply,” allowing respondents to indicate the different types of paranormal tourism they partook in.

<b>Type of Paranormal Tourism</b>	<b># of Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
Paranormal-Related Tour	32	64%
Hotel/Hospitality	18	36%
Paranormal-Related Retail Establishment	17	34%
Paranormal Services	10	20%
Paranormal-Related Attraction/Site	21	42%
Independent Tourism	16	32%
Other	7	14%

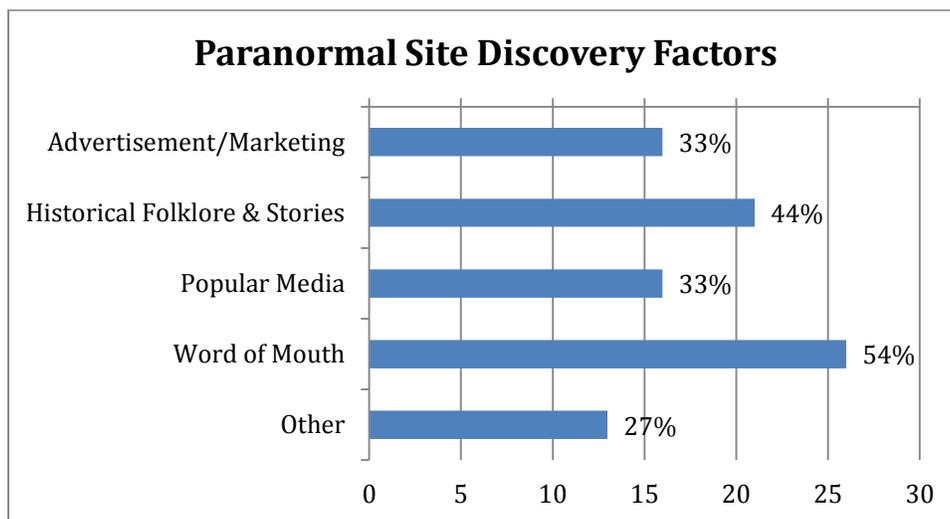
*Source: “Paranormal Tourist Survey,” Author.*

Paranormal and spiritual tours were the largest type of paranormal tourism that respondents partook in. This coincides with data derived from the tour business survey process in which tour companies were the most ubiquitous of paranormal tourism operations. Attractions and sites came in at second. This includes visiting sites of alleged paranormal or spiritual activity.

Respondents were also asked what their favored locales for paranormal tourism were and while results widely varied, many also corresponded to sites that have famous legends surrounding them, including the Waverly Hills Sanatorium, Kentucky; Savannah, Georgia Estes Park, Colorado; and New Orleans, Louisiana. All these sites and communities have some form of marketing promoting its paranormal lore to a tourist demographic. Curiously, many respondents also indicated that they enjoyed traveling to more obscure and smaller communities for paranormal tourism. One respondent indicated that they believed that paranormal tourism is a “gold mine for many of these towns/attractions, but you have to be truthful about it and very open and a lot of towns and cities, especially here

in Kansas are ‘shy’ about it or think it will bring in the crazies... on the other hand many are starting to open up to it.”<sup>113</sup>

Respondents were asked the underlying basis and reasoning for their travels. Answers widely varied but common themes were curiosity, investigation, research, spiritual purposes and healing, and business. When asked how they discovered a given paranormal site, attraction, event, hotel, or shop, more than half indicated by word of mouth. Historical folklore and stories were also strong contributing factors while formal advertising and marketing and popular media tied at third place. This compliments the literature review in that popular media is believed to have spread knowledge about the paranormal and paranormal sites. However, word of mouth and personal communication are interestingly the strongest factor. Other responses related to popular media as many respondents indicated they discovered the paranormal destination via web searches, watching documentaries, and by reading reviews. While there are many explanations, one could be that if one person is informed about a site via popular media or formal advertising, they may share the information with others via personal communication, creating a chain of influence. Full results are shown in **Figure 4.6**.

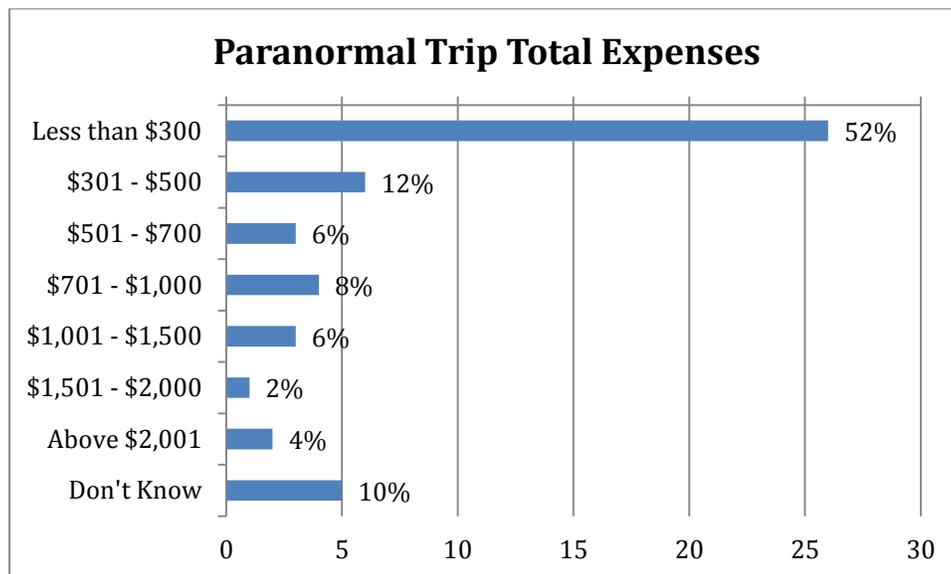


**Figure 4.6: Paranormal Vacation Site Discovery Factors:** Respondents were given the option of selecting all of the available options that applied to them in regards to how they discovered a site or business relating to the paranormal. The majority indicated “word of mouth” but historical folklore and stories was also a strong contributing factor. *Source:* “Paranormal Tourist Survey,” Author.

<sup>113</sup> Paranormal Tourist Survey Respondent, survey message to author. February 2016.

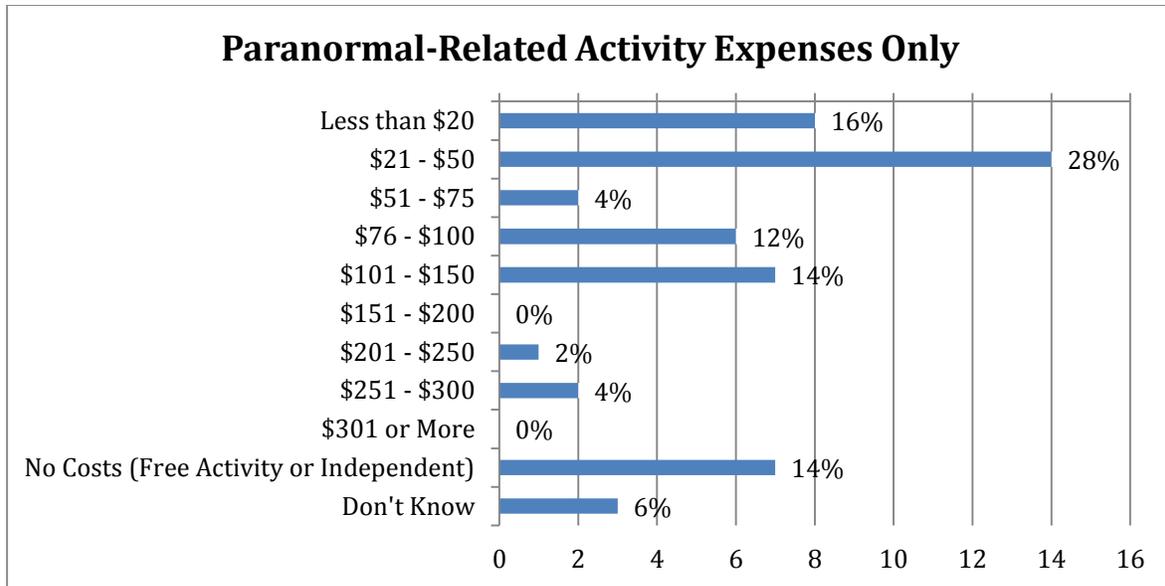
## Travel Costs

Respondents were asked two questions pertaining to expenses for paranormal trips. The first asked respondents to provide how much in total expenses they spent on paranormal-related tourism. This includes transportation, food, shopping, lodging, admission and tickets, and service costs. On average, respondents spent less than \$300 approximately on total travel expenses for paranormal-related trips where the paranormal tourism component was either the primary purpose or a side attraction, as seen in **Figure 4.7** However, some responses indicated that some spent more than \$1,000 on total travel expenses. Most of those stayed at a destination for longer amounts of time, specifically the respondents who indicated 8 or more days.



**Figure 4.7: Paranormal-Related Trips Total Expenses:** Respondents were asked indicate how much they spent on total trip expenses including transportation, lodging, dining, and on the paranormal activities and services themselves. The majority indicated less than \$300 which strengthens the argument that many paranormal-related trips are day trips within a region. *Source: "Paranormal Tourist Survey," Author.*

In regards to expenses for just the paranormal-related tours, services, merchandise, and attractions, 44 percent of respondents indicated that they spent less than \$50. This coincides with ticket prices of many tour companies which respondents indicated they have participated in. However, once again significant responses indicated that some spent more than \$100 on the paranormal aspect of the trip. Full results are depicted in **Figure 4.8**.



**Figure 4.8: Paranormal-Related Activity Expenses Only:** Respondents were asked how much they spent on the paranormal-related activities, services, and products only. The majority indicated they spent between \$21-\$50 while significant numbers indicated more than \$100. *Source: "Paranormal Tourist Survey," Author.*

Many respondents also indicated that the paranormal-related businesses they visited were locally owned (68 percent) while 18 percent indicated that their experiences were independently conducted and did not visit a paranormal business. In addition, 84 percent of respondents also indicated that they support other local businesses while visiting destinations for paranormal purposes.

### New Orleans Tourist Component

Respondents were asked if they have ever visited New Orleans whether for paranormal or spiritual purposes or non-paranormal purposes. 19 (38 percent) respondents indicated, "Yes," while 31 (62 percent) indicated, "No." Those who answered, "Yes" were provided an additional set of questions pertaining to paranormal tourism within New Orleans. Data collected from this portion of the survey was analyzed and compared with results from the rest of the survey in order to understand how New Orleans paranormal tourism is similar and differs from paranormal tourism as a whole, according to the results gathered from this sample.

68 percent of respondents indicated that they spent 2 to 4 days, 16 percent spent 1 day, 11 percent spent 5 to 7 days, and 5 percent spent 8 or more days. This correlates with

CBS’s report that the average vacation length is four days. Respondents were next asked to indicate how many companions they traveled with to New Orleans. Similar to results in the previous section (See **Table 4.1**), 47 percent indicated that they traveled with 2 to 4 companions while 42 percent indicated they traveled with one other.

Respondents were next asked if they participated in any local paranormal tours, activities, or visit any paranormal-related businesses while visiting the city. 63 percent indicated, “Yes,” while 37 percent indicated “No.” Those who selected, “Yes,” were ushered into an additional set of questions pertaining to costs and experiences. When asked how much, on average, they spent on just paranormal-related activities in New Orleans, responses fell widely across the board, although the majority spent between \$21 and \$50, as seen in **Table 4.3**.

**Table 4.3: New Orleans Paranormal-Related Activity Costs:** Similar to results shown in Figure 4.8, the majority of tourists are most likely to spend less than \$50 on paranormal-related tours, activities, products, and services.

<b>Paranormal-Related Activity Costs</b>		
Less than \$20	0	0
\$21 - \$50	5	42%
\$51 - \$75	2	17%
\$76 - \$100	2	17%
\$101 - \$200	1	8%
\$201 - \$300	-	-
\$300 or More	-	-
No Cost (Free Activity)	1	8%
Cannot Remember	1	8%

*Source: “Paranormal Tourist Survey,” Author.*

This correlated with responses from the previous section when asked to provide approximate expenses for paranormal-related activities only where 28 percent of respondents indicated between \$21 and \$50. Based on this, I concluded that the majority of paranormal tourists are most likely to be willing to spend between \$21 and \$50 and in some cases up to \$100 while fewer are willing to spend more.

Respondents were then asked to rate their experiences while participating in paranormal tourism in New Orleans. All respondents rated positively with 58 percent indicating they were, “Somewhat Satisfied,” while 42 percent were, “Very Satisfied.” In addition, when asked if they would return to New Orleans to participate in a paranormal-related tourist activity, 92 percent indicated, “Yes,” while the remainder respondent indicated, “Not Sure.” This is similar to data compiled by the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau in which 69.9 percent of respondents were satisfied with their experiences in the city along with 62.6 percent who indicated that they have returned to the city multiple times because of satisfaction.<sup>114</sup>

## **Business Survey**

I contacted three categories of paranormal-related businesses: tour businesses and companies, retail shops and services, and hotels and accommodations. I sent email notifications to eighteen businesses and organizations related to paranormal tourism in the New Orleans metropolitan area. I contacted those who did not respond to the email within one week of its distribution by phone to confirm if they were interested or disinterested in participating in the interview process. Of these eighteen subjects, nine responded with two declining to participate and seven agreeing to participate. Two of the participants opted for a phone interview while the remainder opted to take the online survey. Respondents were given the option of giving their business’s name and their job title or remaining anonymous in this report. Titles/names provided are given at the permission of the corresponding subject. The following are a list and short description of the respondents, categorized by which paranormal-business type they fall under.

Results from the three phases of surveys and interviews indicated that paranormal-related businesses are a relatively new form of commerce, emerging in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, in conjunction with growing paranormal beliefs and market demand, and cater to both tourists and locals alike. These businesses provide essential employment opportunities to those with unique skillsets that otherwise may not be able to utilize them elsewhere and are compensated generously, above the federal minimum wage.

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<sup>114</sup> “New Orleans Achieves 9.52 Million Visitors and Record-Breaking Visitor Spending in 2014.”

The businesses themselves are relatively successful. They generate modest to great sums of annual revenue and are able to support many full time employees. Many respondents also cited that popular media has been a major factor in increasing interest in the paranormal and subsequently sales. The majority of respondents also indicated that the local community has responded very positively to their operations although there are some safety and health concerns, such as decaying infrastructure and crime. In regards to the impact of public policy and planning, respondents cited that ordinances, laws, and policies have had a mixture of effects on their business and tourism as a whole, both positive and negative. The questions and answers given to the respondents is provided in **Appendix 1.2** for clarification and context.

### **Tour Business Respondents**

- 1. Tour Business A:** a larger, but locally owned tour company that has received awards and accolades for its service. Tours include cemetery, ghost, crime, and private tours.
- 2. Tour Business B:** a small, family owned travel agency that coordinates with other tour companies for booking tickets.
- 3. Tour Business C:** a larger tour company with tours in three American cities. The company offers several varieties of paranormal tours, including an investigation and ghost hunt tour.
- 4. Bloody Mary's Tours & Spirit Realm:** a locally owned tour company that also provides paranormal and spiritual services and products.
- 5. Tour Business E:** large, corporate tour company with tour services throughout the United States. Does not exclusively offer paranormal tours but many non-paranormal tours as well including swamp, architectural, historical, and plantation tours.

Tour companies and operations were the largest group of respondents in the course of this research. In the New Orleans area alone, there are more than forty tour companies and are quite prolific throughout the city. As the researcher, I aimed to gather data from a

mixture of corporately owned and operated tour companies and locally owned and operated companies to provide a diverse set of data for comparison and analysis.

Business Background and Model

Respondents were first asked to provide data regarding their respective business’s origins, history, growth, and purposes of its establishment. These particular questions were designed to understand how paranormal and spiritually-related tour operations have grown and developed throughout time and if their growth coincides with growing belief and interest in society, as explored in the tourist survey and literature review.

Respondents were first asked what year the company began offering tours in New Orleans, as seen in **Table 4.4**. Three of the tour businesses began in the mid-2000s to early 2010s. There were two that departed from this trend, with Bloody Mary’s Tours and Spirit Realm beginning in 1994 and Tour Business E beginning in 1929. It is of interest to note that Tour Business E began offering tours in the New Orleans area in the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but did not begin offering paranormal-related tours until the mid-2000s.

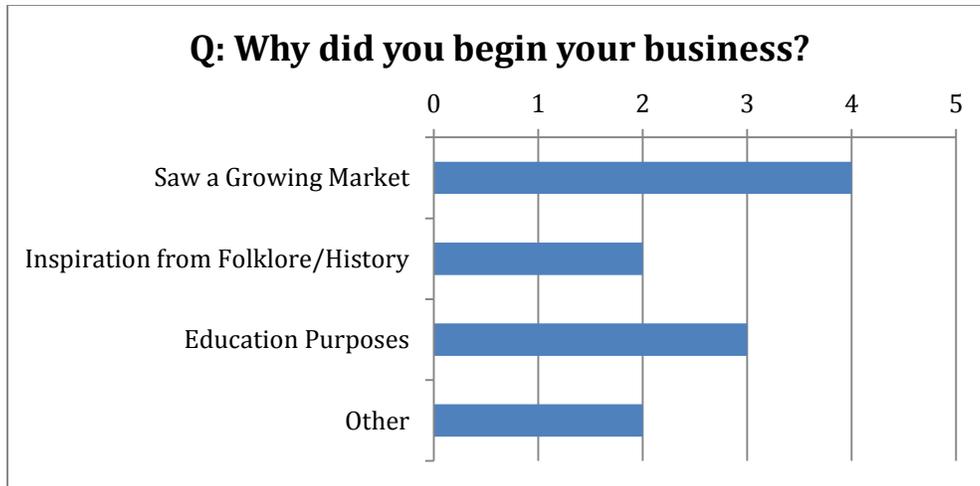
**Table 4.4: Tour Company Year of Establishment:**

The majority of tour companies with a paranormal component began in the late 20th century and early 21st century. It is noted that Tour Business E did not begin offering paranormal themed tours until the mid-2000s but began as a tour company in 1929, offering other tours.

<b>Tour Company Year of Establishment</b>	
<b>Tour Business</b>	<b>Year Operations Began</b>
Tour Business A	2007
Tour Business B	2009
Tour Business C	2012
Blood Mary’s Tours	1994
Tour Business E	1929

*Source: “Paranormal Tour Business Survey,” Author.*

Respondents were asked why they began offering paranormal-related tours, as a select all that apply answer. The results are as follows in **Figure 4.9**:



**Figure 4.9: Business Influencers:** Respondents were asked to indicate what influenced opening their business. Many indicated they saw a growing market for paranormal tourism while education was also a strong factor. *Source: "Paranormal Tour Business Survey," Author.*

All but one respondent selected that a growing market was a major motivating factor in beginning their business. This corresponds with the literature review in that interest and belief and interest in the paranormal is on the rise in the United States. As this interest increases, so does the market demand for paranormal-related niche tourism. Many of the tours feature the city's famous hauntings, Voodoo, witchcraft, and psychics on the tours. Respondents also provided additional responses, such as providing a credible tour service and another citing that they had received a request from spirits to share the city's unique history and paranormal activity with others.

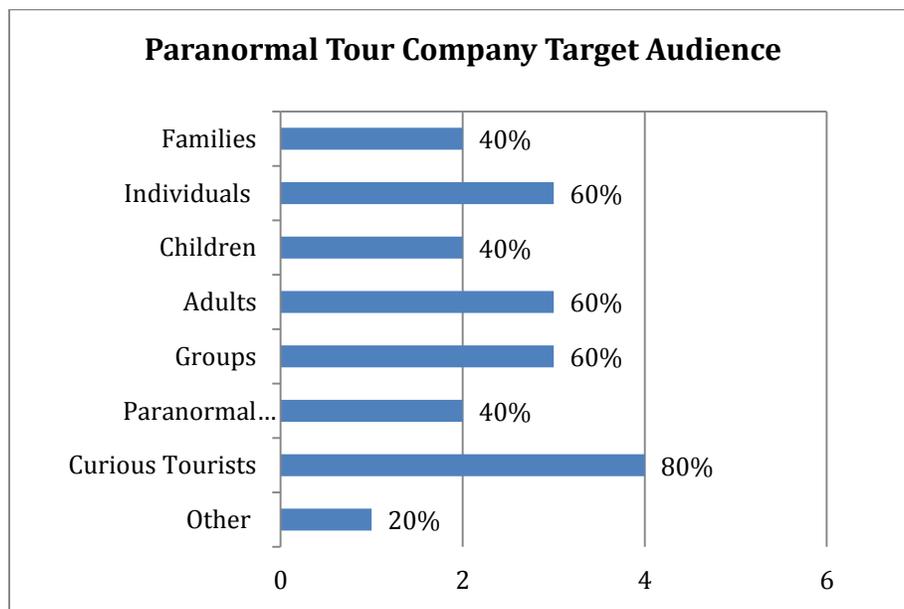
### Customer Demographics

The following results and analyses pertain to basic customer demographics of tour companies with a paranormal or spiritual component. Respondents were asked to provide data that included average customer's age, annual customers served, target audience, tour group size, and busiest time of the year.

Respondents were first asked to whom the business catered towards, whether tourists, locals, or both. While it could be assumed that tour companies will only cater towards tourists, this is not always the case. Tour Company C indicated that it caters to both locals and tourists, with locals accounting for about 20 percent of the tour

participants.<sup>115</sup> Many of the participants are New Orleans locals who may have family and friends visiting and interested in taking the tour or are just curious themselves. While the other four tour companies did denote that they mostly cater to tourists, as hypothesized, this interesting outlier shows how New Orleans locals are affecting and even embracing paranormal tourism. When asked if tourists and customers seem to have prior knowledge of the featured paranormal phenomena and lore, four out of the five respondents indicated, “Yes.”

Furthermore, respondents were asked to indicate what tourist demographic they catered more towards, whether it be paranormal enthusiasts, an adult demographic, a family demographic, or not necessarily a specific demographic. Results were mixed and split between an adult demographic and not catering to a specific demographic. However, respondents also indicated that it depended on that type of tour as some tours are more family-oriented while others are more adult oriented and inappropriate for younger audiences. **Figure 4.10** depicts the results from this question.



**Figure 4.10: Paranormal Tour Company Target Audiences:** Curious Tourists (Not necessarily paranormal believers/enthusiasts) are the largest target audience, followed closely by individuals, adults, and groups. Source: “Paranormal Tour Business Survey,” Author.

<sup>115</sup> Tour Company C Representative, interviewed by author, February 24, 2016, Telephone Call.

Many respondents indicated that they served over 15,000 customers annually while only one respondent indicated that they served less than 5,000. In a city with more than forty tour companies, these are considerable numbers as it suggests that many of the tour companies are still popular and successful despite increasing competition and saturation of the market.

Respondents were next asked to provide the approximate age cohort of customers. This was asked in order to better understand what the typical age is of a tourist participating in paranormal tourism and if this coincides with literature that argues that it is within the younger age cohorts belief is growing. Most respondents indicated that the approximate age range of customers was 25 to 44 years of age and also middle-aged adults. This coincides with the literature review and tourist survey in that the majority of tourists fell within the 40 to 65 age range while a younger cohort is still large.

Typical tour group sizes for tours led by the survey respondents fell between 11 to 20 customers and 21 to 30 customers. The respondent from Tour Group C indicated that the City of New Orleans' Code of Ordinances Sec. 30-1489 lays forth regulations regarding tour group size. Ordinance Sec. 30-1489.3 states that, "tour groups shall be limited to 28 patrons per tour."<sup>116</sup>

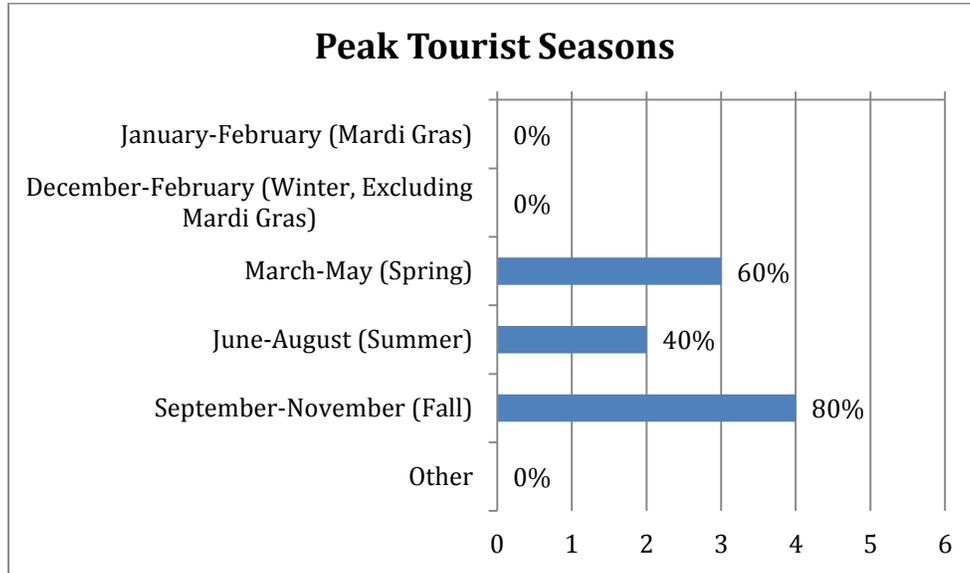
When asked if business has improved and increased in the last five to eight years, all respondents indicated, "Yes." This coincides with previous literature review in that interest in the paranormal has grown but also the growth of tourism in New Orleans as a whole as the city continues to recover from Hurricane Katrina and the 2008 Recession. Four out of the five respondents also indicated that they had repeat customers. The representative of Tour Group C stated that many who go on the tour return with friends and family in subsequent visits and partake in several of the offered tours.

Respondents were finally asked to indicate the peak times of the year for business, as shown in **Figure 4.11**. 80 percent of respondents indicated that the autumn months from September to November are the busiest while spring and summer are also considerably

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<sup>116</sup> Sec. 30-1489 Walking Tour Guide Rules and Regulations. *City of New Orleans Municipal Code*. M.C.S., Ord. No. 21187, 7-17-03, (accessed March 3, 2016).

busy for paranormal tour operations. This compares with data derived from the other two business categories surveyed in which respondents in those respective categories also indicated fall as the peak season.



**Figure 4.11: Peak Tourist Seasons:** 80 percent of respondents indicated that autumn months were the most popular for tourism, coinciding with results gathered from the other two paranormal-related businesses. *Source:* “Paranormal Tour Business Survey”, Author.

## Revenue

The following results are related to the revenue and employment data of the respondents interviewed or surveyed. Respondents were asked to provide basic revenue, percent of sales attributed to the paranormal, employment, and wage information. Answers were completely voluntary and respondents could refuse to answer any questions. Respondents were also given the option to remain anonymous when providing revenue and employment data. Four of the five businesses opted to remain anonymous when presenting data pertaining to revenue, employment statistics, and sales information.

Respondents were first asked to provide a statement in which they explained how they have impacted the local economy, specifically the tourism economy of New Orleans. Common elements included providing jobs, increased marketing of New Orleans as a paranormal tourism destination, and coordination with charitable organizations. Tour

Company B stated that they, “book tours for ghost tour operators so we send maybe \$50,000 a year in business to ghost tour companies.”<sup>117</sup>

When asked to provide approximate yearly income and revenue, four out of the five respondents provided data, which widely varied. An answer was provided for each of the four income brackets, indicating a diversity of generated revenue. These brackets range from, “Less than \$500,000,” “\$500,001-\$1,000,000,” “\$1,000,001-\$3,000,000,” and “Above \$3,000,001.” To determine how much of this total annual revenue is attributed to the paranormal tourism component of the business, respondents were asked if their tour operations offered other tours that are not paranormal-related. All selected, “Yes” in which then they were prompted to provide an approximate percentage of total revenue attributed to the paranormal components of their operations. **Table 4.5** depicts the results of this question, which fell across the board. Both larger, more corporate tour companies (Tour Company E) and smaller, more local tour companies (Tour Companies A & B) indicated that paranormal tours contributed less than 50 percent to total annual generated revenue. However, other larger and locally owned tour companies indicated that paranormal tours contribute more than 50 percent to total annual generated revenue.

**Table 4.5: Percentage of Total Revenue Attributed to Paranormal Tours:** Responses widely varied and were quite diverse with both locally owned and corporate, non-local tour companies providing diverse data.

<b>Percentage of Total Revenue Attributed to Paranormal Tours</b>	
<b>Percent of Total Revenue</b>	<b># of Respondents</b>
Less than 25%	2
26 - 50%	1
51% - 75%	1
76% - 100%	1

*Source: “Paranormal Tour Business Survey,” Author.*

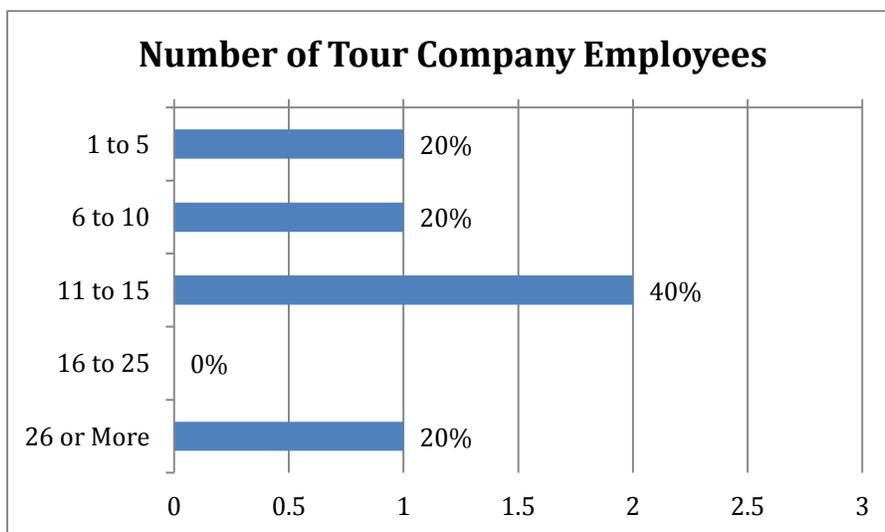
During initial research, it was observed that some tour companies also offered paranormal or spiritual products and services, directly relating to the paranormal retail, shops, and services category. To further understand this crossover of the two categories, respondents were asked if their business also offered paranormal or spiritually-related

<sup>117</sup> Tour Company B Respondent, *Paranormal-Related Tour Business Survey*, responded February 23, 2016.

services or products in addition to tours. These include supplies, readings, events, religious services, and souvenirs. Three out of the five respondents indicated that they did. Next, these respondents were asked to provide an approximate percentage of total generated annual revenue attributed to these products and services. Two of these three respondents indicated “Less than 25 percent” while the remainder selected “26 percent to 50 percent.” In comparison to national business statistics, all but Tour Company E could be considered small businesses due to their annual generated revenues being less than \$3 million.

### Employment

Respondents were next asked to provide employment data and information, such as number of employees, employee wages, and hours worked. The tour companies surveyed have diverse numbers of employees, from very few (less than 5) to many (over 26). **Figure 4.12** depicts the number of employees per tour company. This particular data was collected to understand how tour companies with a paranormal component are affecting employment and income within the city of New Orleans. In theory, a tour company with more employees could be interpreted as being larger and more stable. However, several of the smaller tour companies surveyed are quite successful in their own right and choose to remain small because they are family-owned businesses and for other purposes not explored in this research.



**Figure 4.12: Number of Tour Company Employees:** While the larger, corporate tour companies employed a considerable amount of employees, locally owned companies also employ a considerable amount, average between 6 and 15 employees. *Source: “Paranormal Tour Business Survey,” Author.*

Employees of tour companies are required to have the following skills as depicted in **Table 4.6**. Some skills are those that would apply to many other non-paranormal jobs but some options provided are more specialized in character because of the uniqueness of this type of tourism. To elaborate, some businesses may require highly specialized skills such as acting and theatrics, historical and folklore knowledge, and spiritual or supernatural talents and gifts, among others. The majority of respondents indicated that historical and folklore knowledge is an essential skill that employees must have, along with some form of official education. It should be noted that Tour Company B is a family-owned tour booking company and thus does not necessarily require its employees, who are most likely members of the same family, to possess any of the skills included on this survey. Tour Bloody Mary's, however, requires some employees to have spiritual and/or supernatural gifts in order to provide investigations, communication with spirits, and an authentic experience.<sup>118</sup> One requirement that continuously appeared was "Tour Guide License," which was not anticipated while creating the answer options for this question. Upon further investigation, the City of New Orleans requires that all tour guides must possess a tour guide license per Code of Ordinances Sec. 30-1551.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, in order to obtain a tour guide license, prospective guides must complete and pass a written examination and pay an initial fee of \$50.00 with an annual renewal fee of \$20.00.<sup>120</sup> Other responses provided indicated that employees must have crafting and art skills in order to create special products.

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<sup>118</sup> "About Us: Bloody Mary's Tours Mission," *Bloody Mary's Tours*, 2015, accessed March 14, 2016 from <http://bloodymarystours.com/aboutneworleanstourdestinations/>.

<sup>119</sup> Sec. 30-1551 Tour Guide License, *City of New Orleans Municipal Code*, M.C.S., Ord. No. 24435 (6-2-11), accessed March 14, 2016.

<sup>120</sup> Sec. 30-1553 Tour Guide License Requirements, *City of New Orleans Municipal Code*, M.C.S., Ord. No. 24435 (6-2-11), accessed March 15, 2016; Sec. 30-1557 Tour Guide License Fees, *City of New Orleans Municipal Code*, M.C.S., Ord. No. 24435 (6-2-11), accessed March 15, 2016.

Table 4.6: Required Employee Skills for Paranormal Tour Companies

Required Employee Skills					
N: Non-Required Skill		R: Required Skill			
Tour Companies					
Skill Set/Achievement	A	B	C	D	E
High School Diploma	R	N	R	R	N
Higher Education (College Degree)	R	N	N	R	N
Historical & Folklore Knowledge	R	N	R	R	R
Acting Skills	R	N	N	N	R
Spiritual/Supernatural Talents & Gifts	N	N	N	R	N
Other	N	R	R	N	N

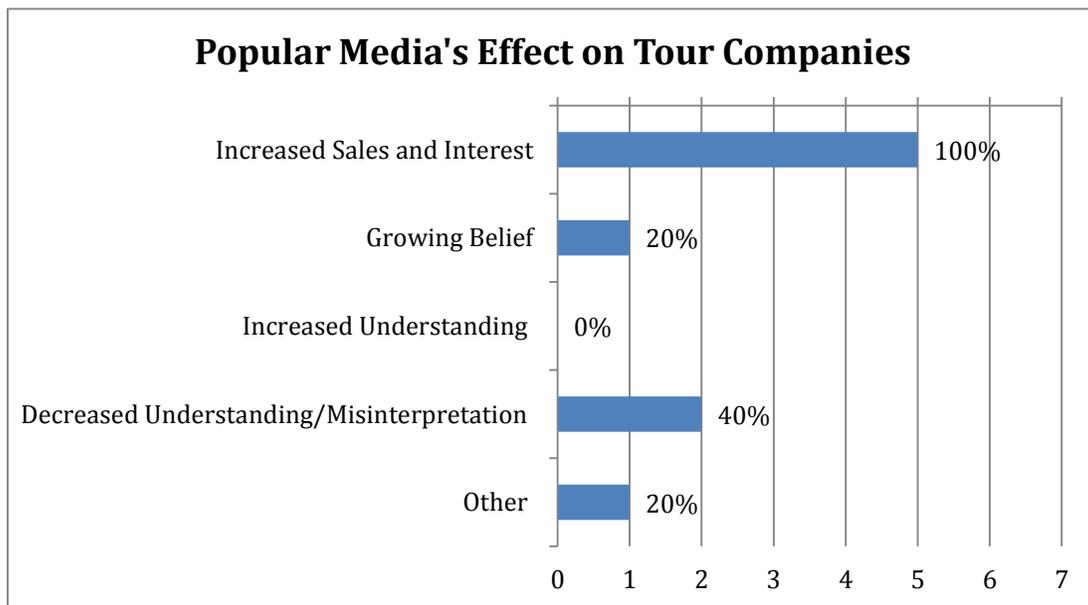
Source: "Paranormal Tourist Survey," Author.

Respondents were next asked if employees' wages are hourly or salaried but also given the option not to provide data. Three respondents opted not to provide data while the remaining are split between hourly and salaried. Tour Company A employees' wages are salaried, with average yearly earnings between \$40,001 and \$50,000. This exceeds the average local annual income for tour guides of \$26,270 and national average of \$26,120 (See **Table 2.1**). Tour Company C employees' wages are hourly, earning \$10.99 per hour. This is below the average local hourly tour guide wages of \$12.63 and is also less than the national average of \$12.56. Both companies, however, pay above the federal minimum wage of \$7.25. At the majority of the tour companies, employees work part time, working between 16 to 30 hours per week. At Tour Company C, however, tour guides are full-time, working 7 to 8 hour shifts averaging 40 or more hours per week.

## Local Community, Relation to Tourist Economy, and Media

To determine how paranormal-related tour operations impact and relate to the local community and tourist economy, several key questions were asked to respondents pertaining to popular media and culture, local community response, safety and health, and business arrangements.

The proliferation of the paranormal in popular media and culture is believed to be one of main contributing facts to why belief in the paranormal is on the rise in first world nations. Respondents were asked if this proliferation of the paranormal by popular medias such as television, film, books, and the Internet has affected their operations. **Figure 4.13** details the results in which all respondents indicated that popular media has increased sales and interest. However, interestingly, popular media has also lent to some misinterpretation of the paranormal and folklore of New Orleans, which can be explained by decades of misrepresentation of Voodoo and inaccuracies in more current productions such as *American Horror Story: Coven*. This supports the research gathered in the literature review in which popular media has increased interest and belief in the paranormal but also can have an adverse effect by misrepresenting some paranormal beliefs and lore.



**Figure 4.13: Popular Media's Effect on Paranormal Tour Companies:** The number one impact that popular media has had upon tour operations with a paranormal component is increased sales and interest. *Source:* "Paranormal Tour Business Survey," Author.

Respondents were next asked how the local community has responded to their operations, whether positively, negatively, or neutrally. Generally, response has been positive or neutral but there has been some negative feedback. The respondent from Tour Company C stated that when the company began operations in New Orleans, some locals were dismissive of another tour company coming into town while some other tour companies were hostile. This was confirmed by a personal conversation with a tour guide from this company who stated that some tour guides will refuse to work for out-of-town companies and will only work for local companies.<sup>121</sup> While relations with the local community have gradually improved, some still hold resentment. This alludes to competition between the different tour companies for customers and also to keep the tour business local.

Many of the tours traverse the French Quarter, St. Louis Cemetery #1, and the Garden District which are riddled with uneven walkways, crumbling infrastructure, and poor lighting, and stifling heat in the summer months. This brings up concern for safety and health. While the city and the Archdiocese of New Orleans have responded to crime and vandalism that plagued the historic cemeteries in previous years by implementing time limits and protective policies, infrastructure concerns are still at large. Respondents were asked if safety and health concerns were a problem on tours and all respondents indicated that there were indeed concerns and issues. Uneven and unmaintained sidewalks and infrastructure were the main concern as they could cause some customers to trip and injure themselves while concerns included intoxicated people harassing customers and access for those with disabilities.

Finally, respondents were asked if their respective tour operations have arrangements with other businesses within the community, whether paranormal-related or not. All respondents indicated, "Yes," and were allowed to provide a text answer. For the pub crawl tours, tour companies have arrangements with various bars but not all are contractual. Others have stops and arrangements with some shops and hotels in which they are allowed to bring tour groups into the property. These arrangements help strengthen

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<sup>121</sup> Tour Company C Tour Guide, in discussion with the author, March 2015.

the ties between businesses but also help promote these other businesses by exposing tourists to them.

### Public Policy and Local Government

The final set of questions given to respondents pertained to how local government, public policies, and planning measures have influenced and affected business operations. Respondents were first asked if any public policies, ordinances, codes, or laws have affected their respective businesses. All denoted that public policies have affected business with three out of five denoting that they have negatively affected business. Detailed text responses included those pertaining to signage laws, curfews, size limits, time limitations, and government interference with tour groups and guides. It was particularly interesting that the respondent from Tour Company A elaborated that a person enforcing tourism laws, not the police but a government agency, assaulted a guide, harassed tourists and was ultimately fired and arrested in November, 2013.<sup>122</sup> This was confirmed upon reviewing news articles in which an official from the Taxi Cab Bureau physically and verbally assaulted a tour guide from Haunted History Tours in which the tour guide sustained bruises.<sup>123</sup> The Taxicab and For Hire Bureau, a division of the Department of Safety and Permits, regulates licensing and inspection of all taxicabs, for hire vehicles, tour companies, and guides within the city.<sup>124</sup> Other responses include tour group size limitations, licensing, and curfews. The City's Code of Ordinances states that, "all tour groups shall be disbanded by 10:00 pm nightly," while tours in the Garden District, primarily a residential area, must, "be concluded by 6:00 pm nightly."<sup>125</sup> Respondents indicated that while some of these policies have negative impacts, they also have positive impacts and understand why they exist.

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<sup>122</sup> Tour Company A Respondent, "Paranormal-Related Tour Business Survey", Online Survey, responded February 17, 2016.

<sup>123</sup> Stephen Babcock, "New Orleans taxicab bureau inspector suspended after accusations of assault on French Quarter tour guide," *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (November 12, 2013), accessed March 30, 2016 from [http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2013/11/french\\_quarter\\_tour\\_guide\\_alle.html](http://www.nola.com/crime/index.ssf/2013/11/french_quarter_tour_guide_alle.html).

<sup>124</sup> "Taxicab & For Hire Bureau," *City of New Orleans One Stop Permits & Licenses*, accessed March 30, 2016 from <http://www.nola.gov/taxicab-for-hire-bureau/>.

<sup>125</sup> Sec. 30-1489 Walking tour guide rules and regulations, *City of New Orleans Municipal Code*, M.C.S., Or. No. 21187, 7-17-03, accessed March 14, 2016.

## **Retail, Shops, and Services:**

- 1. Boutique du Vampyre:** A small, locally owned boutique within the French Quarter, specializing in vampire and paranormal-related merchandise.
- 2. Voodoo Authentica:** Renowned Voodoo Cultural Center and Collection within the French Quarter that also has a strong online and international presence.

Boutique du Vampyre and Voodoo Authentica were the only respondents out of the six contacted to agree to participate in this research for the Paranormal Retail, Shops, and Services Category. However, the answers and data provided by these two businesses are representative of other paranormal-related businesses in New Orleans as they are some of the oldest and most renowned within New Orleans. The other businesses contacted either declined to participate or never responded, despite email and phone call reminders. This may indicate apprehension in participating in research that some may interpret as attempting to exploit or misrepresent their businesses. Conversely, one business owner indicated that they receive so many requests for interviews and surveys that it was not possible to participate because of time constraints. Boutique du Vampyre completed the online survey while an in-person interview was conducted with Voodoo Authentica's owner Brandi Kelley on March 10, 2016. Both respondents gave permission for their business's title and name to be used when presenting this data and final results.

### Business Background and Model

Boutique du Vampyre opened in 2003 inspired by a growing market, local folklore, and to educate and share gifts and talents with others. The respondent went on to further say that, "New Orleans has a fascinating history with vampire, and I felt that people are so intrigued by these creatures and the romanticism that surrounds them... People from all walks of life enjoy a little mystery, and many associate New Orleans with a magical side. I saw a market that catered to customers' mysterious sides."<sup>126</sup> The late-1980s to mid-2000s saw a growth of paranormal-related services and retail establishments in New Orleans,

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<sup>126</sup> Boutique du Vampyre Respondent, "Paranormal Business Retail and Services Survey," Online Survey, February 19, 2016.

focused within the French Quarter area. However, unlike Voodoo Authentica, the business only offers merchandise and not services.

Voodoo Authentica opened seven years earlier than Boutique du Vampyre in 1996. The operation offers not only Voodoo and spiritual supplies and merchandise but also services including readings, rituals, ceremonies, and educational services. Brandi Kelley, the owner of Voodoo Authentica, stated that the purpose of opening this business was manifold, not necessarily tailored to serve the city's growing tourism market. Kelley was born and raised in New Orleans and an active Voodoo practitioner since childhood. Her dedication to this tradition and spirit of entrepreneurship inspired her to open a respectable venue that preserved and promoted authentic Voodoo items, beliefs, and practices. The business originally began in her home but gradually grew into a large, renowned business not only in New Orleans but internationally through web services and merchandise.

### Customer Demographics

When asked to whom their businesses cater towards more, whether locals or tourists, both businesses answered that they serve both demographics equally. Kelley further added that Voodoo Authentica serves an international audience with its online store and services. This is of particular interest because both businesses are located within the French Quarter yet both equally serve the local community and tourists, suggesting that they are not purely designed for tourism but for local, regional, and international sales.

When asked if their businesses cater towards a specific type of demographic, whether it be families, children, adults, or paranormal and spiritual enthusiasts, both businesses responded that the business does not cater to a specific demographic but to many and all demographic sets. This diverged from the tour company data in which adults were the primary target. Instead, they said that these businesses are open to all who are interested despite age and other demographic characteristics.

Businesses were also asked approximately how many customers they served annually, whether as a retail establishment, a service establishment, or both. This question was

asked to differentiate how many people the businesses served between offering services and merchandize. Boutique du Vampyre mainly offers merchandise and thus only indicated that they serve customers as a retail and merchandise establishment while Voodoo Authentica serves both clients as a service provider but also customers as a retail and merchandise establishment. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that they serve more than 15,000 customers per year. It should be noted that the actual number of customers is higher but was not provided as the answer option ranges ended at 15,000, with “More than 15,000” provided to indicate a higher customer number. Voodoo Authentica indicated that they serve more than 500 clients annually as a service provider averaging three to five readings a day. Voodoo Authentica also indicated that they also serve more than 15,000, approximately 36,500, as stated by Kelley. The business has approximately 100 customers per day while the amount swells to more than 1,000 during special events such as Voodoo Fest and Mardi Gras.

When asked if the primary reason for customers patronizing their establishments was related to the paranormal and spiritual or as a secondary reason, Boutique du Vampyre indicated that customers patronized the store primarily for paranormal reasons while Voodoo Authentica indicated both. This is slightly differs from results gathered in the tour company and hotel surveys in which the majority of respondents indicated “secondary.” However, these other businesses offer more non-paranormal services while the retail shops and services surveyed in this process sold primarily paranormal or spiritual goods and services and therefore it makes sense that the majority of customers frequent the establishment for that purpose.

Respondents were also asked what the approximate age cohorts were of the majority of their customers and clients. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that the majority of its customers were young to middle aged adults, specifically within the 25 to 34 years age cohort. Voodoo Authentica had very similar answers, indicating that the majority of its customers and clients fell within the 25 to 55 years age cohort. Kelley also indicated that many children frequent the store who are very inquisitive and curious about Voodoo as a religion and practice. This matches data derived from the tourist survey and the other two business surveys in which respondents indicated similar age cohorts.

Respondents were also asked if customers, specifically tourists, seem to have prior knowledge about their work, services, or products. Both Boutique du Vampyre and Voodoo Authentica indicated that there is a mix of those with prior knowledge and without. Boutique du Vampyre's respondent elaborated that, "it is about half and half anymore."<sup>127</sup> They also explained that promotion and knowledge has spread due to multiple media platforms and other methods:

TripAdvisor is a great help and many people come in because of our review. Also, we have a great deal of publicity throughout the year and people come in from all forms of that as well. So I say our traffic is about 1/3 come to find us and 2/3 stumble upon us.<sup>128</sup>

This suggests that many tourists have prior knowledge due to social media, popular media, and advertising which are effective at marketing the establishment, whether directly or indirectly. However, foot traffic and window shopping are still major factors in customers entering the establishment to browse and purchase goods and services.

When asked if business has improved and increased in the last five to eight years, both businesses answered yes overall. Kelley added that business seems to trend with tragedies, natural disasters, and economic recessions. Kelley elaborated that the New Orleans tourism economy was doing quite well prior to September 11, 2001 after which it dwindled and was slow to recover. However, the tourism economy did recover but was hit with another major blow several years later with Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Again, business was slow to recover but did improve until the 2008 recession. However, the business trend currently seems to be on the upswing and is generally improving for most tourism-related businesses in the city. This data matches that found in the tour company and hotel surveys but also tourism and economic data pertaining to the New Orleans tourism economy as a whole which shows tourism growing, specifically an increase of 2.6 percent from 2013 to 2014.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> "New Orleans Achieves 9.52 Million Visitors and Record-Breaking Visitor Spending in 2014."

Businesses were asked if they had repeat customers and customer loyalty. Both respondents indicated they had. Kelley also added that some customers have been returning for more than 20 years for services and products.

Finally, respondents were asked to denote the busiest times of the year for their businesses. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that while October and fall are very busy, the seasonality has dissipated: “We are consistently busy. Even in the hot summer months.”<sup>130</sup> Voodoo Authentica also indicated that the fall months were the busiest between September and November, coinciding with Voodoo Fest. This is consistent with data derived from the tour company and hotel surveys although it is interesting to note that seasonality is slowly dissipating.

### Revenue and Employment

The following results are related to the revenue and employment data of the two businesses interviewed and surveyed. Respondents were asked to provide basic revenue, percent of sales of paranormal-related products and services, employment, and wage information. Answers were completely voluntary and respondents could refuse to answer any questions. Respondents were also given the option to remain anonymous when providing revenue and employment data. Both businesses gave permission to use their actual titles and names when presenting this data.

First and foremost, respondents were asked how their business has impacted the local economy, in their own words. Boutique du Vampyre’s respondent wrote:

We are #1 on TripAdvisor, because we try to make each customer feel they have stumbled on a little hidden gem. We like to send our customers to secret spots, and we encourage them to come back to the shop if they have any further questions. We find that more often than not people come back just to thank us for sending them to other spots, for spending time with them

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<sup>130</sup> Boutique du Vampyre Respondent.

explaining the artwork in our shop, and for booking ghost, cemetery, cemetery, and vampire tours for them.<sup>131</sup>

This directly ties into a subsequent question asked later in the surveys and interviews in which respondents were asked if their business has arrangements with other paranormally or non-paranormally related businesses, which will be explored and analyzed further in a following section. Voodoo Authentica's owner Brandi Kelley stated that her business provides specialized jobs to those who may otherwise not have a venue to practice and promote their talents and skills. The shop also serves as a venue for artisans from Haiti, Africa, and New Orleans whose works are displayed and for sale within the shop.

When asked what the business's approximate yearly income and revenue is, only Boutique du Vampyre provided data. The business generates less than approximately \$500,000 a year. This is similar to data derived from the tour company and hotel surveys in which the smaller, local tour companies generated less than \$1 million.

The two respondents were also asked if their business offered other services and products that were not paranormal-related. This was asked to determine that if a business did offer other products not paranormal-related, then what percentage of total revenue was attributed to just the paranormal and spiritual-related services and products of the business. Both businesses answered that their business only offers paranormal or spiritually-related products and services, thus eliminating the need to ask what the approximate percentage of total revenue is attributed to just the paranormal or spiritual products and services of their businesses. (See **Appendix 1.2** for clarification).

Respondents were asked how many employees are currently employed at the business. This was asked to help determine the size, economic impact, and also generated revenue of the business, as, in theory, higher levels of revenue are needed to support a higher number of employees. This does not necessarily categorize the business's success as, "success," is often subjective. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that one to five employees are employed

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

at the business, making the business rather small yet efficient. Eleven to fifteen employees are employed. Kelley also elaborated that the shop has a strong international and online presence with ties with artisans in Africa who sell their works in the shop. In regards to the employees themselves, respondents were asked if employees must have a specific set of skills in order to be employed at the business. **Table 4.7** depicts the different categories of skills and the subsequent answers provided by the respondents.

**Table 4.7 Required Employee Skills for Retail/Services:** Respondents were asked what specific skill sets and levels of education were required to be employed at the establishment. According to the results from these two respondents, formal education is not a major requirement to be employed at these establishments.

<b>Required Employee Skills</b>		
<b>N: Non-Required Skill</b>	<b>R: Required Skill</b>	
<b>Skill Set/Achievement</b>	<b>Boutique du Vampyre</b>	<b>Voodoo Authentica</b>
High School Diploma or Equivalent	N	N
Higher Education (College Degree)	N	N
Historical and Folklore Knowledge	Y	Y
Acting Skills	Y	N
Spiritual/Supernatural Gifts and/or Talents	Y	Y
Other (Text Entry)	Y	Y

*Source: "Paranormal Retail Business Survey," Author.*

Formal education is not a major requirement to be employed at these two establishments while other forms of knowledge and skills sets do, including historical and folklore knowledge, and spiritual gifts and talents. Respondents were also given the option to provide an alternative answer. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that since the shop makes many of its own products, the, "assistants must be crafty. They make candles, sculpt, and [have] many other talents. They must also be very personable, and enjoy making our customer's visit special."<sup>132</sup> Voodoo Authentica's employees must also have specific character traits such as sincerity, loyalty, and integrity. It is interesting to note that

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

emphasis is placed more upon traditional knowledge, spirituality, personal gifts, and character traits rather than upon modern, formal education in these two establishments. This differs from many retail establishments in which some level of formal education is required but is similar to data derived from the tour company survey in which the majority of respondents indicated that historical and folklore knowledge, spiritual gifts, acting skills, and other skill sets were required. However, the tour companies also required employees to have some formal educational certifications, such as a high school diploma or college degree.

Respondents were next asked if employees' wages are hourly or salaried. Both respondents indicated that wages were hourly. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that employees are paid between \$15.01 and \$25.00 per hour, which is above the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, the average local retail salesperson hourly wage of \$12.46 in New Orleans, and national average of \$12.38(see **Table 2.1**). Voodoo Authentica pays its employees a minimum of \$11 per hour, which is also high above the federal minimum wage but below the average local and national retail salesperson hourly wages . Respondents were also asked to indicate how many employees were full time and part time. At Boutique du Vampyre, one to five employees are part time, as indicated on the online survey. It can be assumed that since the shop employs a total of one to five employees, most if not all are part time. This is reinforced by the respondent indicating that a typical employee works 16 to 20 hours a week, working a 7 to 8 hour shift while at the shop. At Voodoo Authentica, there are two full time employees while the remainder is part time. A typical employee works 26 to 30 hours a week, working a 7 to 8 hour shift while at the shop.

#### Local Community, Relation to Tourist Economy, and Media

Respondents were asked a series of questions pertaining to how popular media has affected business, community reaction to their business, and arrangements with other businesses. The purpose of these questions is to further understand how service and retail businesses with a spiritual or paranormal component interact with the local community and how popular media, which is believed to be the major impetus for increased interest and belief in the paranormal, has affected business.

Respondents were first asked how media and popular culture pertaining to the paranormal and spiritual has affected business and the tourism economy as a whole. For ease of analysis and understanding, **Table 4.8** has been provided to easily depict and clarify the results from this question.

**Table 4.8: Popular Media’s Effect on Paranormal & Spiritual-Related Businesses:** Popular Media has affected sales and public interest for both businesses but has had a larger impact on Voodoo Authentica, both negatively and positively.

<b>Popular Media’s Effects on Paranormal &amp; Spiritual-Related Businesses</b>		
	<b>(Has had an Effect)</b>	<b>(Has Not had a Significant Effect)</b>
<b>Effect</b>	<b>Boutique du Vampyre</b>	<b>Voodoo Authentica</b>
Increased sales and Interest	Y	Y
Growing Belief	N	Y
Increased Understanding of the Paranormal/Spiritual	N	Y
Decreased Understanding or Misinterpretation of the Paranormal/Spiritual	N	Y
Other (Text Entry)	N	N

*Source: “Paranormal Retail Business Survey,” Author.*

Both businesses indicated that popular media as had an effect on increasing sales and interest in the paranormal and spiritual but has had more of an impact on Voodoo Authentica than Boutique du Vampyre. Kelley explains that popular media’s effect has been ambiguous. In some instances, it has had a severely negative impact by misrepresenting and demonizing Voodoo as a religion. Some customers enter the store with misconceptions or fear of Voodoo. However, popular media has increasingly become a positive medium for education and exposure to what Voodoo truly is. Kelley also discussed how belief and personal spirituality are on the rise, which popular media has most likely influenced. These results are similar to those found in the tour company and hotel surveys in which respondents indicated that popular media has mostly affected sales and increased awareness of the paranormal in New Orleans.

Respondents were asked if the local community has responded positively or negatively to their businesses. This was asked to gauge if paranormal and spiritually related retail businesses are accepted and welcomed into the community or if they are treated hostilely and unwelcomed. Both respondents indicated that the local community has responded positively to the businesses. Kelley elaborated that every year, for Voodoo Fest, the business must get signatures from all the residents, landlords, and other businesses on the street in order to gain a permit from the city to close the street and, every year, there has been 100 percent cooperation and support from the community. Similar to results from the other two survey processes, the local community has responded positively or neutrally to paranormal-related businesses.

The last question in this section asked respondents to describe any arrangements they may have with other businesses within the community. These arrangements could include arrangements with tour businesses other shops and services, hotels, and a multitude of others. This question was asked in order to better understand how businesses with a paranormal or spiritual component interact with and support other businesses in the community. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that they have several arrangements with other businesses. This includes booking tours with certain tour companies and providing a map to other paranormal and magic-related businesses, bars, and restaurants in the city. This, in turn, promotes these other businesses and increases their sales. The boutique also sends customers to various escape rooms in town. An escape room is, “a game which requires a player to escape from imprisonment by exploiting their surroundings.”<sup>133</sup> By sending customers to these location, they are helping to promote business and awareness of these businesses. Voodoo Authentica, on the other hand, does not have any formal arrangements with local businesses but does use extensive networking and communication with other businesses in order to provide diverse, unique products and services. Kelley elaborates that communication with similar businesses is essential in order for each

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<sup>133</sup> Aaron Hallaway, “What is a ‘Escape Room,’” *Geek & Sundry*, Mary 29, 2015, accessed March 16 from Sec. 30-1551 Tour Guide License, City of New Orleans Municipal Code, M.C.S., Or. No. 24435, 6-2-11, (accessed March 14, 2016).

business to provide different products that are unique to that particular business and lends to that business's own unique identity.

### Public Policy and Local Government

The final set of questions asked of respondents were those pertaining to how the local government and public policies have affected business and how the government and tourism organizations can better improve and promote business. These questions also directly tie into planning as one function of planning is economic development, creating better business environments, and implementing public policies.

Respondents were first asked if there have been any public policies, ordinances, codes, or laws that have affected their business operations and activities. This was question was asked to better understand how public policies have affected paranormal and spiritually related businesses. Answers and results from this question were mixed however, as both respondents believed that some policies have had a positive effect while others have had negative effects.

Boutique du Vampyre's respondent stated that, "it has been sad for many of our customers that they can't go into the cemetery (St. Louis Cemetery #1) on their own anymore. Now they have to be on a tour. I explain to them that it is because of ongoing vandalism, and it quickly negates anger about it, and makes them feel empathetic."<sup>134</sup> The Archdiocese of New Orleans controls the Catholic cemeteries within the city and because of ongoing vandalism, sacrifice, and litter, the Archdiocese decided to close St. Louis Cemetery #1, the most famous of the three St. Louis Cemeteries, to the general public unless with a tour group.<sup>135</sup> This same policy and concern has been echoed by many others in the course of this research, including Voodoo Authentica's Brandi Kelley. Kelley discussed how some tourists and locals would litter, vandalize, and leave sacrifices within the cemeteries without cleaning up afterwards. While the response has been detrimental to tourism and Voodoo practitioners alike, Kelley understands the City's and Archdiocese's response in

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<sup>134</sup> Boutique du Vampyre Respondent.

<sup>135</sup> "Tourism- St. Louis #1," New Orleans Catholic Cemeteries, accessed March 14, 2016 from <http://nolacatholiccemeteries.org/tourism/>.

order to protect and preserve the cemetery. Kelley also discussed several other policies and planning measures that not only affected her business but others within New Orleans. Traditionally, Congo Square and the Municipal Auditorium had been the venues for Voodoo Fest since 1999. When Harrah's decided to build a casino in the city, the city gave the land upon which Congo Square and the auditorium stood. Many local businesses and practitioners protested but were ultimately ignored by the city, according to Kelley. Harrah's did not do well at the location and ultimately moved to a new location in downtown New Orleans.

Respondents were next asked if they received any subsidies or incentives of any kind. This was asked to discover if paranormal and spiritually-related retail and service businesses use incentives like many other businesses. Both respondents answered that they do not.

When asked if tourism corporations and organizations have affected their businesses, the respondents' results were considerably different. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that tourism organizations have increased marketing and advertisement of the paranormal and spiritual within New Orleans. Voodoo Authentica's Brandi Kelley indicated that her business once held membership with the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau but no longer does after not seeing much impact upon business. Kelley states that word of mouth, social media, international online presence, and a growing reputation have been more impactful on increasing business than tourism corporations and organizations have been. This compares to what some respondents indicated in the tour company and hotel surveys that they do not necessarily see any benefits from being members of these organizations.

Finally, respondents were asked if they believed any policies and planning measures could improve their business and other businesses related to the paranormal and/or spiritual. Boutique du Vampyre indicated that they were, "not sure," while Voodoo Authentica's Kelley believes more acceptance and respect from leaders is essential in promoting paranormal and spiritual businesses. Kelley detailed how historically, the City

has ignored and tried to hide Voodoo and other spiritually related practices unless it was to exploit and abuse the religion for revenue and tourism.

## **Hotels/Hospitality**

1. **Hotel A:** a small, locally owned Bed & Breakfast (B&B) operating in the French Quarter. The inn offers two rooms and while does not actively market its paranormal history and activity, though many stay at the inn because of it.

Only one bed and breakfast business responded and agreed to participate in this research. A phone interview lasting approximately one hour was held with the owner of Hotel A who provided key insight into the accommodation industry in New Orleans, as well as how other accommodation businesses are embracing their paranormal lore for tourism purposes.

### Business History and Model

Hotel A originally opened in 1999. The representative stated that while they do not actively market the bed and breakfast's paranormal activity, many guests have stayed at the establishment primarily to experience the paranormal. The establishment has been featured in several popular media documentaries, videos, and is featured in the paranormal-related tours within New Orleans due to the alleged hauntings and activity. The representative stated that they originally began the business because they had a deep love of hospitality but also saw a growing niche market within the New Orleans economy.

### Customer Demographics

The B&B caters more towards tourists, according to the respondent. Guests must be twelve or older and while the inn is not modeled to cater to a specific customer demographic, it has increasingly become more popular with paranormal enthusiasts and believers. Most guests are middle-aged falling between 35 to 65 years of age. Again, this corresponds to the paranormal tourist survey in which the majority of respondents fell within the age range and also the tour company survey which had similar results. The respondent also indicated that business has substantially increased in the last five to eight

years, specifically after the New Orleans Saints victory in Super Bowl XLIV (2010) in which respondent describes that the world saw that New Orleans was indeed recovering from Hurricane Katrina and welcoming tourists. The respondent also added that they have strong customer loyalty with many guests returning in subsequent years and is already close to being fully booked for the next year.

When asked what were the peak seasons for business, the respondent indicated that the Mardi Gras period (January- February), Winter (December-February), Spring (March-May), and the Summer (June-August) months were the busiest, although added that seasonality is slowly diminishing as New Orleans is increasingly becoming busy yearlong. This coincides with what the respondent from Boutique du Vampyre indicated in which they also observed peak seasonality dissipating.

### Revenue and Employment

The inn is quite small offering only two guest rooms, yet successful and renowned within New Orleans with an annual occupancy rate between 66 and 80 percent. The B&B generates more than \$75,000 after taxes and maintenance costs, according to the respondent. However, the owner considers her business quite successful and lives a comfortable lifestyle.

In terms of employment, the owner is the primary overseer of operations doing much of the work themselves while a part-time maid cleans the property once per week. The owner is self-employed, and their yearly salary ranges from \$30,001 to \$40,000. The owner works full time at more than 40 hours a week, making for 9 to 11 hour work days.

### Local Community, Relation to Tourist Economy, and Media

Following the same format as the previous two survey processes, the respondent was asked how popular media and culture has affected their business. Like previous results, they indicated that popular media has contributed to increased sales and interest, growing belief, and also increased understanding of the paranormal. In regards to how the local community has responded to the establishment of the B&B in a primarily residential neighborhood, the owner indicated that the community has responded very positively.

## Public Policy and Local Government

When asked how public policies have affected their business, the owner departed from previous trends in the other surveys and stated that they believe there is a lack of regulation for B&B's, particularly in regards to Airbnb. The respondent elaborated that while not inherently bad, Airbnbs have become rampant and unchecked with some users having criminal intents. Airbnb allows users to list, find, and rent lodging. According to the company's website, the service is, "the easiest way for people to monetize their extra space and showcase it to an audience of millions."<sup>136</sup> While useful and groundbreaking, this same ability to broadcast to a vast audience has led to many issues and difficulties in regulation, especially within New Orleans. Recent news articles discuss how Airbnbs have caused contention between neighbors who dislike the short-term rental aspect of the app while proponents have argued that the service serves as a supplementary income that has helped them pay for home restorations.<sup>137</sup> Many opponents argue that unruly and untidy guests are causing detriment to their communities and that the short-term rental nature of some users is pricing residents out of neighborhoods.<sup>138</sup> Others also argue that many Airbnb properties are not owner-occupied but rather owned by a small group of individuals who buy properties throughout the city and effectively use as hotels. Cities throughout the United States are faced with the difficulties of regulating such properties as they straddle residential and commercial land uses. Local community groups have investigated short-term rentals coming to the conclusion that Airbnbs and other lodging apps impact the housing market by "constricting supply and increasing demand."<sup>139</sup>

While Airbnb is not purely tied to paranormal tourism, the website does feature a list of allegedly haunted Airbnb-registered homes. Not much data is available pertaining to

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<sup>136</sup> "About Us," *Airbnb*, accessed March 15, 2016 from <https://www.airbnb.com/about/about-us>.

<sup>137</sup> Rob Walker, "Airbnb Pits Neighbor Against Neighbor in Tourist-Friendly New Orleans," *The New York Times*, March 5, 2016, accessed March 15, 2016 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/06/business/airbnb-pits-neighbor-against-neighbor-in-tourist-friendly-new-orleans.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&r=3>.

<sup>138</sup> Susanna Kim, "Airbnb to Launch Feature for Neighbors to File Complaints," *ABC News*, March 14, 2016, accessed March 15, 2016 from <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/airbnb-launch-feature-neighbors-file-complaints/story?id=37632987>.

<sup>139</sup> Darin Acosta, Breonne DeDecker, and Andru Okun, "New Orleans Short Term Rental Report," *NOLA Rental Report*, 2015, accessed March 15, 2016 from <http://nolarentalreport.com/#/>.

how popular these homes are but it can be assumed that as paranormal niche tourism grows, so may the growth of Airbnb hosts who market their home as haunted or with a storied history to curious tourists.<sup>140</sup> If this does indeed become the case, hosts must be diligent to abide by cities' regulations or flexible in adapting to new regulations as many cities are just beginning to recognize the implications of Airbnbs and are scrambling to implement new regulations.

When asked if their business currently used any incentives or subsidies the respondent indicated, "No," but did explain that they received a small business grant after Hurricane Katrina to help stimulate economic activity within the city. The respondent did go on to explain that the state should reinstate tax credits for filming and motion pictures. The Motion Picture Investor Tax Credit provides motion picture productions, "up to a 30 percent transferable tax credit on total qualified in-state production expenditures, including resident and non-resident labor."<sup>141</sup> However, in 2015, the program was cutback and a \$180 million cap was enacted which some opponents believe has negatively affected the film industry in Louisiana which provides over 10,000 jobs and pumps more than \$1 billion into the state's economy.<sup>142</sup> However, with the state facing more than a \$1 billion budget shortfall, many tax credit programs are being cut back or killed altogether.<sup>143</sup>

Like several previous respondents, when asked how tourism and convention organizations have affected business, the respondent explained that the local tourism organizations have not had a significant positive impact on business and marketing. Conversely, the membership fees have had an adverse effect and the respondent is no longer a member and uses Bed and Breakfast directories for marketing, which are

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<sup>140</sup> "Haunted Homes," *Airbnb*, accessed March 15, 2016 from <https://www.airbnb.com/wishlists/haunted-homes>.

<sup>141</sup> "Motion Picture Investor Tax Credit," *Louisiana Economic Development Department: Louisiana Entertainment*, accessed March 15, 2016 from <http://louisianaentertainment.gov/film/motion-picture-investor-tax-credit>.

<sup>142</sup> Richard Verrier, "Louisiana scales back film tax credits, roiling the industry," *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 2015, accessed March 15, 2016 from <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/cotown/la-et-ct-louisiana-film-tax-20150702-story.html>.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

inexpensive. Other sites such as TripAdvisor have been very effective at advertising the B&B and allow guests to post reviews.

When asked if they believed any policies and planning measures could improve their and other businesses relating to the paranormal, the respondent detailed the following:

- Increased regulation of Airbnbs
- Restoration of Filming Incentives and Tax Credits
- More Media Exposure and Marketing

## **Site Visit**

I conducted a site visit to New Orleans and the surrounding areas, March 10 through March 13, 2016. The purpose of this site visit included immersion within paranormal tourism itself, to conduct interviews, photography, and subsidiary data collection. In summation, I participated in three paranormal tours with different tour companies, visited several sites of paranormal and spiritual significance, and had conversations with guides, tourists, and a hotel concierge.

## Tour Experiences

Three paranormal tours were taken in total, each with a different element and within a different area of the city. An additional fourth tour was taken that was not paranormal themed but the guide did mention the alleged paranormal activity of the site. This particular tour was of the Oak Alley Plantation in Vacherie, Louisiana located in St. James Parish within the New Orleans Metropolitan Area. The tour of the plantation mansion was mostly historical but towards the end, the guide did mention that she has had alleged paranormal encounters. At the completion of the tour I briefly spoke to the guide and about her experiences and if the plantation offers a paranormal tour. She stated that the foundation does not because they do not want a paranormal reputation attached to the plantation but did admit that some tourists may be curious and travel to the plantation specifically for that reason.

The next tour was a standard ghost tour offered by Tour Company C within the French Quarter on Thursday, March 10, 2016 starting at 8:00 pm and lasting till

approximately 9:30 pm. There were only two participants on this tour, myself and a family relative although tour group sizes usually fill up to the 28 maximum. The tour featured locations within the French Quarter of historic and paranormal importance and featured a mix of historical facts, folklore, and paranormal information. This tour company had several arrangements with local businesses during the course of this particular tour, including entering a hotel to allow tour participants to take photos and experience the site of alleged hauntings. Participants are led through the lobby of this particular hotel and into the back courtyard but are not allowed to enter any of the guest rooms or ascend to the second floor. During this tour the tour guide informed us that tour groups must maintain a minimum of 50 feet from one another per City Ordinance Sec. 30-1489.2.<sup>144</sup>



**Figure 4.14 St. Louis Cemetery #1 Rules:** In response to vandalism, the Archdiocese has close the cemetery except to license tour groups and family members whose relatives are buried within the cemetery. *Source:* Photo by Author

On Friday morning, March 11, 2016 I partook in a cemetery tour offered by Tour Company A featuring the famous St. Louis Cemetery #1 which is renowned for its above ground vaults and famous people buried there. The tour began at 11:00 am and lasted approximately two hours. It is noted that the cemetery tours are the earliest paranormal tours offered by tour companies as all tours must conclude by 3:30 pm. Time limitations and curfews are very strict and enforced within the cemetery which has experienced considerable vandalism in past years.<sup>145</sup> In response, the Archdiocese of New Orleans closed the cemetery save for tour groups and families of the deceased (See **Figure 4.14**).

This particular tour costs about \$16 if tickets are ordered online while they are \$20 at the

<sup>144</sup> Sec. 30-1489 Walking Tour Guide Rules and Regulations

<sup>145</sup> "Tourism- St. Louis #1"

office counter. Part of revenue acquired from ticket sales goes to the Archdiocese for preservation of the historic St. Louis Cemeteries. These policies were implemented and put into effect March 1, 2015.<sup>146</sup> Seventeen others participated in this tour which was somewhat theatrical in nature and part architectural history tour in addition to being paranormal-related. The tour begins from the tour company's office which shares space with a bar lounge. The tour stops at the Basin Street Visitors Center which houses New Orleans historical artifacts, collections, and a souvenir shop. This can allude to a special arrangement with the visitor's center which helps increase traffic. Once inside the



**Figure 4.15: New Orleans Catholic Cemetery Policies:** In response to vandalism, the Archdiocese maintains strict policies and surveillance to protect the historic tombs. *Source:* Photo by Author.

cemetery, the guide explained the unique history and burial customs of New Orleans, mixing the historical facts with paranormal tales. Participants were informed to avoid touching or leaning against the tombs as many are centuries old and historical and other rules laid forth by the Archdiocese, as seen in **Figure 4.15**. The Archdiocese have actually helped tour companies in that tourists who wish to see the historic cemeteries must be with a licensed tour group and therefore must partake in a tour which economically benefits the tour companies.

The fourth tour occurred in the Garden District, a primarily residential district west of the French Quarter and downtown. This tour was offered by Haunted History which is considered the largest and most successful of the paranormal-related tour companies in the city. While Haunted History did not participate in this research, I wanted to partake in a tour offered by the company to compare and contrast from the others while also gaining insight into the company's operations. The tour began at 2:30 pm and ended at 4:45 pm, as the city mandates that all tours within the Garden District must conclude by 6:00 pm per

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<sup>146</sup> Tour Company A, "St. Louis #1 Cemetery Walking Tour," *Tour Company A Website (Protected for Anonymity)*

Sec. 30-1489.5. The tour group met at the gates of Lafayette Cemetery #1, with about eighteen members, the largest of the three tours I partook in. The first segment of the tour was the cemetery tour in which the guide explained the unique history of New Orleans' cemeteries and paranormal occurrences. Much of the tour focused on the famous films, television shows, and stories filmed or set within the cemetery, such as being a filming location for *American Horror Story: Coven*, *The Originals*, and *Interview with the Vampire*. Unlike the St. Louis Cemeteries in which most film productions are banned, Lafayette Cemetery welcomes film and television productions as long as fees are paid. The tour guide elaborated that some controversy surrounded this practice as the money generated from film productions was meant to go to the maintenance of the cemetery but was instead being diverted to the City's General Fund. Public outrage ensued which has pressured the City to maintain the cemetery more. Indeed this was the case as I explored the cemetery as several maintenance workers were busy mowing, weed-eating and cleaning the tombs. Compared to St. Louis Cemetery #1, Lafayette Cemetery #1 has remained in considerable good condition with many of the tombs retaining their original architectural features and sculpture. One aspect of the storytelling I observed was conflicting accounts and facts from the previous tours.

The second phase of the tour was a walking tour through the streets of the Garden District. The tour guide explained the storied histories of the homes, unique architectural elements, and also the famous current residents. Several celebrities have homes within the district including Sandra Bullock and John Goodman. Paranormal lore was the focal point of the tour with the guide telling the stories of the alleged hauntings of each of the featured properties and how some of the homes are allegedly cursed. When asked if residents within the district dislike the vast volume of tourists and tour groups, the guide explained that while newer residents may frown upon tourism, many of the older, more established residents welcome it, actually encouraging some tourists to enter their homes to use the restroom if needed. After the tour concluded, I was able to speak with the guide for several minutes, asking if New Orleans, in general, has embraced the paranormal and paranormal tourism. He explained that for the most part yes as many of the residents have their own encounters and stories of the paranormal which is unique to the city and the American

South in general. He noted that this type of tourism would not work everywhere as a city must have a unique historical foundation and folklore to establish such niche tourism upon.

Overall, the most noteworthy observations from these events was just how prolific and popular these paranormal tours were. Posters, brochures, and advertisements are found throughout the French Quarter and other sites in the city for these paranormal tour groups as seen in **Figures 4.16** and **4.17**.



**Figure 4.16 (Left) & 4.17 (Below):** Ghost and paranormal tour posters, brochures, and advertisements are common throughout the city's tourist centers, hotels, shops, and the French Quarter. *Source:* Photos by Author.

### Shops and Services Experiences

Two businesses were visited specializing in spiritual and paranormal products and services, Voodoo Authentica and Reverend Zombie's House of Voodoo. Voodoo Authentica agreed to participate in the research via email while Reverend Zombie's and its partner Marie Laveau's House of Voodoo did not respond to the original inquiries. Voodoo Authentica is located in a more quiet area of the French Quarter and while it is popular with tourists, it treats the Voodoo tradition in a serious manner. The shop sells supplies, potions, Gris-gris bags, candles, tarot cards, dolls, and other spiritual items that are not designed to be souvenirs but active ritualistic and spiritual items. I was able to explore the shop in-depth prior to the interview with the owner. The store appeared to be more educationally oriented, with most products including a brief description of what the

product is and how to properly handle and use it. Employees are very friendly and eager to assist customers, however, theatrics are not a ploy to lure in customers.

Reverend Zombie's House of Voodoo is the opposite of Voodoo Authentica in several ways. The store sits close to Bourbon Street which is the busiest thoroughfare of the French Quarter with a high amount of tourist traffic into the store. The shop sales similar merchandise as Voodoo Authentica and also offers services but has its own unique flavor and items. The shop is adjoined to a cigar and smoke shop, emphasizing the tourist and merchandise-oriented component. One interesting component I observed is the employees were dressed in theatrical clothing, a mixture of Goth and Punk influence. Brooke Butler detailed this performance in her paper "The Other Magic Kingdom" in which she argues that the theatrics employed at Reverend Zombie's and Marie Laveau's are, "signs of culture

difference," and reinforce the difference of Voodoo and the paranormal from other shops within the Quarter.<sup>147</sup> While Voodoo Authentica serves more of an educational purpose, Reverend Zombie's is more theatrical. Yet, this is not to say that Reverend Zombie's and Marie Laveau's does not take Voodoo seriously as a religion and practice but is merely portraying it in different ways for different audiences. Even within non-paranormal oriented businesses there were paranormal-related souvenirs and merchandise. This included shirts, books, dolls, and décor. **Figure 4.18** is an example of such merchandise.



**Figure 4.18 Paranormal Souvenir:** Many non-paranormal oriented stores throughout the French Quarter sell paranormal-related products, such as the t-shirt of which the alleged haunted homes of New Orleans are displayed. *Source:* Photo by Author

<sup>147</sup> Brooke Butler, "The Other Magic Kingdom: New Orleans Voodoo and Tourism (doctorate dissertation, University of California Davis, 2011), 124.

## Hotel and Hospitality Experience

Two hotels were visited during the site visit, the Andrew Jackson Hotel in the French Quarter and La Quinta Downtown New Orleans where I stayed. These are two very different hotels for a variety of reasons, the most obvious being that one is a small, locally owned boutique hotel and the other a large, corporately owned chain hotel. The Andrew Jackson Hotel was visited during Tour Company C's tour in which tour participants were taken through the lobby and into the back courtyard as the tour guide described the paranormal history of the site. The hotel has also been listed on several websites as one of the most haunted hotels in New Orleans but does not actively market its alleged paranormal occurrences on its website. While staff at the hotel were not questioned, it can be inferred that hotel management tolerates or even embraces the hotel's alleged paranormal activity by allowing paranormal tour groups to enter the hotel.

Conversely, La Quinta had no paranormal lore nor is it locally owned. However, the hotel's concierge, Vicki Capro, offered some key insight into the growing paranormal tourism market within New Orleans. Capro believes that paranormal tourism has grown very recently in the last two years which she attributes to New Orleans being the setting for many popular films and television shows such as *American Horror Story: Coven*. Capro is often questioned by guests at the hotel who are curious about which paranormal tours are the best to take and also ask where certain sites with a strong paranormal history are located. Echoing what survey and interview respondents indicated, Capro stated that Halloween was the busiest time of the year for paranormal tourism. When asked why so many boutique and locally owned hotels have paranormal history and marketing while chain and large corporate hotels do not, Capro stated that many of the large chain hotels are housed in newer buildings which may not have an alleged paranormal history while many of the boutique hotels are housed in older, more historic buildings with rich paranormal histories. However, she also stated that some boutique hotels may market their alleged paranormal activity as a strategy to increase room occupancy and sales, thereby catering to paranormal tourists, and to provide an edge over some chain hotels.

According to Vicki Capro, concierge at La Quinta Inn & Suites New Orleans Downtown, a growing number of tourists have background knowledge and interest in the city's paranormal history and lore. Capro helps guests at the hotel book tickets with paranormal tour companies. She says that popular media such as *American Horror Story: Coven*, *Interview with the Vampire*, *The Originals* has helped market New Orleans as a paranormal vacation destination by exposing people to the city's paranormal history.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Vicki Capro (La Quinta Concierge) in discussion with the author, March 2016.

## **V. Discussion**

From the results gathered, I reached several major conclusions about paranormal tourism and its affect on the New Orleans tourism economy and public policy but also how the local economy and public policies are, in turn, affecting paranormal tourism and other forms of tourism. Overall, I concluded that paranormal tourism and businesses relating to the paranormal or spiritual positively affect local economics and communities, based on the results of this research. Public policy, however, has had a mixture of effects on paranormal tourism, some beneficial some harmful. These conclusions create implications for many stakeholders and groups including business owners and leaders, local government and planning officials, local citizens and residents, and tourists themselves. These conclusions are further subdivided into two sections discussed in this chapter: 1) Planning and Local Government Implications and 2) Business Implications.

### **Planning and Local Government Implications**

Major implications for planners and local governments derived from this research are regulation, revenue and economic development, marketing of paranormal tourism, community support and involvement, and accommodating paranormal tourism. From the results derived from the literature review and from this study, belief in the paranormal is generally expected to continue to rise, coupled with paranormal tourism. Cities and communities should be aware of this growth and equipped to handle and accommodate paranormal tourism. Some of the most noticeable implications that planning and public policies have had on paranormal tourism in New Orleans are direct effects such licensing requirements, curfews and time limitations, and other regulations but also indirect, more nuanced effects such as respect, tolerance, and taking paranormal tourism seriously. This section explores how New Orleans and other communities can encourage and market their communities for paranormal tourism for economic benefit while also retaining a sense of respect and professionalism.

#### Regulation

Communities that wish to implement or control paranormal tourism could use regulations which are directly within the power of local governments. Regulations

including land use and zoning, tour guide and tour planner licensing, tour group rules, and district regulations can help accommodate paranormal tourism while mitigating negative effects that are often associated with tourism. Land use and zoning can be used to effectively create tourism enclaves which serve as foci of tourist activity while also creating a respectable buffer to residential neighborhoods. New Orleans' French Quarter is the city's principal tourist enclave and is very mixed-use and diverse in land use with shops, bars, restaurants, apartments, homes, public spaces, religious and government institutions within an area less than a square mile. Much of the city's tourism economy is focused in the area with many of the businesses feeding off each other yet also serves the local community with many locals living in the district. What makes this particular area so successful and unique is this focus of energy and uses that not only caters to paranormal tourism but a variety of tourist activities and other economic activities.

Licensing and tour group regulation are also effective tools in regulating tourism. In New Orleans, tour guide licensing, examination, and as well as district regulations such as curfews and distance requirements have helped appease and protect the local community while not being too severe and constrictive of tourism. Licensing and examination help ensure a degree of accuracy by requiring tour guides to complete and pass a written test with various historical, cultural, and social questions. The city's regulations have been controversial. In the 2011 lawsuit, *Kagan vs. City of New Orleans*, several tour guides and operators sued the City of New Orleans on grounds that the City was violating their First Amendment rights by requiring tour guides to register with the city, pass a history examination, and pass a drug test and background check. The district court found that the regulation was constitutional in that it protected tourists from swindling, ensures reliability, provides safety to citizens and visitors, and was not content-based but rather content neutral.<sup>149</sup> The United States Court for the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit affirmed the district court's decision. The appellants appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court which declined to take the case.<sup>150</sup> The decision of this case shows that while such regulations could be considered controversial, they are within the constitutional limits of local government to implement

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<sup>149</sup> *Kagan vs. City of New Orleans*, 13-30801(5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2014), accessed April 6, 2016 from <https://www.ca5.uscourts.gov/opinions%5Cpub%5C13/13-30801-CV0.pdf>.

<sup>150</sup> "NOLA Tours," *Institute for Justice*, accessed April 6, 2016 from <http://ij.org/case/nola-tours/>.

and enforce. While many tour companies indicated that while licensing can be a strenuous process it does have its positives and has helped maintain a level of professionalism within the tourism economy. The regulation applies to all tour guides and groups in the city, whether paranormal or non-paranormal-related, it helps protect the City's history and maintain factuality intermixed with paranormal lore, lending credibility to the tour guide but also to the city's history and culture. Cities and communities that have the manpower and means to regulate and license tour guides and groups should also consider implementing an exam as a prerequisite for license attainment. This would help ensure a degree of professionalism and historical accuracy during tours while also increasing the skillsets of tour guides.

District regulations such as curfews also help ensure safety and community quality by limiting the times when tour groups can be active on the city streets. In New Orleans, all tours throughout the city must conclude by 10:00 pm while the Garden District has additional stipulations that all tours must conclude by 6:00 pm. If communities are concerned that an influx in tour groups will negatively affect neighborhoods and tranquility, they could implement similar time limitations to protect the community and local residents. Special regulations have also impacted paranormal tourism and general tourism, such as the Archdiocese's decision to limit access to many of the City's cemeteries, only allowing family members of the interred or those within a tour group access into the historic cemeteries which have been threatened by vandalism and decay in recent years. This regulation has been met with understanding and is welcomed in many groups as a way to protect and preserve the famous cemeteries. If other communities are concerned about an influx of tourists visiting historic sites that are in danger, similar regulations could be enacted to protect the site and also generate funds for restoration and preservation (See Revenue and Economic Development section).

The respondent from the hotel survey called for more regulation of Airbnbs and short term rentals in the city, and they are not alone. Many citizens are increasingly becoming concerned with the proliferation of Airbnbs in the city and how they are affecting land values, quality of life, and neighborhood aesthetics. While Airbnbs are not directly tied to paranormal tourism, those who own property with alleged paranormal activity may

begin to market their property in increasing numbers towards paranormal tourist. Several cities have responded to the influx of Airbnbs with new regulations. Portland has responded by requiring Airbnb hosts to acquire a \$180 two-year permit, undergo a home inspection, and notify adjacent property owners. Hosts must also pay the city's 12.5 percent lodging tax which Airbnb assists hosts with charging.<sup>151</sup> New Orleans' Planning Commission has proposed a mixture of regulations to combat the negative consequences of Airbnbs. These include density controls, different regulations for hosts who live on the premises versus those who run them remotely, and parking requirements.<sup>152</sup> The city does recognize the economic importance of Airbnbs as many property owners rent out their homes for income support and would cost the city considerable money to enforce regulation of Airbnbs.<sup>153</sup> Overall, local governments need to study the effects Airbnbs are having upon local economies, housing prices and stock, and land use to determine if they are having a beneficial or detrimental effect on the community.

Regulations, however, should not be so stringent in that they effectively discourage or prevent paranormal tourism or tourism in general. For example, some respondents referred to the tour guide assault incident in which enforcement of the tour guide licensing was unreasonable and excessive. While many support the policies and regulations as a whole, they should not be excessive nor forced excessively. Regulations, codes, and ordinances should not prevent paranormal tourism but should rather address concerns and problems that may arise out of paranormal tourism and seek to fairly and rationally correct and regulate them. Furthermore, enforcement of the regulations should not outweigh the benefits of the regulations themselves, whether financially, socially, politically, or legally.

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<sup>151</sup> Mary Hammon, "Portland Looks To Regulate Airbnb," *Planning* 80, no. 8 (Aug, 2014): , Accessed April 6, 2016 from <http://search.proquest.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/docview/1554418858?accountid=11789>.

<sup>152</sup> Robert McClendon, "Draft Rules Would Legalize Short-Term Rentals in New Orleans," *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (January 20, 2016), accessed April 6, 2016 from [http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/01/airbnb\\_short-term\\_rentals\\_rule.html](http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/01/airbnb_short-term_rentals_rule.html).

<sup>153</sup> Cain Burdeau, "New Orleans Considers Legalizing Airbnb and Other Short-Term Rentals," *Skift* (January 24, 2016), accessed April 6, 2016 from <http://skift.com/2016/01/24/new-orleans-considers-legalizing-airbnb-and-other-short-term-rentals/>.

## Revenue and Economic Development

Paranormal tourism provides a unique and creative method for cities to support the local economy and increase revenue, whether through taxes, fees, or through indirect means. There are four major ways in which cities can financially benefit from paranormal tourism: tax revenue, job creation, licensing and regulation fees, and historic preservation.

Tax revenue generated from businesses relating to the paranormal are the most apparent way in which cities can benefit from paranormal tourism. While this study did not collect data pertaining to tax revenue, the relative success of these businesses suggests they generously contribute to the tax base of New Orleans. New Orleans maintains several special taxes relating to tourism, specifically the hotel occupancy tax.<sup>154</sup> Guests staying at any New Orleans hotel also pay a 13 percent tax atop their room rates. The amount of generated revenue from this tax is contingent on the success of hotels. Many hotels in the city market the paranormal to attract customers. If this paranormal element does indeed attract more guests to establishments then it could be assumed that these establishments are performing better and thus generating a higher percentage of tax revenue. Other communities who are seeking to diversify and increase their tax base could encourage paranormal tourism as a means to meet these goals. While this is not true for all communities, it does provide a unique option to increase tax revenue from a growing niche of tourism. Results of this study also show that many of the businesses relating to the paranormal are successful and growing and provide a new market for tax base expansion. However, governments should avoid singling out paranormal businesses and unfairly levying special taxes on them as this can have a very adverse effect on these businesses which are often small and locally owned. These effects can include relocation, failure, or lay-offs.

Job creation is a major economic development factor in paranormal tourism. While job creation is typically within the domain of the private sector, cities and communities can help encourage job creation through different means. Jobs relating to paranormal tourism

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<sup>154</sup> Jennifer Larino, "New Orleans hotel tax revenue soars, raising collection questions," *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (June 15, 2015), accessed April 6, 2016 from [http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2015/06/new\\_orleans\\_hotel\\_tax\\_hits\\_hig.html](http://www.nola.com/business/index.ssf/2015/06/new_orleans_hotel_tax_hits_hig.html).

or the paranormal in general are often skilled and require unique skills that are otherwise not typically appreciated or utilized elsewhere. Thus, the paranormal helps diversify the local economy and job market by providing a mixture of unique jobs and skill requirements. Cities may not be actively able to create jobs in this sector directly but can help support businesses through incentives, subsidies, marketing, and through accommodation, as discussed further in subsequent sections. While the majority of business respondents from this research indicated that they do not receive subsidies nor incentives from the government, incentives and subsidies can be powerful tools in encouraging business and economic growth.

Licensing fees are another revenue tool which cities can use to generate funds. In New Orleans, tour guides and tour planners must pay initial and renewal fees in order to maintain a license. These annual and biennial fees range from \$20 to \$500. While renewal fees are not the most dependable source of revenue, they do provide an additional source atop taxation. Cities should avoid enacting unreasonable fees as this could effectively discourage or prevent paranormal tourism. While what is considered reasonable differs from region to region, cities and communities must be diligent in studying and deciding what is appropriate and conducive for both revenue generation and businesses.

Historic preservation is another way in which paranormal tourism assists the local economy and can generate revenue for restoration of sites. In New Orleans a percentage of proceeds generated from ticket sales of cemetery tours goes to fund the restoration of the city's historic cemeteries. Organizations such as "Save Our Cemeteries" champion the preservation and restoration of New Orleans's famous cemeteries and offers volunteer opportunities for restoration projects in addition to tours which generate funds for these projects. While the tours are not operated by the city, they do provide a creative mechanism to preserve and restore the city's famous cemeteries which serve a public purpose. This could pertain to other cities which may have historic properties that are severely neglected and in decline. If the site has alleged paranormal activity and history, it could be marketed for paranormal tourism and generate funds for the preservation of these properties and other city projects.

## Marketing

If local governments, communities, and tourism organizations seek to market their community for paranormal tourism, it is recommended that the community have a strong foundation of history of alleged paranormal activities to build this niche tourism upon. It is also important to have other strong preexisting tourism activities in order to promote the community as a tourist destination and provide additional activities for tourist to partake in. Many respondents from the tourist survey indicated that paranormal tourism was a secondary reason for traveling to a destination, not necessarily the primary reason. Some communities have been successful on relying on a relatively small amount of alleged paranormal phenomena, such as Roswell and Salem but in New Orleans, it is the proliferation and sheer number of alleged paranormal phenomena and businesses relating the paranormal that truly makes it a paranormal tourist destination. The focusing of such activities in several key tourist enclaves such as the French Quarter and Garden District have made paranormal tourism quite successful in New Orleans as they are walkable and easy to access from hotels and other land uses. Yet, results from the tourist survey also indicated that a large percentage of respondents spent less than one day and less than \$300 on total travel expenses for trips relating to the paranormal. This suggests that many paranormal tourists are merely taking day trips to communities and sites in close proximity to their homes.

The complex nature of paranormal tourism makes it difficult to know which communities will be more successful at marketing themselves as a paranormal destination than others. Large scale paranormal tourism will most likely be successful in places like New Orleans where a multitude of tourist activities, both paranormal and non-paranormal, exist. Yet, this does not mean smaller communities could not benefit from paranormal tourism. Small towns such as Atchison, Kansas, have been successful in marketing and implementing paranormal tourism as a subsidiary economic activity and tourist draw.<sup>155</sup> Data from the tourist survey could be seen as supporting the notion that small towns can in fact be popular paranormal tourism destinations as many respondents indicated they

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<sup>155</sup> "Experience Haunted Atchison," *Visit Atchison: Atchison Area Chamber of Commerce* (2015), accessed April 6, 2016 from <http://visitatchison.com/explore-experience/haunted-atchison/>.

traveled to destinations relatively close to their residence, spending less than \$300 on total travel expenses and less than one day on the majority of paranormal tourism trips.

Popular media and advertising are powerful tools to help market communities and should be encouraged. This is apparent in New Orleans where popular media relating to the paranormal and spiritual has made it a mecca for paranormal enthusiasts and curious tourists. This could be attributed to New Orleans being a popular filming location due to Louisiana's film production tax credits. One respondent indicated that in order to further market New Orleans and Louisiana in general as a paranormal tourism destination, these tax credits need to be restored to their full capacity, as they have been cut in recent years. While not all communities can offer tax credits for film production, it should be noted that those who can attract media exposure should do so to propagate the community as having alleged paranormal activity yet also friendly and welcoming to curious and interested tourists.

While not every community may not be able to market itself as paranormal or spiritual, those that do have paranormal and spiritual assets should consider marketing their community for paranormal niche tourism, provided there is support from local residents and is done in a respected manner. Several respondents from the tourist survey stated their opinions of paranormal tourism:

"I think the paranormal could be used as a great marketing tool for cities, if they can see beyond any prejudices against it."

"I'm not sure how to feel about it. In a way it seems disrespectful to spirits that may be active in that area they are promoting the tourism for, specifically advertising that it has paranormal activity. It is financially beneficial but turning a restless spirit into profit feels wrong. I know I would be laughed at by a lot of people for taking a ghost's feelings into consideration but it's just my beliefs."

The dichotomy of these two statements present a very credible scenario about paranormal tourism in regards to respecting alleged phenomena itself but also seeing it as

a useful marketing tool for cities. Therefore, tying into community involvement, cities must ascertain if residents are generally supportive and also must find creative methods to market the community for paranormal tourism in a respectful manner.

### Community Relations and Support

With all this being said, it is absolutely key that local governments and planners first obtain community input and support. Per the results gathered, some businesses and sites did not want to market their alleged paranormal activity in fear of having a negative reputation. Others wholeheartedly welcomed it. If cities implement paranormal tourism policies or market the city as being paranormal without citizens' approval, it could have disastrous political effects as some may have concerns about their community being marketed as "paranormal." In New Orleans, the community has responded relatively positively to paranormal tourism but as some respondents stated, it could be because many in the city have their own paranormal experiences and belief is strong regionally. In other words, this type of tourism may not be able to work in other regions where belief and acceptance are low. Furthermore, cities should not market paranormal tourism as a joke or unserious manner but should retain a sense of dignity and respect, which lends to this type of niche tourism's credibility. Planners and community leaders must first engage the local community when marketing paranormal tourism or implementing regulations or policies that relate to the paranormal. While not many communities have done this, it is a precaution to those who may consider capitalizing on this form of niche tourism for economic development. This could be done through focus groups, town hall meetings, surveys, community outreach, and social media networking.

### Accommodation and Respect

An important factor that public officials and planners must take into account is respect and tolerance of paranormal-related businesses and paranormal tourists. Cities and communities should find creative ways to accommodate paranormal tourism if they wish to diversify the local and tourist economy. Several respondents indicated that the local government has been dismissive or disrespectful towards their business and similar businesses, often trying to cover them up or only market them when deemed economically

viable. This should not be the case with paranormal and spiritually-related businesses, as it should not be with other businesses. Simple respect and understanding from planners in the planning and political process is essential in creating a diverse and skilled economy, as many paranormal and spiritually related businesses employ those whose skills may not otherwise be welcomed or used at other establishments. Not only this but these businesses generate tax revenue through sales and services. As many communities throughout the United States are faced with changing economies and budget shortfalls, new opportunities should be studied and welcomed, and this includes paranormal-related businesses as many of these businesses meet growing interest and demand for paranormal and spiritual products and services.

Local governments and tourism organizations should also note that paranormal tourists often hail from a mixture of socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels although they tend to be more highly educated holding college degrees. Therefore, local governments must be able to market, accommodate, and welcome this diversity of tourists, rather than focusing on one preconceived notion of whom a paranormal believer is. From this research, paranormal tourists are typically not ignorant, deviant, nor socially or economically disadvantaged, and break stereotypes about who a “believer” actually is. Paranormal tourism will most likely not attract an undesirable demographic to a community but rather a diversity of people and groups who will also patronize other local businesses and establishments while visiting, whether these be other tourism oriented or non-tourism oriented businesses.

### **Businesses Implications**

There are several implications for businesses relating to the paranormal derived from this research including business growth, employment, economic impacts, and community impacts.

#### Business Growth and Model

Firstly, it can be expected that businesses relating to the paranormal, specifically to paranormal tourism, will increase in coming years as belief and interest continues to grow throughout the United States and other developed nations. Creative entrepreneurs will

mostly likely find ways to establish such businesses in the right environment, where certain conditions are ripe. These conditions include a strong tourism market, a community that accepts and welcomes the paranormal, and alleged paranormal activity must be present. While some businesses and services, such as metaphysical shops and mediums or psychics do not need all these conditions met to be successful as they can serve the local community, for paranormal tourism to be successful, many of these conditions should be met. It can also be assumed that many of these businesses will be locally owned and small, although some larger, national businesses and corporations will also capitalize on paranormal tourism. Still, from the results of this survey and literature review, the paranormal market is primarily the domain of local entrepreneurs and small business owners.

### Employment

In regards to employment, paranormal-related businesses are typically non-traditional in model and provide critical jobs to those with skill sets that may otherwise not be utilized at other establishments. This provision of jobs to those with unique skill sets helps create a diverse and strong economy. This is strengthened by the findings that most respondents indicated that employee wages in jobs relating to the paranormal exceeded the federal and city minimum wages. While New Orleans is successful because of its vast tourism market, this may not always be the case for other communities but could be emulated in communities that already have a strong tourism market or have a strong paranormal history.

### Economic Impacts

Paranormal tourism presents many new economic implications that have not previously been explored. Businesses relating to paranormal tourism aid in economic development and diversification through job creation and tax revenue just like any other business. What is truly unique about paranormal tourism is its propensity to serve a specific niche, its local character, fostering of entrepreneurship, provision of unique jobs with unique skillsets, and provide unique products and services that are otherwise typically not provided by larger businesses and corporations. With that being said, it

should not be assumed that paranormal-related businesses are the panacea to a community's economic woes and unemployment but rather an aide in diversifying and strengthening economies. However, oversaturation must be avoided to prevent a community from losing its edge and authenticity. Communication between businesses is essential, as Brandi Kelley of Voodoo Authentica indicated.<sup>156</sup> Communication allows businesses to coordinate with one another to provide a diverse selection of products and services rather than monotonous and homogenous ones. Furthermore, arrangements with other local businesses that feed off tourist traffic from one another is important in not only creating a strong tourist economy but local economy where more revenue stays within the community, rather than being diverted out of the community from larger, corporate businesses. In New Orleans, this was apparent with how many tour companies and businesses had financial and contractual arrangements with one another, particularly with hotels, bars, and shops. This was particularly apparent in the pub crawl paranormal tours where participants stopped at various bars along the tour to purchase refreshments and merchandise. This networking between businesses has created a strong local economy which other communities and businesses can learn from and model.

### Community Impacts

Paranormal businesses must strive to have a positive relationship with the local community and mitigate any negative consequences that may arise from their activities. Results from the business survey show that the majority of businesses have a very positive relationship with the local community. Discussions with guides and other employees indicated that New Orleans is special in that regards. Many of the citizens are familiar with the paranormal and generally accepting of it. However, this is not true for all communities throughout the country and entrepreneurs must be wary and diligent in studying the community in which they wish to create a paranormal business to determine if the community will be accepting and tolerant. Community acceptance is essential for any business and although paranormal tourism businesses will most likely cater to tourists

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<sup>156</sup> Brandi Kelley (Voodoo Authentica Owner) in interview with author, March 10, 2016.

who are not from the community, a negative reputation can still be quite harmful and deter tourists through word of mouth, reviews, or campaigns.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The paranormal continues to grip humanity's attention with an unwavering force, such as it has since the beginning of our species. Whether this be in the form of mainstream religious beliefs or the more unorthodox beliefs in cryptids, the unexplained and superstition continue to fascinate humanity and impact our lives in more ways than we perceive. Even with rising educational and income levels in the United States, paranormal belief persists and is, in fact, growing. This perpetual belief and interest and is creating new economic implications in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the form of paranormal tourism. From the results of this study, paranormal tourism has a positive impact on the local New Orleans economy. This can be more detailedly understood by knowing more about paranormal tourists and businesses relating to paranormal tourism.

Paranormal tourists themselves come from a variety of demographic, educational, and employment backgrounds with a variety of reasons and purposes for partaking in paranormal tourism. Their beliefs are not fueled so much by formal education but rather by personal experience and exposure to popular media. Characteristics of paranormal tourists defy stereotypes and preconceptions associated with the paranormal with many being highly educated, employed in respectable occupations, and are most likely to be young adults (18 to 24 years of age) or middle-aged adults (45 to 64 years of age). Not all are believers in the paranormal, being a mixture of believers, skeptics, and those just curious yet still participate in paranormal tourism and travels. Paranormal tourists tend to spend one day or less on paranormal travels and less than \$300 on total travel expenses, suggesting many are visiting local sites close to their homes. While most typically spend less than \$50 on paranormal-related tourist activities, their growing numbers and interest allude to a growing form of niche tourism that businesses will seek to cater to and local governments must better understand in order to properly accommodate it.

Paranormal-related businesses are typically small businesses locally owned, although some are larger businesses with operations in several cities throughout the country. These businesses can include tour companies; retail and service establishments; hotels, bed & breakfasts, and hospitality establishments; and paranormal sites and

attractions. Of the businesses that participated in this research, common themes and threads were found including the positive effect of popular media on business, community support, similar customer demographics, and unique job creation and employment statistics. Paranormal businesses tend to provide jobs to those with unique skillsets that would not be valued elsewhere. These jobs are typically higher paying than local and national wage averages. Respondents of the business survey indicated that while some government regulations have created hindrances to their business, they generally supported the policies but did indicate that acceptance and respect from local governments would help their businesses and those similar.

Implications of paranormal tourism relate to local governments and businesses alike. Communities can benefit from paranormal tourism through tax revenue and historic preservation, but also should consider implementing regulations to curb negative effects of tourism. Local governments and planners must be diligent in getting community input and support before marketing a community as a paranormal tourism destination. While support may be strong in some regions, such as New Orleans, this is not true for all cities where opposition or negative stereotypes of the paranormal may exist. Both cities and businesses must determine if a given community is truly suitable in establishing a paranormal tourism market. Most often, a city with a strong and diverse tourism economy, variety of activities, and a focus of alleged paranormal activity are more suitable for paranormal tourism. However, smaller communities can also implement a successful paranormal tourism market through smart marketing and community support. However, communities and businesses must avoid manufacturing a paranormal phenomena for economic gain and should retain a degree of authenticity. Avoiding oversaturation of the market is also key to a successful and unique paranormal tourism market. Communication between businesses is also a good technique to promote a diverse market that provides a wide range of services and products and gives each business their own unique identity. What makes paranormal tourism unique is that it is relatively small and focused in certain communities, not ubiquitous nor trite. However, this is not to say that communities with a strong paranormal and spiritual history and alleged activity should avoid marketing

themselves for paranormal tourism but strong community support and diversity is essential in creating a successful paranormal tourism destination.

In conclusion, paranormal tourism is viable economic activity that should not be ignored or allowed to pass by cities in terms of strengthening and diversifying local economies. It can be concluded that this form of niche tourism is expected to grow as paranormal beliefs and interest increase as they have been for the last twenty years. Communities who may wish to encourage paranormal tourism must evaluate if this type of tourism is viable and realistic within that community while also gaining strong community support. Businesses must also do the same, studying a market in detail and meeting certain parameters in order to have a successful business. These parameters can vary from community to community but typically include an existing tourism economy, existing paranormal phenomena or lore, a mixture of tourism activities, and the existence of a tourist enclave, as is present in New Orleans and other major tourist destinations. The paranormal is very complex and so is paranormal tourism. What may work in one community may not work in another. The same is true for the said parameters as while they may generally be true, they are not totally indicative of a successful paranormal tourist market. Smaller communities and businesses within smaller communities can still successfully market and benefit from paranormal tourism through creative marketing and economic development. It is essential, however, that community and government support for any business to be successful.

Thus, I conclude that paranormal tourism will truly be successful in a community in which it is welcomed, fostered, and appreciated where residents are accepting of tourists from a diversity of backgrounds. A community that is featured in popular media is most likely to be popular as a paranormal destination, whether or not the other parameters exist. Popular media birthed modern paranormal tourism and attracts people to places where no formal paranormal tourism market has existed before. Paranormal tourism provides a crucial opportunity for reinvention of economies but also a celebration of a community's history and unique identity. It is up to each community to decide how they wish to identify and market themselves. Paranormal tourism can be seen as kitschy or authentic, depending on the narrative told. It provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs to

establish diverse, creative businesses while also supporting those with unique skill sets. It is truly of interest to city planners as they strive to diversify cities, strengthen economies, create jobs, and provide new investment in cities, whether large or small.

## **VII. Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Interview Questions**

Contains the following:

- Appendix 1.1: Interview Questions for Paranormal Businesses
- Appendix 1.2: Interview Questions for Tourists & Visitors
- Appendix 1.3: Interview Questions for Public Officials/Tourism Organizations

## Appendix 1.1: Interview Questions for Paranormal Businesses



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND  
REGIONAL & COMMUNITY PLANNING  
THE COLLEGE of  
ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING & DESIGN // K-STATE

**Project Title:** Paranormal Tourism & Economics

**Researcher:** Everett Haynes, Graduate Student of Regional and Community Planning

**Major Professor:** Assistant Professor Katherine Nesse, Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning

### Interview Questions for Businesses

**Purpose:** The purpose of this interview/survey is to gather data and information relating to how your business/activities relate and contribute to the tourist economy of New Orleans. This interview/survey consists of six sections that cover various facets of tourism, employment, and economics that includes questions both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Quantitative questions include those pertaining to customer/client statistics (not detailed information/profiles), generated revenue and income, employment numbers, wage data. Qualitative questions include those relating to perception, safety, public policy, and improvement measures. Confidentiality is important and all income/employment data will be presented in aggregate form. Placeholder names will be used to substitute actual business/organizational names to protect anonymity, per interviewee's request.

#### **Questions:**

##### **Business Background**

1. What is your business's name/title?
  - Wish to Provide (Please Type Business Name/Title): \_\_\_\_\_
  - Do Not Wish to Provide (A Generic Placeholder Name will be used in substitution to protect anonymity, Ex. Tour Business A)
2. When did you begin your business? (Year only is acceptable)

3. Would you describe the business as being more service oriented or retail/merchandise oriented? (For Retail/Services Only)
  - Service and Event Oriented (Provide paranormal/spiritual services, onsite tours & events)
  - Retail and Merchandise Oriented (Provide spiritual/paranormal supplies, merchandise souvenirs)
  - Equally Both
4. Why did you begin your business/operation? What was your inspiration? (Select all that apply)
  - Saw a growing market
  - Inspiration from folklore and/or spiritualism
  - Educational Purposes
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
5. How does your business relate to the paranormal? (Select all that apply)
  - Ghosts/Apparitions
  - History & Folklore
  - Religious and/or Spiritual (Voodoo included)
  - Witchcraft, Shamanism, Alternative Medicine/Healing
  - Psychic, Precognition, Medium
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
6. How has your business/operation impacted the local economy, in your own words?
7. Who does your business cater towards more? Locals or Tourists?
  - Tourists
  - Locals
  - Both, evenly

### **Customer & Tourist Demographics**

1. Does your business/activities serve and/or cater to a specific tourist/visitor demographic?
  - Yes, mostly to those interested in the paranormal and/or spiritual
  - Yes, primarily an adult demographic
  - Yes, primarily to a family demographic

- Yes, Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  - No, the business is not structured to cater to a specific demographic
  - No, Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_
2. Approximately how many clients/customers do you serve annually? (As a service provider) (For retail/services only)
- Less than 100
  - 101 – 300
  - 301 – 500
  - More than 500
  - Other Number, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Approximately how many customers/clients do you serve annually?  
(Retail/Services Only)
- Less than 5,000
  - 5,000 -10,000
  - 10,001-15,000
  - More than 15,000
4. What is your approximate annual occupancy rate? (Hotels/Hospitality Only)
- Less than 50%
  - 51% - 65%
  - 66% - 80%
  - 81% - 95%
  - Above 96%
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the total number of guest rooms at your property? (Hotels/Hospitality Only)
- Less than 20
  - 20 – 39
  - 40 – 59
  - 60 – 79
  - 80 or More
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is the primary reason for customers patronizing your establishment related to the paranormal or is it a secondary reason, in your view? (Some tourists may have traveled to

New Orleans specifically to partake in paranormal tours or may be partaking as a side activity while visiting the city for other purposes)

- Primary
- Secondary
- Don't Know/Not Sure
- Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Who is your target audience? (Select all that apply)

- Families
- Individuals
- Children
- Adults
- Groups
- Paranormal/Spiritual Enthusiasts
- Curious Tourists (Not Necessarily Enthusiasts/Believers)
- Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Approximate Age Groups of Customers

- Under 12 years old
- 12-17 years old
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65-74 years old
- 75 years or older
- Primarily Families/Family Oriented
- Adults
  - Young
  - Middle
  - Older
- Don't Know/Do Not Wish to Provide

9. What is the typical size of your tour groups? (For Paranormal Tour Businesses)

- Less than 10 customers

- 11-20 customers
  - 21-30 customers
  - 31 or more customers
10. Do tourists seem to have prior knowledge of the featured paranormal phenomena/lore?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't Know/Not Sure
11. Has business improved and increased in the last five (5) to eight (8) years?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't Know/Not Sure
12. Do you have repeat customers/customer loyalty?
- Yes
  - No
  - Don't Know/Not Sure
13. What time periods in the year are the busiest? (Select all that apply)
- January-February (Mardi Gras)
  - December-February (Winter)
  - March-May (Spring)
  - June-August (Summer)
  - September-November (Fall)

### **Revenue and Employment**

1. Do you require that a substitute placeholder name/title be used when referencing your business's revenue, income, and employment statistics? (Qualtrics Logic: This question only showed if business opted to provide name at the beginning of the survey/interview)
- Yes, please use a placeholder name to protect anonymity when referencing my business's revenue, income, and employment statistics.
  - No, you may use my business's name/titles when referencing this data in the final report, as stated at the beginning of this survey/interview.

2. Approximate yearly income and revenue
  - Less than \$500,000
  - \$500,001- \$1,000,000
  - \$1,000,001- \$3,000,000
  - Above \$3,000,001
  
3. Does your tour company offer other tours that are not paranormal-related? Such as purely historical tours, architectural tours, etc.? (Tour Companies Only)
  - Yes, the business offers other tours that are not paranormal/spiritually related
  - No, just paranormal tours
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Does your business offer other services/products that are not paranormal-related? (Retail/Services Only)
  - Yes, the business offers other products/services that are not paranormal/spiritually related.
  - No, just spiritual/paranormal services/products
  
5. What is the percentage of total revenue is attributed to the paranormal activities of your operation? (Qualtrics Logic: Question only displayed if previous question's answer is "Yes") (Tour Companies and Service/Retail Only)
  - Less than 25%
  - 26 – 50%
  - 51 – 75%
  - 76 – 100%
  - Don't Know
  - Other, Please Elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Does the business offer other paranormal/spiritually related services or products in addition to tours? (Ex. Supplies, merchandise, readings, events, religious services, etc.) (Tour Companies Only)
  - Yes, the business offers other paranormal/spiritually related services and/or products
  - No, the business offers only paranormal/spiritual tours
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is the average percentage of total revenue attributed to these other paranormal/spiritually related components of the business? (Qualtrics Logic: Question only displayed if previous question's answer is "Yes") (Tour Companies & Hotels Only)
- Less than 25%
  - 26 - 50%
  - 51 - 75%
  - 76% - 100%
  - Don't Know
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many employees are employed in the company?
- 1 - 5
  - 6 -10
  - 11 - 15
  - 16 - 25
  - 26 or More
9. What specific skill sets must employees have? (Select all that apply)
- High School Diploma or Equivalent
  - Higher Education (College Degree)
  - Historical and Folklore Knowledge
  - Acting Skills
  - Spiritual/Supernatural Gifts and/or Talents
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Are employees' wages hourly or salaried?
- Hourly
  - Salary
  - Both, Depends on Position
  - Do Not Wish to Provide
11. If hourly, what is the average hourly pay? (Select most accurate)
- \$7.25 (Federal Minimum Wage)
  - \$7.26 - \$15.00
  - \$15.01 - \$25.00
  - Above \$25.01

12. If salaried, what are the average yearly earnings? (Select most accurate)

- Below \$10,000
- \$10,001 - \$20,000
- \$20,001 - \$30,000
- \$30,001 - \$40,000
- \$40,001 - \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$60,000
- Above \$60,001

13. How many employees work part time?

- 1 – 5
- 6 – 10
- 11 – 15
- 16 – 25
- 26 or More

14. On average, how many hours do employees work on a typical day?

- 1 – 3 Hours
- 4 – 6 Hours
- 7-8 Hours
- 9-11 Hours
- 12 or More Hours

15. How many hours a week does a typical employee work?

- Less than 15 Hours
- 16 – 20 Hours
- 21 – 25 Hours
- 26 – 30 Hours
- 31 – 35 Hours
- 36 – 39 Hours
- 40 Hours or More
- Do not wish to provide

**Local Community, Relation to Tourist Economy, and Media**

1. How has the media and popular culture pertaining to the paranormal/spiritual affected business and the tourism economy as a whole? (Select all that apply)
  - Increased sales and interest because of popular media (films, television shows, books, music, etc.)
  - Growing belief in the spiritual and/or paranormal
  - Increased understanding of the paranormal
  - Decreased understanding or misinterpretation of the paranormal
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Don't Know/Not Sure
  
2. Has the local community responded positively or negatively to your business?
  - Positively
  - Neither positively or negatively
  - Negatively
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Are safety and health ever concerns on tours? This includes crime, uneven sidewalks, geography, heat, etc. (Tour Companies Only)
  - Yes, Crime and Security can be problems
  - Yes, Uneven Sidewalks or Unmaintained Infrastructure
  - Yes, Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_
  - No, there are few to no safety concerns
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Does your business have arrangements with other paranormally or non-paranormally related businesses? This can include a stop at a local restaurant/bar on the tour, special arrangements, discounts, etc.
  - Yes, Please Specify what kind of arrangement: \_\_\_\_\_
  - No

**Public Policy and Local Government**

1. Have there been any public policies, ordinances, codes, and/or laws that have affected your business and activities?
  - Yes, they have negatively affected business. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Yes, they have positively affected business. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

- No, there are few to no public policies that have substantially impacted business
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Don't Know/Not Sure
2. Does your business/operation receive subsidies or use incentives of any kind?
- Yes, Please Provide a List of Programs: \_\_\_\_\_
  - No
  - Do Not Wish to Provide
3. Have tourism corporations, organizations, etc. affected your business? (Select all that apply)
- Increased marketing and advertisement of the paranormal
  - Financial Support Programs
  - Consultation and/or Advice
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Tourism organizations have not had a significant impact on business
4. Do you believe there are any policies and planning measures that can improve your and other businesses related to the paranormal? (Examples: Subsidies, historic district designation, ordinances/codes, special infrastructure)
- Yes, Please Specify in your own words: \_\_\_\_\_
  - No
  - Don't Know

**Title:** Paranormal Tourism & Economics

**Researcher:** Everett Haynes, Graduate Student of Regional and Community Planning

**Major Professor:** Assistant Professor Katherine Nesse, Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning

## Interview Questions for Tourists

**Purpose:** The purpose of this interview/survey is to gather background, educational, financial/economic, and travel data pertaining to paranormal/dark/spiritual tourism from a tourist's standpoint. This interview/survey consists of five sections that include questions both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Quantitative questions include those pertaining to tourist's age, completed education, income, and travel expenses. Qualitative questions include those relating to travel experience and satisfaction. Confidentiality is important and all financial and personal information will be presented in aggregate form and with an anonymous placeholder name, if you, as the participant, so desires.

### Questions:

#### Background

1. What age category do you fall within?
  - Under 12 Years Old
  - 12 - 17 Years
  - 18 - 24 Years
  - 25 - 34 Years
  - 35 - 44 Years
  - 45 - 54 Years
  - 55 - 64 Years
  - 65 - 74 Years
  - 75 Years or Older
2. How many times per year (on average) do you participate in paranormal tourism?
  - 1 Time Per Year
  - 2-3 Times



- 4 or more times
- Not Sure/Don't Know

3. When you partake in paranormal tourism, do you travel specifically for paranormal/spiritual reasons or is it a side attraction?

- Primarily for Paranormal and Spiritual Reasons
- Side Attraction
- Other, Please Elaborate (Conference/Convention, Family, History, Recreation, Festival, etc):\_\_\_\_\_

4. How do you participate in paranormal tourism?

- Partook in a ghost/paranormal tour
- Stayed at a haunted hotel/inn
- Shopped at a retail establishment specializing in the paranormal while on vacation (Example: Voodoo Shops in New Orleans, Souvenir Shops, Supply Stores)
- Traveled to receive paranormal services (fortunetelling, physic readings, medium, spiritual healing,
- Attended a paranormal museum/attraction
- Independent: Solo investigation, unorganized personal tour, etc.
- Other, Please Elaborate:\_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you:

- Believer/Enthusiast
- Skeptic
- Curious
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What cities, communities, and/or locales have been your favored for paranormal tourism?

7. What is the underlying basis and reasoning for your travels, in your own words?

8. Where are you originally from? City, Region, History

9. Do you partake in paranormal tourism (as a):

- Alone
- Family Unit
- Group (3 or more)
  - a) Self-Guided

b) Guided Tour Group

- Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Educational Background**

1. What is your highest level of completed education?
  - Some High School (No Diploma)
  - High School Graduate, Diploma or the Equivalent (GED)
  - Some college (No Degree)
  - Trade/Technical/Vocational Training
  - Associate Degree
  - Bachelor's Degree
  - Master's Degree
  - Doctorate Degree
2. What has affected your belief (or disbelief) of the paranormal/spiritual? (Check all that apply)
  - Religion/Spirituality
  - Formal Education
  - Self-Education
  - Culture
  - Personal Experience
  - Family/Upbringing
  - Popular Media
  - Science
  - Lack of Evidence
  - Other, Please Specify
3. How? (Follow-up question to Question 2. Ask during longer interviews, if time permits)

**Employment Background**

1. Are you currently: (Select all that apply)
  - Employed for wages
  - Self-Employed
  - Out of Work (Looking)
  - Out of Work (Not Looking)

- Homemaker
- Student
- Military
- Retired
- Unable to Work

2. What is your occupation?

### **Travel, Lodging, Entertainment Expenses and Statistics**

1. How much do you spend on total travel expenses on this trip?

- Less than \$300
- \$301-\$500
- \$501-\$700
- \$701-\$1,000
- \$1,001-\$1,500
- \$1,501-\$2,000
- Above \$2,001

2. On average, what were your expenses on just the paranormal-related tours, services, merchandize, and activities, per person (in total)? (Ticket prices, equipment costs, service rates/fees, souvenirs, etc.)

- Less than \$20
- \$21 to \$50
- \$51 to \$75
- \$76 to \$100
- \$101 to \$150
- \$151 to \$200
- \$201 to \$250
- \$251 to \$300
- \$301 or More
- No Costs (Free Activity or Independent)
- Don't Know/Cannot Remember

3. How many days are you typically take for your paranormal-related vacation/travel?

- 1 Day
- 2-4 Days

- 5-7 Days
  - 8 or More Days
4. Were any of the paranormal-related businesses you visited locally owned?
- Yes
  - No
  - Did not visit any paranormal businesses at all (Visit and paranormal experiences were independent)
  - Not Sure/Don't Know
5. Do you typically support other local businesses while visiting these destinations?
- Yes
  - No
  - Not Sure/Don't Know
6. How did you find out about this paranormal site, attraction, event, hotel, shop, etc.?  
(Select all that apply)
- Advertisement/Marketing
  - Historical Folklore and Stories
  - Popular Media (Films, Television Shows, Books, etc.)
  - Word of Mouth
  - Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you ever visited New Orleans for Paranormal/Spiritual or Other Purposes  
(Conventions, Recreation, Family, etc.)?
- Yes (If "Yes" is selected, the survey continue to the next section)
  - No (If "No" is selected, the survey is ended)

### **New Orleans Paranormal Tourism**

1. How many days did you spend in New Orleans?
- 1 Day
  - 2 - 4 Days
  - 5 - 7 Days
  - 8 or More Days
2. How many companions did you travel with?
- 0 (Traveled Alone)

- 1
  - 2-4
  - 5 or More
3. Did you partake in any local paranormal tours and/or activities while visiting the city and surrounding areas?
- Yes (If “Yes” is selected, the survey continues to the next set of questions)
  - No (If “No” is selected, the survey ends)
4. On average, what were your average expenses on these tours, services, and activities, per person (in total)? (Ticket prices, equipment costs, service rates (physics, readings, etc.), souvenirs, etc.)
- Less than \$20
  - \$21 - \$50
  - \$51 - \$75
  - \$76 - \$100
  - \$101 - \$200
  - \$201 - \$300
  - \$300 or More
  - No Cost (Free Activity or Independent Tour)
  - Don't Know/Cannot Remember
5. How would you rate your overall experience during these paranormal-related activities in New Orleans?
- Very Satisfied
  - Somewhat Satisfied
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat Dissatisfied
  - Very Dissatisfied
6. Would you partake again in another paranormal-related activity/tour in New Orleans/other city?
- Yes
  - No
  - Not Sure/Don't Know
7. Any other thoughts and input that you would like to share about your experiences with paranormal tourism?





LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND  
REGIONAL & COMMUNITY PLANNING  
THE COLLEGE of  
ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING & DESIGN // K-STATE

**Title:** Paranormal Tourism & Economics

**Researcher:** Everett Haynes, Graduate Student of Regional and Community Planning

**Major Professor:** Assistant Professor Katherine Nesse, Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning

## **Interview Questions for Public Officials/Tourism Organizations**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this interview/survey is to gather data and information regarding tourism, particularly paranormal tourism, within New Orleans. This interview/survey consists of five sections that cover various aspects of tourism, employment, local economics, safety, and public policies and programs. This interview/survey is primarily qualitative in nature and serves to provide supplemental data for the overall research and goals of this report. The interview is expected to take between 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

If you wish to remain anonymous, as stated in the consent form, all personal information will be kept confidential and a generic placeholder name will be used in substitution to conceal identity. However, it is encouraged that you provide personal information to strengthen the validity of the final results of this research.

### **Questions:**

#### **Background**

1. What are the city's/region's major economic activities? Has tourism eclipsed these other industries in importance to the local economy?
2. How does the city/local government assist tourism as a whole?
3. What is the percentage of growth of visitors/tourists since Hurricane Katrina?
4. What is the percentage of growth in tourism related businesses since Katrina?

## **Marketing**

1. How does your organization/local government market tourism, particularly paranormal tourism?
2. Paranormal and spiritual belief and tourism have been growing in the United States and world in the past 15 years. Have you seen a surge in interest pertaining to paranormal tourism in the last 10 years? If so, how?
3. New Orleans is renowned for its rich history and paranormal lore. How have you seen the local community use this for economic advantages?

## **Tourist Demographics**

1. What is the average age of the New Orleans tourist?
2. What is the main attraction and/or draw to the city and region? Is it the history, conventions, the party scene, the paranormal?
3. What is the average length of stay for a tourist visiting the city?
4. Where do the majority of the tourists come from? Are they American, international, etc.?

## **Tourism Economics**

1. Tourism is said to contribute more than \$6 billion to the New Orleans economy annually. Has this number remained consistent in recent years?
2. How much does the average tourist spend in New Orleans?
3. If you know, how much has paranormal-related tourism operations contributed to the local economy?
4. Tourism and leisure related occupations are said to be low-paying and low-skilled as a whole. As New Orleans has a high dependence on tourism for economic support and since most of the new jobs have been in this sector, it's thought that there has subsequently been growth in low-paying jobs which have not improved the overall economic condition of the city. What are the average hourly wages in tourist related activities/industries? (Optional Question)
  - a. Retail/Service:
    - \$10.10 (Minimum Wage) - \$15

- \$15.01-\$20
- \$20.01-\$30
- Above \$30
- Do not know

b. Museums/Attractions:

- \$10.10 (Minimum Wage) -\$15
- \$15.01-\$20
- \$20.01-\$30
- Above \$30
- Do not know

c. Entertainment:

- \$10.10 (Minimum Wage) -\$15
- \$15.01-\$20
- \$20.01-\$30
- Above \$30
- Do not know

d. Hospitality/Hotels:

- \$10.10 (Minimum Wage) -\$15
- \$15.01-\$20
- \$20.01-\$30
- Above \$30
- Do not know

5. Hotels are an obvious important component of the larger tourism industry. What is the average nightly rate of hotels in downtown, the French Quarter, and/or the Garden District?
6. In your own words, would you say New Orleans is an affordable city to visit? Does this explain its growing popularity as a tourist destination or are there other more important factors?

### **Public Policies/Programs**

1. What ordinances, laws, and policies affect tourism in New Orleans (Mainly aimed towards Public Officials, can be answered by Tourism Officials to provide multiple viewpoints)

2. Does the local government offer incentives for tourism-related industries? If so, what are their natures?
3. Do you know if there are any paranormal-related industries that take advantage of government or private incentives?
4. Are there any safety concerns for tourists? If so, what are they? Do they include crime, poorly maintained infrastructure, etc.?
5. How has tourism, as a whole, affected redevelopment and neighborhood stabilization?

### **Local Community**

1. How has tourism, as a whole, affected redevelopment and neighborhood stabilization?
2. A tourist enclave is a small geographic area, such as a neighborhood or district, in which tourism is focused and often contained to enhance profits by corporations and businesses but not necessarily the larger local economy. In your own words, are there tourist enclaves within the city? If so, do you perceive them as having a negative impact on the local economy and other businesses throughout the city as a whole?

## Appendix 2.1: Contact Email & Consent Form

### Appendix 2.1 Sample Contact Email Message to Potential Interviewees

***Notes:** This sample contact email is structured to be inclusive and flexible depending on the party being contacted. Underlined areas, forward slashes, and lists are designed to denote placeholders and do not necessarily reflect how the final email will be structured.*

**To:** Interviewee/Business/Organization Title and Name

**From:** Everett D. Haynes, Graduate Student of Regional and Community Planning, Kansas State University

You/Your business, operation, organization, or activity has been selected to participate in a voluntary interview/survey based off your relation to paranormal and/or spiritual tourism within New Orleans. This research is being studied on behalf of Kansas State University's Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning as a Master's Report focusing on Paranormal Tourism with local communities.

The purpose of this research and study is to better understand how paranormal, spiritual, businesses impact the local tourism economy. Little to no research has been conducted on this topic which creates the need for local economists, planners, tourism organizations, public officials, and the general public to better understand its growing impact on tourist economies and local communities throughout the United States.

The interview is anticipated to take between 15-20 minutes to complete. Questions include income, employment, Interviews can be scheduled over the telephone, Skype, or in-person if you so desire. If you do not feel comfortable answering particular questions or wish to not participate in the interview process altogether, please notify the researchers at the following:

Everett D. Haynes,  
Graduate Student of Regional & Community Planning, Kansas State University  
Email: [edhaynes@ksu.edu](mailto:edhaynes@ksu.edu) (Preferred Method of Contact)

Telephone: (316) 213-6082

Dr. Katherine Nesse,  
Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning  
Email: [knesse@ksu.edu](mailto:knesse@ksu.edu) (Preferred Method of Contact)

Telephone: (785) 532-2439

The questions are structured to either be answered in an interview or as a survey. If you feel more comfortable answering the questions as a survey, please notify the researchers of your preference and the questions will be administrated accordingly.

Your participation is completely voluntarily but is invaluable in gathering effective and sufficient data for the purpose of this study. Attached is a consent form, denoting your agreement in participating in the interview/survey process. If you wish to partake in the process, please fill out this brief form. The proposed questions will be sent to you before the actual interview is scheduled in order for you to determine which questions you are Confidentiality is important and if you do not wish for your business/organization's name and identity to be conveyed in this report, a placeholder name will be used to protect anonymity.

## **Appendix 2.2: Informed Consent Form**

**Title:** Paranormal Tourism: Economics and Planning

**Principal Investigator:**

**Dr. Katherine Nesse** (Primary Investigator and Contact),

- Assistant Professor, Landscape Architecture and Regional & Community Planning
- (785) 532-2439
- knesse@k-state.edu

**Everett Haynes**, Regional & Community Planning Graduate Student

- (316) 213-6082
- edhaynes@k-state.edu

**Purpose Statement:**

The purpose of this research study is to understand how alleged paranormal phenomenon affects local economies through tourism and tourism-related businesses. This includes tours, retail, hospitality, and services relating to the paranormal.

**Study Procedure:**

You will be asked to provide responses to several questions about your business's revenue, employment, customer demographics and statistics, and business history. Other questions are more qualitative in nature regarding experiences, public perception, and neighborhood aesthetics.

All questions are completely voluntary and the subject can refuse to answer any one or more question(s) at any time. Full completion is encouraged, however, for better results and data to strengthen the research. The interview is expected to take fifteen (15) to twenty (20) minutes to complete.

**Risks Anticipated:**

Few to no risks are anticipated in this study. Data and results will be kept strictly confidential per request of the subject.

## **Benefits Anticipated:**

Benefits derived from the study include a deeper understanding of local economics and tourism as well as how planning and public policies can benefit business leaders and residents in the community economically.

## **Confidentiality:**

The information that you provide in this experiment will remain confidential per request. Personally-identifiable information may be collected if you voluntarily offer personal or contact information. Results derived from the interview will be used in aggregate and generalized forms to understand the economic implications of the paranormal. If you, as the subject, wish for information relating to your activity(ies), business, and/or self to be published, please inform the interviewer/researcher. This choice is completely optional and will not affect the overall results of the research. If you wish for your or your business's identity to remain anonymous, a placeholder name will be used instead.

- Check for permission to use actual business name/titles in research
- Check if you do not wish for your business/personal names/titles to be used in the final report of data. A generic placeholder name/title will be used in substitution

Audio recording will be used with the subject's written and verbal consent. Audio recordings will not be shared with others outside the research team nor utilized in the final report/presentation. Audio recordings will only be used for archiving and recounting interview data and analysis. Data derived from this interview will be stored both digitally and in hard copy with the researchers Dr. Katherine Nesse and Everett Haynes for at least five (5) years.

## **Contact Information:**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, you may contact Dr. Katherine Nesse (contact information provided above). If you have any concerns or complains about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Kansas State University Research Compliance Office:

203 Fairchild Hall  
Manhattan, KS 66502  
comply@k-state.edu

## **Consent:**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. By agreeing to partake in this interview, you agree to participate in a research project conducted by the investigators.

**Terms of Participation:** I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

**Participant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness to Signature  
(Project Staff):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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