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Dark tourism and cities

Sites associated with death and disaster appear to exert a dark fascination for visitors and tourists. Death, suffering, visitation and tourism have been interrelated for many centuries but the phenomena of dark tourism was identified as such and categorised by Lennon and Foley (1996, 2000). However, as early as 1993, Rojek had referred to “Black spots” and “Fatal Attractions” to highlight sites of fatality which he identified as a feature of the post-modern condition (p. 136). However, such a definitional framework was considered too narrow and Lennon and Foley (1996, 2000) hypothesised that there are aspects of the ancient, modern and post-modern to be identified within the spectrum of dark tourism. The phenomena developed included:

■ visits to death sites and disaster scenes;
■ visits to sites of mass or individual death;
■ visits to sites of incarceration;
■ visits to representations or simulations associated with death; and
■ visits to re-enactments and human interpretation of death.

Critical here is the language and the use of the word “dark” as a predominantly pejorative term that intimates that events or locations are negative, transgressive or dubious. Other forms of visitation which Seaton (1996, 2009) refers to as “Thanatourism” have either limited or no sinister connotations, such as; literary pilgrimages to the graves of famous authors or visiting battlefields with family associations. However, the urban or city context frequently features.

Heritage is contested concept and the pursuit of historical “accuracy” is invariably compromised by competing ideologies, interpretation, funding and a host of other factors. For some, such as Lowenthal (1998) valuably highlighted defining heritage let alone agreeing a verifiable truth will invariably remain elusive. In tourist attraction sites, visitor centres and those locations explored in this submission such issues are continually confronted. This complexity becomes acute in the case of “dark” sites at what has been referred to as dissonant heritage (Ashworth and Hartmann, 2005; Seaton, 2001). Dark tourism then is an inclusive term incorporating the extensive and identifiable phenomena of visitation to sites associated with our shared dark past; mass killing, extermination, death, incarceration, war crimes, dictatorship, etc.

Dark tourism has generated much more than purely academic interest. The term has entered the mainstream and is a popular subject of media attention. In the city of New York, the Ground Zero site within 12 months of 9/11 was attracting significantly greater numbers of visitors than prior to the terrorist attacks (Blair, 2002). From a management and operations perspective issues of ethical presentation, visitor behaviour, site management, revenue generation, marketing and promotion, all create areas that are fraught with difficulties and are frequently the subject of criticism and debate. Education and the nature of the learning experience and the preservation of historical record are frequently used to justify and explain motivation for development and visitation. Interpretation of the unimaginable as an educational experience is often cited as the motivation but in truth the reasons for visitation to such sites is more complex and multifaceted.

Such sites are defined by a heritage that has changed over time. Many factors imbue the meanings and content of place. This is a function of a plethora of competing influences and agendas: political, economic, cultural, demographic and historical. These sites have potential to influence the historical, social and cultural meanings represented (Smith, 2006). The selection,
interpretation and conservation of elements of the past of this place are critical in understanding what is considered.

Interpretation is used to articulate heritage through objects, artefacts, audio recording, place or imagery. They have potential reconstructed and re-represent the past. Historical memorialization remains embedded in interests that are global, commercial, ideological but rarely neutral.

This Special Edition seeks to present papers which reflect the fact that dark tourism is of increasing interest and importance, both for academic study and for gaining an insight into how the tourism industry may best meet the needs of tourists and visitors. Dark tourism is of growing significance, as many authors here would attest, and often matters such as commemoration and heritage overlap in such a way as to challenge our, perhaps, negative associations with sites of death, disaster and tragedy.

This Special Edition explores the best of current thinking about dark tourism from a number of perspectives, but each has the common thread of “darkness” at the heart of their thinking. Often it is possible to reconsider tourism in a new light, or is that a new darkness?

There are papers which explore the way in which dark tourism offers opportunities to consider new tourism products, offering opportunities to develop or enhance visitation. Powell et al. explore the idea that dark tourism is not fully understood, and as such European cities do not always promote the dark features of cities in ways which maximise the potential of a rich historical environment with an awareness of how tourism works, although one of the main ideas running through all the papers presented here is that dark tourism is a real phenomenon and as such has real potential to be part of the planning for tourism process, be it in developing new attractions or showcasing existing ones.

This is clearly shown in the paper by Mileva which explores the potential for the development of dark tourism in Bulgaria. A number of factors are considered and the reader is left to reflect on the fact that opportunities are there, waiting to be developed.

Similarly, Kuznik investigates the wealth of dark stories abounding in the cities of Brežice and Krško in Slovenia as being a good starting point to develop a tourist offering based on dark history and heritage. Azevedo takes an established (albeit niche) tourism product: lighthouse visitation, and wonders if there is in actual fact a dark side to consider as well. Tan also considers how the “Pearl of the Orient” may further enhance tourism in Malaysia. Mirasee offers insight into how post-war tourism may be employed as an important part of reconstruction efforts post-conflict in Khorramshahr, Iran. All these papers amply illustrate some of the ways the current awareness of dark tourism in academic circles may prove to provide useful and practical lessons which inform the practice of tourism in cities and contribute to the many positives tourism can provide host communities and others.

There are also papers which use up-to-date techniques to add to our understanding of dark tourism: as discussed earlier, a field which is far from being exhausted or fully understood in all its complexities and nuances. Çakar uses visitors’ comment on TripAdvisor to better understand the experience of visitors to Gallipoli, interestingly using the term “pilgrims” to denote such visitors. Battlefield tourism has exerted a pull and a fascination for a very long time, and there are many reasons why this is so. However, access to the recorded thoughts of actual visitors provides useful and useable insight. Sun uses the visitor experience also to reflect on how the embodiment of the Nanjing massacre affects visitors. The museum is, of course, famous for incorporating the mass graves of victims as a centre piece of the exhibition itself, along with innumerable and tangible artefacts. The need for the museum may be considered self-evident, but how does it provide access to such horrors without being ghoulish or sentimental? There are lessons to be learnt on how such obscenities and horrors may be usefully brought into public discourse here.

Skinner provides a tour of the Pompeii of the Caribbean, a study of Plymouth, Montserrat and its potential as an important tourist destination, as well as a fascinating archaeological resource. Exploitation of the actual Pompeii and its sister city Herculaneum further along the Italian coast provide a timely reminder of the practical issues involved in heritage preservation and conservation existing side-by-side with plentiful visitation. Take the opportunity to be at the front of the queue as our knowledge of this destination grows.
And we have a significant contribution from Professor John Lennon, an academic at the forefront of dark tourism research. In this Special Edition, he writes about disputed narratives in the interpretation of war, citing the case study of the Kanchanaburi and the Thai-Burma railway. The horrors of war considered here are a living memory for many survivors of the brutal treatment meted out by the Japanese during the building of this railway in the Second World War, but as the paper shows, even such stories have two sides to them, and often interpretation is a matter of perspective. This factor is crucial if we are to understand, truly, what dark tourism even is, and how we might make best use of it if we are so inclined to do, either as tourism professionals or as visitors ourselves.

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Further reading


Dark cities: a dark tourism index for Europe’s tourism cities, based on the analysis of DMO websites

Raymond Powell, James Kennell and Christopher Barton

Abstract

Purpose – Dark tourism is a topic of increasing interest, but it is poorly understood when considering its significance for mainstream and commercial tourism. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the significance of dark tourism in the top ten most visited European tourist cities and propose a dark tourism index for Europe’s tourism cities.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from the websites of the cities’ Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) using a content analysis methodology, based on keywords related to dark tourism taken from the research literature in this area. Descriptive statistics were produced and the variance between the frequencies of keywords related to each city was analysed for statistical significance. These results were then used to construct a darkness ranking of the cities.

Findings – There are significant differences in the extent to which dark tourism products and services are promoted by the DMOs of Europe’s top ten most visited European cities. The ranking of cities by darkness does not correspond to the ranking by visitor numbers, and further qualitative analysis suggests that, that the ranking is also independent of the actual presence of dark sites within the destination. This implies that European city DMOs are engaging with the emerging dark tourism market with varying degrees.

Research limitations/implications – The purposive sample of ten cities can be extended in future research to increase the validity of the findings of this paper. A further limitation is the selection of keywords for content analysis, which have been developed following the literature review contained below. Future research could develop an extended list of keywords using a systematic review process.

Practical implications – This paper shows that it is possible to create a ranking of tourist cities in terms of their darkness, and that this methodology could be extended to a much larger sample size. This links dark tourism research to the urban tourism literature and also offers possibilities for creating a global ranking that could be used by destinations to judge their success in engaging with the dark tourism market, as well as by tour operators seeking to develop products for the same market.

Social implications – This paper will offer DMO’s and others the opportunity to hone their tourism products more effectively in a way which offers a better understanding of tourism, and therefore provides for better management of its issues.

Originality/value – Dark tourism is a growing niche area of study, and this paper seeks to provide a framework to better understand supply-side aspects of it.

Keywords Europe, Content analysis, Cities, Dark tourism, Urban tourism

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The academic study of dark tourism gathered momentum in the early twenty-first century (Stone, 2013), and is reflecting the growing interest of the citizens of post-modern societies in the sites of death and disasters – an interest that needs deeper research to be understood fully. It also reflects the increased sensitivity of the international community to the significance of such events for nations, national identities and the direction of their history. Dark tourism sites offer the opportunity to capture and conserve the “dark” memory of humanity and make it available, through domestic and international tourism, to the wider public. It should also be noted that vicarious thrill
seeking and entertainment motivations are also significant factors that have affected the recent growth of the dark tourism sector. This study of dark tourism in an urban setting, therefore, offers the opportunity to investigate the many ways in which dark tourism offerings are packaged and presented as tourism products within a significant sector of the tourism industry. This paper aims to investigate this in the context of European city tourism and to construct a ranking of Europe’s top tourism cities in terms of the “darkness” of their tourism offer.

Dark tourism

Dark tourism can be defined as tourism associated with the visitation of sites which have death, tragedy or suffering as an ingredient in the mix of visitor motivations in some way or other. Stone (2005) considered dark tourism to be an old concept in a new world. That is to say that the fascination with scenes of death and disaster is old and quite possibly universal, but what is new is the way in which there is a commercialised and functional tourism industry able to make very much more available to very many more people than was the case in the past. The definition of dark tourism is wide and varied. Smith (1998) argued that sites associated with war probably attract more visitors than any other single type of attraction. Dark tourism is a widespread and growing reality and it is an important factor when considering the supply and demand of sites and attractions. Lennon and Foley (2000) described the phenomenon of death-related activity and coined the term “dark tourism” to describe this observable and growing trend. Yan et al. (2016) reviewed a range of definitions and sub-definitions of this tourism activity and concluded that the phrase “dark tourism” itself is the most frequently applied term to describe it. Seaton (1996) described the same experience as “thanotourism”, acknowledging that it is not solely a recent occurrence, but has, in fact, ancient precedent. Blom (2000) was able to recognise an apparent subset within the motivations of so called dark tourists, and used the term “morbid tourism”.

The academic study of dark tourism

As interest in the academic study of dark tourism grew, so too did the labels by which it could be known. Rojek (1993) considered phrases such as “disaster tourism”, “black spot tourism” and even “phoenix tourism” to be appropriate to communicate the central idea of dark tourism: it entails visitation to sites associated with death, suffering and tragedy. Commonly such visits are conducted with commemoration, education or entertainment in mind (Stone, 2005), meaning that much dark tourism research has been published within the heritage tourism literature (Yankholmes and Akyeampong, 2010). The attraction of death, disaster and the macabre promises to be a significant factor in the tourism sector worldwide, and in Europe in particular. Dark tourism offers the interested participant the chance to “gaze upon real or recreated death” (Stone, 2005, p. 3.) The fascination with scenes of tragedy is not unique to any one set or group of tourists, but dark tourism, as yet, remains on the fringes of respectability: a number of authors have given consideration to “shades” of dark tourism (Lennon and Foley, 2000; Stone, 2005; Strange and Kempa, 2003) which is to say that it is recognised that there is a continuum of “dark” touristic experiences, ranging from very mild excitation to the grim reality of the holocaust and terrorism, for example. It is often observed in the literature that dark tourism has a continuum of darkness (see Figure 1).

At the darkest end of that continuum, attractions are categorised largely on the basis of real, recent and actual suffering and death. There is often an educational and commemorative rationale which underpins the establishment of an attraction, very often being the authentic site of the suffering which is visited, such as at Auschwitz or the site of the Twin Towers in New York. Stone (2006) recognised that the connection with dark tourism at particular sites is fluid, and the relative darkness of each attraction lies along a continuum, ranging from the very dark (Auschwitz, for example) to the commodified, entertainment-based attraction, such as the London dungeon which represents gruesome torture as family entertainment. Europe has an abundance of dark tourism sites, both real and imagined which offer ample opportunities to experience dark tourism in all of these ways if so desired. However, they are rarely conceptualised as dark products, and as such categorisation of individual attractions is, at the moment, confused. This also means that whilst dark tourism is proving to be an effective draw for significant numbers of tourists, many
sites are not considered in this dark context, and as such opportunities for capitalisation and exploitation of a valuable tourism resource are often overlooked.

Lennon and Foley (2000) had largely been credited with coining the phrase “dark tourism” in “Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster”. They sought to signify what they identified as a “fundamental shift in the way in which death, disaster and atrocity are being handled by those who offer associated tourism “products” “(p3). In doing so, they identified that dark tourism as it is presented in a modern context is the product of the late modern world, and is intimately connected to the political, sociological, economic and technological landscape within which modern tourism products are made available. That is to say, whilst death and disaster have always had a universal appeal, the circumstances of modern media, accessibility and technology mean that interest in dark sites is at an unprecedented level, and the tourism industry should be capable of making every effort to provide a product which meets the demand for such dark experiences. The increasing consumerism of post-modern western societies has a tendency towards making such experiences much more entertainment based. Lee et al. (2012, p. 76) highlighted the “tacit moral opposition” between dark tourism and “light” tourism, with their negative and positive connotations in terms of the motivations and values of the experiences involved, explaining how it possible, for example, for the relatives of the bereaved to visit sites of disaster to remember loved ones, or for non-dark tourists to admire architecturally significant buildings associated with dissonant heritage (Harvey Lemelin et al., 2013), without enjoying places of tragedy and death in a vicarious manner. Taylor (2006) examined tourism marketing in destinations that have recently suffered terrorist attacks and showed how Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) can promote tourism in the wake of an atrocity through marketing campaigns which aim to support local visitor economies, leading to tourism that is associated with “dark” sites, but which is not easily categorised as dark tourism when it does not involved “dark” motivations.
Dark tourism – an old concept

The concept of dark tourism, however, is not a new one. Tourists have been drawn to battlefield sites, places of execution, tombs and other related sites for a very long time (Stone, 2005). Seaton (1996) had identified dark tourism as being the visitation of sites associated with death and disaster, something which dates from the Middle Ages at least. Dale and Robinson (2011) also identified dark tourism as being an established practice as far back as the eleventh century. It is possible to argue that dark tourism as an actuality was established in ancient times: a compelling thought if we consider the popularity of Roman Gladiatorial contests, for example. Collins-Kreiner (2016, p. 1186) examined the concept of dark tourism alongside the more ancient idea of pilgrimage, noting that “both dark tourism and pilgrimage emerge from the same milieu to include the sites of dramatic historic events that bear extra meaning”. The metaphor of modern pilgrimage has been used to describe the motivations of non-religious dark tourists, as for example in the work of Winter (2011) who explored motivations for tourism to the First World War battlefield sites in Belgium. This conceptualisation removes dark tourism from its solely “thanatourism” (Seaton, 1996) roots as being linked to death and instead attaches it to a broader trend in visitation to sites of historical significance, some of which will be dark but, for example in the case of pilgrimage, some will be associated with rituals of joy and thanksgiving. Historically it can be seen that tourism has always had aspects of dark tourism in its gaze (Stone, 2012).

Several commentators (Lickorish and Jenkins, 1997; as cited in Lennon and Foley, 2000; Vellas and Becherel, 1995) have identified that pilgrimage is one of the earliest forms of tourism. Pilgrimage sites are often associated with death in one form or another, with religious pilgrims often visiting the site of the death, or the graves of individuals or groups. Such visits tend to have religious or spiritual associations relevant to the pilgrims visiting, and are seen as acts of remembrance, commemoration or veneration, and usually feature as part of a ritualistic or tokenistic ceremony, perhaps tied to a particular religious or even secular calendar. It is clear that such ritualistic approaches to commemoration are not solely the stuff of sanitised tourism products within the remit of the modern tourism industry. It should be recognised that there is an increasing demand for dark tourism products which offer a connection with scenes of suffering and death. That is not to say that this is a completely modern phenomenon: visitation to scenes associated with death in particular; battlefields, graveyards and the former homes of dead celebrities for example, have proven to be a significant motivator in tourism in past-times as well. However, of particular significance to this study is the consideration of the commodification of such sites has transformed the tourism industry in such a way as to generate demand for, as well as access to, dark tourism experiences. Shondell Miller and Gonzalez (2013) also discussed “death tourism”, an emerging field of travel associated with assisted dying, which despite its superficially specific features can be classified within the spectrum of dark tourism experiences. The growth of a new form of tourism associated with a new set of social or cultural practices or technologies is a regular feature of the development of modern tourism (Poon, 1994) and Stone (2013) observed that “dark tourism is simply a fascinating and controversial area” and therefore the growth in recent scholarship in this field may be attributable to the nature of the subject matter as much as to any specific maturation in the field of tourism studies or developments in the industry itself.

Supply and demand as factors in dark tourism

Much of tourism can be seen to be related to classic demand/supply issues: does demand drive supply or does supply initiate demand? The nature of dark tourism is multi-faceted, and despite its increasing popularity, understanding of the phenomenon remains limited (Biran et al., 2011). Yan et al. (2016, p. 110) splitted their definition of dark tourism into two categories; that which is focused on a psychological consumption process and which “offers tourists desired psychological outcomes and actual psychological outcomes to satisfy tourists’ emotional demands” and that which is focused on the supply side of dark tourism and which “supplies emotional and cognitive experiences to tourists who have an interactive relationship with a dark tourism product, including either man-made or natural disaster destinations.” Biran et al. (2011) saw little distinction between dark tourism and heritage tourism, however. They argued that dark tourism is largely a product of supply side factors, and as such visitation to Auschwitz-Birkenau...

(the case study under consideration by them) needs further examination of visitors’ perceptions must be considered in order to fully understand the complex motivations of such visitors, and it is unlikely to be simply a morbid fascination with death alone which encourages current annual visitation of over 1.7 million people (Times of Israel, 2016). This notion challenges the descriptive idea that dark tourism is simply about death and disaster to an approach which must necessarily encourage the exploitation of dark attractions in line with other, similar heritage attractions. The core motivations in this case are seen as essentially those of heritage tourists with the dark aspect being an addition rather than a prime motivator.

Farmaki (2013) suggested that dark tourism in general appears to be supply driven and attraction based, but a segmented approach to marketing such attractions which takes into consideration the purpose of the visit with regard to personal considerations and the relevance of the dark site to the individual tourist and the depth of the dark element all combine to make a clear exposition of dark tourism motivations difficult to ascertain. It seems likely that there are a variety of motivations, but nonetheless there are a number of drivers which dark tourism destinations can be better placed to exploit. The significance of that observation for this work is that dark attractions will prove appealing and are likely to increase overall visitation in an urban context especially, where there are also other pull factors encouraging tourists to visit in addition to the dark attractions alone. Over 3.5 million visitors visited the Ground Zero site in New York in 2007, marking it out as one of the biggest visitor attractions in the city (Kang et al., 2012). It seems unlikely that all of those 3.5 million visitors were visiting New York exclusively to visit Ground Zero, and it seems reasonable, therefore, to speculate that dark tourism is an additional motivation to visit urban environments when there are a range of pull factors at play (Crompton, 1979) to entice and encourage visitation. Rural locations, however, also have the potential to offer resources for the dark tourism market, whether these are the now-empty battlefield sites of Scotland (Banks and Pollard, 2011), the “rural dystopias” of post-agricultural Australia (Rofe, 2013) or the haunted castles of Transylvania (Light, 2017).

Stone (2006) offered a categorisation of the supply side of dark tourism into seven “dark suppliers”: Dark Fun Factories – those sites which are primarily focussed on entertainment, with low levels of authenticity; Dark Exhibitions – dark tourism products that blend entertainment and learning opportunities, often with a commemorative or reflective intention; Dark Dungeons – which rely on the presentation of sites associated with previously implemented penal codes; Dark Resting Places – based on cemeteries or grave markers; Dark Shrines – these are specially constructed attractions which provide an opportunity to commemorate or remember the recently deceased; Dark Conflict Sites – being sites associated with warfare; and Dark Camps of Genocide – sites at the darkest end of the dark tourism spectrum which present locations associated with genocide, atrocity and catastrophe.

Stone (2005) suggested that the supply-side aspects of delivering a dark tourism product depend largely on factors such as the attempt to manipulate a dark site for political purposes, or the desire to achieve a commercial advantage. Such factors need, rightly, to be considered with sensitivity, and may prove to be a significant limiting factor in the willingness of DMO’s to develop dark sites fully on a commercial basis. Notwithstanding this consideration, as research develops it is becoming apparent that the typology of dark attractions is varied. Stone’s (2006) work develops the darkness continuum, within which attractions can be considered according to their perceived darkness (Figure 1). Miles (2002) proposed a similar model, again through consideration of Auschwitz as a destination, which also has authenticity at the core of the dark offering. That is to say, actual sites of death and disaster exert a stronger pull for the visitor. Such authentic sites tend to have commemoration at the core of their offering and tend to be history centric. This does mean that sites which are authentic have a much greater pull in dark tourism, and as is the case with similar heritage attractions, it does present a unique selling point for DMO’s to consider, bearing in mind that visitation is unlikely to involve visitation to the dark site alone for the duration of the stay. Stone (2012, 2013, p. 307) pointed out that dark tourism has become an “increasingly pervasive part of the visitor economy” and refers to the locations of dark tourism experiences as “deathscapes”. Authenticity with regard to location is a key factor at the darkest end of Stone’s (2006) spectrum, but time is also a consideration, as in how much time has elapsed since the actions commemorated at the site. Essentially, the nearer the events are to us in time, the darker they appear. Sites which are near contemporary and located at the actual
scene prove to be the darkest of all, and this in turn can influence visitor expectations and experience due to the level of empathy shown by visitors who are aware of a closer connection to dark events, therefore (Miles, 2002). Ryan and Kohli (2006) also argued that temporal, political and ideological factors all have influence on visitor perceptions at a dark attraction. These considerations can partly explain the way in which supply side dark tourism is not keeping pace with demand. However, this paper argues that the potential for dark tourism is often unacknowledged when considerations other than commemoration are brought into the mix. It should be recognised that no study of the supply side of dark tourism is complete without also considering demand led factors (Stone, 2006).

Motivations for visiting dark sites

The motivations for visiting dark sites is an under-researched area (Sharpley and Stone, 2009), and somewhat beyond the remit of this paper. However, Stone (2005) identified that the desire to create a mercantile advantage or manipulate a particular site for political reasons are usually the primary supply-side factors which will determine whether a dark site is developed or not. It should also be noted that a usual explanation for the establishment of dark sites is that they allow contemplation of one’s own death – the memento mori effect (Walter, 2009). Inauthentic offerings allow this contemplation to be at several stages removed, unlike the horror of a death camp for example. There is also a marked reluctance to be seen to be making money from other people’s suffering, and it may be that esoteric questions of taste cloud the development of more authentic dark sites.

The dark tourism continuum model has been adapted by Raine (2013) to similarly characterise dark tourists in terms of the “shade” of their motivation, ranging from “mourners”, through the “morbidly curious” and the sightseers’ to “passive recreationists”, although the limited sample size of 23 graveyard visitors means that the typology requires further testing. Researching the motivations of black metal tourists in Norway, Podoshen (2013) identified motivations related to consumption linked to a specific cultural form, suggesting that dark tourism motivations can also be considered from the perspectives of subcultures and media and Podoshen et al. (2015) specifically suggested that the application of concepts from outside of mainstream tourism studies such as Consumer Cultural Theory to the study of dark tourism motivations may produce yet more sophisticated perspectives on the demand side of the dark tourism phenomenon.

Seaton (1996) argued that visitors to dark sites have as a significant motivation the desire for an actual or symbolic encounter with death, and this underlying motivation needs to be considered in conjunction with the idea that visitors to many dark sites may not always be necessarily aware that the site is, in fact, dark. This is because attractions like museums may not be explicitly marketed as “dark”, but do fit into the continuum of dark attractions as postulated by Stone (2006, Figure 1) but which still act as key motivator in actuality, although the draw may be more linked to the idea of “heritage”, as suggested by Farmaki (2013). As Rittichainuwat (2008) highlighted, motivations for dark tourists can depend on differences in motivations between the very diverse groups who partake in it; children and young people are the most curious group when it come to a general interest in atrocities, for example, whilst women are most likely to show concerns about safety and security when choosing dark tourism destinations. When evaluating the motivations of Scandinavian and domestic-Thai visitors to dark tourism sites in Phuket, Thailand, Rittichainuwat (2008) found significant differences in push and pull-factor motivations (Crompton, 1979) based on the nationalities of the tourist studied, as well as in their ages. Lee et al. (2012), in their study of tourism to the North Korean Mt Kumgang mountain resort, also considered the western-centric perspective of much dark tourism research, suggesting that future research may wish to more effectively distinguish between indigenous and non-indigenous tourism to non-western dark tourism sites. This point is supported by the work of Harvey Lemelin et al. (2013) who showed that the consumption of “war heritage” sites of significance to indigenous peoples, by dark tourists, can contribute to the perpetuation of “grand colonial narratives” which reinforce the dominant histories associated with dissonant heritage.

It is, therefore, a key consideration for this paper that dark tourism is a real phenomenon, in that it exists as a motivator for visitation, albeit in ways which are not necessarily fully understood or
researched at present. Nevertheless, it is also recognised also that there is significant overlap with dark and other forms of tourism (e.g. heritage tourism), and in certain cases visitation to dark sites may be coincidental. Seaton and Lennon (2004) identified two key motivators for dark visitation: Shadenfreude (the contemplation of others’ misfortune) and Thanatopsis – the contemplation of death. However, it may be that such motivations are considered as an afterthought rather than necessarily primary factors, although Smith and Croy (2005) maintained that all visitors to dark sites are motivated by an interest in death, and it is acknowledged that not all tourists share the same experience. This has significant implications for the marketing of dark attractions, and it could be inferred that currently (with the possible exception of the darkest attractions such as concentration camps) the marketing implications of dark site development needs to be further evaluated and understood more fully. It is a key contention of this paper that often visitors to dark sites may not be aware of the classification of “dark” as being especially relevant to them and their leisure activities. However, DMO’s would benefit from identifying suitable dark attractions and making them available to this latent and often untapped market. In other words, if there is more clarity around what an attraction has to offer, it will prove more attractive to visitors and in the case of dark attractions marketed as such will appeal to more visitors potentially. Nevertheless, they are most definitely an integral part of the appeal of dark tourism, and it is that appeal that DMO’s need to recognise and capitalise on in order to attract increased visitation.

(Some) ethical considerations related to visitation of dark sites

It is recognised that commercial or other exploitation of dark sites involves a number of ethical issues. In particular Seaton (2009) pointed out that there is a general feeling that “it is unacceptable to profit from the dead” (p87). The classic model of visitor attractions would dictate that commercial, and in particular retail operations are an important source of revenue. However, this may prove a contentious area: consider the restraints on merchandise they can offer, limited by both location and subject matter (Brown, 2013). This does mean that DMO’s and other interested parties will need to consider their dark developments carefully: there is an appeal, but if that appeal and increased visitation is difficult to capitalise then it is less likely to happen. Of course, authentic dark sites in particular have merit on their own as attractions, but it is necessary to also consider matters of taste and decency (Sharpley, 2009). This may serve to limit commercial exploitation, but as part of a coordinated approach to visitor management overseen by a DMO or similar it can be a vital part in increasing overall visitation, with the benefits to commercial exploitation perhaps realised elsewhere in other local businesses such as cafes and bars. It is also worth noting that often dark tourism sites are not spatially or temporally distinct or unusual places (Johnson, 2015). For example, Ground Zero in New York is a busy pedestrian thoroughfare, and families regularly picnic in Pierre Lachaise cemetery in Paris. This observation has implications when considering use of space: it should be possible to combine multiple uses with careful planning, thus maximising potential within an urban context. In particular, it should be recognised that often Thanatourism sites are not all one-dimensional theme parks created purely for those interested in death. The sites exist in their own right and often serve everyday functions, existing as places were local people live their lives (Johnson, 2015).

Urban tourism in Europe

Urban tourism is a challenging and multi-disciplinary field of study that draws on areas including sociology, urban studies, planning and architecture, as well as traditional tourism research (Selby, 2004). Research in urban tourism has been prompted by the recent dramatic growth of tourism to cities, and research into this area forms a relatively new part of the tourism literature (Maxim, 2017; Wearing and Foley, 2017). Maitland (2016) noted that tourism is just one of the many mobilities that brings visitors to a city, echoing earlier research by Pearce (2001) that indicated the difficulties in carrying out research in to urban tourism due to tourism’s relatively minor role in the complex socio-economic life of urban areas. If we define urban tourism simply as tourism that takes place in urban areas, it becomes more important to develop a thorough understanding of the components of urban tourism destinations. Selby (2004), in his review of previous writing on urban destinations, includes the following aspects of cities as forming part of the foci of urban tourism
urban areas, Gladstone and Feinstein noted that (Richards, 2007). Whilst noting that tourism appears to function well as an economic engine for opportunities for niche tourism development such as business tourism and cultural tourism displays little seasonality, attracts relatively well educated and well-off tourists and provides Urban tourism offers a number of benefits to destinations. Unlike other forms of tourism, it consume diverse products, leading to a growth in niche tourism products such as cultural development in the area. For example, cultural diversity has become a key aspect of marketing local economy over a period of 30 years have provided specific opportunities for tourism can include natural features, historical attributes and specialist tourism facilities such as conference venues, sporting arenas and museums. Next are the secondary products and services, such as accommodation, retail, restaurants and information, which are necessary for generating staying visits, as opposed to day visits in a city. External transport is the third aspect of the tourist city, highlighting the connectivity of the city to tourism-generating regions. The fourth aspect is internal transport: the city must be easily navigable to tourists to ensure that the whole city becomes a resource to tourism, again extending the length of visits. Finally, the tourist city must have a developed tourism image. The image of the city is developed from the relationship of the first four elements to the marketing activities of the city’s DMO and the perception of the city held by potential visitors.

The growth of urban tourism can be understood as part of the changing cultural context of developed countries. Urry (2002) noted that the shift of tourism to urban areas from traditional coastal destinations has accompanied a broader shift within post-modern culture, which prioritises consumption, accessibility, culture and technology, which began in the 1980s. Gale presents Urry (2002) set of processes that exemplify the post-modern transformation of culture, and therefore tourism, which were in turn developed from Harvey (1989, pp. 340-1) categorisations of the emergence of postmodernism in developed economies. The first of these, the shift in the nature of experienced time towards instantaneity, has meant that “post-tourists” or “post-modern tourists” have moved away from the regimented Saturday to Saturday element of traditional holidays (Gale, 2005, p. 94), helping to explain the growth in shorter city-break tourism. Coupled with increases in the efficiency and accessibility of transport, this has meant that the time-space compression that is a characteristic of contemporary globalisation has made international travel more affordable and practical (Gale, 2005, p. 95). Changes associated with post-modern culture such as the increase in individualisation, the weakening of group identities, and the playfulness of modern consumption have led to the increasing popularity of new urban destinations and a rejection of older resorts which are now seen as “tasteless” by many (Gale, 2005, p. 93).

As well as cultural explanations for the growth in urban tourism, economic explanations also help to explain this phenomenon. By the end of the 1990s, many post-industrial cities were seeking ways of diversifying their economies, and tourism development offered opportunities for investment and promotion (Ben-Dalia et al., 2013; Spirou and Judd, 2014; García-Hernadez et al., 2017). Hoffman (2003) studied the development of Harlem, New York in the post-Fordist period from the perspective of regulation theory and showed how significant changes in the local economy over a period of 30 years have provided specific opportunities for tourism development in the area. For example, cultural diversity has become a key aspect of marketing in a highly differentiated market place and the area of Harlem can offer products and services that meet the needs of many different cultural segments, as well as the desires of tourists to consume diverse products, leading to a growth in niche tourism products such as cultural tourism which are an example of “flexible specialisation”, a concern of regulationist approaches to understanding post-Fordist economies.

Urban tourism offers a number of benefits to destinations. Unlike other forms of tourism, it displays little seasonality, attracts relatively well educated and well-off tourists and provides opportunities for niche tourism development such as business tourism and cultural tourism (Richards, 2007). Whilst noting that tourism appears to function well as an economic engine for urban areas, Gladstone and Feinstein noted that “the distributional consequences of tourism are more debatable” (p. 38). Urban tourism is now a core part of urban redevelopment and competitiveness strategies (Richards and Wilson, 2007; Spirou, 2007; Smith, 2007; Zukin, 1995), but this only serves to reinforce the already central role of tourism and culture in the development and image of urban areas. As Sharon Zukin (1995) pointed out, “For several hundred years, visual representations of cities have ‘sold’ urban growth. Images, from early maps to picture postcards, have not simply reflected real city spaces; instead they have been imaginative reconstructions – from specific points of view – of a city’s monumentality” (p. 16). The huge competition between cities, coupled with the growth in accessible transportation and
the emergence of new economies into the global economy, has meant that cities that have not historically been well-known tourism destination to enter the tourism industry, leading to increased global completion between cities for urban tourists (Ben-Dalia et al., 2013; Valls et al., 2014). Because of this, it is important for cities to understand areas of the tourism market in which they can offer novel and unique experiences to tourists, to increase their attractiveness – the growing dark tourism market (Stone, 2005; Stone and Sharpley, 2008; Biran and Hyde, 2013) may offer a way for many cities to become more competitive in this sense.

Europe is the world’s most competitive tourist region according to the World Economic Forum (2017) and the world’s number one tourism destination, according to the UNWTO (2017), attracting around 50 per cent of the world’s total tourism arrivals in 2016. This has been facilitated by increasing European integration, with a knock-on effect on price comparability and ease of movement, as well as the growth in European low-cost airlines (Baldassin et al., 2017). This research focuses on tourism to Europe’s most popular tourist cities, in terms of arrivals, shown in Table I. Cities are the most important part of Europe’s tourism product, especially when it comes to the cultural and heritage tourism that forms the core part of their offer (Garcia-Hernadez et al., 2017; Wickens, 2017). European city destinations range in size from the relatively small, emerging destinations that have recently entered the tourism market such as Ljubljana (Bozic et al., 2017) and Krakow (Matoga and Pawłowska, 2016) to world cities such as London and Paris (Maxim, 2017). Valls et al. (2014) showed that there are a diversity of holiday products offered by European cities, with different cities particularly attractive for certain type of holiday. Paris and London are the most popular tourist cities by far, but Rome and Barcelona are also significant long holiday destinations and Berlin and Venice major city-break destinations.

One of the aims of this paper is to investigate to what extent dark tourism products feature as an important part of the offer of European cities, and to put this into the context of the literature on urban tourism, which currently suggests that that urban tourism destinations are not recognising or promoting their dark tourism products consistently or effectively (Powell and Kennell, 2016). DMOs in developed economies are still adapting to the impacts of the global economic crisis that began in 2007 (Kennell and Chaperon, 2013), and many European destinations are now operating in a situation where supply-side factors associated with cultural tourism that have supported the growth of post-industrial cities are losing their significance (Kennell, 2013), meaning that there is a need for destinations to establish new grounds for their competitive advantage in a crowded city tourism market (Valls et al., 2014). Major tourist cities in Europe and the USA that have historically been magnets for tourism development are now also facing competition from secondary and satellite cities and need to innovate in terms of their tourism offer to remain competitive (Spirou and Judd, 2014). In terms of Van den Berg et al.’s description of the tourist city, this paper aims to explore the representation of dark tourism as a primary product for European cities, with implications for the marketing activities of DMOs in the region.

<p>| Table I | Europe’s top ten tourist cities |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Visitors (millions, Euromonitor, 2017)</th>
<th>Destination Management Organisation</th>
<th>Website (English version)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>18,580.00</td>
<td>Visit London</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visitlondon.com/">www.visitlondon.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>15,023.00</td>
<td>Paris Info</td>
<td><a href="http://en.parisinfo.com/">http://en.parisinfo.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>12,414.60</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visitistanbul.org/">www.visitistanbul.org/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>12,414.60</td>
<td>Rome Official Tourist Site</td>
<td><a href="http://www.turismoroma.it/?lang=en">www.turismoroma.it/?lang=en</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>9,558.70</td>
<td>Prague.eu</td>
<td><a href="http://www.prague.eu/en">www.prague.eu/en</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>6,967.40</td>
<td>Visitamilano</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visitamilano.it/turismo_en/">www.visitamilano.it/turismo_en/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>6,612.20</td>
<td>Barcelona Turisme</td>
<td><a href="http://www.turisme">www.turisme</a> de barcelon a.net/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>5,897.00</td>
<td>I am Amsterdam</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/visiting">www.iamsterdam.com/en/visiting</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>5,718.90</td>
<td>Welcome to Vienna</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wien.info/en">www.wien.info/en</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>5,490.00</td>
<td>Venice tourism</td>
<td><a href="http://www.venice-tourism.com/en/visit-venice.html">www.venice-tourism.com/en/visit-venice.html</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Method

In order to assess the significance of dark tourism products in the offering of European tourist cities, a purposeful sample (Bryman and Bell, 2007) was constructed. An extreme case (Saunders et al., 2007) approach was taken to choosing which cities were included in the sample to increase the likelihood that the chosen cities would provide sufficient data on their tourism products to support this initial phase of research. Using the most recently published Euromonitor data for international tourism arrivals (Euromonitor, 2017), the following list of the top ten European tourist cities was constructed as the sampling frame for this research. The DMO for each city was identified, along with its English-language website. English was chosen as a major lingua franca for international tourists and to ensure that each website was comparable, although this does present a limitation of this research. Each city, its visitor numbers, its DMO and the DMO website are shown in Table I.

The content of each DMO website was searched using the keywords in Table II. The search was carried out during April 2017 using the “site:” function in Google Advanced Search (Google, 2017), which allows for the targeted searching of specific web domains using keywords, producing frequency counts for each word. A system of keywords was used to categorise the data that refer to themes and concepts of relevance to this research that have been developed in the preceding sections on dark tourism and urban tourism. This is a deductive method of code generation (Berg, 2007) that formed a starting point for an inductive process of further categorising the data to allow for the emergence of additional information of relevance to the research. In total, 19 keywords were identified deductively from the literature reviewed above, with diverse terms chosen and judged for applicability and frequency in the literature, until a theoretical saturation point (van Rijnsoever, 2017) was reached. Certain terms were then excluded from the list because of their ambiguity, such as “memorial” and “historical”, which were judged to have too broad an application in DMO promotional material, whilst not retaining a clear focus on tourism products associated with dark tourism. The terms chosen were found in multiple sources. Some terms, for example the word “monument”, are open to multiple interpretations and could reasonably be expected to refer to a range of historical events, only some of which would be considered as “dark” in the context of this research. This limitation is addressed in the conclusions section, below. The final list of keywords is shown in Table II, along with indicative sources in the literature.

Results

The data collected from DMO websites, using the keywords set out in Table II, were coded and sorted to allow the construction of descriptive statistics about the data as shown in Table III.

The data were then further analysed using the $\chi^2$ to test the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant association between total dark word count and city category. The tests compared the observed total dark word count for each city category with totals expected under the null hypothesis, under the assumption that totals amongst city categories would be equal if the null hypothesis was correct. The results of the $\chi^2$ test is shown in Table IV.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Keywords used for content analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atrocity</td>
<td>Taylor (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battlefield</td>
<td>Banks and Pollard (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catastrophe</td>
<td>Stone (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commemoration</td>
<td>Dale and Robinson (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Harvey Lemelin et al. 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark</td>
<td>Seaton (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>Lannon and Foley (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster</td>
<td>Sharpley and Stone (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungeon</td>
<td>Powell and Iankova (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dying</td>
<td>Shondell Miller and Gonzalez (2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since $p < 0.001$, the null hypothesis is rejected, and a conclusion is made that there is a significant association between total dark word count and city category, meaning that it was possible to construct a ranking of Europe’s top ten most visited tourism cities in terms of the darkness of the tourism products and services that were present on their DMO websites, creating a darkness ranking of Europe’s top tourism cities. This ranking is shown in Table V.

### Discussion

The results presented above describe the extent to which words associated with dark tourism products and services on the websites of DMOs, which indicates the extent to which dark tourism is part of the tourist offering of each destination. Although this approach involves some limitations, discussed below, the systematic way in which it has been applied gives an indication of the relative significance of dark tourism in the promotional strategies of each DMO. As described in the Methods section, above, the deductive process of keyword searching and the generation of descriptive statistics was then followed by an inductive process of analysis to
explain the results in greater detail. This Discussion section presents analysis of two key areas of
the results: the variation within the sample and the differences between the ranking of the cities by
visitor numbers and by darkness.

Table IV shows the ranking of Europe’s most visited cities by darkness, indicated by the frequency
at which the selected keywords appeared on their DMO websites. Within this, there is a wide
variation in the frequency of keywords. In this discussion, the two highest and two lowest
ranked cities are analysed in more depth, in order to establish the validity of the results above.
The highest ranked city, London (f = 11,689), receives a frequency 79 times greater than the lowest
ranked city, Venice (f = 167). As Powell and Iankova (2015) explained, London offers an
“entertainment-focused dark tourism experience” through the promotion of a number of high
volume attractions such as The London Dungeons and Madame Tussaud’s Chamber of Horrors.
Although London does contain numerous sites of dark history, it is the presence of these
entertainment-focused attractions on the Visit London website that accounts for the high frequency
of keywords associated with dark tourism. This research confirms Powell and Iankova’s (2015)
previous findings that London offers a highly commercialised dark tourism product to tourists.

The second highest ranked city in these results is Amsterdam, with 11,689 instances of dark
tourism keywords featuring on the DMO website. Further analysis shows that although
Amsterdam does not contain the range of inauthentic dark tourism attractions that can be found
in London, the DMO promotes a variety of experiences that could be placed on the dark tourism
spectrum (Stone, 2006). These experiences include the Anne Frank House, a museum
associated with the occupation of the Netherlands during the World War II, the
Slavernijmonument, a monument commemorating the slavery associated with the
Netherlands’ colonial past, and a guide to the “haunted” locations in the city connected to
historical executions, dungeons, robbery and famous deaths. Complicating this analysis, the city
is characterised by many heritage and other cultural attractions described using the word dark
because of, for example, they are lacking windows at street level to protect from flooding, or
because of the prevailing painting style of the later Dutch Masters. (laamsterdam, 2017). Both of
the highest-ranked cities included in the sample used for this research demonstrate the
complexity involved in categorising dark tourism products in terms of their authenticity as dark

The two lowest-ranked cities shown in Table IV are Milan (f = 775) and Venice (f = 167). Both of
these cities are associated with significantly low frequency of keywords associated with dark
tourism on their DMO websites. Milan is one of Italy’s top international tourist destinations
(Euromonitor, 2017) and is regarded as one of the country’s “art cities”, along with Turin, Venice, Bologna, Ferrara, Florence, Perugia, Rome, Naples and Palermo (Italia, 2017). Its
prominence as a cultural tourism destination and its worldwide reputation for its fashion industry
(De Carlo et al., 2009) perhaps explain the lack of attention given to the presentation of dark
tourism products on the DMO website. In addition, significant resources that could be used to
develop a dark tourism offering are associated with dissonant heritage (Harvey Lemelin et al.,
2013) related to periods of recent conflict in the city, including the occupation of Northern Italy by
Nazi troops and the public hangings of the Italian Dictator, Benito Mussolini and other Fascist
leaders in 1945. As Stone (2005) identified, political factors on the supply side can have a significant influence over whether a dark site is developed for as a tourism attraction.

Venice is the third most popular tourist city in Italy and the tenth most visited city in Europe (Euromonitor, 2017). It is a major international tourism destination for cruise holiday, in particular, and has been a feature of European tourism since the days of the Grand Tour (Verhoeven, 2013). Unlike Milan, neighbouring destination in Northern Italy, Venice has not been caught up in historical conflicts and although it was occupied during World War II it was never bombed, preserving its significant architecture and unique canal-based infrastructure, which has become the main resource for its contemporary tourism. Venice does have some heritage resources that could be incorporated into a dark tourism offer for tourists, including the prisons of the Doge’s Palace and the Catacombs (Venice Tourism, 2017), these are associated mainly with very localised events and the individual tragedies of the criminal justice system, and lack broad tourist appeal. The dominant narratives that form Venice’s tourism brand are linked to its cultural and natural heritage (Manrai et al., 2017) and its reputation as “the city of love”. Dark tourism does not fit into this brand and unsurprisingly, words associated with darkness do not feature strongly on its DMO website. This support’s Biran et al.’s (2011) view that supply-side factors are the most important factor in creating dark tourism destinations.

Table VI, shows the differences between Europe’s most visited tourist cities in terms of visitors and darkness. Although this research has not considered causal relationships, it appears that there is no obvious link between the promotion of dark tourism and the success of a destination in attracting tourists. This descriptive analysis suggests that the association of darkness with visitor numbers merits further investigation, although on the basis of this exploratory research it is not possible to draw any conclusions about this relationship. Table VI has been provided to show the differences between tourist arrivals and the promotion of darkness, and to stimulate further research in this area.

Conclusions

This paper has investigated the relationship between city tourism and dark tourism in a European context, through the analysis of the websites of the DMOs of Europe’s top ten most visited tourist cities. In order to do this, the literature on dark tourism and tourist cities was reviewed, and nineteen keywords were identified from this, related to dark tourism. A search was carried out on DMO websites for the frequency of these words, and the variation in these totals was tested for statistical significance using the $\chi^2$ test. The variation within this sample was found to be significant, and a new ranking of these cities was created, which ranked them in terms of the significance the promotion of their dark tourism offer to tourists.

The approach taken in this paper presents a number of limitations that can be explored in further research. First, the keywords shown in Table II were chosen following the literature review presented in this paper. Certain prospective keywords were eliminated from this list; however, this process was completed in a rigorous but not systematic way. Because of this, an element of subjectivity was inherent in the selection process. Future research applying this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Visitor ranking</th>
<th>Darkness ranking</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>= 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>−3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>−5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>−2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prague</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>−2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>−3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>= 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
method should conduct a systematic review of the literature and consider using software to aid this selection process, such as NVivo or emerging semantic analysis tools, to develop a more objective set of keywords to use in content analysis. A second limitation is the small sample size that was chosen for this research. This exploratory paper made use of a purposeful sample of the top ten tourism cities in Europe, but now that this methodology has been developed, the study could be repeated using the full Euromonitor (2017) list of all major European tourist cities, or extended to a global list of tourism cities. This would allow for the construction of a more extensive ranking of tourism cities by darkness. The third limitation of this study has been explored in the Discussion section above. This paper has only considered the presentation of dark tourism product and services within DMO websites, in English. Because of this, specific DMO marketing campaigns were excluded from the analysis, which might give an alternative measure of DMO promotional activity. In addition, only international-focused websites were analysed, that are presented in the English language, which might miss activity related to developing dark tourism products and services for the domestic tourism market.

This research has confirmed the prevailing view in the literature that there are differences of emphasis on the supply side of dark tourism, and that the idea of a scale of darkness that has been applied to dark tourism products (Lennon and Foley, 2000; Raine, 2013; Stone, 2005; Strange and Kempa, 2003) can also be applied to the classification of cities as dark tourism destinations. Biran et al. (2011) and Yan et al. (2016) draw attention to the key role played by the supply-side of dark tourism in determining whether a site can be developed for dark tourism. The four examples of cities discussed above (London, Amsterdam, Milan and Venice), show how supply-side issues of varying kinds, such as the authenticity of the offer, the number of dark attractions, the dominant brand of a destination and the presence of dissonant heritage can impact on the ranking of the darkness of a city destination.

For practitioners in tourist city marketing, tourism marketing and destination management, this research shows that there is a wide variation between European cities in terms of the promotion of dark tourism products and services as part of their tourist offer. This suggest product development and marketing opportunities for cities that wish to capture the emerging dark tourism market. A more developed and comprehensive dark tourism ranking of tourist cities can be used by practitioners to evaluate their success in promoting this aspect of their city’s tourism offer and to judge their performance against competitor destinations.

References


Euromonitor (2017), *Top 100 City Destinations Ranking*, Euromonitor, London.


**Further reading**


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Abstract

**Purpose** – The paper is making a preliminary evaluation of dark tourism potential in Bulgaria. Dark tourism is underestimated research topic in Bulgaria – a country with long and rich cultural heritage, belonging to orthodox religion, with ambiguous impacts from the communist/socialist political regime and nowadays being a typical destination for mass and 3 “S” (sun, sand, sea) tourism. The research topic is approached by starting with an inventory and classification of the main tourist attractions/sites for dark tourism according to the most widely applicable theoretical typologies, inclusively their territorial density, cities location, authenticity and commercialization. The general counterpoint is the non-western approach and the hypothesis that dark places/attractions can be explored as potential tourist resources, diversifying the cities destination supply. The places related to death within the death-tourism framework are explored within the urban landscape. The research applies supply-demand approach and includes semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders from the supply side and a questionnaire accessing the tourist’s perspective and readiness from the demand side. Special attentions is given to the cities as concentrating the major part of the dark sites/attractions in the country, being at the same time integral part of the public areas and urban landscape, with special designation and/or combination of additional recreational functions. The data and results from the conducted research revealed that dark tourism in Bulgaria, in the narrowest sense is relatively unknown, unexplored type of tourism, difficult to distinguish and overlapping with other types of tourism mainly in the cities. The paper also raises the discussion about the necessity to extend the dark tourism research in the cities, taking into account the non-western approach and cultural sensitiveness. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The methodology of the research, in its nature, is purely qualitative, widest and most applicable (Biran A., Hyde K., 2013), (Wight, 2006) (Light, 2017) and follows two main stages: inventory, classification and potential of the dark tourism sites/attractions in Bulgaria and supply-demand approach for pilot exploratory study of the readiness of the suppliers and main stakeholders from one site, and the tourist’s perceptions from other side.

**Findings** – The data and results from the conducted research revealed that dark tourism in the narrowest sense in Bulgaria is relatively unknown, unexplored type of tourism, difficult to distinguish and overlapping with other types of tourism mainly in the cities. The findings challenge the predominant understanding of dark tourism typology, spectrum, and type of places/attractions (Light, 2017). Within the tourism-death relationship framework in the non-western approach with narrow focus in Bulgaria as research area, the author can confirm that the concept of dark tourism research should be extended taking into account the religion (relationship to death), historical development and political regime. The results obtained clearly show that the main difference from the western approach lies in on completely different conceptual basis, which differs from the concept of dark tourism. Tourism is mostly linked with recreation, leisure, and entertainment, while the dark places/sites related to death and suffer are mostly linked to religion, historical or political heritage. Besides being different both create and conduct to a behavior and visit of such places with deserved respect, honor and part of national identity and culture.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study’s focus is narrow and limited at national level as part of “eastern” (non-western) context of tourism-death relationship framework. The findings resulted from pilot exploratory study provide theoretical and practical insights into understanding of dark tourism and its potential development in Bulgaria by considering the availability of dark sites/attractions, supply (readiness of main stakeholders) and demand side (tourist’s perspective). The paper limits the research in the post-modern context stressing on tourism/leisure and commercial use of death as attractions and places. Other limitations are pilot character of the exploratory study and the limited number of respondents.

**Practical implications** – The paper delivers practical insights into understanding of dark tourism and its potential development in Bulgaria by considering the availability of dark sites/attractions, supply (readiness of main stakeholders) and demand side (tourist’s perspective).

**Originality/value** – Most of the research in the field of dark tourism as expression of tourism-death relationship framework are concentrated on the “western way of thinking” (Light, 2017, p. 297) covering...
countries from West Europe, USA, Australia (Foote, 1997), (Bowman M., Pezzullo P., 2010, p. 188). The use of Western frameworks for understanding the tourism-death relationship in other parts of the world and particularly in Bulgaria as Eastern European and orthodox country may not be appropriate. For the specific research area – the case of Bulgaria, theoretically although incorrect, a parallel is possible between the western post-modern secularism and atheism as official communist policy between 1940 and 1990 (Metodiev, 2013). Darkness of sites/attraction identified within the tourism-death relationship and exploitation of the death is seen supporting and commemorating the sacrifice of the “heroes” of the time keeping them “eternally alive” and as symbols, incarnations of the “sacral” political power.

Keywords Tourism, Bulgaria, Communism, Non-western approach, Dark, Tourism-death framework

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

Dark tourism as phenomenon has been in existence for a long time, but seems to be more “fashionable and emotive” nowadays (Sharpley, 2005, p. 220). The dark tourism is gaining popularity and importance in all aspects – for tourists, for the destination development (destination marketing organizations), travel agencies and for research[1] and education in the field of tourism. The development of dark tourism in destinations like France, Poland, Cambodia, USA, Ukraine, etc., has proved that it could play an important role for intensification and attraction of tourists to new and unknown places and sites, responding to specific motivations, needs and expectations. In the last decade, the literature body of dark tourism proliferated extending the discussion on the various approaches, definitions and typologies (Lennon and Foley, 2000; Stone and Sharpley, 2008; Stone, 2006; Timothy, 2011; Sharpley, 2005). Most of the research in the field of dark tourism as expression of tourism-death relationship are concentrated on the “western way of thinking” (Light, 2017, p. 297) covering countries from West Europe, USA, Australia (Foote, 1997; Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010, p. 188) and currently extending the coverage of the topic from research works within the Asia’s context (Selmi et al., 2012; Kang et al., 2012). While the use of Western frameworks for understanding the tourism-death relationship in other parts of the world and particularly in Bulgaria as Eastern European and orthodox country may not be appropriate (Lee et al., 2012; Yoshida et al., 2016).

For a country as Bulgaria, mainly recognized as a “sun, sand and sea” mass tourism destination, with orthodox religion, part of the ex-Eastern Bloc, located in the heart of in the Balkan Peninsula – geopolitically complex region, the dark tourism is a questionable alternative. The complex relationships between dark tourism, heritage, history, and death, contemplation are revealed in tensions between culture and contemporary concept of the tourism and commercial leisure (Smith et al., 2010). In this context, the western approach is situated along with the evaluation of potential restrictions, socio-cultural obstacles deriving from the tourism-death relationship and cultural sensitiveness hampering the development of the dark tourism in Bulgaria. The research framework is limited to the local market key players, as integral part social-cultural environment and holders of collective memory and identity. In Bulgaria, the topic of dark tourism is almost unknown and under researched as a whole. There are limited publications partially covering the topic, mostly as a tangent to communist/socialist heritage and other heritage considered as representing the “dark” periods of Bulgarian history (Moncheva, 2015; Iankova and Mleva, 2014; Poria et al., 2013, Ivanov and Ohridska-olson, 2017; Vukov, 2007; Vukov, 2017). The aim of the current study is to identify the potential for development of dark tourism in Bulgaria as an alternative to the mass tourism destination development of the country, applying the western approach for evaluation. Preliminary inventory and classification of current attractions/sites in the country and with special attention to the cities – classified as “dark” according to the Stone’s (2006) typology as most influential in literature body, representing the western approach within the spectrum of dark tourism supply. The demand side is approached by conducting research with the main key players – stakeholders, suppliers and tourists.

2. Literature review

Dark tourism tends to be used as an umbrella term for any form of tourism that is somehow related to death, suffering, atrocity, tragedy or crime (Light, 2017, p. 277). Commonly such visits
are conducted with commemoration, education or entertainment (Stone, 2006; Korstanje and Ivanov, 2012; McEachern and Huntington, 1991). Other attempts for terminology clarification include “thanatourism” as offering of interested participant the chance to “gaze upon real or recreated death” (Seaton, 1996, 1999, 2002); “morbid tourism” (Bloom, 2000), “black-spot tourism” as “commercial developments of grave sites and sites in which celebrities or large numbers of people have met with sudden and violent death” (Rojek, 1993); “milking the macabre” (Dann, 1998); “grief tourism” (Trotta, 2006; Dunkley et al., 2007); “horror tourism, hardship tourism, tragedy tourism, genocide tourism” (Dunkley et al., 2011); “atrocity tourism/heritage” (Ashworth and Hartmann, 2005); “death tourism” referring to disaster sites as recreational landscape (Sion, 2014).

What is common behind all of them is the search for appropriate approach for definition of different manifestations of dark tourism as result of sudden, violent death by different reasons such as natural disasters, war (battlefields, concentration camps, and graves), religious rituals, genocide, places of genocide or execution, etc.

The dark tourism model developed by Stone and Sharpley (2008) shows how tourism can “provide a means for confronting the inevitably of one’s own death and that of others. More specifically, dark tourism allows the re-conceptualization of death and mortality into forms that stimulate something other than primordial terror and dread.” Thus, dark tourism in its diverse forms allows tourist to satisfy their curiosity and allows them to create their own thoughts about the mortality (Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010; Stone, 2010). It can be argued that dark tourism additionally creates the sense of death, while the consumption of such products allows the individuals to digest and understand past disasters and ominous events and decrease the feeling of fear of death as an opportunity to contemplate death at a safe distance, transforming morality into symbol of memory and knowledge.

The demand side and specially the consumption motivations, attitudes and search for “dark” touristic experiences have been the main focus in the works of many authors (Podoshen, 2013; Stone and Sharpley, 2008; Seaton, 1996; Tarlow, 2005; Rojek, 1993; Foley and Lennon, 1996). Confrontation of death, enduring loss and a finite transition overcoming negative feelings (Osbaldiston and Petray, 2011; Dunkley et al., 2011). Among the most extensive descriptive work about the motivations for visiting dark places is that of Dann (1998), but we cannot agree that all of them are applicable for tourist behavior. The dark tourism (like all kind of tourism) satisfies specific tourist needs driven by complex push and pull factors, heritage, history, guilt, curiosity, death and dying, nostalgia, education, remembrance, artifacts, site sacralization, tribute to victims, etc. (Yuill, 2003). The supply side is accessed in works of Stone (2006), where dark tourism is referred as the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre as in the works of others (Lennon and Foley, 2000; Stone, 2006; Mowatt and Chancellor, 2011). Tarlow (2005) adds that dark tourism is “visitation to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred and that continue to impact our lives,” while the management of dark heritage places is another issue (Poria et al., 2006; Timothy, 2011; Foote, 1997; Dann, 1994). As an exception of general understanding of tourism supply (entirely consumer-centric), dark tourism as pointed by Seaton (1999) is not only driven by consumer tastes (which are often very commercial and self-oriented), but also depend on media influence and capacity of the supplier. The development is also relatively fragile, dependent and subject to changes in the wider political and cultural climate and environment – movies, books, memories, etc. (Rojek and Urry, 1997). Thus, dark tourism is subject to external and not always controllable factors, outside the reach of marketing and other regular tools applicable for destination marketing and research, and this is why we consider dark tourism in post-modern context and within the commonly accepted western approach.

Dark tourism is also considered as cultural intermediary between death and life (Walter, 2009; Tercier, 2005). Stone and Sharpley (2008) are putting the dark tourism inside the conceptual framework linking the dark tourism experience with the “sociology of death” and the “mechanisms for confronting death in contemporary societies.” More importantly, Stone points that dark tourism “mediates a potential social filter between life and death” and acts as “modern mediating institution, which not only provides a physical place to link the living with the dead, but also allows a cognitive space for the Self to construct contemporary ontological meanings of
mortality” (Stone, 2012). Thus, the development of dark tourism is suggested as contributing not only for saving the history and cultural heritage, but also for protection of moral and ethical values of contemporary societies.

Within the western post-modern approach of the death-tourism framework there is “secularization and negation of religion as a traditional dominant framework” along with the “process of individualization and moral confusion,” enabling “dark tourism places to become more communicative spaces” providing “extraction of moral meaning […] embodying of the self […] and emotional engagement of individual visitor apart from the official interpretation of death” (Stone, 2010, p. 118). In this context certainly the ethical, moral questions and cultural sensitiveness are very important in parallel with the commercialization and economic benefits of the tourism as a destination. Foley and Lennon (1996) are among those who “blame” the dark tourism as a type of exploitation due to the fact that organizers and suppliers are taking advantage and generate profits form tourists emotions and conscience and this raises serious moral dilemma. For the specific research area – Bulgaria as a dark tourism destination, this is not surveyed and will be taken into account in the current research.

3. Research area

In the context of dark tourism and considering the non-western approach it is important to take into account the impacts of the religious, cultural and political development of the destination.

Bulgaria, as an orthodox state, with long history (officially adopted the Christianity by Boris I in 865 AD), has always followed the religious canons related death. The death is respected with honor and “rest in peace.” We consider this as very important aspect when linked to the cultural sensitiveness and non-western approach.

Later, after the Second World War the atheist communist policy based on ideological issues and irrational striving to be modern, leads to the emergence of civil society. Important in the context of the research is the communist policy during the late 60’s enhancing the affirmation of the Orthodox Church into “guardian of Bulgarianness” and “monument of culture,” maintaining the national spirit and identity (e.g. transforming monasteries into tourist places and museums as UNESCO heritage Rila Monastery during 1961).

The political regime of communism/socialism and conducted for years policy of atheism have strongly influenced the Bulgarian society, inclusively in respect to death. Death in socialist (communist) period was integrated into two main themes: heroic and daily death, and these are, in fact, the themes of the political-ideological uses of the “great” death and the management and domestication of the “little one,” the attempts of the regime to “colonize” the death (Vukov, 2013). The dark tourism attractions in Bulgaria as heritage are commemorative signs and monuments were built during the so called communist/socialist period (1940-1990). They represent the ideological concept and of the “sacred” at that time and, accordingly, through the prism of the relationship it has with political power (Vukov, 2017). Darkness of these monuments and palaces is based on the relationship and exploitation of the death, seen as supporting and commemorating the sacrifice of the “heroes” of the time, keeping them “eternally alive” and as symbols, incarnations of the “sacral” political power. The cultural heritage was shaped during the last 40-50 years by the communist/socialist policy and different historic periods were designed with a confrontation of a death, enduring loss, neutralization of any resentment against death – representing it either as an accomplished duty or as a willing sacrifice to the nation (Dimitrova, 2005; Osbaldiston and Petray, 2011; Dunkley et al., 2011). For example, among the main goals of the Art Council policy (Department of Soldier Graveyards and Monuments of the Ministry of War) was the rework of the negative memories of war (fear, destruction) in order to impose the myth of war as “an aspiration towards a sensible life, as a desire for individual and national regeneration” (Dimitrova, 2005). The erection of memorials of victims of war aimed public recognition of the death and incorporation into the collective historical time of the nation. The materialized sites of death and memory of war became a place of social life in the cities, where the state strategy of modernization dominated peasant culture and disciplined the attitude towards the
“other’s” death. In fact this is one of the main reasons we find biggest concentration of dark sites/attractions in cities (as a result of the state policy) and also the explanation why they are not perceived as “dark” objects. The cities are in fact concentrating different types of attractions, integral part of the urban landscape. What is under investigated is how these two extremities: death and tourism are accepted and part of the cultural sensitiveness. From other side, dark tourism development will be always overlapping and in certain way competing with other types of tourism, linked to the cities and urban environment.

For Bulgaria as a specific research area, theoretically although incorrect, a parallel is possible between the western post-modern secularism and atheism as official communist policy between 1940-1990s (Metodiev, 2013). While the secularization referred as “[...] religion diminishes in social significance, becomes increasingly privatized, and loses personal salience except where it finds work to do other than relating individuals to the supernatural” (Bruce, 2002, p. 30), atheism was imposed as part of the official policy, planned and structured process from the governing communist (socialist) party. The policy of atheism achieved its goals by changing the attitude towards death, especially as a presence and integral part of in the urban and social environment.

4. Methodology

There is a wide range of methodological approaches applied for dark tourism research being the most common the qualitative methods with combination with in-depth interviews and observations about tourist behavior (Light, 2017; Biran and Hyde, 2013; Dunkley et al., 2011; Wight, 2006). That’s why in the current paper we also apply qualitative methodology, extended with qualitative methods for suppliers and stakeholders (semi-structured interviews) and tourists (open ended, explanatory questionnaire).

The methodological framework consists of two main stages:

1. approaching the dark tourism trough inventory process, classification and preliminary evaluation of potential dark tourism sites/attractions in Bulgaria; and

2. launching the supply-demand approach, based on pilot exploratory study, investigating the readiness of the suppliers, the main stakeholders and the tourist’s perceptions as prerequisite for dark tourism development.

At the first stage, based on preliminary assumption that the existence of adequate tourist attractions and places of interest are among the main pre-conditions for development of any kind of tourism, we conducted preliminary inventory of the existent, main attractions and places matching the dark tourism concept. The main sources of information are the official tourist sites of the Ministry of Tourism, the municipalities as well as historical sources and official urban development plans of the largest cities in the country. We used qualitative research and content analyses selecting attractions and places that recall death, disaster, and tragedies (Foley and Lennon, 1996). The inventory is not pretending to be complete, but as first ever attempt in Bulgaria the main goal is rather to identify the available types of dark tourism attractions and their geographical location with special attention to cities. The research resulted to the creation of list (inventory) of attractions/sites matching the dark tourism concept and classification according to the criteria: region concentration (NUTS[2]), location (city or outside city), authenticity, commercialization (Powell and Iankova, 2016) and under the Seaton’s (1996) typology the five categories of dark travel activities. The identified sites/attractions were sorted by regions concentration within the administrative division of Bulgaria. We opted to apply the NUTS division at level 2 for the main six planning regions due the statistical and planning reasons at national level and eventually future management of the sites/attractions. The dark tourism sites/attractions were classified by the criteria location in order to identify the concentration of attractions/sites in cities or outside cities. The next criteria, considered as important for dark tourism evaluation is the authenticity (Stone, 2006; Powell and Iankova, 2016) addressing the sites/attractions as real historic dark events or as no authentic representing and/or recreating imaginary events inspired from the legends, popular imagination, collective consciousness, etc. Another important issue within the non-western framework of tourism-death framework is the commercialization and that is why we applied the criteria commercial (developed for profit) vs noncommercial exploitation of
the dark tourism sites/atraction. Taking in consideration the purpose of the attractions/sites educational/entertainment according to the Stone’s spectrum (Stone, 2006) we have applied the proposed by Seaton’s five categories of dark travel activities (Seaton, 1996): travel to witness public enactments, travel to see the sites of individual or mass deaths after they have occurred, travel to memorials or interment sites, including graveyards, cenotaphs, crypts and war memorials, travel to see evidence or symbolic representations of death at unconnected sites, such as museums containing weapons of death, travel for reenactments or simulation of death. The results from the first stage of inventory and classification according the criteria – regional concentration, location, authentic/no authentic and commercial/no commercial are presented in table.

At the second stage, we pushed the analysis even further on and tried to access the readiness of the suppliers and main stakeholders along with the tourist’s attitude in visiting and consumption of dark tourism. The research adopted supply-demand approach combining qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews for the suppliers and main stakeholders (administration) and online open ended, explanatory questionnaire for the tourists. The respondents passed pre-selection process accessing in total nine travel agencies and tour operators offering or declaring (officially at their web sites) as offering dark tourism tours and packages. Among them only two (Lyuba Tours and All BG Leisure) responded. That is why we opted to extent the responses from their representatives, assuming that they are acting as collective representing bodies of supplier industry. In fact this is mentioned in the answers of the interviewed representatives as expression of the opinion of their most “adventurous” members. Specifically, six semi-structured interviews were conducted during the period January-February 2013 with the representatives of the mentioned travel agencies and NGOs. The interviewees were initially contacted by telephone and/or by mail, while each interview session – which lasted approximately 35-40 minutes – was performed at each interviewee’s office by the author. The interviews started asking about the general understanding of dark tourism, because the term is unknown, unpopular and applied without the consent of the tourism industry itself (Wight, 2006), so many professionals responsible for managing places of death or suffering for tourism do not embrace the term (Baldwin and Sharpley, 2009; Magee and Gulmore, 2015; Seaton et al., 2015; Light, 2017). The others questions intent to evaluate the dark tourism potential in Bulgaria, inclusive the possibilities or strategic plans to offer/initiate products, based on dark tourism and identification of restrictions, obstacles and/or risks for developing it (see Table I). The answers from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed manually due to the low number of respondents and the simple nature of the answers.

Enlarging the dark tourism supply side perspective, we conducted survey within the main stakeholders (administration and government institutions), directly linked with dark tourism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>Interview/survey questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interview questions for service suppliers and administration</td>
<td>Questionnaire for the tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you understand dark tourism? (tourism-death relationship)</td>
<td>Do you know what dark tourism is? (tourism-death relationship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that Bulgaria has potential to develop dark tourism?</td>
<td>Do you think that Bulgaria has potential to develop dark tourism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which are the main sites/attraction suitable for dark tourism based on the relationship tourism-death?</td>
<td>What are the main attractions/sites for dark tourism in Bulgaria based on the relationship tourism-death?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you intent to develop/support/offer dark tourism tours/packages?</td>
<td>Have you visited dark tourism attraction in Bulgaria?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the main restrictions, obstacles or risk in developing dark tourism from your perspective?</td>
<td>Would you like to visit dark tourism attractions/sites? If yes, which one?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the main motivation/goal for visiting dark tourism sites/attraction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How much you are ready to pay for dark tourism?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
development and policy making in the country. The inquiry questions repeated the questions in the conducted semi-structured interviews. We reached government and other official institutions representing the identified sites/attractions for dark tourism from the previous research stage. The list of replied government and official institutions are six in total and include Ministry of Economics; Energy and Tourism, General Directorate “Execution of Penalties” at Ministry of Justice, and the Prisons from Sliven, Pazardzhik and Belene (ex-concentration camp). The collection of data was obtained through an official written inquiry to the responsible officials between March and June 2013. We have received written answers in a form of official position about the dark tourism from these institutions.

At the second stage, we have also approached the demand side conducting a questionnaire within domestic tourists only, as the result from the first stage revealed dark tourism potential as recognizable at national level. The sample is not representative ($n = 60$) and the questionnaire was sent and collected electronically, between September 1, 2013 and January 30, 2013. It is an exploratory pilot study due to the lack of previous studies conducted in Bulgaria. In its nature the methodology is purely qualitative, although sending online form of a questionnaire for distribution and data collection. The structure of the questionnaire is overlapping the questions from the conducted semi-structured interview aiming to compare the supply (service providers and administration) and demand (tourists themselves) (see Table I).

The questionnaire was conducted in Bulgarian language, consisting mainly open ended and exploratory question aiming to discover the responses that individuals give spontaneously. The questionnaire was sent to larger number of respondents ($n = 200$), but only 30 percent responded ($n = 60$). The respondents were randomly selected from the mail list of tourism students (bachelor and master degree) and graduated Tourism graduated students (ALUMNI) of Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”[3]. This is the main reason for prevalence of young respondents and students. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table II.

The questionnaire was sent by mail and the data collected and analyzed manually due to the limited number of respondents and majority of open ended questions aiming free and spontaneously expressed opinion. The main findings presented derive from the thematic analysis of the narrative answers.

5. Findings

5.1 Attractions and sites for dark tourism in Bulgaria

The dark tourism development is complex issue especially for a destination, internationally recognized as traditional destination for 3 “S,” former socialist country with a rich, but not so widely known history form more ancient times (Thracian culture, part of Ottoman Empire, participant in the II World Wars, active in saving of prosecuted form Hitler’s Jewish citizens, etc.). Bulgarian culture originally developed in the shadow of the Eastern Roman Empire, lately remained on the margins of mature Western European medieval culture development. For fifth centuries the Bulgarian territories were part of the Ottoman Empire, and later, after a short fascist period in the 1920-1930 the country has fallen in so called Eastern Bloc, communist regime and behind the Iron curtain. In post-modern context, this is why the dark tourism considered under the communist/socialist heritage. Bulgaria de facto is not linked to the internationally recognizable dark heritage. As part of the Eastern Bloc, Bulgaria was among the leading tourism destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Respondents’ profile</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>19-24: 46%; 25-30, 45%; &gt; 30, 9%;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male $n = 26$ (43.33%), female $n = 34$ (56.67%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Secondary 28%, higher education 72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
receiving tourists from other socialist countries. Since then the country is associated as mass tourism destination, nowadays conducting differentiation policy straightening and supporting the cultural and other types of tourism (e.g. SPA, balneotherapy). The dark tourism is outside of the focus and general strategic framework of official tourism policy, both at state and supplier’s level. For domestic tourism therefore, visiting dark sites is mainly linked to national history and definitely contributes for national, universal and human sense of identification, formation of a collective identity, preservation of cultural memory and attitude of tolerance towards others. In Bulgaria, dark tourism attractions are mainly part of the cultural heritage of the country and thus managed and owned by the state, municipality, Bulgarian Orthodox Church and other registered religions, as well as private and legal entities (Cultural Heritage Act, 2011).

For creation of the list of dark tourism attractions, we identified those with emphasis on the disaster, death, human suffering we selected the sites for visits of cemeteries, ossuaries, prisons, battlefields (as Dragoman, Slivnitsa, Pleven, etc.), places of murders and coups d’état (political and military), locations of a firing execution and mass graves, crypts, pantheons etc. From the list are excluded communist/socialist heritage monuments[4] and some paranormal/ghost sites as not corresponding or matching the dark tourism concept for death, disaster or suffer and laying on completely different ideological fundaments and associations. Applying the proposed by Seaton’s (1996) five categories of dark travel activities we found that from all of them we only exclude the travel to witness public reenactments of death as non-applicable for Bulgaria as many other countries in the world. All other four categories can be found in Bulgaria at different extent, number and diversity. The preliminary results from the first stage are presented at Table III.

The result of the inventory, although not pretending to be complete and extensive, and the content analysis applied reveals that in their majority the dark places/attractions are linked to war, battlefields, cemeteries, pantheons, ossuary and other, part of the historical heritage and collective memory, treated with great respect and honor. In some of the sites the victims are proclaimed as saints (e.g. in Batak) and respected with greatest glory. The places that are identified as attractions in Bulgaria with the potential for dark tourism are linked mostly to the sanctification and in least extent to the designation. We excluded the classification based on belonging to different historic periods and political regimes as for example Byzantine, Ottoman domination and communist and fascist periods of ruling powers, due to the little or no direct connection with general dark attractions/sites framework. Moreover, it is important to consider not only the absolute number of sites/attractions, but also their attractiveness, socialization, specialization and readiness to meet tourists. Not all of the listed places are suitable and permitted for tourist visits, but can be classified by major themes like: places of natural disasters (explosions, earth rakes, etc.); concentration camps and prisons (e.g. Belene, St Kirik); war cemeteries, memorials, mass graves; battlefields; places related to myths and legends (Kaliakra cape); places of accidents, terrorist attacks. From the list should be excluded all functioning prisons as places forbidden by law for free (inclusive tourist) visits. Among the war and battlefield sites, some may be identified of international interest, as part of the international history, e.g. Russian-Turkish and Balkan wars.

The concentration of the sites/attractions is unevenly distributed within the country, as South-West (BG41) and Sofia as capital city in particular stands out, followed by North-Central (BG32) and South-East (BG34). With respect to location there is high level of concentration of sites/attractions in cities (66.67 percent). The inventory list confirmed that the cities are the destinations, aggregating the major and most important sites/attractions, overlapping and competing with other predominant types of tourism and eclipse the dark tourism potential. The cities are generally leading destinations for city tourism, cultural, events, etc. Applying the criteria commercial/no commercial as tourist product for profit or not we found that only 4 out of 36 sites/attractions are considered commercial, being the majority classified as no-commercial or with mixed nature. It no surprise in the fact that almost all of them are classified as authentic (real historical dark events), and limited number (4 percent) of no authentic, related to representation or recreation of imaginary events inspired from the legends, literature, popular imagination and collective consciousness. The no authentic sites are generally nature/landscape sites, outside the cities related to legends, murders, disasters or tragic death in the past.
Only three are specifically created in the cities during the last five years. These attractions are the Prison museum in Veliko Tarnovo, the old bomb shelters in Burgas transformed into recreation underground attraction and St Anastasia Island as tourist attraction with adequate management. All of them are result from the public/municipal initiative to transform, renovate or make more “touristic” abandoned, non-attractive or ruined places in the cities.

Table III
Dark tourist attractions/sites in Bulgaria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Major dark tourism attractions</th>
<th>Authentical (A)/non authentical (NA)</th>
<th>Commercial (C)/noncommercial (NC)</th>
<th>Location: city (C)/outside city (OC)</th>
<th>Stone’s typology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North-West, BG31</td>
<td>1. Pleven’s Panorama &amp; Battlefield</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lovech’s Camp “Sunny beach”</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Ossuary at Chirovtsi monastery</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC-C</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Okolitsa Peak (Botiev’s place of death)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-Central BG32</td>
<td>1. Belene’s concentration camp “Prison” (Veliko Tarnovo)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Military cemetery (Tutrakan)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>L+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Baldwin Tower (Veliko Tarnovo)</td>
<td>NA-A</td>
<td>C-NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Stazhista (ghost buildings after the earthquake in 1986)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Pantheon of the Heroes of the National Revival, Ruse</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Ossuary at Chiprovtsi</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East, BG33</td>
<td>1. Vladislav Varmenchik museum and battlefield area</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC-C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The Pantheon – city of Varna</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Yastrebino village</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>D++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East, BG34</td>
<td>1. St Anastasia island (ex-prison) (Underground city)</td>
<td>A- NA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>L+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Burgas bomb shelters</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Silven’s prison</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Pantheon of Georgi Stoykov Rakovski</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Battlefields in Sheinovo, Shipka, Kalitino</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West, BG41</td>
<td>1. Sofia Central cemetery</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Sofia’s garrison shouting ground</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Sofia’s bomb shelters</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Ilanti mass grave</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. St Sofia crypt</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC-C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. St Nedelya Church (Sofia)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC-C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Black Rock at Rila Mountain</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Dragoman battlefield</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Slinitsa battlefield</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Scravena ossuary</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Uranium mines in Bobov Dol (also place of big explosion 1997)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. “St Vrach” concentration camp (Sandanski)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-Central, BG42</td>
<td>1. Batak ossuary</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Ardino Devil’s bridge</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>L+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Pazardzhik prison</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. St Kirik and Gonda voda concentration camps</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>OC</td>
<td>D++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *No prison in the country is authorized for tourist visits
Considering Stone’s (2006) typology as expression of approach to tourism-death framework of seven dark tourism suppliers – dark fun factories, dark exhibitions, dark dungeons, dark resting places, dark shrines, dark conflict sites, dark camps of genocide, for Bulgaria we exclude all of them as possible, except for “dark conflict sites.” All of the six excluded – either they do not exist as defined by the author, are of insignificant importance or completely irrelevant to Bulgarian tourism offer. This is why we found the western approach and Stone’s typology of the dark tourism suppliers in particular as inappropriate for specific research area. Within the Bulgarian context the inventory of the attractions and places for dark tourism are mainly linked to Bulgarian history – wars, battlefields, and other past events form different historical periods.

We pushed the content analysis even deeper applying the Stone’s (2006) typology “darkest-lightest framework” and the understanding for the purpose of the sites/attractions: educational (the dark side) and entertainment (lighter side) (see Table I). The results demonstrate that the attractions are mainly with educational purpose with concentration in the middle – between darkest and lightest extremities. All the sites/attractions identified in Bulgaria with potential to attract tourist for dark tourism can be classified as accidental or non-purposeful sites according to the classification of cultural places linked to history and culture of the country. Most of these places are visited by educational reasons, remembrance, rising national pride, keeping living the national memory and are widely known for domestic tourism. The economic (commercialization) and entertainment reasons are not well presented compared to neighbor’s Romania (Dracula castle) or other countries like UK, where dark tourism is inseparable part of entertainment industry (London Dungeon, London Bridge experience, etc.). Some efforts in this direction is the declared intentions of Sozopol municipality to create a tour linking the “vampire” graves found recently (2012) with the Sighisoara (Dracula city) in Romania[5]. Again only in very recent times, and strongly supported by EU finding and grant schemes within the cross border cooperation and creation of interregional routes and tourist products. From the resource provision and availability of dark tourism sites/attractions Bulgaria can be concluded that the dark tourism potential is questionable. From one side because of weakness in applying the western approach with the same/equal approach of tourism-death framework and by other side due to the typology of the identified sites/attractions – mainly authentic, no commercial with educational purpose and thus more as part of cultural heritage tourism, collective memory and national identity. Moreover the inventory and list of possible sites/attractions for dark tourism in Bulgaria are quite far away from focus of major research studies such as related to holocaust, slavery, genocide, terrorist attacks, contemporary conflict zones, sites of death of famous people, entertainment based sites and others (Light, 2017, p. 280). Within the Bulgarian context as ex-socialist country with orthodox religion and different approach and understanding of death is difficult to find clear and unquestionable relationship between death and tourism.

5.2 Supply and demand perspectives

The results from the conducted six semi-structured interviews of respondents, representing the supply side, reveal that they are unfamiliar with the concept dark tourism, but not with it main expressions linked to visits of sites/attractions related to death, disaster and suffer. The major identified themes are grouped and presented in Table IV.

According to most respondents, dark tourism is motivated by cultural or religious needs. Second, the importance of historic events like wars, battlefields and other historical places related to death severely influence the culture of a nation, collective memory, and identity. Another group of answers is related to visits of epic death places or doom of national heroes, victims of wars, e.g. memorials, pantheons, ossuaries, etc. The tourism-death framework is completely unacceptable and difficult to be linked. The potential for dark tourism is disputable. Almost all interviewed agree that Bulgaria is far away from other countries developing “serious” dark tourism. The main sites/attractions offered by travel agencies are the Central Cemetery and other memorials form communist/socialist periods. The idea of one of the managers to transform ex-concentration camp into boutique hotel have been rejected pointing that “These places are so absorbed with negative energy, that sleeping in a place like that it’s not good.” This comment of one of the interviewed tour operators clearly shows that there is very different approach to places related to death and murder in Bulgaria in comparison to the western approach and
Table IV  Main results from the semi-structured interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semi-structured interview questions for service suppliers and administration</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you understand dark tourism? (tourism-death relationship)</td>
<td>“Difficult to combine the terms”, “western approach to the ex-socialist counties”, “we have more conservative understanding and honor to death”, ”no play with death” “Interesting topic, eventually in the future”; “no expressed interest or demand”; ”in Bulgaria we have lack of “dark spots” of the caliber of Auschwitz in Poland, Katín in Ukraine and the Second World War town-heroes such as Odessa and Stalingrad and many more of the sort witnessing the horrors of the World War two mainly occurred in Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian territories.” Two enthusiastic managers stated that “this is not a reason to give up and offer what we have”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that Bulgaria has potential to develop dark tourism?</td>
<td>No expressed interest or demand; “we have more conservative understanding and honor to death”, “no play with death” “Interesting topic, eventually in the future”; “no expressed interest or demand”; “in Bulgaria we have lack of “dark spots” of the caliber of Auschwitz in Poland, Katín in Ukraine and the Second World War town-heroes such as Odessa and Stalingrad and many more of the sort witnessing the horrors of the World War two mainly occurred in Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian territories.” Two enthusiastic managers stated that “this is not a reason to give up and offer what we have”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which are the main sites/attractions suitable for dark tourism based on the relationship tourism-death?</td>
<td>Communist/socialist heritage – “because is interested for the western foreign tourists” Communist/socialist heritage – “because is interested for the western foreign tourists” “Central Cemetery (again, visiting the graves of ex-socialist political leaders as George Dimitrov)” Central Cemetery (again, visiting the graves of ex-socialist political leaders as George Dimitrov)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you intent to develop/support/offer dark tourism tours/packages?</td>
<td>Limited answers and low activity. Among the mentioned reasons for so limited interest are the “conservatism and lack of ideas about dark tourism attractiveness”, “lack of expressed tourist interest” Special legislative regime and difficulties in organization and receiving the permits from responsible institutions for visits in ex-concentration camps, prisons (completely prohibited) The Ministry of Justice as main governmental body responsible for issue of permissions in functioning prisons declared that “tourist visits are unlawful and will not be authorized”. The representative from the Ministry of Economics, Energy and Tourism answered that there is “no official policy supporting dark tourism, but eventually this could be done as part of other specialized types of tourism”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the main restrictions, obstacles or risk in developing dark tourism from your perspective?</td>
<td>Limited answers and low activity. Among the mentioned reasons for so limited interest are the “conservatism and lack of ideas about dark tourism attractiveness”, “lack of expressed tourist interest” Special legislative regime and difficulties in organization and receiving the permits from responsible institutions for visits in ex-concentration camps, prisons (completely prohibited) The Ministry of Justice as main governmental body responsible for issue of permissions in functioning prisons declared that “tourist visits are unlawful and will not be authorized”. The representative from the Ministry of Economics, Energy and Tourism answered that there is “no official policy supporting dark tourism, but eventually this could be done as part of other specialized types of tourism”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

understanding of relationship tourism-death. The NGO’s, as collective representing bodies, declared that their members are not interested in supporting or promote dark tourism, regardless the fact that dark attractions/sites exist. According to general secretary of BAAT “the development of dark tourism is not going to happen in the next five to ten years.” As obstacles for dark tourism development pointed are the legislative restrictions and organizational difficulties in receiving permits for visits of detention camps for political prisoners and dissidents against the communist government. The official legislation prohibits tourist’s visits to functioning prisons. Therefore, all regularly functioning prisons or other places under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Justice by Law have to be excluded from the list of potential dark tourism sites. We have received discouraging answers to our enquiry from the administration and official institutions in charge with the management of the identified dark tourism sites/attractions. The results from the questionnaire accessing the tourist readiness and perception from the demand side perspective are presented in Table V.

Less than one-third of the respondents declared to know what dark tourism is, expressing own interpretations and demonstrating clear misunderstanding of the concept. The tourist perspective and evaluation of the Bulgaria’s potential for dark tourism is not definitive or clear. Most of the respondents link dark tourism with other types of tourism, mainly – heritage or communist tourism. Not a single answer totally refusing dark tourism potential, but always seen as part of cultural, religious, education or heritage context. The main recognizable types of dark tourism sites/attractions are war and battlefield places, following by ghost tours, cemeteries and tombs/catacombs. The group age of 35+ are interested in visiting concentration camps and prisons from the communist period (30 percent), but mixing it with other types of tourism (like communist, pro-poor and paranormal tourism) shows confusion and misunderstanding about what dark tourism concept. According to the Stone’s typology, most of them can be classified as “dark conflict sites.” Majority of respondents confirmed their experience with dark tourism attractions/places – mainly war and battlefield memorials from Russian-Turkish war, e.g. Shipka, Pleven (Panroama); Thracian tombs; memorials of national epic heroes like e.g. Vasil Levski, Okolchitsa Peak (Botev’s place of death) and Batak ossuary. The expressed interest about future visits include specific places such as Belene concentration camp (15 percent), abandoned ghost villages, paranormal or spiritual places like Tzarichina, Belintash, Shishenci village, Ardino Devil’s bridge. Not all of them, actually can be linked the death, disaster or suffer. The answers evaluating
ceremonial mourning expressions such as and changed the relationship to death in building memorials, commemorating the death imposing death), historical development, and political regime. The communist/socialist period interfered the concept of dark tourism research should be extended considering the religion (relationship to death), substituting the general idea of interpretation and confrontation of death, but rather associated as memories and landmarks from the past political regime. The “social filter” (Stone, 2012) between death and life in Bulgaria suffered from dramatical changes and we can.

6. Conclusion

The paper attempts to study more in depth about the dark tourism potential in Bulgaria within the non-western approach of the tourism-death relationship. The findings challenge the predominant understanding of dark tourism typology, spectrum, and type of places/attractions (Light, 2017). Within the non-western approach, focusing on Bulgaria as a research area, we can confirm that the concept of dark tourism research should be extended considering the religion (relationship to death), historical development, and political regime. The communist/socialist period interfered and changed the relationship to death in building memorials, commemorating the death imposing ceremonial mourning expressions such as “fallen for the Patria, fallen in the fields of honour, fallen in the name of sacred duty” with main purpose to neutralize any resentment against that death and to represent it either as an accomplished duty or as a willing sacrifice (Dimitrova, 2005).

Not surprisingly, the results of the conducted survey confirm that the understanding of dark tourism mostly linked to the national history – wars and battlefield memorials. The communist policy in Bulgaria during the 50-years period have determined and validated the forms of sacred dimensions of the monuments and commemoration sites (places, exposition, forms, visualization, realization, narratives, etc.). In turn, the sacred authority has validated the political power through the legitimacy and authority necessary to make it absolute and dominant. After the changes of 90s and transition to the democracy these sites/attractions were charged with different type of attitude, substituting the general idea of interpretation and confrontation of death, but rather associated as memories and landmarks from the past political regime. The “social filter” (Stone, 2012) between death and life in Bulgaria suffered from dramatical changes and we can.

### Table V

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire for the tourists</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you know what dark tourism is? (tourism-death relationship)</td>
<td>“Visiting sites linked to dark side of the history”, “sites we should regret that exist”, “visiting paranormal sites”, “ghost, catacombs, abandoned or crumbling buildings”, “cemetery tourism”, “communist heritage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that Bulgaria has potential to develop dark tourism?</td>
<td>“Part of our history”, “heritage”, depends from the “historical interpretation”, expresses “nostalgia” and contributes for “keeping alive our memories about past events or people”, “enhance understanding of the past”. In one of the answer we found “not sure about dark tourism, because tourism is recreation, and related to visiting pleasant and calm places, avoiding additional stress”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the main attractions/sites for dark tourism in Bulgaria based on the relationship tourism-death?</td>
<td>War and battlefield places ghost tours, cemeteries, tombs/catacombs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you visited dark tourism attraction in Bulgaria?</td>
<td>Considerable percentage (72 percent) of the younger (19-30 years) respondents clearly declared their interest and readiness for participating in “dark” tours, while the respondents aged of 30+ were more moderate, with 43 percent of positive answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to visit dark tourism attractions/sites? If yes, which one?</td>
<td>The element of “discovery” and learning form history is dominant answer for all surveyed. Followed by the “curiosity” pointed by quarter of respondents. The “escapism, new and extreme experience” is identified by younger respondents (19-24) and with none from the older cohort (25+), for quarter of whom “the authenticity and first hand” experience is important factor. The “thrift of death proximity” (Podoshen, 2013) collects only 2% from the 25-30 years old and is considered as insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the main motivation/goal for visiting dark tourism sites/attraction?</td>
<td>War and battlefield places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much you are ready to pay for dark tourism?</td>
<td>On average &lt; 49 EUR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

motivation and expectations from dark tourism attractions are quite different from the generally presented in research studies (Light, 2017, p. 286), which again raises the question about the applicability of the western approach. Taking into account the marketing perspective about the solvent demand, we also asked about the budget, which tourists are ready to pay for dark tourism trip[6]. As expected there are similarities in younger respondents (19-24, 25-30) opting for the lowest ranges (< 49 EUR) as allocable budget. Reasonably the older group (> 30) is ready to spend more (between 50 and 99 EUR). The indicated budget for dark tourism is relatively low as compared to the average expenses of Bulgarians for tourism[7].
find different expressions and attitude toward dark sites/attractions. After the 1990s, the monumental landscape was reworked as a self-representation following the process of “cleanse” of the public space from the traces of the former ideology, embracing a new “post-socialist” identity (Vukov, 2007). The socialist heritage after the end of the communist/socialist regime was subject of purposeful destruction (e.g. the Mausoleum of the communist party leader Georgi Dimitrov), vandalism, abandoning and physical degradation or in other cases of protection, conservation, re-use and harmonious integration to the landscape and the free market economy (Iankova and Mileva, 2014). The contemporary perspective of the monuments and main attractions related to death and suffer are attached to the new interpretations and meanings of the history, reflecting the ethical and moral society’s sensitiveness.

From one side we are in front of the results deriving form the process of transformation, mixture, and substitution of the religious traditions, and from other side, the emergence of post-modern world without frontiers thanks to the power of social networks, open communication, access to information and re-emergence of interest to the religion and traditions, and particularly those related to death. All these have changed the “cognitive space for the Self to construct contemporary ontological meanings of mortality” (Stone, 2012). The dark tourism is a not an easy issue to be studied in this complex context and widely accepted western approach, but certainly a new, contemporary, more open and certain way adventurous interest to the dark attractions and places is present. Apart of this the possibility of commercialization and somehow trivialization as noted by Stone (2010, p. 105), stands outside of the eastern culture and communist/social policy, orthodox religion and tourism industry development — rising strong ethical and morality issues. We strongly agree that dark tourism require more in-depth research and development of new terminology that has more utility in non-western settings (Light, 2017, p. 296).

Dark tourism in Bulgaria currently can be classified as relatively unknown and unexplored type of tourism, both for demand and supply side, despite the identified various sites and attractions matching the concept. The inventory and classification done, applying the most influential approaches in the research literature (Foley and Lennon, 1996; Seaton, 1996; Stone and Sharpley, 2008) resulted to the identification of sites and attractions in majority linked to the heritage and history – communist/socialist period (memorials and landscapes), First and Second World Wars, Russian-Turkish war and others from smaller scale in terms of importance and numbers related to disaster or suffer. From the content analysis of the inventory list, we can conclude that Bulgaria does not have internationally, clearly recognizable and famous attractions for dark tourism (like Holocaust memorials e.g. Auschwitz – Poland; disaster places, e.g. Pripiat –Chernobyl, Russia; genocide, e.g. Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum – Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Ground Zero – New York, USA, slavery). Matching the dark concept with the identified sites, we found out that not all sites of death, disaster, and destruction are places to be memorialized, nor do all of them evolve into tourist attractions, due to the strong dependence of cultural values, political, social and/or economic factors, sometimes overlapping and accumulating over a number of decades. When a site experiences a tragic or violent event, one of the four outcomes – sanctification, designation, rectification, or obliteration – results (Foote, 1997).

Moreover, a broader contextual discussion of the cultural identity in the cities is necessary. It is noticeable that the majority of listed dark tourism sites/attractions are considered as part of historical and cultural heritage of the country, the heroic past and collective memory of the cities. Generally dark tourism is recognized by the respondents in this study as small scale, niche tourism suitable for the domestic market without enough potential to generate international interest. This is explained by the nature of sites/attractions and lack of important and internationally recognized “flag” attractions for dark tourism. The historical and political development of the country excludes dark sites linked to holocaust, slavery, terrorist attacks. Applying the Stone’s framework, comparing the concentration of dark and light attractions we can observe a gap in the extremities of the scale. Bulgaria is just making the first steps in developing and building the lighter type of attractions with focus on entertainment. Interesting conclusion is also that entertainment track is evolving not from the tourism suppliers, but rather as different types of official public or municipality administration initiatives (like transformation of
St Anastasia island ex-prison into tourist attraction; transformation of Burgas city ex-bomb shelters into recreation area; the idea to create integrated “vampire product” between Sozopol municipality and neighbor Sighisoara – Dracula city in Romania. All these initiatives aim to transform, renovate and make more attractive old, abandoned, non-attractive or ruined places mainly in the cities. Therefore, dark tourism can be also seen as contributing to the cities’ tourism development. These measures resulting in transformed and creation of “new” attractions in the cities were financially supported by EU grants and programs such Operational Program “Regional Development[8].” The main difference, when taking into consideration the death-tourism and the western approach, is that the newly and specifically created attractions by its meanings totally substitute and/or erase the initial link with the death and give space only to the tourism and recreation.

From the supply perspective, we have found that there is a limited understanding of dark tourism. Among the sites/attractions recognizable and suitable for dark tourism, we found great variety of answers, mixing the communist/socialist heritage tourism, pro-poor, paranormal tourism and even pilgrims visits to spiritual places, churches or monasteries with saints’ relics. These answers confirm the poor understanding of the dark tourism from service providers (Foote, 1997). Apart from them, the main dark tourism sites/attractions that appear in interview’s answers are – battlefields and linked with war places, such as memorials, pantheons, ossuaries; cemeteries; sites related to death, based on myths or legends. Extending the dark tourism concept to death, disaster or suffer, we have found limited interest from the service suppliers to offer dark tourism. It is considered very small niche, reserved for the domestic market, with a little potential to attract international tourists. Applying the Tarlow’s (2005) classification of emotions, closely linked to the demand of dark tourism and exploring the connection between visitor and victims, the possible target groups for dark tourism demand are the Bulgarians (domestic tourism) and nationals, form countries historically and culturally bound with Bulgaria like Russia, Germany, neighbor countries and others involved by the numerous wars taken place on Bulgarian territory through the history as for example the Russian-Turkish war etc. The tourist’s perceptions, attitude and interest trough dark tourism shows completely different conceptual basis, which differs from the western concept of dark tourism. At one extremity is tourism, associated with recreation, leisure and entertainment and general acceptance as commercialization (service provided) and at the other extreme is death, linked to loss, sadness, sites of rest or commemoration, treated with deserved respect, honor and part of national identity, collective memory and culture. The survey shows that the tourists are ready to spent relatively modest amounts of money for dark tourism, which is not stimulating the economic players from supply side. This is engraven with the lack of support and recognition from the official institutions, and obstacles in front of prohibition and impossibility to visit dark tourism attractions like prisons or bomb shelters – the latest being managed by Fire safety and Civil Protection Direction. There is unexplored potential for international dark tourism, mainly related to the Bulgarian history – war and battlefields like Russia (Russian-Turkish war) and neighbor countries (The Balkan wars). The domestic dark tourism is more likely to be explored with the darkest history periods from Byzantine, Ottoman Empires, and lately with fascism, communism period of the country’s history. The main difficulty would remain the clear distinction from cultural and heritage tourism.

The results obtained clearly show that the main difference from the western approach lies in on completely different conceptual basis, which differs from the concept of dark tourism. Tourism is mostly linked with recreation, leisure, and entertainment, while the dark places/sites related to death and suffer are mostly linked to religion, historical, or political heritage. Besides being different, both create and conduct to a behavior and visit of such places with deserved respect, honor and part of national identity and culture.

7. Discussion

Further research is needed in order to identify the correlation between death, dark tourism, and tourism as part of recreation and entertainment within the non-western approach. The study itself, despite not representative, raises questions related to the national psychology, religion, ethical and cultural aspects as for the supply and also for the demand side. It is
remarkable that in our questionnaire no single answer pointed as motivation for dark tourism pure voyeurism, recreation and entertainment, which is considered as possible in other studies (Lisle, 2007; Dorina and Alison, 2013; Stone and Sharpley, 2008). The entertainment category is an indication of the role for the (non)choice and the (non)acceptance of death as entertainment activity, intolerant attitude along the idea play with death and “entertaining based on death.”

Our assumption is that this is connected to the larger cultural context of the Slavic Eastern Orthodox countries, where death and disaster are something to be avoided or to be passed under silence rather to be spoken out loud as this is repulsive to Slavic psyche and is superstitiously associated with potential disastrous or at least misfortunate future events. While in the Anglo-Saxon and Latin-catholic world, they represent a huge attraction for tourists which is largely exploited by the industry, in Slavic, orthodox countries as Bulgaria superstitions and general feeling of unease and fear surrounding such places make them difficult to be marketed and linked to the tourism and leisure.

Notes

1. As, for example, The Institute for Dark Tourism Research (IDTR), based at the University of Central Lancashire, England, as a world-leading academic center for dark tourism scholarship, research and teaching (www.dark-tourism.org.uk).
2. NUTS – Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics, codes BG31-BG34 and BG41-42.
3. Largest and oldest university in Bulgaria, www.uni-sofia.bg
4. When searching the web with the key words “dark tourism + Bulgaria” the main results are linked to the communist heritage/comunist tours, e.g. http://bnr.bg/en/post/100482163/bulgaria-dark-tourism-destination
6. Officially for 2012 according to the National Statistical Institute (NSI) the average salary is 758 BG leva or approx. 387 EUR.
7. www.nsi.bg/en/content/7086/expenditure-tourist-trips-population

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Further reading


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Into the dark – dark stories in the cities of Brežice and Krško in Slovenia as a basis for the future dark tourism products

Lea Kužnik and Nina Veble

Abstract
Purpose – Dark tourism has a very long heritage. Compared to the rest of the world, dark tourism in Slovenia is very poorly developed. The theme is therefore a novelty in Slovenia as well as in the Slovenian professional and scientific literature. The purpose of this paper is to identify and describe dark stories of two small cities – Brežice and Krško – in Slovenia.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper brings ethnographical approach based on the in-depth literature analysis, existing documentation in museums (old newspapers articles, photographs) and fieldwork in Brežice and Krško which contained the method of unstructured interviews with four curators in The Posavje Museum Brežice, The City Museum of Krško and The National Museum of Contemporary History – Brestanica Branch as well as the method of observation with participation in a guided tour of Posavje “witches” in The City Museum of Krško and The Brežice Cemetery. The information for the research was also obtained by conducting ten unstructured interviews with the residents who live nearby “dark places” or are still connected to them.

Findings – The paper provides practical results as 14 dark stories related to the castles, wars, accidents, murders, paranormal activities and witchcraft were found. These stories could be incorporated into dark tourism.

Research limitations/implications – Because of the chosen research approach, the research results may lack generalizability. The results refer to a particular area of research.

Practical implications – The paper includes implications for the development of a new dark tourism product on a basis of dark stories found in the research area.

Originality/value – The paper fulfills need to identify and study dark stories that can be integrated in dark tourism in Slovenia.

Keywords Slovenia, Dark tourism, Brežice, Dark stories, Krško

Paper type Research paper

Introduction
People have always been fascinated by the mystery of death and one might argue that what we refer to as dark tourism today has a very long heritage. In the past, people visited gladiator games, public executions and cursed places also in the territory of Slovenia which proves that they wanted to be very close to the action and experience death.

The fact is that dark tourism is a special type of tourism that involves visits to tourist attractions and destinations associated with death, suffering, disasters and tragedies (Lennon and Foley, 2000). Visiting of dark tourist destinations globally and also in Slovenia is the phenomenon of the twenty-first century. The number of visitors to the venues of past accidents, tragedies and murders, cemeteries, cursed and war places are rising sharply. Nevertheless, in Slovenia, the area of dark tourism is still unexplored. As Rangus and Brumen argue that the production of tourism literature in Slovenia started with Janez Vajkard Valvasor’s Slava vojvodine Kranjske (Eng. The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola) in 1689 and since then, it has been trying to keep up with the international scientific community. The absence of a strategic endorsement of the
research field is evident in national economic and scientific policy and in the lack of available national research funds for this field (Rangus and Brumen, 2016, p. 939).

Therefore, it is not surprising that dark tourism in Slovenia is practically unknown and very poorly developed compared to the rest of the world, especially in the cities, and it is mostly limited only to tourist sites related to the First and Second World Wars. The theme is therefore a novelty in Slovenia as well as in the Slovenian professional and scientific literature which makes it almost unknown compared to the position it holds in the rest of the world.

Slovenia is a small European country with a total of two million people and does not have a number of cities with a wide range of dark activities for urban tourists. But there are many dark urban stories related to the dark heritage from the past and present in small cities such as Brežice and Krško which have a good potential for the inclusion into the current tourist offer and for becoming the Slovenian “dark cities.” They are located close to each other in the Posavje region with a total of 14,000 residents.

The main purpose of this research is to explore the current situation related to dark tourism in Brežice and Krško, to identify the potential dark stories and on that basis propose a typology of dark tourism in both cities that should contribute to the further development of the new dark tourism products based on the dark heritage and present of Brežice and Krško. The research is ethnographic and used research methods as well. The main goal was to identify and describe dark stories. The research can offer a variety of new opportunities based on storytelling for the development of dark tourism in Brežice and Krško, maybe even the design of dark and innovative thematic trails.

Dark tourism

Dark tourism, which could also be called black or thanato tourism (deriving from the Greek word thanatos – death) has been defined as tourism which includes travels to places associated with death, tragedies, murders and disasters. Thousands of visitors are attracted to the scenes of death, especially mass death (Korstanje and Ivanov, 2015, p. 57). As Lennon and Foley (2000) argue that this is a phenomenon that includes visitors’ “consumption” of death; true or commodified. The authors believe that this is a postmodern phenomenon, which brings us to Rojek (1991) and the notion of so-called “black spots” that describe the location of death which has become a commercialized, postmodern scene, the existence of which depends on how the image of death is reconstructed. On the other hand, Seaton (2009) offers a different perspective on dark tourism and its development. The origin and transformation of dark tourism can be found in the traditional journeys that were developed and designed on the basis of major shifts in the European history that still have an impact on the present.

Dark tourism relates to tourist travel which interprets the heritage through tragedies and conflicts and is raising awareness of dark historical realities, or the heritage of it (Stone, 2013). The central research center for dark tourism is located at the University of Central Lancashire, in England. The Institute for Dark Tourism Research (iDTR) is led by Dr Philip R. Stone. According to iDTR, the main contours of dark tourism destinations are to be found in three groups of geographically expressed areas: destinations of the death, burial, and/or the tragedies of celebrities, destinations of great battles and falling soldiers, destinations of collective suffering and death.

Wilson (2008) further states that dark tourism is the phenomenon that is commonly referred to as the commodification of death although the paradigm of dark tourism is not so simple. She argues that dark tourist places represent much more than “just” the scenes of suffering that have the connotation of a human being at the point of death which would be a major asset for the particular place. Such places are always multi-layered; both historically as well as sociologically. From these places, multifaceted different groups of people derive different sophisticated shades of meaning, which are attributed to a particular place.

Although the phrase dark tourism can only be found in the scientific and professional literature from 1990s onward, when it was coined by Lennon and Foley, and we can say that it refers to a newer type of specialized tourism (Kužnik and Grafenauer, 2015, p. 2), death-related travel appeared long before that. Since people have been able to travel, they have been attracted to places, attractions and events which were in many ways connected with death,
suffering, violence and disasters, says Sharpley (2009), and offers examples of visiting the gladiatorial games in the period of ancient Rome or pilgrimages and public executions in the middle ages. Sharpley and Stone (2009) state that the first guided tour in England was connected with a visit to the scene of death. In 1838, a train journey was organized to the place of execution of two murderers who were executed by hanging. Since 1816, people have been taking organized and payable tours to the scene of battles in the Belgian town of Waterloo known for the famous battle in which Napoleon was defeated in 1815 (Kužnik and Grafenauer, 2015).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the visitors of Paris could also see drain passages, morgue and slaughterhouses states. MacCannell (1999) who chose Paris for a case study because it was a major tourist destination with good documentation at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the study, he used a travel guide of Karl Baedeker from 1900 with a description of a morgue as a small building of sinister appearance in which the unidentified dead picked up from streets or dragged from the river lay publicly displayed, waiting for someone to identify them. All the corpses were decently covered and numbered. The room temperature was about zero, which enabled the corpse to have been displayed for 40 hours. In the meantime, people were coming to see the corpses (MacCannell, 1999). The attitude of tourists to the corpses, which he/she sees in the morgue, is not only the relationship between life and death, but also the relationship between order and chaos, because those who are on the “cooler” side of the morgue, suggest on rapid and inappropriate departure from this world and incorrect lifestyle as well that led to such an end. The exhibition of corpses is apparently intended to identify them, but the important thing is what it represents; the importance of the social order and “departure” from the society in an orderly manner, which preserves the individual’s identity until the very end, states MacCannell (1999).

Stone (2011) claims that dark tourism provides an opportunity to reflect on our own death by watching and experiencing the death of another in its various disguises of “camouflaged” and “repackaged” death. Dark tourism allows individuals to develop their in-depth reflection on mortality and satisfy their curiosity and fascination with death in a socially acceptable environment which the society often even approves and confirms.

Lately, dark tourism receives more and more attention. This is a form of tourism which can add to the offer of certain tourist destinations (Korstanje and Ivanov, 2012). Articles and contributions on this kind of tourism can be found in various mass media, especially abroad but also in Slovenia. For instance, the national television station held a public debate on the issue of appropriateness of the cemeteries as tourist attractions or alike (RTV SLO, 2008, 2014; Delo, 2012). Different places and locations for potential dark tourists are also described in many newspapers (Finance, 2012; Heiderstadt, 2014; Hider, 2016; Pelayo, 2015; Turner, 2016).

In doing so, we cannot avoid the question whether dark tourism should be understood as a form of social entertainment or a new type of repressed sadism. Korstanje and Ivanov (2012) argue that fascination with disasters and suffering of others is one of the most spectacular aspects of dark tourism. Dark tourism still needs to be studied despite the fact that numerous studies on the topic emerged in the 1990s. Korstanje and Ivanov (2012) note that the existing studies fail to outline the anthropological roots of dark tourism in connection with nationalism and national individualism. They also wonder whether tourism as a form of social mechanism is flexible enough to help the society to recover from certain disasters.

The first international workshop on dark tourism in Slovenia entitled “Dark Tourism: Post-The First World War, Destinations of Human Tragedies and Relevant Tourism Development Opportunities” was held at the Faculty of Tourism Studies – Turistica in Portorož in October 2014 on the occasion of the centenary of the beginning of the First World War.

**Dark stories**

Stories have a great impact on people. They are a powerful tool that can be used in the development and marketing of tourism products. Exciting tourism products can be designed based on stories and dark places. They can include one or more elements of different types of dark tourism. In our
research, we want to explore whether such stories and places exist in Brežice and Krško and have 
the potential to be effectively incorporated into a new comprehensive dark tourism product.

According to Fog et al. (2010), the key elements of storytelling are: message, conflict, characters
and the course of the story. The message in every story is vital as we have no reason for a story 
without it. Every story must have a central clearly defined message that acts as a central theme 
throughout the story. The conflict is necessary, making the story unpredictable and therefore not 
boring. Such a conflict can be seen as the driving force of the story. We cannot have good stories 
that attract audiences without it. The reason for the conflict being so important in the story can be 
found in human nature. People are subconsciously looking for balance and harmony in life and if 
we find ourselves in an imbalance, we are looking for a way to restore it again. The greater the 
conflict, the more dramatic the story is. Conflict leads to the peak of the story, turning, solutions 
and ultimately to closure.

Another element of the story are the characters. The characters must be strong and mutually
influence each other. Normally, the story begins with the protagonist or central character who 
wants to reach a specific goal. The central character has special abilities, characteristics such as 
courage and ingenuity and it can even possess some special weapons (Ruger, 2015). Different 
problems and challenges that must be overcome appear on its way to reach its goal.

Yet another important element is the phenomenon of the main enemy or antagonist. The main 
character and the main opponent are dependent on each other. For listeners or visitors, it is 
important that they can identify with them. People are inclined to the main character, but affection 
strengthens through its relationship with the main antagonist. The objectives of the two must be 
different in order to create a good conflict. When it comes to the solution of the central conflict, the 
message of the story becomes relevant. If the story is good then the visitors should connect with 
its characters and the message (Fog et al., 2010).

The basic element of the story is also the course of the story. It is usually divided into three 
parts – the beginning, middle and the end. It is the beginning of the story that attracts the 
attention of the audience. The following is a potentiation or development of the conflict to the 
extent that return is no longer possible. For the main character, this is the time when a 
significant decision which has an impact on the outcome is made. The escalation of the conflict 
and the decisions of the main characters are those that bring the story to the peak. Normally 
that is also the time in the story when the hero meets the opponent. The conclusion is not 
necessarily positive (Fog et al., 2010). That may surprise the audience.

According to Moscardo (2010), tourists create stories during their experiences and then present 
these stories to others as memories of their trip. Through stories, they are learning and creating flow 
according to Csikszentmihalyi (1997). Flow is experienced when perceived opportunities for action 
are in balance with the actor’s perceived skills. In storytelling, flow can be fostered by influencing 
both environment and individual. This approach to learning is much more consistent with 
constructivist learning where knowledge is constructed by the learners as they are actively involved 
in problem solving in an authentic context than with the traditional instruction. Csikszentmihalyi 
(1997) developed a series of theories to help people get into their flow state. Since then, these 
theories have been applied to various fields for designing better human interactive experiences.

Additionally, stories told by others (e.g. service staff that tourists interact with) affect the overall 
destination’s brand. As a result, destination management should support the design and creation of 
consistent tourist experience stories and themes (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). According to Tung 
and Ritchie (2011), storytelling acts to both consolidate and recover experiences from memory, 
and an appreciation of storytelling provides listeners with a deeper understanding of the intricate 
lives of storytellers and truly empowers researchers with a heightened sense of awareness for 
details in these stories.

In storytelling, the emotional component is exposed and it becomes a very important tool for 
achieving various goals. Especially in the tourism sector, it serves as an important tool that 
conveys the message about the specified destination. American Poet and Campaigner for 
Human Rights Maya Angelou (2005) wrote that people will forget what they say and do, but they 
will never forget the feelings that were aroused in them.
Visitor’s emotional experiences are likely to be enhanced by interpretation, along with the authenticity of the site visited. Interpretation is defined as a set of information-focused communication activities designed to facilitate a rewarding visitor experience (Moscardo and Ballantyne, 2008, p. 239), and has been discussed as the primary means of communication between a site and its visitors (Sharpley and Stone, 2009; Wight and Lennon, 2007). Importantly, interpretation plays a crucial role in sites or attractions which reflect terrible events, given that without interpretation such sites may be meaningless to visitors (Moscardo and Ballantyne, 2008). In other words, effective interpretation of such sites remains essential to enhance visitor experiences, and fulfill the need for understanding and meaning (Sharpley and Stone, 2009).

The ethnographic research

The research is ethnographic. This is an exploratory research with multi-method approach with the main research technique, unstructured interview (personal communication). In our research, we want to explore whether dark stories and places exist in Brežice and Krško and have the potential for dark tourism. The main research question is:

RQ1. Do the cities of Brežice and Krško have dark places and stories that can be effectively incorporated into a new comprehensive dark tourism product?

In obtaining stories and searching for dark places, we first analyzed the literature and existing documentation (old newspapers articles, photographs) in museums in Brežice and Krško (The City Museum of Krško, The Posavje Museum Brežice and The National Museum of Contemporary History – Brestanica Branch of the places and stories that can be defined as dark). On that basis, the first identification of potential dark stories was made. The main goal of the research was to describe dark stories as much as possible in detail. Furthermore, the method of fieldwork was used as we visited all the potential places to discover the related stories as well as the method of observation with participation, as we participate in a guided tour of Posavje “witches” in The City Museum of Krško and The Brežice Cemetery which hides many dark stories which are not very well known.

More detailed information and descriptions of dark stories were obtained with the technique of unstructured interview as we interviewed four curators in the City Museum of Krško, The Posavje Museum Brežice and The National Museum of Contemporary History – Brestanica Branch. All interviews were recorded. The most important information was written down in the field notes. We also searched for residents who are in any way connected with a certain dark place, for example, living near the dark place or surviving a certain historical period. The first three interviewees were proposed by curators in museums. Other seven were found with the snowball sampling technique. The information and descriptions of dark stories were gathered with short unstructured interviews from altogether ten residents (from 68 to 87 years old, seven females, three males) of both cities (six from Brežice, four from Krško). All respondents were asked for stories related to death, murders, violence, witchcraft, cruel legends from castles, peasant revolts, war, post-war killings. With all information gathered through interviews and observation with participation, we supplement prior identified stories from literature and documentation resources with details. With interviews we also gained a few stories that we did not find in the literature before. Detailed information about the stories was written down in the field notes. We identified and described 14 stories in both cities that have a potential for the inclusion into the dark tourism. Following are the most interesting dark stories and places for dark tourists in relation to cemeteries, castles, historical figures and war identified in Brežice and Krško.

The stories from cemeteries

The cemetery tourism includes guided tours and visits to cemeteries. There are many cemeteries in Brežice and Krško. Four of them are bigger functional and active cemeteries with burials on a regular basis. There are also many small and old cemeteries which are not in use anymore. Many of them are hidden, abandoned and not marked.
In the context of dark tourism, we can highlight a monument in the main Brežice cemetery as it is connected with the tragic accident from the year 1910. The accident occurred on the railway crossing in Brežice where three young people were killed. Two of them were newlyweds, being married for only a few days. The accident happened because the railway crossing barriers’ operator forgot to close the barriers as she went home to feed the children. The passengers in a carriage did not notice the approaching train that hit the carriage. The remains of the three young people killed in the accident were found many kilometers away. Before the funeral, they were collected and assembled in a coffin where they were also photographed (personal communication, interview, March 22, 2017). The gravestone still bears this photograph that tells the story of the tragic loss of three young lives. The monument itself is also unique as it stands out among the many modern monuments in the area while the story hides another element of dark tourism, the scene of the accident, where no material evidence about this event can be found today.

Another nearby gravestone could be attractive to a potential dark tourist as well. It is a stone monument with an embedded brightly colored stone plate as described in the listing of ethnological photographs of The Posavje Museum Brežice. It was erected in the memory of a married Ivanšek couple brutally murdered with an axe in their house in the woods in the suburb of Brežice in the early morning hours of 1933. A detailed article on the murder was published in the local newspaper Slovenski gospodar (1933) at the time describing that the killer came into the couple’s remote house located on the side alley through the back door that was only shut by a wooden handle. He was supposedly looking for money but could not find any and left empty-handed. The children of the married couple lived in America at the time of the murder and due to the tragic event returned home and took care of the grave and the monument. Today, the grave of the murdered couple looks deserted. According to interviewee, it is also interesting to note that the funeral ceremony of the murdered couple was the first funeral ceremony in the Slovenian language in this area and the local priest who conducted the ceremony complained about the inadequacy of the Slovenian language for such ceremonies throughout the funeral (personal communication, interview, March 22, 2017).

Another interesting story is the one of the Trappist monks who lived in the Rajhenburg castle in Krško until the beginning of the Second World War when they were exiled like many other intellectuals. The Trappist monks were famous for their cheese, chocolates and liqueurs. The permanent exhibition in the castle portrays their everyday lives. The graves of the monks in the monastery cemetery are marked by modern monuments. The board at the entrance to the cemetery shows the state of the cemetery in the past. After the Second World War in 1947, the order of the Trappist monks was dissolved and their property was taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, which used it for a penitentiary for women that they opened in 1948. The cemetery was then demolished and removed, only being reopened as a memorial place in 1993 at the opening of the first exhibition on the Trappist monks (personal communication, interview, April 4, 2017).

Another interesting story is related to the Trappist cemetery. At the end of the 1990s, a military exercise of NATO was held in the area and tents for military groups were erected at the place of the former cemetery. When the chief of the group was informed that this was the location of the former Trappists cemetery, he immediately ordered for all the tents to be removed as a sign of respect (personal communication, interview, April 4, 2017).

When visiting cemeteries dark tourist can also be attracted by the fact that the majority of church cemeteries has unmarked graves of nonbaptized children, very poor people, homeless, people who committed suicides and various criminals. Such graves are located in the most disreputable parts of cemeteries which are usually at the back of churches. They were also buried outside church walls in the so-called unblessed soil.

**Stories from the castles**

Dark tourism also includes mysterious, unusual and cruel stories and legends of castles that are located in Brežice and Krško. The most famous is the cruel story of the Bizeljsko castle where the evil lord’s daughter lived. She was always inventing new ways to torture the serfs but one day they...
had enough. Lord’s daughter sat under the parasol on the horse when she was pulled down, had her mouth clogged with a cloth and was put in front of the plough (Zorec, 2009). The story ends tragically, not for the evil lord’s daughter, but for the young boys who rebelled against her. They were hunted down and imprisoned in the dungeon. One of them was even bricked alive. After that all the serfs rebelled, attacked, destructed and robbed the castle and saved the imprisoned young boys. However, this was not the end as the lord and his cruel daughter managed to escape. After a while they returned with an army and built a new, even more beautiful castle where the serfs were even more exploited (personal communication, interview, March 12, 2017). Today, a winegrowing family live in the castle. Visitors can taste wines of the Posavje region in their wine cellar.

There is another story from the Mokrice castle where Countess Barbara lived. She was desperate because of unrequited love and threw herself off one of the towers. She died immediately but her ghost kept wandering around the castle for a long time. Some people say that it can even be seen today. At the time of her death, a big Turkish cannonball that was in front of the castle rolled around the castle fountain three times (Brlić, 1961). A memorial plaque in the chapel of St Ana in the castle park still reminds us of the unfortunate countess. The graves of the last four feudal owners of the Mokrice castle from the Gagern family are hidden under the chapel. The place is called the Silent Valley. It is a quiet, mysterious place with unmarked graves that are now deserted. The Gagern family buried their dead directly into the soil and marked the place of a burial only by a simple wooden cross without a gravestone. Sometimes graves were planted with flowers. In the first half of the twentieth century, for many years a mysterious person kept appearing on the night before the All Saints’ Day. The identity had been never disclosed. The person cleaned the graves, lit the candles, adomed wooden crosses with flowers and mysteriously disappeared into the night (personal communication, interview, April 11, 2017). If we want to include the graves into dark tourism, we have to restore and mark them first.

There is also a legend related to the Mokrice Castle which addresses the crows in the castle’s coat of arms. During the Turkish invasions, large flocks of crows stayed on the banks of the Sava river. One day, the horse stampede upset them and they fearfully flew away but the Turks were shooting at them with arrows. With their loud croaking warning of the danger, they flew to the castle. According to the legend, one of the crows that was shot with an arrow in the neck by the Turks fell to the castle’s courtyard and that was the reason for the lord of the Mokrice castle honorably placing it into the coat of arms where is still today (personal communication, interview, April 11, 2017).

We can also find the potential for the development of paranormal tourism in the Rajhenburg Castle where visitors can still be haunted by the ghosts of two brothers who were mortal enemies. Due to their continual disputes, one of them moved to the nearby valley and built a new castle called Flis Castle which is now in ruins (Zorec, 2009). One day, the two brothers decided to become friends again. For this special occasion, they prepared a huge feast to which all the nobles were invited. At the peak of the event, one of the brothers offered the other a glass of wine. The other one drank it and immediately realized that the wine was poisoned. With the last bit of his energy, he grabbed a sword and stabbed the brother who poisoned him (personal communication, interview, April 4, 2017).

There is another version of this story which was written in 1886 in the Dolenjske news. According to this version, the brothers shot each other through the window after seeing each other through their castles’ windows. Their hatred continued even after their death. Skulls of the two brothers were stored in the chapel of the Rajhenburg Castle and even centuries after their death, it was possible to hear the chattering skulls which illustrated the quarrel between them. However, if anyone separated the skulls or moved one into another room they were always together again in the morning. Although the brothers hated each other during their lifetime their skulls did not want to be separated from each other after their death.

**Stories of peasant revolts – Matija Gubec and Knight Marko**

The cities of Brežice and Krško have a few castles that have the potential for recreating various events from the past, for example medieval battles that can be associated with stories and legends from the castles, cemeteries and dark museum collections. Several peasant revolts occurred on the territory of both cities in the past.
We can highlight the Croatian-Slovenian peasant revolt from 1573, a major battle of resistance that took place in the area of where the city of Krško lies today. Matija Gubec was one of the Leaders of the resistance but we do not have any reliable evidence of his presence in Krško during the resistance. The revolt started in Donja Stubica in Croatia and spread to the Slovenian territory. When the rebels arrived in Krško, the local residents agreed to bring them across the Sava river with boats because the rebels wanted to reach Metlika. One part of the rebels moved by the Styrian side of the river toward Sevnica to the Rajhenburg. Those whose final destination was Metlika came to the Šrajbarski Castle and continued toward the Krško field where they encountered the army of nobles that defeated the rebellious peasants, drowning and killing many of them in a cruel revenge (personal communication, interview, April 21, 2017). The theme of peasant revolts represents a permanent exhibition of the Posavje Museum located in Brežice.

Krško now has the street, the market and the sports stadium named after the Leader of the peasant revolt – Matija Gubec. His statue was designed by the Sculptor Tone Kralj and the inn where Matija Gubec used to dine, one of the oldest still existing inns in Slovenia now called Krulc, can still be found in the Mostec village near the city of Brežice.

In the Brežice Castle, dark tourists can discover another story of the cruel Knight Mark Sittich from Klis who at the time of the peasant revolts got the name “Marko the dog” due to his cruelty (Zorec, 2009). After the emperor’s command for ceasefire with the rebelling peasants knight, Marko decided to make a deal with the nobles. With the help of the horsemen, he captured 500 peasant women and children and sold them on the Croatian coast, wanting to show the other farmers what happens if you resist the nobility. The farmers were outraged by Mark’s actions and 10,000 of them gathered and surrounded the Brežice Castle where Marko was hiding with his brother and other supporters. Farmers only had one main goal, to capture the hated “Marko the dog.” They broke into the castle and caught Marko, his brother, ten Croatian nobles and 50 armed servants and killed them. That was the revenge for their wives and children. The farmers impaled the heads of the murdered nobles on sticks and carried them along on their triumphant march (personal communication, interview, April 21, 2017). A monument dedicated to the peasant revolts and created by a famous Sculptor, Stojan Batič can be found in Brežice.

According to the history, there is a great potential for performing medieval battles in both cities today. Suitable locations for organizing such events and their inclusion in the tourist offer are the regions around the Bизeljsko castle and the Raka manor. Both places are popular not only in terms of dark tourism but also for tourism in general.

“Witches” from the city of Krško

Dark tourism also includes stories associated with witchcraft. There were witchcraft processes in Krško between 1701 and 1714 (Golec, 2013, p. 118). Due to these processes, the city got a bad reputation because, according to some data, between 20 and 40 people were condemned and burned (Radovanovic, 1997). Nobody was safe from the accusations of witchcraft. During the witch trials superstition was widespread and people who stood out from the crowd were found guilty of various natural disasters or infectious diseases. In reality, they were mostly those who had a particular subject of interest, knowledge and useful skills such as herbalists, midwives and fortune tellers. When something bad occurred, an incident or an accident, people started their activities attributed to the devil which is the cause of all evil. The witch trials were a source of income for the majority of participants while they also brought something new and exciting into the city. To accuse somebody of witchcraft was an easy way to get rid of enemies or just unpleasant neighbors (Radovanovic, 1997 and personal communication, interview, March 20, 2017). In Krško wives and daughters of the respectable citizens and town councilors were also accused of witchcraft (Golec, 2013). Many of the accused and tortured women pointed at Sidonija Museger, a wife of a wealthy and respectable man from Podsreda as a person who seduced them into witchcraft. In reality, Sidonja was a common choice for baptismal godmother in Krško and a benefactor of the church (personal communication, interview, March 20, 2017).

The most famous “witch” from Krško was Ušula Jeriša, who is still present in the collective memory of the people of Krško (Golec, 2013). She was murdered in 1709. Lapajne (1894) writes
that Uršula was the wife of Matija Juriša, the Town Councilor. She was also the Spiritual Leader or the “mother spiritualis” of the capuchin monks who lived in the Krško capuchin monastery. Other witchcraft stories from Krško can also be found in the city chronicles. After Uršula’s death, her husband remarried and it is assumed that she was in the way. A few years later, Uršula’s daughter Marija Colnarčič was convicted of witchcraft as well.

According to the story (Lapajne, 1894), Uršula occasionally sent food to the monks after their ritual prayer. Usually she sent a bowl of crabs and birds. One day one of the priests came to the meal later than the others. He noted that the bowl was still covered and after blessing the meal opened the bowl in which he found frogs and toads instead of crabs and birds. Uršula laughed when she passed the capuchin monastery on the way to the place of execution while remembered hiding in the dining room of the monastery during lunch and afternoon rest. The execution place for the “witches” was located near the Žlapovec stream and is now flower and herb garden.

There is another story about the “witch” Veronika of Desenice, retelling about the first witch process in Slovenia which took place in 1427. Frederick II, the Count of Celje murdered his wife Elizabeth in the Castle of Krško to marry a Croatian girl Veronika of Desenice. She did not belong to the nobility and that was the reason for his father Herman II opposing the marriage. Herman II put his son to prison and accused Veronika of witchcraft which resulted in the first Slovenian witch process. She was murdered by drowning and her grave was discovered in 2005 (personal communication, interview, March 20, 2017).

From the perspective of dark tourism, another witch story can be interesting. It is a story about a married couple who lived on a small farm near Krško. According to the interviewee, the wife was selling various products from the farm to Brigita – the owner of the small inn in Krško. The couple was childless. One day they got a visit from a woman with a small child who left the child with them. The couple raised the child as their own. After her husband’s death, the wife married her adopted son in order to avoid tax payment. They were living well for some time but then the boy fell in love with the neighbor’s young daughter called Polonca. Their love was very strong but the boy was already married. He therefore decided to get rid of his old wife. He accused her of witchcraft and she was taken to the capuchin monastery where she was interrogated and tortured. The innkeeper Brigita, who was an important person in the city organized for her to be released from the prison and saved her from death. In the meantime, her young husband lived with Polonca but he felt guilty because of the false accusation. One day, he drank too much in one of the pubs and ended his life in the Sava river. There are two possible causes of his death as he might have committed a suicide or was thrown into the river by the locals because of his actions. Unfortunately, even Polonca ended her life. The elderly wife who was saved by the innkeeper Brigita returned to her farm and later gave birth to a boy who, according to the people of Krško, was suspiciously similar to one of the monks from the monastery (personal communication, interview, March 15, 2017).

Traces of the war – stories of the Slovenian exiles

Expulsion of the Slovenes during the Second World War was carried out by the German occupying forces. The City Museum of Krško, Posavje Museum Brežice and Museum of Contemporary History in the Rajhenburg Castle, where the main deportation camp for the Posavje region was held during the Second World War, host the exhibitions that tell the stories of the Slovenian exiles. According to Fürst and Kokalj Kočevar (2014), before the occupation the Rajhenburg Castle was a monastery for the Trappist monks. The deportation camp was initially in the stables and barracks near the castle and in April 1942 also moved to the barracks at the railway station while the Germans have their administrative premises in the castle. This was the deportation camp for most of the Slovenian exiles, about 45,000 out of 60,000. This meant the expulsion of every third Slovene who lived under the German occupation. Slovenes were exiled into the Volksdeutsche Mittlestelle camps in Germany and used as a temporary labor force in factories, mines, and cultivated areas. They were not meant to return to their homes after the war but were to be moved to the eastern parts of Poland and Russia. They had very different fates that depended on the camps they were sent to, and the head of the camp who managed the fate of masses of people.
The first round of exiles from Rajhenburg to Serbia were intellectuals, the second were the people from the Primorje region and intellectuals and the third people from the Posavje region. Since 2014, the Rajhenburg Castle hosts a permanent exhibition entitled Slovene Exiles 1941-1945 that tells tragic stories of all Slovene exiles and was set up by Irena Fürst. The stories tell of the path of exile, tragedies, death, humiliation, deprivation of education and hard work for a very modest fee. They are brought to life by visual materials and a number of personal items of exiles that portray the fate of individuals and families. The exhibition concludes with a “wall of memories” where every visitor can write their thoughts and memories.

There is a number of interesting objects with stories of the exiled individuals and families that can be found in the museums and are not very well known or included in the collection of dark tourism products. One of them is the deck of Tarock cards that was drawn by the Artist and Architect Boris Kobe in 1945 at the Allach concentration camp. The concentration camp Tarock cards were not meant for playing the game of Tarock but to depict the “power games” at the concentration camps. It was a game between life and death and even today the cards inspire us with the strength of human will and creativity even in the darkest moments of human existence (personal communication, interview, April 3, 2017).

The exile, which is specific for Slovenia and lasted for more than four years, left serious consequences on people such as loss of family members or loss of property. Many of the exiles returned to their ruined farms and had absolutely nothing on the arrival back home (personal communication, interview, April 3, 2017). Exile can be characterized as a very dark side of the historical period during which people lost everything they had, everything they had been. The theme of war and exile is still alive today and has an important place in the memory of the living.

Discussion of results

Dark tourism is a phenomenon of the twenty-first century. It is still not clearly defined in Slovenia, despite a general rise in demand for the dark which means that dark tourism in Slovenia is still to be discovered and has the potential for the development of a variety of dark tourism products in the modern tourist offer. The main purpose of this research is to explore and identify the potential dark stories in the small Slovenian cities of Brežice and Krško for the inclusion in the dark tourism. The goal therefore is to describe dark stories as detailed as possible. The main research question is:

RQ1. Do the cities of Brežice and Krško have dark places and stories that can be effectively incorporated into a new comprehensive dark tourism product?

Field research shows that we can confirm our research question as 14 dark stories were identified and described. Three stories are related to cemeteries, four to castles, two to peasant revolts, four to witchcraft and one to war.

Depending on the content of identified and described stories of the dark heritage of Brežice and Krško, the following typology of dark tourism in both cities can be given:

- cemetery tourism (a guided tour of the cemetery of Brežice and Krško, the story of the tragic accident of the newlyweds, the story of the murdered Ivanšek couple, the story of Trappist monks);
- legends from the castles and paranormal activities (the story of the evil lord’s daughter, the story of Countess Barbara, the story of Matija Gubec and knight “Marko the dog,” the story of the two brothers from the Rajhenburg castle);
- witchcraft tourism (the stories of the witch Uršula and Veronika of Desenice, the story about an elderly wife and her young husband from Krško); and
- war tourism (the Slovenian exiles, remains, and graves from the First and the Second World Wars, post-war killings).

A lot of interesting, tragic, sad and terrifying places and stories from different historical periods were discovered in the study area and, as such, would be of interest to a specific segment of tourists which makes us conclude that the potential for the development of dark tourism certainly exists. Places and stories are associated with the typology of dark tourism in both cities.
By reviewing current (dark) tourist offer of both cities, some places that can be defined as dark were found which are already included in tourist offer but not called dark. All three museums from Brežice and Krško (The City Museum of Krško, The Posavje Museum Brežice and The National Museum of Contemporary History – Brestenica Branch offer “dark” collections dealing with war issues. Since many people were exiled from their homes during the Second World War, these events are marked today with memorials and monuments and display in various dark collections in all three museums. Wars demanded a lot of victims, which are buried today in numerous small cemeteries or hidden cemeteries in the cities of Brežice and Krško. A tourism product associated with the Second World War could be formed on the basis of dark collections, monuments and war cemeteries. Because of the small size of both cities, dark tourism product could combine the elements of one or several types of dark tourism. For example, the legends from castles could be combined with the castle dungeons and cemetery tourism while all the castles in both cities also have collections that refer to the time of the Second World War which enables the combination of war tourism.

In the city cemeteries, a tourist can learn about the history of a nation from old gravestones. The unique gravestones from the older periods quickly disappear. One of the possibilities for their preservation can be the development of “dark” tourism, and at the same time, by integrating unmarked cemeteries and graveyards into the tourist offer, we can revert that places the piety role and importance.

Some castles have a great potential and appropriate location for performing a variety of medieval battles and knight tournaments. Such events also offer the possibility for international cooperation and promotion abroad as well as an opportunity to increase the number of visitors in both cities and the region as a whole. Performances of medieval battles can be enriched with the legends and paranormal elements from the castles. The purpose of a trip to a dark tourism site, the expectations of the visit, the emotional and learning experiences, and the level of commitment to the dark tourism site or event, can differ significantly depending on a visitor’s connection to or familiarity with the site or event it represents.

Conclusion

Dark stories educate, awake memories, inform and try to appeal to people and their decisions, which can also lead to disasters. Regardless of whether the effects of disasters are caused by nature or result from the historical socio-political decisions that lead to the disaster, pain and death are common to all. Miles (2002) also argues that a good story needs to offer high emotional experiences which engender empathy among visitors. Importantly, a tourist or visitor’s experiences can be strongly affected by their reasons and motivations for visiting, their personal characteristics, and in particular, by their connection to the site or event.

There are many scary and cruel stories and legends in the Castle of Brežice, paranormal stories in the castle of Rajhenburg, the main cemeteries of Brežice and Krško where “famous” citizens are buried, tragic accident of the newlyweds and the story of the first murdered “witch” Uršula in Krško which is still present in the collective memory of the citizens. All of these stories could be incorporated into the dark tourism product.

As with other types of special interest tourism, dark tourism provides a special experience for tourists and visitors which are, in general, both educational and emotional, and in sites such as ones tied intimately to war, also therapeutic (Braithwaite and Lee, 2006). The reinforcement of visitor experiences through authenticity is more effective than the exhibition of artifacts at a site (Lennon and Foley, 2000) essentially, authenticity and the meaning associated with a place are regarded as the essential elements in developing a dark tourism attraction (Miles, 2002).

Creation of an actual dark product should be examined more closely from different perspectives. Above all, it is necessary to explore the opinions of the potential (dark) tourists and the local community. The local community is an important factor and the opinions of the locals represent an important factor when designing a new dark tourism product because the topic that could be perceived to be appropriate for dark tourism might seem too sensitive to the locals and therefore inappropriate to connect with the tourism industry as that could result in a dismissive attitude of locals to tourists. Death, horror and suffering may provoke
unpleasant feelings, especially if that is related to tourism. Particular caution should be given to the topic of the Second World War and the post-war period because the related events are still very much present in the memory of all those who survived the horrors of the war as well as their descendants. The memory is preserved through oral tradition, a variety of written sources, literary works, museum exhibitions, memorials and monuments dedicated to the victims of the war. At the same time that also proves that the potential for the development of war tourism exists in both cities.

It would also be interesting to study the motives that encourage tourists to attend the dark places defined in the research. The memory of some events is still present and plays an important role because it can still have an impact on lives of people today.

Dark tourism represents the main source of income for many tourist destinations but there is also an ongoing never-ending debate on the difficulties related to the proper interpretation and presentation of the dark and often very cruel history to the visitors. Also there is the question of an appropriate tour guide. The work of the “dark” tour guide can be even more demanding and tough. He or she must be well educated especially for very sensitive topics. Gorenak argues that a person also needs to have some predispositions like, good communication skills, positive work attitude, calm personality, accuracy, good self-organization, ingenuity and fluent language skills (Gorenak and Gorenak, 2012, p. 287). Interpretation at sites may include the exhibition of artifacts related to events of the past and a guide’s explanation of the event. A guided tour is particularly effective for reinforcing a visitor’s emotional experiences, above all if the guide is a survivor of the tragic events, or a relation of the victim or survivor (Shackley, 2001).

People love good stories. They are the reason that keeps us awake long into the night to read a book or watch a film till the end. Not many things grab us like a good story. It has the power to achieve anything: inspiration, fun, learning, action, etc. A good story provokes, inspires, motivates and finds its way to the surface in the sea of information (Smith, 2015). Dark heritage, with its stories of the past, reflects different relationships between people and has a great impact on their understanding of life and actions in the modern time and space. The stories in tourism are very dynamic and have a great potential for communicating the message. Some of them are widely known and others remain mysterious, waiting to be discovered by the visitors of the two small Slovenian cities, Brežice and Krško.

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Lighthouse tourism: is there a “dark” side?

Antonio Azevedo

Abstract

Purpose – The lighthouse tourism, which has been flourishing in several coastal areas and port cities with waterfront, provides the ideal scenario for escape experiences. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the implicit (dark tourism) meanings, symbolisms and emotions evoked by lighthouses, in particular those related with recreational storm chasing, “land’s ends” pilgrimage and gaze upon dystopic places.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a qualitative approach such as filmography’s content analysis (filtered by IMDb database), photo elicitation and engagement with lighthouses promotion websites, this study searched for evidences supporting the classification of lighthouse tourism as a “lighter” dark tourism product.

Findings – The qualitative information gathered from different sources provided support for a taxonomy of motives for engaging (dark) lighthouse experiences: risk recreation; isolation and loneliness; pilgrimage; shipwrecking; memorials; dystopia; and gaze for “ice palaces.”

Research limitations/implications – This conceptual paper suggests a taxonomy for a systematic classification of dark lighthouse experiences and suggested some research propositions for further research.

Practical implications – Public decision makers, maritime authorities and tourism operators may acknowledge the theoretical and practical contributions provided by this paper and develop innovative escape experiences.

Social implications – The lighthouse tourism is an innovative and creative way to promote the sustainable development of waterfronts of port cities, giving more “energy” to these coastal and often peripheral areas.

Originality/value – The paper fills a gap in the literature that so far never had deeply explored the relationship between the lighthouses’ meanings/experiences and dark tourism and introduces the innovative concept of (dark) lighthouse tourism.

Keywords Dark tourism, Dystopia, Escape experiences, Lighthouse tourism, Risk recreation, Waterfront cities

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

This paper aims to discuss the symbolism of lighthouses and all their implicit ingredients, which can transform lighthouses into a new tourism’s product segment with attraction power and economic value. The lighthouses are usually located in coastal areas, in geographical strategic points or in somehow remote and isolated places.

However, some cities have a lighthouse integrated in their landscape, playing an important role as identity maker. Here are some examples: the Tower of Hercules in A Coruña (Spain); the Alexandria’s Lighthouse (Egypt); the Maiden’s Tower in Istanbul; the Genoa Lighthouse – “La Lanterna” (Italy); Fort Perch Lighthouse at New Brighton facing Liverpool; the Absecon in Atlantic City; the Robbins Reef Lighthouse in New Jersey; or the lighthouse of Port Said in Egypt.

Furthermore, the lighthouse is an iconic symbol linked to all important port cities with waterfront. A port city is by definition an open and commercial city, connected to world and, therefore, more tolerant with multiculturalism. Nowadays, the relationship between cities and port areas are evolving, thus urging regeneration action plans (Girard et al., 2014). Recently on 2017, several European Union institutions have awakened to this problem and started to discuss the revitalization of these deprived and dystopic areas. The requalification of lighthouses to other functions will certainly contribute to the sustainable solution.
Therefore, this paper about lighthouse tourism aims to contribute to the discussion of revitalization of these areas that sometimes build a physical barrier between the urban life and the fruition of the waterfront for leisure activities (Girard et al., 2014; De Fino et al., 2015). Furthermore, this paper will support the exploration of dark tourism elements associated to lighthouse tourism as stimuli for the design of edutainment and escape experiences in order to revitalize these waterfront areas.

Just few weeks before the conclusion of this article, the news of the opening of the first lighthouse adapted to hotel in Spain at Pancha island, Lugo (http://elpais.com/elpais/2017/01/25/paco_nadal/1485345397_929449.html) and the reopening of “Semaforo” in Finisterra (Galicia, Spain), have reinforced the relevance of the theme of this paper. These are two examples among the 7742 lodgings named with the “lighthouse” word and evaluated by Tripadvisor website besides the 4,307 restaurants and 19 tours related with lighthouses. In the website www.bookalighthouse.com it is possible to book a lighthouse from the 67 options in Europe, in Africa (2), North America (6) or Australia (1). England is the country with the higher number (40) of lighthouses being promoted.

What kind of thoughts and emotions are elicited when you see a lighthouse?

According to the Pine II and Gilmore’s (1998) grid, tourists may engage four different types of experiences realms depending of the level of participation (active vs passive) and the space-time framework (absorption vs immersion). Living in a lighthouse is an escape experience as the tourist (actively and by immersion) “plays” the role of the lighthouse keeper.

This type of experience provides the ideal scenario that awakes several motivators: sensation-seeking mechanisms such as the risk recreation associated to storm chasing thrill, the attraction/gaze for death sites or dystopic places (also designated as dark tourism).

Considering the author did not find any paper in the literature that explicitly analyzes the lighthouse thematic within the dark tourism context, this paper gives a relevant contribution to fill this gap and introduces the innovative concept of (dark) lighthouse tourism. Moreover, limited discussions of meanings have been ascribed to marine environments (Wynveen et al., 2010).

The concept of dark tourism or thanatourism was primarily defined by Foley and Lennon (1996, p. 198) as “the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites.” Later Stone (2006, p. 151) proposed the dark tourism spectrum as classification methodology for the supply in dark tourism comprising several layers or stages which can be gradually represented by a continuum framework from “darkest to lightest.”

The darkest extreme refers to the sites of death and suffering, places and events such as the death campsite at Auschwitz. These darker places are influenced by political ideology, are oriented to educational proposes and are perceived as more authentic.

On other hand, the lightest classification occurs when the place is only associated to death and suffering (for instance the terror organized tours). Alternatively, Sharpley (2009) proposed a grid with four quadrants whose axis are the way that the interest by death is expressed (explicit vs implicit) combined with the degree of orientation toward tourist’s fascination (intentional or accidental).

Therefore, lighthouses may be classified as lighter dark tourism product according to Stone’s spectrum, since this category has all the necessary features usually associated to dark tourism. Lighthouses elicit unconscious thoughts and emotions, which are implicitly related with death and can be intentional promoted by tourism operators as suggested by Sharpley (2009). The lighthouses are usually located in the coastal areas and islands which have a higher propensity for occurring disasters such as shipwrecks (for instance, the Coast of Death/ “Costa da Morte” in Galicia, Spain).

Therefore, the visit to a lighthouse, or its use as lodging, is aligned with the claims of Stone and Sharpley (2008, p. 586) who developed a model that aimed to conceptualize dark tourism as an opportunity to face “mortality moments” but within a distance and environment perceived as safe, allowing the “social neutralization” and “de-sequestration” of death and its reconceptualization.
The symbolism of lighthouses comprise several aspects that are deeply discussed later in the literature review section: the lighthouse as landscape element; the risk recreation factor; the emotion contagion provoked by lighthouses; the lighthouses located in “lands’ ends” as “power spots” and dark tourism products.

The relationship between risk/death and lighthouses is also supported by the 2016 and 2017s filmography. In order to demonstrate that relationship, this paper will use a qualitative methodology, which includes: a content analysis of synopses of several recently released films; the interpretation and semiotic processing of some lighthouses photos in order to build the taxonomy of explicit/implicit meanings.

Finally, this paper will also present some case studies of routes based on the lighthouse’s thematic, showing how it can be used to design dark tourism experiences: the hiking route “Camino dos Faros” in the Galician coast; the lighthouses route in Brittany (France); the Lake Michigan lighthouses’ route; other iconic lighthouses used as lodging.

2. Literature review

The best known lighthouse structure is the Colossus of Rhodes, built around 300 BC, a statue over 33 m high in the form of the sun god Helios, which is known as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Later, the Lighthouse of Alexandria (also called The Pharos of Alexandria) was built around 258BC and was about 117 meters, much taller than the Colossus of Rhodes (Marriott, 1999).

The search of the word “lighthouse” in search engines make us realize that this word has been highjacked by the famous book of Virginia Wolf (1927), “To the Lighthouse.” However, there are few papers deeply analyzing the role of lighthouses in tourism:

1. the lighthouse as contrasting building in the landscape from the Architecture perspective (Blake, 2007);
2. the lighthouse as lodging alternative and its environmental implications due to their usually location in protected areas (Bushell and Bricker, 2017); and
3. the lighthouse as dark tourism product is only indirectly mentioned once as the Alcatraz prison is the focus of paper of Strange and Kempa (2003).

2.1 The symbolism and meaning of lighthouses

From the perspective of landscape architecture, Nakajima (2014) claimed that lighthouses give meaning to space around them and function like a bridge. There are sky, sea and the horizon in between them. Horizon creates a strong place, as it is where sunrise and sunset occurs. Locations of the lighthouses are defined by the relationship with land and sea and are consequence of landscape’s context. Therefore, we can read the meaning of the place through this signature. Lighthouses all inspire an affinity for the special places created at the meeting point of water and earth (Blake, 2007).

Nakajima (2014) added that the unique function of a lighthouse is as platform of light and claimed that “a light in the darkness” is embedded in western traditional thinking. He found support on the Bible (Matthew. 5:14, 15): “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”

Furthermore, Bartolomei and Ippolito (2015) analyzed the symbolism of lighthouse geometry and they stressed that there is not a model underlying the construction of lighthouses. According to these authors, the beauty of lighthouses seems to lie precisely in the lack of proportions between their parts and especially in their magnitude in relation to the human being. The geometric forms have since antiquity played an important role. Bartolomei and Ippolito (2015) quoted Gerbert d’Aurillac (later Pope Silvestro II, 950-1003, a medieval author of works entitled Opera Mathematica) in order to explain that although the central point of the circle symbolizes the Creator, it cannot be represented without its circumference. On other hand, the octagon
(another geometry often used in lighthouses) is a very important symbolic figure, indicating the transition from the square to the circle, or the passage from earth to heaven. Hence, it symbolizes the resurrection and rebirth. As a symbol of the earth, it represents architectural solidity, not through its surface but through its volume. The number eight being the first cubic number also represents the eighth day of creation or the bridge to infinity. It is not by chance that in mathematics infinity is expressed with the digit 8 placed horizontally.

Moreover, Schwartz (2012) claimed the idea that the collective actions of groups (cultures) are directed toward the objectification of their environments. “Humans engage in an objectification of the environments we inhabit, consciously or unconsciously, in order to render the future more predictable. In a more dramatic conception, human landscape usage decisions are driven by a biologically embedded imperative to annihilate the unknown” (p. 50). This author quoted Hutchins (1995) who used lighthouses as an illustration of this process, because their lighting function drives their objectification. They are often used to symbolize true guidance and steadfastness in relationships, teams and organizations, encapsulating their ability to weather any storm. Lighthouses have also been used to represent the determination to achieve goals, no matter the challenges. As tourist stated in her narrative: “A light in the dark is an old and well-used simile, but lighthouses, quite apart from their protective role, assume life and personality in the darkness” (Ankor, 2012, p. 64).

On other hand, lighthouses may also contain several implicit Freudian meaning evoked by the metaphoric phallic silhouette contrasting in the natural landscape. A lighthouse’s phallic design and aura of imperturbability are sometimes used to depict strength and virility.

Later, Wynveen et al. (2010) provide us useful insights through the using the symbolic interactionism (SI) to understand the meanings of marine settings. Studies that have referenced marine settings have focused only on coastal towns and beaches and have not included aquatic settings (Vanclay et al., 2008).

The SI approach suggests that the meanings people associate with a setting are the product of processes involving the individual, the setting, and their social worlds (Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Kyle and Chick, 2007). SI treats stimuli (e.g., past motives, emotions, other people, society, and physical attributes of the environment) as social objects that individuals incorporate into their definitions (Charon, 2007).

Moreover Charon (2007), based on the theories of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969), identified five central ideas involved in SI:

1. People are social and interact with one another when creating and ascribing meanings;
2. Individuals interact with themselves and respond to their own thoughts and emotions when ascribing meaning. Humans use words to consider and communicate their thoughts and emotions to themselves and others;
3. People define what is important about their environment and the meanings people ascribe to objects are the product of ongoing social interaction and thinking;
4. People consider past experiences, but their behavior and current salient meanings are responses to present stimuli; and
5. People are actively involved in the creation of their experiences. Individuals form their own meanings rather than the notion that meanings are inherent to the physical environment.

Based on this last assumption, this research acknowledges the SI approach to support the contagious mechanism induced by lighthouses’ physical environment. Lighthouses are often scenario of death related events (e.g. drownings and shipwrecks caused by storms) and other strange occurrences associated with supernatural causes. Therefore, dark tourism motivations and meanings are likely to be elicited by these stimuli and the SI theory helps us to understand this elicitation.

Places can be “repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place qua place, to which people are attached” (Altman and Low, 1992, p. 7). In addition, place meanings also are reflected
in the stories that people tell about specific settings. For example, Brooks et al. (2006) found that relationships with place were fostered by “(a) being at and engaging with a place and one’s companions, (b) extended stays, (c) ritualized behaviors, (d) family history in the outdoors, (e) childhood socialization, and (f) informal training and social learning” (p. 339).

Wynveen et al. (2010) identified ten meaning-themes to ascribe marine settings: esthetic beauty, lack of built infrastructure/ pristine environment, abundance and diversity of coral and other wildlife, unique natural resource, facilitation of desired recreation activity, safety and accessibility, curiosity and exploration, sense of connection to the natural world, escape from the everyday, and experiences with family and friends.

As mentioned before, this paper uses a qualitative methodology of content analysis of the 2016 filmography to validate the presence of dark tourism elements in the meanings elicited by lighthouses. The SI theory supports the hypothesis that the filmography is a source of stimuli and social interaction and thus can influence place meanings. In particular, this paper (in the fourth section) will suggest that the produced filmography imaginary is one source that can explain the link between lighthouses and dark tourism motives.

2.2 Reasons why lighthouses should be classified as (lighter) dark tourism product

This paper also highlights others perspectives scarcely analyzed in literature, namely the combination of dark tourism with the lighthouses and land’s ends contexts. The dark tourism motivators are relevant in this context because that there are many dimensions related with these “thrilling” experiences. According to Carroll and Ryan (2015), one might just be “blacker” than the other and one might just triggers different emotions than the other. The fascination to be “shaken up” and taken outside the normal comfort zone seems to be a sign of our times as “everyone is so blasé about what happens in the world. They (consumers) need a safe release. It is about creating a cinematic experience and making people feel they’re living their own horror movie. Movies can’t fool us anymore.”

The co-creation of truly living the experience becomes more important than ever. Yan et al. (2016, p. 110) proposed two dark tourism definitions distinguishing between the tourist host and the destination: dark tourism is a psychological consumption process that offers tourists (hosts) desired psychological outcomes and actual psychological outcomes to satisfy tourists’ emotional demands; dark tourism is a symbolic consumption process that supplies emotional and cognitive experiences to tourists who have an interactive relationship with a dark tourism product, including either man-made or natural disaster destinations. Then, the same authors defined dark tourism as “visiting death spaces or “deathscapes” and as an interactive process between tourists and death space that share particular features and characteristics and that can thus be loosely translated into various symbolic meanings.”

According to De Visser-Amundson et al. (2016), there is a range of different types of dystopian experiences. In addition, for Rofe (2013) even rural idyllic places can be perceived as violent and dystopic places as result of the influence of literature and cinema.

The sociological and psychological factors that motivate dark tourism has received much academic attention (Dann, 1998; Stone, 2005; Sharpley and Stone, 2009; Biran et al., 2011; Stone, 2012; Isaac and Çakmak, 2014; Zheng et al., 2016). However, this paper stresses the motivations related to the lighthouses’ category, namely education and remembrance, leisure-pursuit or even risk recreation motives.

Recent studies claimed that dark tourism stimulate: strong emotional responses (Podoshen, 2013; Podoshen et al., 2015); hedonistic motivations (Biran and Poria, 2012), that is, entertainment, socialization, escape, relaxation and novelty seeking (Biran et al., 2014; Dunkley et al., 2011; Isaac and Çakmak, 2014); propose mortality-related motives or leisure-pursuit motives (Biran et al., 2014).

One of the strongest implicit motivators is the risk recreation or danger (fear) sensations seeking that can raise the adrenalin levels. Zuckerman (1971) proposed the sensation-seeking construct to explain personality traits and behaviors associated with people’s willingness to participate in risk recreational activities. And later, this author defined sensation-seeking as “a trait defined by
the seeking of varied, novel, complex and intense sensations and experiences, and the willingness
to take physical, social, legal and financial risks for the sake of such experience” (Zuckerman, 1994, p. 27).

Zuckerman (1978) quoted by Xu et al. (2012), also developed the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS-V)
as an operational measurement tool of the optimal level of stimulation. SSS-V comprises four
subscales: thrill and adventure seeking, measuring the desire to engage in risky, impulsive and
adventurous activities offering the individual unique sensations; experience seeking, measuring the
desire to seek new sensations through the mind and senses and having an unconventional lifestyle;
boredom Susceptibility, measuring aversion to routine, repetitive and monotonous
invariant situations; and disinhibition, measuring the need to seek social stimulation through
disinhibited behavior.

Xu et al. (2012) claimed there is a niche tourism of the recreation storm chasers who scored
highest on experience seeking, thrill and adventure seeking and lowest on boredom susceptibility
dimensions. The same authors (p. 269) suggested a definition for recreational storm chasing: “is a
risk recreation activity undertook to closely experience severe atmospheric phenomena for leisure
or recreation purposes rather than scientific endeavors.”

These theoretical contributions led us to the formulation of some propositions that can be
explored in further research. As natural consequence of severe storms, several types of incidents
can happen, namely, shipwrecks which may cause drownings of people at sea or in the beaches:

P1. In some coastal areas there is an implicit danger associated to storm waves and strong
winds, which are the cause of shipwrecking, people drownings, mysterious lighthouse’s
keeper disappearances and other death related events, which provides the scenario’s
ingredients for attracting dark tourists to engage in lighthouse experiences.

P2. Tourists who have a psychographic profile with a higher propensity sensation seeking
such as recreational storm chasing behavior will have more willingness to engage in
lighthouse experiences since there is a symbolic or real association with storm waves and
strong winds.

On other hand, it is possible to add an extra motive related to the mystic or religious nature of the
“land’s ends” or “ends of earth” (in latin Finis Terrae) (Herrero, 2009). The Romans thought that
end of world was at Finisterra (Spain) and therefore all the territory beyond that was the
“unknown” where monsters and all sort of evil entities lived. In Europe, from South to North, there
are few places with that “aura”: Cape Sagres (Portugal), Cape Roca (Portugal, most western land
of Europe), Finisterra (Spain), Finistère (Brest-France); Land’s End peninsula (Cornish, Cornwall,
UK) until Cape North (Norway). Since the ancient times, pre historic men and women used to
pilgrim to those “power spots” to celebrate or perform rituals. This motive is aligned with the
findings of Dunkley et al. (2007) who suggest twelve categories of motives for dark tourism, such
as special interest, validation, self-discovery and pilgrimage as fulfilment of an obligation:

P3. The pilgrimage to “land’s ends” resulting from the sensation of “fulfilment of obligation”, the
seeking for loneliness, the gaze for “ice palaces” and dystopic places are implicit motivators
which can foster the attraction for lighthouse tourism.

It will be important to consider also the concept of authenticity that Rickly-Boyd (2012),
thetically analyzed in a symbolic approach, in which the tourist experiences the “aura” of the
place as a fragment of space-time. Often tourists refer to the search for authenticity as motivator
and criterion of choice of destination and the activities in which they participate.

3. Methodology

The methodology has a structure designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. Using a qualitative approach, the research will search evidences that lighthouses are often
scenarios of death events (P1) thus satisfying the needs of dark tourists; moreover they have
the necessary elements and meanings to satisfy the needs of tourist with propensity for
sensation seeking and recreational storm chasing behavior (P2), propensity for seeking
loneliness or fulfilment of obligation/ pilgrimage (P3). These evidences will support the three
propositions formulated in literature review and will validate the thesis that lighthouse tourism can be classified as dark tourism product.

2. The research will also make a diagnostic of lighthouse tourism showing that there are already in the market active touristic routes based on this theme.

3. The research will look for evidences showing that dark tourism experiences in lighthouses will bring benefits for the regeneration of the waterfront areas of port cities.

Kim and Stepchenkova (2015) emphasized on the importance of studying the effects of explicit content (elements and signals that can be objectively interpreted by their “facial value”) and latent content in the photographs constituted by implicit signals that can be cognitively deduced, read between the lines, or simply result from impressions or subjective reading meanings (Riffe et al., 2005). In addition, Özdemir (2010; quoted by Hsu and Song, 2014) stated that an atmosphere or a certain state of mind of the destination can be recorded in a photograph.

According to the Salazar (2012), the only way to study these imaginaries of intangible nature and through the study of images and speeches that appear in films, documentaries, photographs, postcards, travel blogs, exhibitions, fairs, tourist brochures, magazines, literature and advertising.

Therefore, this study adopted a qualitative approach and the information was collected from the following sources, according to Salazar (2012) and Podoshen (2013) suggestions. First as an exploratory step, researcher made active and non-active observation as a participant (Bryman, 2008) which included the visit to several lighthouses (that are opened to the public) or playing the role of client in lighthouses lodgings. This step was complemented with gathering of published and documental information. The researcher visited online communities as an observer-netnography (Kozinets, 2010) (e.g. searching in Instagram through number of lighthouses; exploration of websites dedicated to lighthouses, and in particular to lighthouse tourism).

After these exploratory steps, author engaged in a systematic analysis of written documents, films and documentaries (Bryman, 2008; Belk, 2011), focusing in IMDb films’ synopses of recent filmography of 2016 and 2017. The internet Movie Database (IMDb) (www.imdb.com/) is an online database of information related to films, television programs and video games, including cast, production crew, fictional characters, biographies, plot summaries, trivia and reviews, operated by IMDb.com, Inc., a subsidiary of Amazon. As of June 2017, IMDb has approximately 4.4 million titles (including episodes), 8 million personalities in its database as well as 75 million registered users.

Finally, author used photo elicitation- a methodology described by Matteucci (2013) and inspired by the protocol of Dempsey and Tucker (1994), in which the researcher selects and interprets images. The selection criterion combined convenience sampling with the relevance of the image conveying the meanings, motivations and implications for lighthouse dark tourism.

4. Discussion of results

4.1 Content analysis of the filmography using lighthouses as principal scenario

According to IMDb website consulted in February 2017, there are 392 films classified with the keyword “lighthouse.” When combined with keyword “death”, we found 73, which are also related with words such as “murder” (41), blood (31), corpse (29), or cemetery (23). In terms of genres, 197 are “dramas” while others were classified as “thriller” (81) or mystery (73). Considering only the filter criteria of word “lighthouse” in the title, the IMDB provides 200 matches.

One of the most famous movies is “Half Light” directed by Craig Rosenberg and filmed on 2006 in Llanddwyn Island, Wales) (www.imdb.com/title/tt0412798/). After the tragic drowning of her five-year-old son, a best-selling thriller novelist Rachel Carlson (performed by Demi Moore) moves to a remote cottage on the Scottish coast. However, Rachel’s demons have followed her, as loneliness and paranoia leave her not knowing what is real and what imagination in the fight for saving her life.
In this study author selected the IMDb synopses of all films dedicated to lighthouse theme and produced during 2016 and 2017. They illustrate the propensity for use lighthouses as scenario to death related events (shipwrecks, drownings or murders):


A newly positioned lighthouse caretaker is haunted by a dark force and mysterious presence. Unlikely assistance is given to bring justice to the dark forces that lie within the lighthouse grounds.

2. “Edgar Allan Poe’s Lighthouse Keeper” is a horror movie directed by Benjamin Cooper on 2016:

Marooned on a remote peninsula and haunted by frightening specters, a young man must confront the grotesque denizens of the night, or heed the Lighthouse Keeper’s cryptic warning to, ‘Always keep a light burning!’ (www.imdb.com/title/tt3181898/).

3. “The Lighthouse” directed by Chris Crow in UK on 2016:

Based on real events (the infamous Smalls Island Incident of 1801), which saw two lighthouse keepers stranded for months at Irish sea in a freak storm, the film tells a tale of death, madness and isolation; a desolate trip into the heart of human darkness. (www.imdb.com/title/tt3520714/).

The true incident of 1801 is reported here. Two-man team, Thomas Howell and Thomas Griffith, were known to quarrel. When Griffith died in a freak accident, Howell feared that he might be suspected of murder if he discarded the body into the sea. As the body began to decompose, Howell built a makeshift coffin for the corpse, lashed it to an outside shelf, and managed to keep the lamp lit. When Howell was finally relieved from the lighthouse, some of his friends did not recognize him:

4. “The Light between the oceans” on 2016 directed by Derek Cianfrance (www.imdb.com/title/tt2547584/) filmed in Cape Campbell, near Seddon, Marlborough as location for Lighthouse in the movie:

A war weary man takes a job as a lighthouse keeper on an island for the solitude. He meets a beautiful young woman and they eventually marry. One day they see a small dingy with an infant and man inside floating in the ocean. They rush to rescue them only to find the man is dead. They struggle over the decision to report it and whether to keep the baby. It’s only years later that they discover that the child still has a mother looking for her.


A lighthouse keeper’s surprising discovery pulls him out of his daily routine and takes him into uncharted territory. Horror, dark forces, fear, phantoms, drownings, murders and storms are key elements of all synopses confirming that lighthouses have all the tangible and intangible ingredients to be classified as a dark tourism product.

4.2 Examples of Lighthouses as lodging or as dark tourism product

There are literally thousands of lighthouses, lightships, and navigational beacons around the world. In an effort to identify these lights for amateur radio contact purposes the official ARLHS World List of Lights (http://wlol.arlhs.com/) was created. The ARLHS WLOL contains information on 15,365 Lighthouses.

Table I presents some case studies of lighthouses routes which have all the ingredients to inspire the design of dark tourism experiences. First, the hiking route “Camino dos Faros” in the Galician coast. Blanco (2014) in his book describe all the 50 lighthouses that you may visit in this region. The tourist who visits the “Costa da Morte” (Coast of Death) has several motivations associated with different attraction factors: nature tourism (landscape), sun and sea (beaches and islands), religious tourism (Way of St James), maritime tourism (artisanal fishing), nautical tourism and lastly the segment analyzed in this study - dark tourism. That association results from 643 shipwrecks registered by Mouzo (2014) and Cortizo (2016), 5,984 dead or missing and related wreckage and spoiled loot.
The case that triggers the use of this toponym, started in 1904 by the newspaper El Noroeste and the consequent romantic myth occurred on November 10, 1898 (Garcia, 2013). The English ship HMS The Serpent crashed into the rocks of the Bois and of the 175 crewmembers, only three survived. The cemetery of the British is the tangible evidence of this tragedy (Cela, 2001). Along the coast (e.g. near “Punta Roncudo” Lighthouse), tourists may see several cruces as memorials remembering the sailors and fishermen drown in the shipwrecks.

The Nobel prize-winning writer, Camilo José Cela (2001) narrated, in a sublime and humorous way, the balance of the wrecks that took place on the Costa da Morte. Meanwhile evoking all the Galicia mythology, he told dozens of stories played by characters such as sextons, werewolves, ghosts, whalers, healers, suicides, mourners, martyred virgins, mermaids, witches and their spells and gastronomic recipes.

There several examples of use of lighthouses as touristic attractions or lodgments such as the Cabo Vilan’s lighthouse, which is open to the public or the “Semaforo” hotel, near the Finisterra Lighthouse (Galicia, Spain).

A similar landscape can be found in lighthouses’ route in Brittany (France). The analysis of the latent content automatically stimulates the imagination of the consequences for ships of the absence of lights during the night. They recall the legends of black piracy according to which allegedly in some sites, motivated by the gain of the loot, local people would criminally cause shipwrecks with cows with lanterns that would deceive the boats against the rocks in the days of storm. Even when it is not black piracy, the coastal areas populations according to Duncan and Gibbs (2015) always are anxious to profit from the shipwrecks.

Brittany has more than one third of the 148 French lighthouses (23 in Finistère). The discovery of these impressive buildings is mandatory for lovers of maritime heritage. Of these, seven are classified as historic monuments, and five are among the few still guarded fires (Sein, Créac’h, Belle Ile en Mer and Fréhel).

Another interesting example is the Lake Michigan (US) lighthouses tour (see Table 1) where there many lighthouses for sale or rent. As a lighthouse tourist, you can experience all the job function as keeper and even be paid for doing that. In the winter, some lighthouses transform into “ice palaces”[1].

Finally, a search in the internet for lighthouses somehow related with dark tourism provided some examples of abandoned, haunted and dystopian places[2]. According to Debra Kelly (2015), “there’s something indescribable about a lighthouse. They’re lonely places, standing watch over rough seas and through inclement weather, an isolated and solitary existence for their keepers. Though many are now unmanned, their former occupants lived with few, if any, people to talk to, never-changing scenery and immensely inhospitable conditions. It takes a strong-willed person to be a faithful lighthouse keeper, but no matter who that person is, or was, tragedy can still strike.”

### Table I Examples of lighthouse tourism routes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region/country</th>
<th>Brand name</th>
<th>Source/website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa da Morte (Galicia, Spain)</td>
<td>“Camino dos Faros” (50 in Galicia region)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.caminodosfaros.com/">www.caminodosfaros.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany (France)</td>
<td>23 Lighthouses, seven classified as</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bretagne.com/fr/a_la_une/visitez_les_phares_des_cotes_bretonnes">www.bretagne.com/fr/a_la_une/visitez_les_phares_des_cotes_bretonnes</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Lake Michigan Circle Tour: lighthouse driving itinerary (105)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wmtna.org/lake-michigan-lighthouse-map-circle-tour/">www.wmtna.org/lake-michigan-lighthouse-map-circle-tour/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Lighthouse tourism trail (20 lighthouses from a universe of 70)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.irishlights.ie/tourism/lighthouse-tourism-trail.aspx">www.irishlights.ie/tourism/lighthouse-tourism-trail.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Leisure at a lighthouse</td>
<td><a href="http://www.visitfinland.com/article/leisurely-at-the-lighthouse/">www.visitfinland.com/article/leisurely-at-the-lighthouse/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Directorate General of Lighthouses and</td>
<td><a href="http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/78-lighthouses-in-India-to-be-">http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/78-lighthouses-in-India-to-be-</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lightships (DGLL) (78 in 189)</td>
<td>developed-as-tourist-centers/article/show/49338451.cms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland and Estonia</td>
<td>Lighthouses passport</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lighthouseview.net/Majakkapassi2.pdf">www.lighthouseview.net/Majakkapassi2.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Conclusions, managerial implications and further research

Recently the lighthouse tourism has been developed in several coastal areas, either through their opening to visitation, adaptation of lighthouses into hotels, or simply through new escape experiences designing. Hunting, visiting and photographing lighthouses are popular hobbies, as is collecting ceramic replicas or stamps. Some lighthouses are popular travel destinations in their own right, and the buildings are maintained as tourist attractions. In the USA, National Lighthouse and Lightship Weekend is celebrated on the first weekend of August.

This paper aimed to discuss the implicit meanings, symbolisms and emotions evoked by lighthouses, in particular those related with recreational storm chasing, “land’s ends” pilgrimage and gaze upon dystopic places. Lighthouses do not always evoke positive feelings. Because lighthouses tend to be located in isolated areas, they can symbolize fear, desolation and death. This is particularly true in television programs, movies and books, such as the Martin Scorsese’s film “Shutter Island.” Additionally, since their blinding light has occasionally been used to guide ships to their destruction, lighthouses can represent deception and betrayal. Escape from inside a lighthouse is virtually impossible; for this reason, they have also been employed as symbols of bondage.

Using a qualitative approach, the classification of “lighter” dark tourism product is supported by filmography content analysis, photo elicitation and netnography of lighthouses websites. The content analysis of these storylines leads us to a theoretical framework of the taxonomy of several meanings with decreasing degree of “darkness” (see Figure 1):

1. Shipwrecking – the location of lighthouses is usually in strategic points where shipwrecking is frequent which can motivate the design of edutainment experiences through the interpretation of historic shipwrecking events or by engaging diving activities to explore the wreckage sites.
2. Memorials – remembering historical events often resulting in drownings or shipwrecking. The identification of these last four categories of meanings supports P1.
3. Risk recreation – the lighthouse is places of refuge as they face the storms while the lighthouse keeper has the noble but in this case also heroic mission of guiding the sailors at night. One is a very famous photo in internet because it capture the moment that the light keeper is on the balcony in the middle of the storm[3]. Therefore, P2 is supported by these findings, since lighthouses can provide opportunities to storm chasing tourists to observe (safely) these extreme events.
4. Isolation, solitude, and loneliness – the lighthouse is a place where mysterious incidents happen, while the lighthouse keeper is alone watching the sea at night and no one knows

Figure 1 Proposed theoretical framework for a taxonomy of motives and meanings evoked by (dark) lighthouse tourism
what is happening (like the incident in the Small Islands portrayed in the movie described earlier). The implicit consequence is that the lighthouse keeper is a job that appeals to your survival skills and can be a challenge for a tourist who wants to experience that escape experience and assess his/her self-knowledge of his/her capacities. There is an iconic lighthouse described by some as the “loneliest hotel in Germany,” the Roter Sand lighthouse (www.thelocal.de/galleries/travel/1041), some 30 miles off the coast of Bremerhaven, Lower Saxony, has been welcoming guests for over ten years. Another example comes from Iceland, the fairytale-like Dyrhólaey lighthouse (www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/travel/78295/iceland-icelandair-stopover-holiday-lighthouse-helicopter-reykjavik-adventure.html), which is located on the edge of a promontory and surrounded by natural assets.

5. Pilgrimage to “Land’s Ends” – this attraction to a lonely place is well described in video (www.visitfinland.com/article/meet-paula-the-bengtskar-lighthouse-keeper/) by Paula Wilson, the lighthouse keeper of Bengtskär lighthouse (Finland) who explains the magic attraction for this type of pilgrimage thus supporting the proposition P3:

[…] to Finns, visiting Bengtskär lighthouse is almost like going on a pilgrimage. It’s something everyone has to do at some point in their lives.” She says, “I first visited Bengtskär in summer 1968 when I’d just got engaged to my husband. It immediately had an indelible impact on me. The lonely island, miles from anywhere, felt like an enchanted place. As if you were out on the open sea, yet with your feet still firmly on dry land.

6. Dystopia – lighthouses are located in remote places facing severe weather conditions, which turn them into abandoned buildings hostile to human living.

7. Phantasmagorical “ice palaces” – however, in some lower latitudes the polar vortex can freeze lighthouses and make ice sculptures, which are very attractive for photographers.

As Berger (2004, p. 6, quoted by Ribeiro) pointed out, symbols in tourism are “camouflaged myths and rituals, simplifications of ancestral desires and cosmogonies.” Sometimes the objective reality is superimposed by the “imaginary” of the tourist, defined by Salazar (2012, p. 864) as a “composition of socially transmitted representations that interacts with the individual imagination or fantasy and is used as an instrument of creation of meanings and molding of reality.”

5.1 Implications for cities’ managers, place makers, tourism operators and experience providers

Public decision makers, maritime authorities, hoteliers and tourism operators may acknowledge the theoretical and practical contributions provided by this paper. Escape experiences in lighthouses dark tourism are an innovative way of revitalize and regenerate waterfront areas. This paper demonstrates that there is a target segment demanding for more strong emotions. By adapting the lighthouses for lodgings or museums or through creative storytelling, it is possible to stimulate the people imagination and design new touristic attractions thus giving more “light” to these deprived regions.

Further research should explore and confirm the role of the meanings and motivations as suggested in the formulated propositions.

Notes
1. (please see photo: www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/07/frozen-lighthouse-photo_n_4557462.html).
2. www.urbanghostsmedia.com/2015/02/10-abandoned-lighthouses-mysterious-tragic-histories/

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Further reading


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The “Pearl of the Orient” as a dark tourism destination in Malaysia

Geraldine Anne Tan and Sonia Lim

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the potential of Penang in being a dark tourism destination in Malaysia with the influence of urban tourism development.

Design/methodology/approach – A systematic review was conducted to serve as a foundation by highlighting the number of dark tourism studies conducted in Southeast Asia (SEA).

Findings – The results projected a total of 23 dark tourism studies conducted within the SEA region. These papers revolve around the following key themes that were conducted in these countries: tourists’ behaviour (motivation, satisfaction and experience), nation building and narratives, dark tourism development (management, marketing and implications), theoretical underpinnings and the role of dark tourism. Amongst these, it was found that tourists’ behaviour is the most studied with eight papers while the least is on nation building and theoretical underpinnings of dark tourism with three papers each.

Research limitations/implications – The lack of dark tourism studies in SEA results in insufficient existing literature which justifies the need of exploring Penang as a potential dark tourism destination.

Originality/value – This paper builds on prior dark tourism studies that are significantly related to urban tourism but takes a step further by exploring the Asian settings. Specifically, into Malaysia which is more than just an SEA country, but a multicultural one which is rich and diverse with its culture and heritage that leads to many unique tourists’ destinations. This paper extends the geographical scope of the dark tourism literature as it focuses on Penang in Malaysia.

Keywords Malaysia, Southeast Asia, Urban tourism, Dark tourism, Penang

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Travelling to sites of death, disaster and the seemingly macabre is becoming a pervasive cultural activity within the contemporary society. The growing number of studies conducted on dark tourism suggests its expansion in both the academic field and in the tourism industry. This is due to the interest and attention placed on the influence of media and extensive social network platforms, a result from the constant evolving tourism trends. Consequently, it influences the growth of urban tourism or some may claim that it serves as a paradox to the development of urban tourism. Despite the increasing number of contributions to this scholarship, there are plentiful of studies conducted in the western regions accompanied with “western” mindset (Light, 2017). Admittedly, there are more established and recognised dark sites in the western countries than in Asian countries. However, it is argued that the common usage of western frameworks in exploring dark tourism studies are not fitting for other parts of the world and academics are advised to explore new ways of thinking that considers the sensitivity of different societies in perceiving dark tourism (Lee et al., 2012; Yoshida et al., 2016). In a similar vein, Asian countries often relate dark tourism as being a “taboo” due to cultural differences. Yoshida et al. (2016) argue that it is inappropriate for a spectrum based on education or entertainment to be applied in Asian contexts. Nonetheless, although dark tourism may be regarded as a “taboo” in Malaysia, it is important to note that micro and macro factors are constantly changing, and countries will need to adopt strategies to strive in the competitive market. Amongst the Southeast Asian (SEA) countries, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand are some of the countries...
that actively promote and acknowledge dark tourism. This illustrates that dark tourism is an untapped potential tourist product in SEA. Penang, being one of the most urbanized states in Malaysia, yet highly diverse in culture, has attractions that should be recognised as dark tourist sites. This is significant as Penang’s urban tourism has the potential to promote the state as a dark tourism destination. With the current steadfast growth of dark tourism and urban tourism, this paper aims to critically examine Penang’s potential in being a dark tourism destination with the influence of urban tourism development by adopting Philip Stone’s dark tourism spectrum as the foundation.

Literature review

Theoretical underpinnings of dark tourism

Dark tourism carries a variety of labels, from being a new phenomenon in the tourism and academic industry, an expanding source of tourism revenues (Legault, 2011) to being a social interest due to people’s growing fascination in death. However, it recently became the epitome of scholarly attention as well as in the dark tourism market (Foley and Lennon, 1996a, b; Sharpley and Stone, 2009; Biran et al., 2011). Lennon and Foley describe dark tourism as a relationship between an interest in death and macabre with tourism attraction. Similarly, Stone (2005) defines it as “the act of travel and visitation to sites, attractions and exhibitions which have real or recreated death, suffering or the seemingly macabre as a main theme”. Other sisterly terms such as “thanatourism” (Seaton, 1999), “morbid tourism” (Blom, 2000), “black-spot tourism” (Rojek, 1993) and “atrocity heritage” (Ashworth and Hartmann, 2005) are being introduced by fellow researchers over the years of studies conducted in this area. Additionally, it is considered as a hype due to media’s response towards this budding attention by the public (Sharpley and Stone, 2009) which is projected in the increasing number of demand and supply of dark tourism products. Ruane (2004) states that disaster and death appear to be profitable commodities that are marketable within the expanding tourism industry. It is also recognised as a form of niche tourism or special interest tourism (Suhaini and Chai, 2008; Masanti, 2016).

Despite that, Powell and Kennell (2015) point out that there is a lack of focus towards the relationship between dark tourism and urban tourism. Clearly, it is important as urban tourism itself is complex in its own nature, making it impossible to have a singular definition to it. According to the National Conference on Urban Tourism (Rennes, 1988), it is defined as “a set of resources or activities located in the city and made available to visitors outside having the purpose of entertainment, business or other reasons”. Gârbea (2013) states that it is a result due to changes in peoples’ behaviour who succeeded in transforming cities into a place of relaxation, cultural centres or even as a leisure or business place.

Hence, this leads to a stiff competition between cities, even for places that were not intentionally built for tourism purposes but becomes an integral part of the process along the way due to globalisation that opens up the pathway for the emergence of new economies into the global economy (Ben-Dalia et al., 2013). Following to that, it is critical for cities to have a better understanding of the different segments in the tourism market to meet or exceed tourists’ expectations of unique experiences. In light to that, the dark tourism market has the potential to offer cities a more competitive edge due to the growing demand of its dark tourism supplies (Stone, 2006; Stone and Sharpely, 2008; Biran and Hyde, 2013). Thus, this paper attempts to critically examine Penang’s potential in being a dark tourism destination with the influence of its urban tourism development. With that, it examines the ability to market Malaysia as a dark tourism destination (Braithwaite and Lee, 2006).

The dark tourism phenomenon receives different perspectives whereby some advocates that it has been within the tourism business ever since medieval executions (Stone, 2006). However, some consider it to be a result of postmodernity (Genov, 2008) wherein dark tourism exists due to the recent demand from the public for new thrilling experiences (MacCannell, 1999). Lennon and Foley (2000) cite that dark tourism is regarded as “intimation of postmodernity” due to the repetition of reconstructions that are reliant on the usage of contemporary audio-visual media with the aim of continuous popularity (Rojek, 1993). Indeed, this is viewed from the increasing
numbers of visitors who consumes both commodified and real dark tourism products through media, popular culture and audio-visual representations (Stone and Sharpley, 2008). This paper is based upon the belief that dark tourism is part of a post-modern world due to the sudden uprising of dark tourism market in the industry which is enhanced by technological advances. The wide array of studies conducted in this occurrence leads to a discourse in defining this phenomenon.

The extensive scholarly attention placed upon dark tourism leads to a variety of dark tourism products projected in the typology of dark sites and attractions pointed out by Stone (2006) in his dark tourism spectrum. This spectrum explains the six different shades starting from lightest to darkest. For example, the darkest level represents "sites of death and suffering" like "the Killing Fields in Cambodia" while the lightest refers to "sites associated with death and suffering" such as "Celebrity Graveyards". These variations showcase the diverse levels of intensities which effects the interpretations and experiences to visitors. This is depicted in Figure 1.

In other words, this explains the existence of numerous forms of dark tourism supplies (Sharpley, 2009) which leads to the nature of subjectivity in experiences and interpretations. The demand for more dark tourism products increases based on the changing and growing tourist trends such as the need to experience new and authentic mode of tourist activities (Lee, 1991). Despite that, it also highlights that the curiosity within individuals who seek for such mode of touristic activities is unexplainable (Suhaini and Chai, 2008). Hence, it is undeniable that it is within the human nature to seek for excitements and thrilling experiences which are unpredictable as it takes them away from their daily routine of life (Nunnally and Leonard, 1973). In other words, the "need to escape from the pressures and conditions of life in a tourist’s home society" is an extrinsic tourist motivation (Sharpley, 1994).

In view of the current literature on dark tourism, it is discovered that people are motivated to visit sites of atrocities due multiple reasons. However, the three main motivations consist of:
“morbid fascination with death” (Seaton, 1996; Seaton and Lennon, 2004), to experience the contemplation of life and mortality (Stone and Sharpley, 2008) and the longing to understand these atrocious events such as how these incidents took place (Biran et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2012; Biran and Poria, 2012). As such, this advocates that tourists’ motivations to dark tourism sites are subjective and unique which are mirrored in their interpretations of dark tourism experiences.

Sharpley (2009) mentions that the fascination is not placed on the manner but with the meaning or implication attached to the variety of atrocities that is significant to the experience. Additionally, Korstanje and Ivanov (2012) explain that individuals hold different meanings and ways of experiencing a site, hence the interpretation of another’s suffering is based on perception and experience. Chronis (2005) and Kang et al. (2012) argue that these interpretations could be influenced by what is displayed, how other visitors experience the dark attractions and the way a guide shares information to elicit emotions of empathy or convey a message to fellow visitors. Consequently, countries are becoming more innovative in developing destinations that can offer complexities and uncertainties to meet the current demands of tourists (Wahlers and Etzel, 1985).

In this context, dark tourism is not just a mode of touristic attraction, but it plays a significant role in “identity construction”, “remembrance and commemoration”, “emphatic identification”, “education”, “curiosity” (Biran et al., 2011; Kang et al., 2012; Biran and Poria, 2012) and as way to “face trauma” (Korstanje, 2015). Furthermore, dark tourism is also regarded as a “guardian of history in heritage terms” (Seaton, 2009; Stone, 2009) wherein effective distribution of information about the site’s heritage and history values allows visitors to have a better comprehension of the atrocities that happened in the past (Braithwaite and Lee, 2006). Hence, it serves as a means of unification the past, present and future into a discourse which enriches history and heritage to visitors.

Stupart (2013) adds that visitation to dark touristic sites provides added value experiences to visitors. This is mirrored by the ability of dark tourism in enhancing emotional and educational elements through the way knowledge and information is conveyed to visitors (Lennon and Foley, 2000) as well as emotional sentiments (Nahimana, 2011). For example, sites such as public memorials, historical monuments and museums enable visitors to visualise historical events. Additionally, visitors to dark sites are able to enhance their knowledge with regard to heritage, at the same time to be connected with its interpretations (Biran et al., 2011).

**Dark tourism and urban tourism**

Similarly, to special interest tourism and niche tourism market, urban tourism is also on the rise (Uysal, 2013). Urban tourism is widely acknowledged for its ability in providing economical and societal benefits to a city or country as it aids in generating income and offering job opportunities (Uysal, 2013). Undoubtedly, this is seen by the number of countries and cities that started to develop and depend on its tourism industry as it contributes significantly to their economy. For example, Barcelona with its effective tourism strategies since the 1990s and Los Angeles with its construction of successful brand image due to the Summer Olympics in 1984. However, in terms of tourism in general, some of the examples cover Glasgow (Paddison, 1993), Rotterdam (Richards and Wilson, 2004) and Cape Town (Bickford-Smith, 2009). Delitheou et al. (2010) support this claim as they agreed that urban tourism plays a role in the increase of economic status of European cities.

Hence, there is a distinctive relationship between dark tourism and urban tourism as the growth of dark tourism in a country would play a role in the development of the country’s urban tourism as well. In light of dark tourism destinations, examples that can be referred to are the following: National 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York due to the 9/11 attack; the France catacombs in Paris and the atomic bombings in Hiroshima, Japan. These are globally recognised dark tourism destinations that play a role in the development of urban tourism in their respective countries. As in the context of urban tourism, some of the popular benefits consists of: creating new work places, new perspectives for local tourism firms, new investment possibilities, increase of incomes and improvement of local community living standards,
improvement of local infrastructure and assurance of the financial sources for conserving the natural areas, art, handicraft, archaeological and historic areas and cultural traditions (European Commission, 1998).

Therefore, it is strongly suggested that the growth of dark tourism destinations plays a role in contributing towards the development of urban tourism. This is said because dark tourism being a main product can be considered as an educational, fascination, humorous, in which case, strongly depends on the specific social and cultural milieu (Stone, 2006). Hence, with the appropriate degree of infrastructure that revolves around the supply of dark tourism products, it aids in encouraging dark tourism to be socially acceptable and its reconceptualization for varying purposes such as for entertainment, memorial or education (Stone, 2006). Furthermore, the production of dark tourism products is not only driven by consumer but is subjected to possible changes in the wider social, cultural and political climate (Seaton, 1999).

Noticeably, western countries are more readily in accepting dark tourism phenomenon as compared to Asian countries. Evidently, this is due to the nature of their society that has a significant fascination with things related to the death, be it real or fictional, as well as if it is media driven or otherwise (Stone, 2006). Light (2017) states that other non-western countries may result differently in which the relationships between the living and the dead can take diverse forms seeing that it was essentially a “western” concept. Prominently, the growth of dark tourism market in the western countries is proven by the number of dark tourist attractions/sites or destinations that are being globally promoted and recognised. For example, the London Dungeon in England, the Chernobyl site in Ukraine and Alcatraz in the USA. Likewise, Liyanage et al. (2015) further inform of the wide variety of dark tourism products in Europe.

Despite the lack of awareness from the stakeholders in Asian countries in promoting dark tourism, it is vital to take note of some dark tourism sites which are being promoted by some of the SEA countries. Similarly, it was cited that greater emphasis was placed on North American and European cases, but Asia-Pacific is progressing in becoming a source of more examples (Henderson, 2000). For example, Cambodia promotes the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and the Killing Fields while Vietnam displays its Cu Chi Tunnels and National War Museum. Peleggi (1996) highlights attractions resulted from the World War II being developed in North Thailand and some in Singapore (Henderson, 1997). The following are some of the dark tourism studies conducted in the Asian region for example countries like Korea (Connell, 2017), China, Taiwan (Zhang and Crang, 2016) and Sri Lanka (Fallon and Robinson, 2016).

Although SEA is slowly progressing in terms of its dark tourism market, it is obvious that the Asian continent is less enthusiastic towards the dark tourism phenomenon due to its strong cultural and heritage values in which Asians are deemed to be more conventional and traditional in comparison to their western counterparts. Masanti (2016) points out that in the case of Malaysia, the local community is not keen in acknowledging dark tourism market in the country as they view it as an exploitation of atrocities in exchange of satisfying touristic experiences. Therefore, it explains on why dark tourism is less acceptable in the country despite the countless dark tourist sites which are not widely promoted by the respective Asian countries. However, it is important to stress on how these dark tourism sites are projected to the local community as “what experiences and dark sites are produced” plays a vital role in altering local community’s negative perceptions of dark tourism.

Considering this, the government should play an active role in examining local communities’ perceptions and attitudes towards dark tourism as well as educating them of this growing tourism phenomenon (Kim and Butler, 2015). Nonetheless, it was noticed that SEA countries are gradually depending on tourism as being a vehicle for rebuilding and economic growth due to garnering interest from the public towards their demand for such authentic experiences (Henderson, 2000). Benton (1999) states that collective memory differentiates the important events of a nation’s past, transforming perceptions into narratives that are conveyed as heritage for the consumption within the tourism industry. Hence, the following section critically reviews Penang’s potential in being a dark tourism destination.

A systematic review of literature on dark tourism studies in SEA was conducted to highlight the lack of dark tourism studies in this region. This is illustrated in Table I. The research design is based on a
ten years’ interval (2010-2017) and only analyses scholarly articles which excludes books, conference papers and book reviews. Four academic search engines were selected and keywords such as “dark tourism”, “thanatourism”, “war”, “heritage”, “dissonant heritage”, “thanalogical”, “visitors” and “tourists” were used to identify the papers. Amongst the 11 SEA countries, only 23 scholarly articles were found focusing on only five SEA countries. These papers revolve around the following key themes that were conducted in these countries: tourists’ behaviour (motivation, satisfaction and experience), nation building and narratives, dark tourism development (management, marketing and implications), theoretical underpinnings and the role of dark tourism. Amongst these, tourists’ behaviour being the most studied with eight papers while the least is on nation building and theoretical underpinnings of dark tourism with three papers each.

**Study context: Penang**

Penang is famously labelled as the “Pearl of the Orient”. This title was based on a virgin paradise (Penang) that took her name from the plenitude of betel nut palms scattered all over her soft, sandy beaches. The capital city of Penang is George Town, named after King George III. On 1 January 1957, George Town was granted the city status by Queen Elizabeth II, which made it the first town in the Federation of Malaysia, after Singapore to become a city. Penang is rich in heritage; it was listed as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site in 2008. Melaka and George Town are the only two cities in Malaysia that were listed as UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Within the first nine months of 2016, the figure for international tourist arrivals reached 1.03 million as compared to 928,000 in 2015 (Tan, 2017). For domestic tourist, the number of arrivals was 1.39 million in 2016, higher than in 2015, which was 1.38 million (Tan, 2017). The increase of tourist arrivals is strongly suggested to be influenced by three reasons: the steady growth in popularity of Penang as a destination, George Town is developing as a desired stopover for international cruises because the heritage enclave is located near the port (Tan, 2017) and the implementation of standardized paging board at the Penang International Airport (Intan, 2016). Penang has always been a preferred destination for both local and international tourists (The Malaymail Online, 2016). Recently, a famous travel magazine, Condé Nast Traveller, named Penang as the second-best place to retire in the world and Penang is the only destination from Asia in this top ten lists (Drescher, 2016). Penang is strategically located; near two major cities, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and a beach vacation, Langkawi.

**Dark tourism in Malaysia**

Comparable to other SEA countries embedded with their own history in being war victims, Malaysia is a victim of the Japanese occupancy during the Second World War (Masanti, 2016). Dark tourism products are considered as a niche market in the Malaysian tourism industry (Mohd Zahari et al., 2016) which are untapped (Suhaini and Chai, 2008; Masanti, 2016). In the context of dark tourism, Malaysia has a variety of dark tourism sites such as museums, cemeteries, churches, war relics, prisons, memorials, etc. Suhaini and Chai (2010) classify dark tourism in Malaysia into four categories: graveyard tombs – tombs belonging legendary warriors, dynastic burial places – royal mausoleum that have graves built for each royal family members that are over decades or centuries, prisons, a famous example is the Pudu Jail and cemeteries – war memorial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Number of journal articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Created by authors
and war cemeteries. Pudu Jail was a 115-year-old building built by the British, one of the famous dark sites that underwent many controversies (Ruban, 2016). The former jail was located at the city centre of Kuala Lumpur and public tours were opened from 1997 to 1998. It served as a prison for the past 100 years, and it was turned into a museum that offered visitors tools that were used for caning and hanging. It was labelled as the Alcatraz Prison of Malaysia, but it was demolished for commercial development without any proper study (Ruban, 2016).

Pudu Jail is an example of dark tourism product that co-existed with the urban development of a city. Pudu Jail was viewed negatively, something that the authorities were not proud of, especially when it was located right in the heart of the city (Zappei, 2010). Critics were received stating that despite the location, it should be kept because it has heritage and tourism value (Malaysiakini, 2010). Given that the building was more than a century old and the location was strategic, it could potentially be turned into tourist magnet, locally and internationally (Nor Shahid, 2014). Potentially, Pudu Jail can be categorised as being a part of heritage tourism which is considered as a dark tourist attraction as it coincides with the characteristics of a dark tourist attraction. Consequently, in 2010, the year when the prison was demolished, the 10th Malaysia Plan announced that an estimated amount of MYR5 million was assigned to preserve and to improve dark tourism sites (Bhuiyan et al., 2013).

In recent years, dark tourism in Malaysia begun to receive attention from researchers (Braithwaite and Lee, 2006; Suhaini and Chai, 2010; Masanti, 2016). In Masanti’s (2016) study, she lists out the potential dark tourism product in Malaysia as projected in Table II.

**Potential dark attractions in Penang**

Penang is widely acknowledged for its multiple attractions which are not just limited to cultural or heritage tourism. Penang has been repeatedly recognised as a potential dark tourism destination in Malaysia (Suhaini and Chai, 2010; Algie, 2014; Masanti, 2016; Mohd Zahari et al., 2016). Here, we examine some of the potential dark attractions of Penang. First, we explore the Penang War Museum which was listed as one of the five macabre SEA destinations by CNN (Algie, 2014). It is also widely known as “Bukit Hantu” or Ghost Hill, a fortress built in 1930 by the British for defence, but fell during an attack by the Japanese soldiers. The Japanese took over the fortress and turned it into a camp for prisoners of war. Hundreds of prisoners were reported to be tortured and beheaded publicly at the site.

Today, the fortress was turned into a museum that offers tours and serves as a memorial with an education element that showcases Malaysia’s history and conveys a reflective message. Penang’s rich history becomes the prominent link in associating the museum with dark tourism, especially since its past is in relation to death. The Penang War Museum offers night tours in conjunction with the “Hungry Ghost Festival” since 2012. The museum is listed the “Top Ten Most Haunted Sites in Asia” by National Geographic and CNN. This museum became an international spotlight when it was featured in a National Geographic documentary series called “I Wouldn’t Go in There” by Robert Joe, an urban investigator for Asia’s scariest places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential dark tourism product in Malaysia</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penang War Museum</td>
<td>Penang, West Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerajak Island</td>
<td>Penang, West Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulau Bidong</td>
<td>Terengganu, West Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batu Lintang</td>
<td>Kuching, Sarawak, East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labuan</td>
<td>Federal Territory of Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Second World War Sandakan – Ranau Death March</td>
<td>Sandakan to District of Ranau area, Sabah, East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulau Berhala</td>
<td>Sandakan, Sabah, East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothel No. 8</td>
<td>Sandakan, Sabah, East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesselton (Kota Kinabalu)</td>
<td>Sabah, East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranau</td>
<td>Sabah, East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantanani Island</td>
<td>Kota Belud, Sabah, East Malaysia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adopted from Masanti (2016)*
The second attraction is the Fort Cornwallis, a defence fortress built in 1786 by Captain Francis Light to serve initially as a stopover for free trading and to protect the base from enemy invasions. Today, the fort offers tour featuring cannon, gun powder magazine, the first Christian chapel in Penang and row of barracks and small jail cells. However, the most iconic feature of Fort Cornwallis is the legendary Captain Francis Light bronze statue. The statue was built by F.J. Wilcoxson in 1936 to honour the 150th years after Light’s historic landing in Penang island.

Captain Francis Light is the founder of British colony in Penang and had contributed a significant part in the Penang history (Penang Global Tourism, 2017). Light passed away in 1794 from malaria and he was buried in the Old Protestant Cemetery (Banji, 2015). Most of Penang’s European pioneers are buried in this cemetery. For example, a renowned nineteenth-century lawyer named James Richardson Logan was buried in this cemetery (Banji, 2015). Logan made the name Indonesia famous which was coined by George Windsor Earl, an English ethnologist and Thomas Leonowens. Thomas’s wife, Anna Leonowens, taught Siam’s King Mongkut’s wives, concubines and children for seven years from 1862 to 1867. The famous musicals: The King and I and Anna and the King were inspired by Anna’s memoirs of The English Governess at the Siamese Court (Banji, 2015).

The British Lieutenant, Colonel Gregory Jackson, was buried in this cemetery with his wife and son (Intan, 2016). Other colonial society buried in the cemetery consists of high-ranking government officials, civil servants to merchants, engineers, doctors and judges (Banji, 2015). The earliest recorded burial was in 1787, William Murray, the Lieutenant Fireworker in the Bengal Artillery. In this cemetery, there are also 12 surviving memorials claimed to be of Hakka Christian refugees from the Taiping Rebellion in China from the year of 1850 to 1864 (Banji, 2015). The cemetery is also next to the Roman Catholic Cemetery, signifying the early tolerance between Protestants and Catholics during that period (Banji, 2015).

The Old Protestant Cemetery is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is the third potential dark attraction. It is considered as one the best preserved Christian cemetery of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century in SEA (Banji, 2015). The Penang Global Tourism organises educational tours to this cemetery for free (Intan, 2016). During the last Halloween celebration, the tour was themed as the “Horror Night at the Cemetery”, where each tourist is given candle as they tour the cemetery (Intan, 2016).

The fourth attraction is a Ghost Museum that features local “ghosts” and “ghosts” from Europe, Egypt, Japan and China. It is the first of its kind in Malaysia (Logeiswary, 2016). This museum allows visitors to take pictures with the “ghosts” display and to educate visitors about the history of the “ghosts” as well as to debunk the fear of “ghosts” (The Sun Daily, 2016). Since its opening in 2016, the museum has been receiving a considerable amount of attention from the media. Finally, another event that features “ghosts” is the Hungry Ghost Festival. This traditional Chinese festival falls in the Seventh Lunar Month of the Chinese’s calendar (generally in between August and September) and it is celebrated widely in Penang. It is believed that the “Gates of Hell” will be opened during this time for “spirits” and “ghosts” to return to earth and to roam freely for food (Penang State Tourism, 2017). This cultural activity is then converted to a tourist attraction featuring opera performances, religious activities, prayers and puppet theatres. The festival is recognised and promoted heavily by the authorities in Penang.

Drawing from this, it concludes that authorities in Penang are becoming more innovative in developing tourist products to meet tourists’ demands. This can be viewed as a way of acknowledging the offering of thrilling experiences that can boost tourism in Penang (The Sun Daily, 2016), despite not being widely labelled as dark tourist attractions. Dark tourism products can be considered as educational, fascination, humorous as well as depending on the social and cultural milieu (Stone, 2006). The “ghosts” feature in this museum are educational, fascination and humorous according to the Malaysian’s social and cultural environment.

These highlighted dark attractions are under the dark tourism spectrum by Dr Philip Stone. Table III projects the potential dark sites in Penang, according to Stone’s typology of dark destination which was constructed from his dark tourism spectrum.

According to the Sustainable Tourism Research Cluster (2016), a study was conducted wherein 4,767 international and domestic tourists were grouped based on their activities in Penang.
Findings showed that three of the top five tourist activities recorded include visiting and participating in dark activities. The highest recorded activity is sightseeing in the city (36.4 per cent), followed by visiting historical sites (23.19 per cent) and visiting museums and art galleries (12.6 per cent). This is in support with Penang being a potential dark tourism destination with the influence of urban tourism as the dark attractions projected in Table III are located within the city and considered as historical sites as well.

Following to that, the dark sites are also categorised as being a museum. Liyanage et al. (2015) further state that dark tourism is considered as part of wider urban and city-based tourism. Although visitation to the dark sites may not be the primary dark attraction for tourists, it is still accounted as one of the touristic activities while participating in city tourism (Liyanage et al., 2015). In terms of the number of tour guides found, Kuala Lumpur ranks the first (2,645), followed by Selangor (2,379) and Penang (1,150). The high figure of tour guides in Penang proves the strong touristic demand that supports the growth of urban tourism.

In the context of Penang, there are six dark sites available to the urban tourists, but it is hardly recognised as such. Dark tourism is an unexplored tourist product in Malaysia (Suhaini and Chai, 2008; Masanti, 2016). This signifies a gap, wherein, Penang has sites that can be developed into dark sites, but has not been marketed as a dark tourism destination. Given that Penang has these potential sites, it can be the first state in Malaysia to set the trend of dark tourism. Arguably, Sabah has more potential sites, but Penang holds the urbanized city status that Sabah lacks. The established urbanized city status in Penang provides a solid foundation for Penang to attract more tourists. On these terms, it provides complimentary benefits to both dark tourism and urban tourism in Penang.

Dark tourism sites propose the chance to capture and conserve Malaysia’s history and collective memories of humanity and make them accessible to the wider public (Liyanage et al., 2015). Additionally, Penang is already listed as a World Heritage Site. Light (2017) suggests that phrases such as “dark heritage” and “dark heritage tourism” show the growing convergence of dark tourism and heritage tourism. In this case, by promoting Penang as a dark destination, this indicates a strong sign for potential growth. The indications of expected growth in terms of income are unclear because dark tourism attractions are considered as complementary tourist values (Minic, 2012). The mass package tours are oversaturated and by adding dark tourism in these tours, it will increase touristic experience (Minic, 2012). Furthermore, local authorities in Penang collected funds to increase the tourism growth in Penang and they seek for new ideas to promote and market Penang’s tourism industry (Ngui, 2017).

### Table III: Potential dark sites in Penang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential sites in Penang</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Typologies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penang War Museum</td>
<td>Memorial site museum</td>
<td>Dark conflict sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Cornwallis</td>
<td>Battlefield remnants</td>
<td>Dark conflict sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Protestant Cemetery</td>
<td>Cemetery memorial site</td>
<td>Cemeteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Cemetery</td>
<td>Cemetery memorial site</td>
<td>Cemeteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghost Museum</td>
<td>Fun museum</td>
<td>Dark fun factories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungry Ghost Festival</td>
<td>Educational/entertainment festival</td>
<td>Dark exhibitions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Created by authors

### Conclusion

Malaysian authorities are encouraged to realise the potential of dark tourism in Malaysia. By venturing into dark tourism market, it will assist in sustaining other forms of tourism from being overused in Malaysia such as eco-tourism (Masanti, 2016). According to Masanti (2016), to establish dark tourism in Malaysia, the cultural consideration needs to be a priority. It is possible to tap into the dark tourism market and make it as a tourism revenue product, if it is marketed in a suitable manner that does not ignore the cultural sensitivity of the local community (Masanti, 2016). Penang is a fitting place to initiate the dark tourism trend in Malaysia as some of the dark sites are recognised internationally by CNN and National Geographic. This shows that the foundation of Penang as a dark site has already
been introduced internationally without sufficient awareness from the local authorities in Malaysia.
In other words, the foundation in promoting Penang as a dark tourism attraction has been
established, which will be enhanced by further promotional efforts.

Furthermore, Penang is a city rich in culture, history and at the same time, is modern but with very
little seasonality. By offering dark tourism, it will increase its attractiveness and competitiveness
(Stone, 2005; Stone and Sharpley, 2008; Biran and Hyde, 2013; Powell and Kennell, 2016). To
conclude, Penang boasts of a strong potential in being a dark tourism destination as it is
recognised that a state that promotes urban tourism, branding and promotion of dark tourism
would only aid tourism growth of the country. To be specific, the stakeholders consist of the
government, the industry and the civil society. In terms of its contributions to the government,
by promoting Penang as a dark tourism destination with the aid of urban tourism, it will increase
tourism growth of the state by providing a new niche market for the country.

Additionally, it will strengthen the nation’s identity and image as dark tourism promotes national
branding. As for the tourism industry, it will benefit from the availability of more job opportunities
and provide competitive advantage to the tourism suppliers. A strong tourism market results in
positive benefits to the nation’s economic status. Finally, the civil society will be able to enjoy
better infrastructure that stems out from the growth of tourism development in the county.
Furthermore, locals will be given the prospect to participate in tourism businesses wherein will
alleviate the issue of unemployment. Hence, it is vital for related stakeholders to explore further
into the dark tourism market as it is proven to be benefiting for countries in light of their economic
status while improving the socio-cultural element of the country.

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Post-war tourism as an urban reconstruction strategy case study: Khorramshahr

Seyed Mehdi Mirisaee and Yahaya Ahmad

Abstract

Purpose – Tourism development has been perceived as a promoter of city restoration and can also affect the post-war city reconstruction. Questions on how to reconstruct ruined buildings and urban areas through a post-war tourism-oriented approach based on the expectations of residents and tourists profound answers. The purpose of this paper is to adopt the sequential mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) with purposive sampling which is a non-probability method to investigate tourism-oriented approaches in the reconstruction of buildings and landmarks as the core components of urban tourism.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopted the sequential mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) to investigate tourism-oriented approaches in the reconstruction of buildings and landmarks as the core components of urban tourism.

Findings – The findings of the study point that the preferred strategy for the reconstruction of damaged symbolic building is the preservation of the war effects in regard maintaining the buildings’ history to be considered by urban policy makers, urban designers, and authorities.

Research limitations/implications – The constraint was associated with the time-consuming nature of this type of research. Original documents of the research context and all the interview data were in the Persian language, making the translating process a time-consuming matter. Furthermore, data collection in the area located near the Iran-Iraq border (500 meters) presented a number of security caveats as limitations.

Originality/value – The research found a majority of tourists and the residents preferred tourism zone where the combination of post-war and natural attraction across riverside area. In other word, most considerable post-war attractions are those that combined with the appeal of the other tourism potentials like eco-leisure tourism. The preferred strategy for the reconstruction of damaged building reconstruction as post-war tourism attractions is the preservation of the war effects in regard maintaining the buildings history rather than reconstruction as the most likely to pre-war conditions with less attention paid to the war effects.

Keywords Khorramshahr reconstruction, Khorramshahr tourism, Post-war tourism, Urban reconstruction

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In parallel with the growth of tourism, the demand for travel to sites of former war, disaster and atrocities has grown in recent decades. In this type of tourism, war remnants may even act as a stimulus to attract tourists who are motivated by the prospect of a novelty experience, different from a conventional holiday experience (Mahrouse, 2016; Isaac, 2009). Despite the emerging streams of research in the study of ethnicity, conflict, and urbanity of tourism aspects, to date there has been little research into the links between urban reconstruction and tourism after war.

At first glance, war and tourism are converging issues since these concepts are coupled as direct opposites: the creativity of tourism and cultural heritage against the destructiveness of urban warfare (Barakat, 2007). Most of the related literature before 1990 emphasizes the negative

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effects of war on tourism development (Smith, 1998). However, the main research streams have emanated from the late 1990s that addressed tourism situations in relation to post-conflict tourism markets, new tourism trends and their characteristics (Causevic and Lynch, 2013). Consequently, some researchers make efforts to describe the war history for tourists with the remaining post-war facts such as damaged bridges, war museums, shelter, and underground tunnels (Alneng, 2002). For example, tourists traveling to Dubrovnik and Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, wish to see the consequences of the war in former Yugoslavia (Isaac, 2009; Arnaud, 2017). In Beirut the capital city of Lebanon, new public spaces are organized around archaeological sites uncovered during the demolition of war-torn buildings then changed the face of the city center to the tourist attraction (Samara, 1996; El-Masri, 1989).

2. Urban revitalization and tourism attractions

Urban tourism tied with urban and regional redevelopment programs can rejuvenate inner city and industrial lands. The first image for urban visitors is created by physical assets such as buildings, landmarks and a series of experiences around those assets. Wilson (2002) argued that buildings and urban areas are the best component of the cultural heritage to tell the story of a city. Several scholars also have stated that tourism can support development by restoring urban areas (Lim Tiam, 2011; Khalid, 2010; Meng et al., 2011; McKercher et al., 2005; Forsyth, 1995; Choy, 1995; Roberts and Sykes, 2005; Yu and Kwon, 2011). For example, Owen (1990) claimed that tourism can play a wider role by helping to create opportunities for urban renewal. Evans (2000) and Smith (2007) also argued that tourism can act as a catalyst for restoring cultural quarters, heritage sites, museums, events, and creative businesses become the principal factor of culture and tourism in the various experiences of the regeneration process.

Regarding cultural heritage conservation for tourism development, Barakat (2007) discussed about the importance of cultural content as the key to the identity of a society and as a factor governing the recovery process. He drew attention to two fundamental issues: the implications of the recovery of heritage damaged due to conflict and the potential role of heritage in the social recovery process. In post-war cities, preservation of the war’s effect on some particular buildings can remind a city’s history (Nguyen and Le Van, 1997). The focus on the buildings and landmarks in the reconstructing war-ruined cities has to be approached cautiously from the point of view some specific destroyed buildings have the potential to change post-war tourism attraction and city landmark in the reconstruction process (Gurler and Ozer, 2013). Preserving of buildings can motivates local residents to conserve their history, cultural heritage and has a positive impact on architectural traditions and ancestral heritage (Rowe et al., 2002). Barakat (2007) stressed the importance of cultural content as the key to the identity of a society and as a factor governing the recovery process.

One of the best examples of conservation approach for a reconstruction process was Cologne in West Germany after the Second World War. The plan for Cologne was vastly conservative and adhered to the traditional character of the city whereas the city’s identity was defined by its cultural and architectural treasures (Deeming, 2010). The post-war vision of the Cologne reconstruction plan essentially focused on the restoration of the major monuments and the spirit of local architecture (Stegers, 2003). The next example is Rouen in France, where has an old background in the tourism.

Regarding regeneration, it has come to be associated with any development that is taking place in towns and cities (Stouten, 2016). It is also important to acknowledge that urban regeneration is not solely a reaction to changed circumstances. In some instances regeneration is proactive and seeks either to improve the prospects of particular neighborhoods (Roberts et al., 2016). Rouen is a successful example of merging cultural tourism into the historical fabric and post-war urban reconstruction by restoration the industrial parts of the damaged areas on one side of the river and strengthen the historic areas on the other side by improving transportation and infrastructure for easy accessibility from the old part to the new part and developed fabrics (Owen, 1990). Rotterdam also adopted a worthy approach of urban regeneration and tourism development after post-war reconstruction. In the 1950s, the development of the port of Rotterdam was prioritized because of the need for post-war reconstruction (Owen, 1990).
In the 1970s and 1980s, the focus shifted to the restoration of decaying inner city districts. Urban tourism was developed by restoring of new cultural and recreational uses with the expansion for the city center across the river (McCarthy, 1998). These changes of regeneration in the 1970s and 1980s were so great and effective that it compares to the massive reconstruction after the Second World War (Owen, 1990). In the recent decade, Rotterdam has changed into the cultural capital of Europe, the city of architecture and art, and international events and festivals. Tourism development in Rotterdam was tied to urban restoration through activities such as developing or upgrading inner city and leisure spaces (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002).

3. Post-war tourism and residents’ satisfaction

Several researchers claim that, host community support is critical successful tourism development and that tourism must have the support of the local community (Allen et al., 1998; Inskeep, 1994, Murphy and Price, 2005). They acknowledged that tourism aspect encourages local community involvement because local residents could act as willing partners in the process of tourism-related development. A successful tourism city is a place where visitors and local inhabitants enjoy the same activities and consume the same urban area. In sustainable tourism development, attention should be paid to the impact of tourism on community development and the benefits for the host community (Deery et al., 2012). Regarding post-war tourism, Biran et al. (2011) and Lisle (2016) clarified the relationship between the symbolic meanings assigned to the war-site and core elements of the tourist experience. Gurler and Ozer (2013) claimed that post-war remembrances as post-war memories remind people of their social history, provide a correlation, and helps to develop empathy with citizens as tourists.

Allen et al. (1998) argued that residents must be involved in the planning and be informed and consulted about the scope of development. Williams and Shaw (2009) discussed that impact of tourism and regional development associated with two main interactions in the local community. First, tourism is a product that must be consumed to the production point. Second, tourism is an industry subject to restructure the community.

For example, Arandjelovic and Bogunovich (2014) illustrated that the Parliament building in Berlin is an architectural model for a new capital reconstructed as a post-war tourism attraction. Hagen (2006) claimed that preservation of its medieval architecture after the Second World War and the growth of modern tourism in Rothenberg has come to occupy a special place in the memory landscape of Germany as a symbol of rootedness, community, and continuity with a bygone era. He claimed that these symbolic landscapes most often represent national images and facilitate the performance of national identity for residents.

Lack of resident support for tourism development or apathy and annoyance of local community can lead to negative reactions to tourists and in turn result in their avoidance of visiting the destinations where they feel uncomfortable (Fridgen, 1991). Expectations of residents in post-war tourism are a critical aspect since the part of urban history, which is attractive to tourists, is ruined or damaged part of cities and maybe a part of bitter memory of war for residents (Mahrouse, 2016). Therefore, questions on how to reconstruct ruined buildings and urban area through the post-war tourism-oriented approach based on the expectations of residents and tourist profound answers. Residents of urban areas often use, consume, and enjoy amenities and attractions developed primarily for tourists (Craggs, 2008). Therefore, tourism and urban revitalization have the shared values where the place to live for residents is a place to visit for tourists. Smith and Borein (2002) and Gurler and Ozer (2013) also stressed that preserving buildings for tourism purposes can motivate residents to conserve cultural heritage and positively impacts architectural traditions and ancestral heritage. This type of tourism development also affects city’s identity through considerable benefits for residents by enriching local or regional culture with new modes of behavior, habits, and customs (Bożętka, 2013).

4. Research context

During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), Khorramshahr was the worst hit city in Iran. Urban destruction in Khorramshahr was more damaging to compare with other cities because it was
under occupation during first two years of the war (Sultan, 2013). About 85 percent of the buildings and infrastructure were damaged and was depopulated for almost seven years. By the end of the war, Khorramshahr had been completely devastated with few buildings left intact. Because of the war, the population of Khorramshahr decreased from 146,706 in the 1976 census to 0 in the 1986 census. After the war, the city entered a reconstruction period from 1988 to 1995. According to the comprehensive reconstruction plans for Khorramshahr[1] after the city’s liberty, a total of 18,710 commercial and housing buildings existed within the city. In total, 2,000 of them were estimated as completely destroyed and the 16,000 remaining buildings were classified as damaged 22-75 percent. Nowadays, according to the World Gazetteer, its population as of 2015 is 158,328, making the population close to its pre-war population.

In terms of post-war tourism situation, approximately 1.2 million local tourists visited this post-war city in 2012 Iran. The city was the most important trading port of the Persian Gulf before the war and had a prosperous tourism sector because it possessed the core characteristics for tourism development, including natural attractions, leisure activities, and transport infrastructure. After reconstruction, governments made an effort to increase the number of domestic travels. In recent years, about 97 percent of Khorramshahr visitors are local tourists. Governmental and military facilities for transportation and accommodation as well as volunteers in related services for visitors have led to low-cost packages for visiting post-war regions. The economic trend of these packages is low-cost travel for all groups of people. A total of 1.6 million local visitors traveled by Rahian-Noor (governmental section of arranging tourist groups to travel to war zones). Despite the high number of visitors, urban area of Khorramshahr still suffers from the scars of war, and residents are struggling with a benefit of tourism. A report by the Research Center of Parliament in Iran (2007) revealed that, of 16,000 damaged buildings, 6,500 buildings remained ruined in Khorramshahr. These abandoned lands and dilapidated houses deform the urban shape and city landscape.

5. Methodology

The present study adopts exploratory case study research with mixed methods of data inquiry. The first phase was a qualitative exploration of the reconstruction process and tourism development by collecting expert views and conducting field observations in the post-war city. Collating the qualitative data will guide a researcher to initiate concepts, expand understanding and develop research hypotheses in the research context. Analyzed data of qualitative phase contributed to the survey through a questionnaire designed to implement and validate the instrument quantitatively (Creswell and Clark, 2011).

For the participants in the expert interviews purposive sampling was adopted in which individuals who hold different perspectives on the central phenomenon, including tourism and reconstruction, were chosen (Yin, 2013). The specialists are integrated in the research not as a single cause, but rather as representatives of a group which participated in the reconstruction process and post-war tourism. The experts selected for the face-to-face semi-structured interviews were from four different fields: urban planning, architecture and urban designer, tourism authorities, and reconstruction authorities. Six interviews were conducted with urban experts from Housing Foundation (Bonyade-Maskan), Ministry of Roads, and Urban Development as the two main sectors for urban reconstruction in Iran. The remaining six interviews were conducted with representative of local authorities from the Cultural Heritage Organization, War museum of Khorramshahr and staff of Seated-Rahian-Noor (the headquarters for supervising post-war reconstruction). At least one interview was conducted within each group of expert including a practitioner who participated in the reconstruction process of Khorramshahr (1988-1995). Table A1 shows the expert interviews, including professional position and expertise according to the field of their study/experience.

According to the interview protocol, the questions of the semi-structured interviews are designed in consideration of the main concepts of tourism and reconstruction to seek information about reconstruction priorities and approaches after the war, and the potential and contribution of post-war tourism in the reconstruction process in Khorramshahr. The questions focused, first, on the issues of urban reconstruction strategy and its relation to post-war tourism, and second,
potentials and opportunity for post-war tourism development in the reconstruction of urban areas. This part of interviews investigated potentials of buildings, sites and urban spaces that have historical significance to make a landmark and tourist attraction regarding the occurrence of war.

To analyze interviews, deductive category applications theoretically derived aspects of analysis, which are brought into connection with the text. The original objectives and design of the case study presumably were based on propositions that in turn reflect a set of research question (Yin, 2013). The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts allows the researcher to determine precisely the relationships between concepts and compares them with the replicated data (Boyatzis, 1998). The observation approach was applied in conjunction with expert interviews to be the supportive and supplementary method (Robson, 2002; Neergaard and Ulhoi, 2007). According to the importance of post-war tourist attractions, which can be identified through observation, in the two selected zone of post-war tourism in Khorrarmshahr (based on the experts’ interview) the researcher defined eight position for observation. From 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. during five days of the Nowruz (Iranian New Year) holiday, periodic photography was conducted with timed interval digital camera. Then, the trails were overlaid individually and collated onto one map of the selected zones, showing individual trails or the intensity of activity along particular paths and buildings.

In the second phase, the researchers adopted the qualitative findings to build a quantitative design for examining tourists’ and residents’ demands in terms of post-war tourism (Creswell and Clark, 2011). Purposive sampling is a non-probability method which is characterized by the use of judgment and a deliberate effort to obtain representative samples by including typical areas or groups in the sample (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000). Thus, a total of 190 questionnaires were successfully completed by residents (92) and tourists (92) by the purposive sampling method. This method was used to identify residents who live in reconstruction circumstances that relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Wellington and Szczersinski, 2007). For selecting resident respondents, first, they were classified according to the damage sustained in the neighborhoods and then the two most damaged neighborhoods were selected. One out of every three homes was integrated in the sample. For second group of respondents, as about 97 percent of Khorrarmshahr visitors are local tourists, 92 questionnaires also completed by domestic tourists in Persian language and translated to English by the native author in the analysis process.

According to the qualitative findings of the research, the questionnaire survey from tourists was conducted in two selected fields of post-war tourism attractions: the Mosque of Khorrarmshahr, and the War Museum, and the pedestrian path along the Karoon River. Five-point Likert scale questions were examined the level of agreement or satisfaction of the respondents regarding reconstruction strategy for post-war tourism.

Since there is no idea about the distribution of data, non-parametric test was adopted for inferential analysis. Mann-Whitney U test (in some text book also called Wilcoxon rank-sum test) was employed as non-parametric inferential analysis to examine whether the responses of locals and tourists to proposed statements are the same or different. The test does not require any specific form for the distribution of the population. The logic behind the test is to rank the data for each group, and then see how different the two rank totals are (Norušis, 2008). If there is a systematic difference between the two conditions, then most of the high ranks will belong to one condition, and most of the lower ranks will belong to the other one.

6. Findings
6.1 Tourism strategies (qualitative phase)

The first part of interviews covered strategies of reconstruction to promote post-war tourism in the city. Based on the experts, the most important post-war tourism attractions would appeal to the local inhabitants in combination with other tourism potentials. In relation to the post-war tourism in the urban area, in particular, two following strategies for Khorrarmshahr emerged from the interviews (Table AII):

1. Symbolic role of buildings in post-war tourism: this view contained the Mosque of Khorrarmshahr as a core component of post-war tourism. First groups of experts believed post-war tourism can be established in the context of the cultural and pilgrim aspects in the
downtown area around the mosque. For example, this strategy was explained in the following comments by the interviewees:

Khorramshahr mosque is the symbol of resistance during the war [and] can be a main potential of post-war attraction in the urban context.

Cultural buildings like the Mosque are related to war occurrence that can be a potential for tourism growth in the urban context.

The important value of this mosque is that the building was the military headquarters during the first 45 days of resistance before occupation. After liberty, it was seen as the symbol of victory in Khorramshahr. Nowadays, the mosque functions as a symbol of people’s resistance during the war. It is known as respectful urban space for Iranians and plays a role as a cultural center and tourist attraction in addition to the religious goals. Most of the war-related events and temporary exhibitions in the peak tourist seasons are held in the square in front of the mosque. This area also consists of souvenir shops, which are visited by most of the tourists during the holidays.

2. Potential of pre-war tourism identity: exploiting the mix of post-war and nature potential in the riverside area was the view of second groups of experts who stressed the pre-war background of tourism to mix with post-war components:

A mix of natural attraction and war-relevant buildings are the main motivation factor for traveling to the city.

According to pre-war background of the city, new tourism identity should attend to war relevant aspects around Karoon riverside to remind pre-war flourished era of tourism.

Karoon River divides the city into two sections: South and North part and two bridges connect these two urban areas. This natural potential was the most important tourism background before the war. This part of the city was the place for leisure tourism with walking path, beautiful sightseeing and restaurants. The second idea stressed on the pre-war nostalgia as a potential of new tourism identity in riverside area.

3. Landmark theme: regarding theme of the landmark, there were two distinct idea. Some experts believed that the landmark of city should be attended to the war as the most important recent event. The following comments illustrate this view:

The Mosque of Khorramshahr is the best potential to be a symbolic landmark and cultural tourism attraction if it was reconstructed with preserving war effects.

The specification of social urban space is to design architectural elements and monuments honoring soldiers and war events as a symbol of resistance.

The most important post-war theme in Khorramshahr is architectural representations of the war and monuments dedicated to warriors. Other experts stressed natural and indigenous cultural symbol as a as the landmark theme. They believed that sense of the Place) Karoon River (is the most important aspect for the landmark theme in the city. Accordingly, theme and location of the landmark were investigated broadly through the questionnaire survey in the quantitative part of the research in order to discover the views of tourists and local residents.

4. Observation: information from the expert interviews indicated two main zones for post-war tourism attractions in Khorramshahr as shown in Figure 1. The post-war attractions in the context of culture (blue) and natural (green) zones were observed to explore the spatial behavior of tourists and the trails they took during their visits. The systematic tourist tracking and data recording in these two sites were supplemented by periodic frequent photography in ten stations plotted onto the map. This technique was used to demonstrate individual trails or the intensity of activities along the particular paths. The first zone comprised post-war attractions in the context of culture and pilgrimage.

The mosque of Khorramshahr was the main attraction point in this zone. The mosque was reconstructed to be in a similar condition as it was in the pre-war period (Plate 1) with little preservation of the war’s effects on the buildings (as shown in Plate 2). The second zone comprised post-war attractions in the context of natural tourism alongside the Karoon River. The War Museum was the central attraction of this green zone. The museum was reconstructed to be a post-war tourist attraction through the preservation of the war’s effects in some parts, keeping some war damage, including broken windows and shot effects, and renovating the
interior space and some part of the exterior elevation (as shown in Plates 3 and 4). The building had been built in 1930 for the Iranian Oil Company as the company’s headquarters, and was used as a monitoring stage by the Iraqi army during the war. At the time of this study, it was being used as the cultural center and the war museum.
6.2 Residents and expectation of tourists (quantitative phase)

Based on the finding of interview and observation, the second phase of the research examined tourists and residents regarding post-war tourism. A total of 190 questionnaires were obtained from both tourist and local resident samples in the selected fields. Altogether, 184 questionnaires were accepted for analysis, comprised of 92 tourists and 92 residents. The remainder of the questionnaires was eliminated because of incomplete answers. From all respondents around half (54 percent) were men, and 46 percent were women. Three main groups of the age distribution were the majority (43 percent) between 26 and 35 years of age, followed by 46-55 years of age (26.5 percent), and 36-45 years of age (16.65 percent).

Among all existing tourism potentials, “post-war tourist attraction” was the main purpose for the majority of tourists (40 percent), while visiting “nature” was the second main purpose (32 percent), followed by the purpose of visiting family and friends (6 percent). The other purpose items, including education, business and shopping were at less than 5 percent for each.
Interestingly, 72 percent of travelers stated that visiting “nature” and the “post-war tourism attractions” were the most important motivations for them. Furthermore, 65 percent of visitors stated that visiting the “post-war attractions” was their utmost reason for traveling to Khorramshahr.

The second part of the survey examined the views on preserving war effects in the urban for tourism development. First, the researchers, examines respondent’s statements regarding preserving war effects within the city to attract tourists without specifying a reconstruction approach. According to Table I, there is a dramatic difference between tourists and residents as 70 percent (rank 4 and 5) of tourists agreed with the approach of preserving war effects, while only 40 percent (rank 4 and 5) of residents agreed with this approach. However, 41 percent of residents chose rank 3, which shows they had no clear views about reconstruction with preserving war effects.

The next question examined preserving war effects using the mosque and the war museum as examples of two different reconstruction approaches (Tables II and III). In this stage, the results indicated that only 37.5 percent of the residents and 14 percent of the tourists agreed with the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>Rank of preserving war effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>1 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Rank of satisfaction for reconstruction of Mosque</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>Rank of satisfaction of a new mosque building with less respect to war history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident</td>
<td>14.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist</td>
<td>21.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reconstruction approach for the mosque. However, 77 percent of the tourists and 60 percent of the local residents agreed with the approach that the museum was reconstructed (rank 4 and 5).

To describe this sharp difference, the researcher referred to the overall score of these two groups as shown in Table IV. The actual difference in mean satisfaction scores between the two groups of respondents was small, while the table shows the mean of preserving the war effect for tourists was 3.64 and the resident was 3.19. Therefore, the considerable percentages (40 percent) of residents’ “three” rankings indicates that they did not have a clear idea about preserving the war effects. This difference is clarified in the discussion part.

The third part of the questionnaire survey examined the landmark theme and location related to post-war tourism attractions. Based on the post-war landmark potential uncovered in the qualitative phase, three symbols were examined as the preferred landmark theme in Khorramshahr, namely, the natural symbol, war-relevant symbol and indigenous cultural symbol. According to the tourists’ survey responses, the war-relevant symbol was ranked first (66 percent) followed by the natural symbol (30 percent) and the cultural symbol (28 percent). Meanwhile, for the local residents’ preference, the natural symbol was ranked first (55 percent), followed by the cultural symbol (50 percent) and war-relevant symbol (19 percent). The priorities of both groups of respondents contradicted each other, whereby the war-relevant symbol which was ranked the highest by the tourists (66 percent) received the lowest percentage of support (19 percent) by the local residents. On the other hand, the local residents equally preferred the natural symbol and cultural symbol (approximately 50 percent each). The natural (45 percent) and war-relevant (45 percent) symbols were the most highly preferred, when tourist and local resident’s view was totally calculated.

In the last part of the analysis, five themes of post-war tourism development regarding building reconstruction approach and the landmark were investigated in the survey, and the responses were examined by a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. At the 5 percent significance level of $-1.96 < Z \leq 1.96$, no significant difference between the responses by the tourists and local residents was found. On the other hand, if the two conditions are similar, then high and low ranks will be distributed fairly evenly between the two conditions, and the rank totals will be similar.

Therefore, our hypotheses are:

$H_0$. There is no difference between the local and tourist on response to the statement.

$H_1$. There is a difference between the local and tourist on response to the statement.

Table V shows five themes of qualitative findings then compare the results of the quantitative findings with inferential analysis (Mann-Whitney U test) of the post-war tourism development.
The results showed that, among all eight examined categories of five themes; the tourists and local residents were unanimous only on the landmark location, with differences between the two groups of respondents in the rest of the items. These results demonstrated that in the rest of the five categories, most of the high ranks will belong to one group of respondents, and most of the lower ranks will belong to the other one. Consequently, the rank totals will not be similar.

Based on the results of the qualitative and quantitative survey, the next part discusses the tourist and local resident groups according to their statements. The issue of the landmark location was examined as a possible future attraction and consequently, there is no significant impact on the recent post-war tourism. On the other hand, the rests of the recent post-war attractions are critical items on which the respondent groups expressed different views.

### 7. Discussion

First, the findings of this research proved that the strategies for post-war attractions are those that combine with natural attraction of the riverside or cultural/religious contexts of the mosque. Regarding the mix of urban tourism attractions, Leiper (1990) indicated that a tourist attraction is a system comprised of the following elements: a tourist or human element, a nucleus or central element, and a marker or information element. A tourist attraction comes into existence when the three elements are connected. The nucleus is any feature or characteristic of a place that a tourist contemplates visiting or actually visits. In terms of Leiper’s theory, each feature (e.g. a building, site, or display) might not in itself be regarded by most tourists as sufficient to influence their itinerary, but together the features might be synergistic by forming the basis for satisfying experiences. Craggs and Schofield (2010) also classified potentials and facilities of urban tourism. They divided the inner city into an “activity place” and a “leisure” setting and claimed that the most pleasurable attractions for tourists are those that combine the appeal of the local inhabitants interacting in the city in their everyday lives.

Second, the qualitative findings identified two main buildings in the tourism zones were selected as having the potential for post-war tourism, namely, the Khorrarmshahr Mosque and War Museum. The notable point regarding the post-war conservation was about resident’s responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of qualitative phase</th>
<th>Statement of the quantitative survey</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Sum of ranks</th>
<th>z-value</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>STD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Preserving war effect of tourist attraction</td>
<td>1 – Rank for preserving war effects in the urban area for tourism attraction</td>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3337</td>
<td>–2.47</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>$H_0$ rejects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Reconstructed buildings like pre-war condition in war relevant cultural buildings</td>
<td>2 – Rank for satisfaction of the new Mosque building with less regard to war history</td>
<td>Tourist</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4478</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>$H_0$ rejects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C) Reconstruction building with preserving war effect for post-war tourism attraction</td>
<td>3 – Rank for satisfaction of reconstruction the War Museum building with preserving war effects</td>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4857</td>
<td>–4.10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>$H_0$ rejects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) Theme of landmark</td>
<td>4 – Nature-symbol as landmark theme</td>
<td>Resident 92</td>
<td>4404</td>
<td>–2.11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>$H_0$ rejects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(E) Feasibility of landmark</td>
<td>7 – Landmark location – around the mosque</td>
<td>Tourist 92</td>
<td>3222</td>
<td>–2.11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>$H_0$ accepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(F) Feasibility of landmark</td>
<td>8 – Landmark location – riverside</td>
<td>Tourist 92</td>
<td>4971</td>
<td>–4.42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>$H_0$ accepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in quantitative stage of this research. First, local people and tourists were generally questioned about preserving the effects of the war in the urban area, only 40 percent of local agreed and 40 percent had not clear idea about war preservation in the reconstruction process. However, in the next question when researchers asked about the War Museum and Mosque as examples of reconstructed building in different approaches of reconstruction, the answers were changed to 60 percent of local people agreed with the War Museum reconstruction approach. Based on the analysis of mean scores, locals initially misinterpreted war preservations with keeping the destroyed buildings and landscapes as they are, which evoke all bitter memories of war. After elaboration on the meaning of war preservation and showing samples of restored war-torn buildings, the locals’ opinion changed.

Regarding reconstruction approaches in Khorramshahr, two strategies were adopted in two periods of reconstruction by government. In the first seven years plan of reconstruction; rapid physical reconstruction aimed to provide home for residential population. The mosque of Khorramshahr was an example of reconstruction during this period (1988-1994). The interviewees, acknowledged that most of the efforts in building reconstruction in the first phase were concentrated on the physical aspects rather than on architectural values. The overall findings of this research demonstrated that nowadays the reconstruction approach as most likely to the pre-war condition with less attention to the war effects is not considered by tourist and residents. Likewise, the findings of Franch et al. (2017) strengthen conservation and management of heritage with the special attention to the role of local stakeholders in the managerial choices and communication strategies in the war heritage site of the First World War in Italy. Given this condition, Calame (2005) claimed that the most successful recovery plans to be eventually shared with local agencies that will carry out the majority of long-term projects. A power balance is necessary for public acceptance of the program, i.e. the central government can insure continuity and local administrators can respond more directly to community needs throughout the process of reconstruction. He stated an example of this approach is found in Beirut, where the creation of Solidere as a guiding force for post-war urban reconstruction marked a symbolic abandonment of government agencies in favor of private enterprise. Solidere attracted the best professional talent, foreign and native, to the city with a clear set of objectives, ample funds, and an innovative business model. Next example is rebuilding Rothenberg, Germany.

Third, regarding landmark theme and location for future tourism development, honoring the martyrs and the war event as a symbol of resistance should be considered as a theme for the landmark of Khorramshahr. In parallel with this finding, Agrusa et al. (2006) emphasized landmarks with the theme of commemoration and honoring the victims of the war that could be an essential factor in attracting tourists when they are defined in a comprehensive plan for post-war tourism in Vietnam. They illustrate these monuments to reflect the psychological and sociological requirements of the societies on the landscape. Past events are kept alive in the common memory through physical representation in public areas and urban landscapes. Quantitative survey in this research proved that the natural theme for landmarks is more acceptable to respondents. However, there was a gap between the resident and tourist respondents regarding preferred landmark themes. Of the three landmark themes, the highest ranked theme among the tourists was the war relevance while the residents ranked this as the least preferred theme. Giving the inferential analysis that interprets the statement of each group separately, the natural symbol was the first priority for the landmark theme among residents and tourists.

8. Conclusion

The study demonstrated that shared values and expectations among tourists and residents were unmet based on the current tourism development approach. The mixture of the natural environment of Karoon riverside and the post-war components were identified as the most attractive approach for post-war tourism development in the urban areas of Khorramshahr. Based on this research in Iran, the preferred strategy for the reconstruction of damaged building reconstruction as post-war tourism attractions is the preservation of the war effects in regard maintaining the buildings’ history rather than reconstruction as the most likely to pre-war conditions with less attention paid to the war effects. In addition, preserving the effects of war as
tourism attraction is only applied in some of the buildings, which played an important role or had a significant impact before or during the war (e.g. political offices, and religious places) located near other attractions (e.g. natural attractions, cultural heritage, and museum) within the specific post-war zone. Moreover, the research found a majority of tourists, and the residents preferred tourism zone where the combination of post-war and natural attraction across riverside area.

Regarding future tourism development, the remarkable result was about landmark of Khorramshahr while the inferential analysis of the landmark showed that both groups of respondents had the same views on the feasibility of future landmark location. Therefore, the development plan for the city’s further post-war tourism and reconstruction priorities should give main concern to this area rather than developing the tourism cultural context in the downtown.

Generally, preserving war defects in buildings and the urban fabrics of other cases, called post-war tourism in this research, is only applicable in a situation where a war is regarded with respect for a historical period and honors martyrs and survivors. In other words, internal conflicts and civil wars effect urban destruction rarely provide opportunities for post-war tourism. Finally, regarding preserving war effect in the reconstruction process, locals would not like to see their city as a war-torn city which only reminded them the bitter memories, inhabitable buildings and ruined landscapes. However, they are commonly happy to preserve war-torn symbols on the reconstruction of buildings to preserve the history of what their city went through during an eight years of war.

Note


References


Craggs, R. (2008), Tourism and Urban Regeneration: An Analysis of Visitor Perception, Behaviour and Experience at the Quays in Salford, University of Salford.

Craggs, R. and Schofield, P. (2010), Regenerating the Quays in Salford: an analysis of visitor perceptions, behaviour and experience, University of Salford, Manchester.


Further reading

Google (2014), “Khorramshahr”, available at: www.google.com/maps/place/Khorramshahr,+Khuzestan+Province/@30.4114455,48.1187415,12z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x3fc45c3c52120ab7:0x31226a38a3c3846218m2!3d30.42562194d48.1891185

(The Appendix follows overleaf.)
Appendix

Figure A1 Analytical framework of research

Research objectives

Theoretical-based definition of the aspects of analysis, main categories, sub categories

Formulation of definitions and coding rules for the categories

Revision of categories and coding

Final working through the texts

Interpretation of the results, quantitative steps of data collection and analysis

Sources: Adopted from Mayring (2000) and Kohlbacher (2006)
### Table AI
The credential of experts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of work/study</th>
<th>Academic/professional position</th>
<th>Areas of expertise</th>
<th>Academic and/or executive experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Architect/urban designer 1</td>
<td>1 – Professor 2 – Council member in The Head Quarter for Post-war Reconstruction</td>
<td>Post-war reconstruction and urban regeneration</td>
<td>25 years of academic experience in reconstruction and conservation from a university in Tehran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Architect/urban designer 2</td>
<td>Associated professor</td>
<td>Urban design and development of coastal land</td>
<td>20 years of academic experience in architecture from a university in Shiraz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Architect/urban designer 3</td>
<td>CEO of consulting engineering</td>
<td>Cultural heritage and architectural conservation</td>
<td>25 years of executive experience in urban conservation and one of the member of Cultural Heritage Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Urban planner 1</td>
<td>1 – Associated Professor 2 – Board member of The Head Quarter for Post-war Reconstruction</td>
<td>Urban development and land use planning</td>
<td>15 years of academic experience in urban planning from Islamic Azad University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Urban planner 2</td>
<td>Corporate Member in Ministry of Housing for reconstruction in Khuzestan province</td>
<td>Reconstruction</td>
<td>10 years of experience in the reconstruction of urban area and infrastructure of Khorrarmshahr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tourism authority 1</td>
<td>Head of the Cultural Heritage Administration of Abadan and Khorrarmshahr</td>
<td>Tourism management and development</td>
<td>9 years of experience in tourism management in Khorrarmshahr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Tourism authority 2</td>
<td>President of the Museum of Khuzestan province</td>
<td>Post-war tourism</td>
<td>19 years of experience in tourism administration and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Tourism authority 3</td>
<td>Head of the War – Museum of Khorrarmshahr</td>
<td>Post-war tourism</td>
<td>20 years of experience in the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran and 5 years of management experience in War Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Reconstruction authority 1</td>
<td>Council member reconstruction of war-torn regions (Setade Bazsazi Manategh Jangzadeh)</td>
<td>Disaster management and relief</td>
<td>30 years of experience in Ministry of Housing and Urban Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Reconstruction authority 2</td>
<td>Expert of reconstruction of war-torn regions (Setade Bazsazi Manategh Jangzadeh)</td>
<td>Disaster reconstruction</td>
<td>20 years of experience in political management in governmental sectors of Khuzestan and Fars province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Reconstruction authority 3</td>
<td>Corporate Member of Khorrarmshahr City Council</td>
<td>Political management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table AII
Post-war tourism strategies in Khorrarmshahr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>1 – Cultural (historical) tourism</th>
<th>2 – Eco-tourism (natural tourism)</th>
<th>3 – Mix of post-war tourism and pilgrim aspects in urban areas</th>
<th>4 – Mix of post-war tourism in the context of natural attraction in the city</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Architect/urban designer 1</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Architect/urban designer 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Architect/urban designer 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Urban planner 1</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Urban planner 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tourism authority 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Tourism authority 2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Tourism authority 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Denote the selected options by the interviewees

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Seyed Mehdi Mirisaee can be contacted at: miresaiee@gmail.com

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Experiences of visitors to Gallipoli, a nostalgia-themed dark tourism destination: an insight from TripAdvisor

Kadir Çakar

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine and understand the experiences of travelers to Gallipoli, by analyzing their online comments and reviews.

Design/methodology/approach – The data were garnered from the well-known online user blog TripAdvisor. Data, concerning visiting the Gallipoli Peninsula, were retrieved from (n = 330) travelers’ reviews and comments, and were examined using content analysis to elicit and identify their experiences.

Findings – Overall, the travelers’ reviews and comments mostly conveyed emotional and nostalgic experiences. Further, the travelers’ nostalgic experiences of Gallipoli emerged as historical nostalgia deriving from the personal attachment of travelers to the site.

Research limitations/implications – The data have shown that the experiences of travelers to Gallipoli can mostly be identified as emotional, which are generally consistent with the current literature. This paper utilized traveler reviews and comments on TripAdvisor, left by tourists who had previously visited Gallipoli, and this represents the limitation of the present study. Thus, to better understand the experiences of travelers visiting Gallipoli, with regard to their psychological aspect, future research should be conducted with travelers either through face-to-face interviews or via a survey.

Originality/value – Despite its significance for dark tourists, limited research has been carried out that deals with the experiences of travelers visiting the Gallipoli battlefield. As such, this is the first research project designed to highlight the experience of dark tourism, under the concept of nostalgic tourism, by providing valuable data and a deeper understanding of the field.

Keywords User-generated content, Dark tourism, Dark tourism experience, Nostalgic experience, Nostalgic tourism

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The commercial tours of battlefield sites pertaining to the First World War increased in popularity at the beginning of the 1990s (Dunkley et al., 2007). The Gallipoli Peninsula, a well-known battlefield tourism destination, is considered one of the most compelling examples of war-related attractions encompassed within the concept of dark tourism. The site is visited every year by thousands of tourists from both domestic and international locales, in particular by Australians and New Zealanders (Slade, 2003). Therefore, the war-related area situated in the Gallipoli Peninsula is seen as one of the most popular battlefield tourism attractions, both at domestic and international levels (Birdir et al., 2015). In particular, the site is seen by Australians, New Zealanders and Turkish people as the real birthplace of their respective modern countries after the First World War. Fundamentally, the site is considered to be a “sacred” and significant place, especially by Australians and New Zealanders, and this can be explained by its playing a role in the building of the modern histories of Australia, New Zealand and Turkey after the First World War (Hyde and Harman, 2011; Prideaux, 2007). Here, then, arises the postulation that travelers visiting Gallipoli have a sense of place attachment with the site and feel Gallipoli to be part of
their own heritage, even though, for Australians and New Zealanders, the site is physically located far away (Eastgate, 2010).

Visitors’ motivations for traveling to Gallipoli are associated with spiritual, family pilgrimage, nationhood, commemorative and remembrance concerns (Basarin et al., 2010; Biran and Hyde, 2013; Cheal and Griffin, 2013; Eastgate, 2010; Hyde and Harman, 2011; Kokkranikal et al., 2015; Ryan, 2007; Ozer et al., 2012), which reinforce the national identities of Australians and New Zealanders (Hall et al., 2010; Slade, 2003), while offering visitors commemorative experiences (Lagos et al., 2015), including joy, sadness, love and anger (Hede and Hall, 2006). Except for a few studies (Birdir et al., 2015; Hede and Hall, 2006, 2012; Lagos et al., 2016), the literature has neglected the battlefield tourism experiences of travelers visiting the Gallipoli Peninsula. Given the present research’s theoretical grounding in nostalgia, there is a link between social identity and cultural tourism emanating from dark tourism (Brown and Humphreys, 2002; Russell, 2008).

Just as warfare tourism sites offer travelers a sense of national identity (Dunkley et al., 2011), dark tourists are also more engaged in nostalgic tourism. This paper is the first one designed to explore the issue of the dark tourism experience, within the context of nostalgic tourism. In doing so, the aim of this study is to examine and identify the experiences of travelers visiting the Gallipoli Peninsula. By adopting a qualitative research method, the study utilizes user-generated content. Thus, in striving to fill a gap in the extant literature, this project has been designed with the aim of finding answers to the following research questions:

**RQ1.** What kind of experiences does the Gallipoli site offer to travelers?

**RQ2.** How can post-visit experiences of travelers to Gallipoli be identified in their online narratives left by tourists who had previously visited Gallipoli?

**RQ3.** Does the Gallipoli site provide travelers with more historical or personal nostalgic experiences, or a combination of both?

The paper begins with a review of the relevant literature on dark tourism. Section 2 explains the research method used, and a brief review of the historical significance of the site is presented. The findings section sets out the ideas and opinions of the travelers, and the conclusion discusses the implications of the findings. Suggestions are given for future research.

### 2. Literature review

#### 2.1 The concept of dark tourism

The idea of dark tourism became a popular research topic in the twenty-first century, having garnered considerable attention after Foley and Lennon (1996a) coined the term for a form of cultural tourism in the modern era (Korstanje, 2011; Powell and Iankova, 2016; Powell and Kennell, 2016). The concept has been further developed by Seaton (1996), who gave the term “thanatourism” to places that are associated with death and disasters. The concept of dark tourism is described as “travel to sites associated with death and disasters. The concept of dark tourism is described as “travel to sites associated with death and disasters. The concept of dark tourism is described as “travel to sites associated with death and disasters. The concept of dark tourism is described as “travel to sites associated with death and disasters. The concept of dark tourism is described as “travel to sites associated with death and disasters.”

The phenomenon of dark tourism, although mainly associated with the last century, has in fact a long history, since people have long traveled to sites associated with death and disaster (Buda and McIntosh, 2013; Stone and Sharpley, 2008).

In simple terms, this form of tourism allows for visitors to experience places where tragic events or deaths have occurred in the past (Hartmann, 2014; Knudsen, 2011). The emergence of the phenomenon of dark tourism is credited to two main causes. One is cited by Rojek (1993), who views the transformation of leisure and tourism into dark tourism as a movement from modernism to postmodernism (Casbeard and Booth, 2012); the other cause is rooted in the tourist’s changing outlook, which is socially constructed to seek out certain types of places (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Thus, over the last two decades, dark tourism has emerged as a new form of niche tourism (Tarlow, 2005), which is credited to the pre-eminence of postmodernity (Muzaini et al., 2007). While the concept of the dark tourism experience has been identified and examined in various ways by scholars, it remains under researched, despite the fact that
concentrating on dark tourism experiences instead of motivations promises rich and meaningful insights into understanding this newly emergent phenomenon (Light, 2017).

There are several different forms of dark tourism, classified according to the nature of the attraction. Thus, for analytical purposes, we may distinguish between dark tourism associated with prisons (Strange and Kempa, 2003), battlefields (Cooper, 2006; Miles, 2014; Ryan, 2007; Seaton, 1999; Smith, 1998; William, 2014; Yink et al., 2016), disaster zones (Goatcher and Brunsden, 2011; Stone, 2013), concentration camps (Ashworth, 2002; Cohen, 2011; Keil, 2005; Kidron, 2013; Liyanage et al., 2015; Thurnell-Read, 2009), places where celebrities died (Blom, 2000; Foley and Lennon, 1996b; Stone, 2005), slavery (Dann and Seaton, 2001; Mowatt and Chancellor, 2011) and sites where terrorist events have occurred (Knudsen, 2011; Potts, 2012).

Given the emergence and evolution of the phenomenon, the media – both traditional and social – plays a crucial role in its promotion (Foley and Lennon, 1996a, b; Sharpley, 2005). Within the context of postmodern perspectives, dark tourism sites are presented by destination managers using imagery and media, which can transform touristic landscapes into apparently authentic products (Stone, 2009; Wight, 2006).

Dark tourism sites give rise to both supply and demand issues (Raine, 2013). The motivational factors driving such visits originate from various sources (Liyanage et al., 2015), such as curiosity and learning more about history or war, or, more generally, a desire for education (Bigley et al., 2010; Henderson, 2000; Podoshen, 2013; Winter, 2011). The sites themselves offer educational and emotional experiences stemming from engagement with a place which has historical and cultural significance (Biran et al., 2011; Henderson, 2000; Kang et al., 2012).

The dark tourism sites that are associated with death or disasters are considered to be a form of cultural tourism which is linked to cultural geography, relying as it does on the interpretation of place by visitors (Koeth, 2014; Young, 1999). Thus, landscapes associated with war, atrocity and horror have been transformed into heritage sites (Hartmann, 2014). On the other hand, the visitor experiences of battlefield tourism vary compared to those of mass tourism, in respect of motivation, emotional attachment and personal experience (Yeneroglu-Kutbay and Aykaç, 2016).

2.2 Nostalgic experience and dark tourism

While Seaton (1996) claims that interest in dark tourism is based on general interest rather than on reasons specific to individuals, it remains the case that cognitive and emotional experiences are gained by dark visitors, whether through participation in collective ceremonies or personal remembrance (Light, 2017). The concept of experience has been classified into ten different types – physical, restorative, sensory, introspective, cognitive, transformative, emotional, spiritual, hedonic and relational – each of which has several dimensions (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016).

From the perspective of Sharpley’s (2005) dark tourism typology, the experience is classified according to a spectrum ranging from accidental to purposeful supply and from palest to darkest demand, which together define the degree to which dark touristic attractions meet visitor expectations. Further, Sharpley includes specific attractions, such as war cemeteries, memorials, battlefields, and other war-related museums or attractions within the ambit of the dark tourism experience. Here, it should be kept in mind that the media plays a central role regarding both push and pull motivational factors, which can also affect the intensity of dark tourists’ experiences (Yuill, 2003).

The conceptual background of the present study is heavily based on nostalgic experiences that have been identified and divided into three forms of nostalgia (Sierra and McQuitty, 2007). While the first refers to the stance of “things were better in the past,” the second is a questioning, rather than an emotionalizing. In the third and last one, the individual actually investigates his or her nostalgic experience (Havlina and Holak, 1991, p. 325). Nostalgia is defined as “an emotional state in which an individual yearns for an idealized or sanitized version of an earlier time period” (Stern, 1992, p. 11), or, more concretely, it “refers to a longing for the past, a yearning for yesterday” (Holbrook, 1993, p. 245). The concept of nostalgia has two basic forms, personal and historical (Kim, 2005; Muehling et al., 2004). Personal nostalgia refers to a period in which a person can directly remember past events or addresses an idealization.
process of the past, while historical nostalgia identifies responses or events pertaining to the past that have never been personally experienced (Marchegiani and Phau, 2010; Muehling and Pascal, 2012; Pascal et al., 2002).

Personal nostalgic tourists tend to revisit their own past cultural environment in order to evoke past personal experiences, whilst historical nostalgic tourists show a tendency to visit an idealized cultural environment, one which they can indirectly experience through both tangible and intangible means, such as movies, books and stories (Russell, 2008). The First World War memorial landscapes hold symbolic meaning, in terms of political and esthetic ideas of nationalism or imperialism, through monuments and memorials dating back to the past (Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010). From this point of view, nostalgia can play a crucial role in the construction process of identity, as well as being a tool for maintaining a common sense of socio-historic persistence (Brown and Humphreys, 2002).

2.3 Historical background and importance of the site

The Gallipoli Peninsula, situated in the Dardanelles in Turkey, is a broad landscape comprising 33,000 hectares, which is associated with significant battles during the First World War (1914-1918) (Yeneroğlu-Kutbay and Aykaç, 2016). The operation was realized by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) and Turkish forces in 1915 (Hall, 2002). The campaign commenced after the landing of ANZAC forces at a beach on April 25, 1915 and ended on December 20, 1915, after almost 500,000 of casualties were lost on both sides (Basarin et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2010; Slade, 2003). Although the campaign ended with a Turkish victory and the defeat of allied ANZAC forces, the war as a whole led to the birth of all three modern nations, Australia, New Zealand and Turkey (Catalca and Yurtseven, 2003; Prideaux, 2007; Ziino, 2006).

Thus, Gallipoli is not only considered to be a sacred landscape for Australians and New Zealanders, which they visit every year to attend commemoration events, but it also has a similar meaning for Turkish people (Hyde and Harman, 2011; Prideaux, 2007). Travelers visiting the site often attend the guided tours organized by travel agents located in the region. For Australians and New Zealanders, the tour often starts from the camp area at North Beach, and continues on to Lone Pine Cemetery and Chunuk Bair after the Dawn Service finish, while other visitors prefer to visit the Turkish 57th Infantry Regiment Cemetery situated at Lone Pine and Chunuk Bair (Cheal and Griffin, 2013). Overall, the site encompasses several monuments, war memorials, museums, trenches, inscriptions, plaques, writings and statues that are all frequented by visiting tourists.

3. Methodology

Through the rapid development of the internet, many online blogs have emerged as social media platforms on which consumers can exchange ideas and opinions about their experiences (Amaral et al., 2014; Leung et al., 2013; Schmallegger and Carson, 2008). Alongside this, the Web 2.0 approach has developed, from which travelers can benefit by using TripAdvisor, which is regarded as one of the largest information source platforms (O’Connor, 2010; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Thus, social media has gained particular recognition in terms of sharing different types of user-generated content, including news, photos and videos on platforms, such as Facebook, Flickr, Google+, Twitter, YouTube and Wikipedia (Khang et al., 2014). The present study adopted a qualitative research method utilizing user-generated content by analyzing travelers’ comments and reviews through one of the most popular websites, TripAdvisor (Jeackle and Carter, 2011).

Data were drawn from its well-known online user blog on November 27, 2016 and July 13, 2017, comprising comments left by Gallipoli travelers who had visited the site between 2011 and 2017. The data for the analysis were drawn from a website related to the Gallipoli travelers’ experiences by entering the words “Reviews and Comments of Gallipoli Travellers” into Google. Data were analyzed through an inductive content analysis technique, and in order to ensure the reliability of the data two independent human coders were involved in the data analysis process, while Krippendorff’s α (Hayes and Krippendorff, 2007) was also utilized. Themes which emerged, and the words mostly used by travelers, were checked by the two coders and intercoder reliability
was found to be 0.77, meaning that a high level of agreement was reached by the two coders. Once the researcher had extracted the most-used themes and keywords identifying travelers’ experiences, the two additional coders checked and verified them.

4. Findings

The process of data analysis revealed that the travelers’ countries of origin were the UK, Canada, Turkey, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Greece, USA, Georgia and Dubai. Data were retrieved from 330 travelers’ reviews and comments, regarding visiting Anzac Cove, Gallipoli National Park and the Hellas Memorial in Turkey. In a subsequent step, after the coding process was realized, two main themes (emotional and nostalgic experience) and seven main categories (i.e. “moving,” “sad,” “amazing,” “memorable,” “humbling,” “proud” and “touching”) were extracted, all falling under the theme of emotional nostalgia. The theme of nostalgic experience also included historical nostalgia. Further, the vast majority of travelers found their experience to be informative, as the Gallipoli site provides useful knowledge about war history. Moreover, it can be seen from travelers’ reviews and comments that they obtained a deeper understanding about the history of the area through monuments, plaques, writing, memorials, cemeteries, statues and museums, which led to a strengthening of their identity. This process can be attributed to an aspect of nostalgia, which is motivated by a fascination to understand ancestral identity (Russell, 2008). The travelers’ ideas and opinions related to historical nostalgia are outlined below:

You may have seen documentaries, or read books about the history, but it’s nothing like the sombre feeling of actually being here (Traveller 2).

[…] If you go when it is quieter, you get the spiritual feeling from the place, you can walk among the graves and take the time to read the headstones, and be at peace […] (Traveller 5).

If you are ever in this part of the world and you are from Australia or New Zealand, then you need to spend a half day at this site. You can feel the history of the place and it will affect you even if you do not know all of the history surrounding this location (Traveller 11).

[…] Easy to get to but the best way to fully experience and understand the history is take a tour or even better get a personal tour guide […] (Traveller 41).

It can also be claimed from an analysis of travelers’ experiences that many considered the site to be an historical marking place, which helped create the national identity of Australians, New Zealanders and Turkish people. While some travelers prefer to visit the site directly, as the first priority of travel, through package tours, others come as backpackers, after experiencing day tours in Istanbul. Another key issue is that tour guides play a crucial role in providing necessary information to the tourists during their visit (Table I).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anzac</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallipoli</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monument</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trench</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battlefield</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must see</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn service</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lest we forget</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroism</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
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While the vast majority of travelers came to visit the site as organized groups attending daily guided tours, the remainder can be categorized as those who preferred to visit the site independently, a group commonly known as backpackers. Overall, the travelers’ experiences were listed as being “moving,” “sad,” “amazing,” “humbling,” “proud,” “memorable” and “touching,” reflecting the emotional nature of their experiences (Table II). Some of the travelers’ opinions and ideas about their experience are expressed in the following:

In the ANZAC Cove is one of the most moving memorials in the area […] (Traveller 16).

[…] The area was filled with visitors who had emotional and familial connections to this spot […] (Traveller 23).

Two visits to Anzac Cove. Both times were so memorable. A beautiful piece of history which will never be forgotten. Very emotional […] (Traveller 43).

[…] They made you feel very proud that we have such wonderful young people in our country […] We are very proud to have been part of the commemoration […] (Traveller 60).

For all Aussies, Kiwis and Turks this is a very special place and was a humbling experience walking around Anzac Cove being the place that the troops landed (Traveller 65).

I was moved at this sight, I felt so upset that I started to cry when I thought of the lives that were lost here during the war. As an Australian I felt humbled and am very proud to have visited this site (Traveller 133).

The whole peninsula is amazing and beautifully kept. Be prepared to feel emotional at the monuments to the fallen […] (Traveller 177).

This is a must if you’re Australian or from New Zealand. Extremely sad and devastating, but it’s something you must visit […] (Traveller 188).

[…] It was interesting and touching seeing the Australian and Turkish trenches which were surprisingly so close to each other, and the memorials, plus the stunning views of the coastline […] (Traveller 225).

Four of my relatives, three of whom were brothers, were killed here in that terrible war, so I found my two-day visit to the sites and their graves/memorials extremely emotional and moving (Traveller 257).

After data analysis was completed, the term “Anzac” emerged as the theme most frequently used, followed by the themes “Gallipoli” and “Memorial” (see Table I). Moreover, during their on-site experience visitors claimed that they felt a connection to the site, in particular, Australians and New Zealanders, while the vast majority of the rest expressed no direct or indirect family connection to the site. The online reviews and comments of the Gallipoli travelers also indicated that there were first-time travelers visiting the site, along with repeat visitors who had previously experienced the battlefields. The majority of travelers cited “moving” as their emotive experience, although their comments also reflected enjoyment from their visits to Gallipoli.

One of the most substantive and compelling motivations for travelers is a form of pilgrimage relating to place attachment and a sense of nationalism or patriotism, since the Gallipoli Peninsula National Park Area represents the birth of national identity for Australians, New Zealanders and Turkish people alike. Although we find this sentiment expressed primarily by travelers from those states, the desire to have this kind of experience is also found among a few visitors from the UK and the United Arab Emirates, even though they have no historical connection to the site. This situation reminds us that Gallipoli does not merely have significance for Australians, New Zealanders and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Frequency of word usage identifying the emotional experiences of travelers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humbling</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Proud</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Memorable</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Touching</td>
<td>8</td>
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Turkish people, but, being a site which is significant for the First World War, it is embedded in a web of global consequences and effects which implicate other international travelers as well:

This is one of the pilgrimages you must make in a lifetime. Research well and plan your trip to maximise the best of this once-in-a-lifetime journey (Traveller 14).

Like most Australians and New Zealanders, while in Turkey I felt the need to make the pilgrimage to ANZAC cove - in my case in early February […] (Traveller 84).

Like a lot of Aussies I have wanted to do the pilgrimage to Gallipoli all my life, but I found myself rushed and unable to just take my time and let the experience and emotions overwhelm me […] (Traveller 132).

Like many Aussies, I did the pilgrimage to Anzac Cove. Such a moving and very humbling experience. Makes me so proud to be Australian and very grateful for what our brave and young soldiers endured. A very beautiful and serene setting […] (Traveller 329).

In light of the statements cited above, as expressed by travelers visiting Gallipoli, one can claim that the trip could be regarded as a modern pilgrimage, based on the notion of battlefield tourism, and consistent with prior studies (Hede and Hall, 2012; Hyde and Harman, 2011). And, as we have just noted, we can also conclude that due to its historical significance in the First World War, the Gallipoli Peninsula National Park Area is considered a locus of pilgrimage not only by Australians, New Zealanders and Turkish people, but also by international travelers who have no connection to the site. Yet the interest of Australians and New Zealanders in the site displays specific characteristics, while other international travelers reflect more general purposes in visiting the area, and thus the experiences they gain are varied.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Academic literature has failed to take note of the significance of the experiences of travelers visiting the Gallipoli Peninsula National Park Area. Responding to this gap in research, the present study has attempted to advance the understanding of the experiences of Gallipoli travelers, by utilizing reviews and comments left on TripAdvisor. In light of the travelers’ comments, it has been seen that the Gallipoli Peninsula attracts not only Australians, New Zealanders and Turkish visitors, but also many travelers from other countries. However, as the site is considered to be the national birthplace of Australia and New Zealand, the visits of such nationals to the area is regarded as a sacred journey, much like the pilgrimages to Jerusalem or Lourdes (Hyde and Harman, 2011; McKenna and Ward, 2007; Slade, 2003). In considering the experiences of Australians and New Zealanders, attending commemorative events and remembering those who died during the Great War were highest on the list, and this finding is generally consistent with the extant literature. The present research has revealed that the experiences of Gallipoli travelers were emotional, and that they hold a sense of nostalgia for the history of their nations. This is amply supported by the key categories elicited from the content analysis, namely “moving,” “sad,” “amazing,” “memorable,” “humbling,” “proud” and “touching.” Based on these research findings, we can conclude that travelers’ experiences mostly reflect feelings of historical nostalgia, rather than personal nostalgia, since their desire was to visit a sacred cultural environment not directly experienced by themselves, where they were able to obtain a deeper understanding of the history of the area through indirect means (i.e. monuments, plaques, writing, memorials, cemeteries, statues and museums), leading to a strengthening of their identity (Russell, 2008).

Moreover, visitor experiences fall within, and mostly comply with, the emotional, spiritual and cognitive facets of the ten-faceted model of the visitor experience developed by Packer and Ballantyne (2016) within the context of dark tourism. In other words, the results of this study have underscored the fact that the dark tourism experiences of visitors reflect the site’s ability to engender emotional, spiritual and cognitive experiences. The data also support the supposition that Gallipoli is a destination selected by travelers because it offers a commemorative experience associated with the prominent word “Anzac,” an experience reflecting one of the main motivational factors of travelers in visiting the site (Basarin et al., 2010; Cheal and Griffin, 2013; Hall et al., 2010; Hyde and Harman, 2011; Lagos et al., 2015; Slade, 2003). Furthermore, it can also be understood from the reviews and comments that the site offers an experience that derives from a personal connection to the area, in terms of the emotions created by a sense of patriotism or nationalism. Further, the results show that the battlefield of Gallipoli provides visitors with both positive and negative experiences, consistent with the findings
of prior research (Birdir et al., 2015; Hede and Hall, 2006, 2012; Lagos et al., 2015). One of the most important findings of the present research is that Australians’ and New Zealanders’ interest in the site are specific, while other international travelers have a more general purpose in visiting the area. This difference has led to Gallipoli travelers reporting differing experiences after their visit to the site. More interestingly, it can be claimed that the Gallipoli site offers not only emotional experiences, but also historical nostalgic ones, while post-visit comments reflect multidimensional characteristics, as seen in emergent categories (Lupu et al., 2017).

The data have also revealed that Gallipoli is visited by backpackers who travel to the site by charter flight from Istanbul to Çanakkale, or by taking buses from Istanbul airport to the area, a journey that takes almost four hours. One of the most substantive implications of the present study is that travelers prefer to experience the site through the tours which are organized daily by domestic tour operators.

More interestingly, it can be claimed that the Gallipoli battlefield offers Turkish, Australian and New Zealander visitors a spiritual experience, alongside the educational and emotional ones, evoking a sense of heroism within an historical and patriotic context. This is due to the fact that the First World War created a feeling of national identity for these three countries, through which their citizens today express themselves in our modern era. The site is widely regarded as a sacred landscape which can evoke nationalistic pride, particularly for Australians and New Zealanders, and, thus, it can be claimed that the overriding motivation of these visitors to Gallipoli is one of pilgrimage, rather than for thanatouristic purposes (Cheal and Griffin, 2013). Another key finding is that some travelers opined that the Gallipoli Peninsula National Park Area was very well preserved and cared for, with only a few people not comparing the Gallipoli battlefield to other similar international sites. The results of the study have demonstrated that nostalgia can be one of the main motivational factors behind dark tourism.

The present research was based on travelers’ comments on TripAdvisor, rather than utilizing face-to-face interviews and conducting traveler surveys at the site, and this comprises its principal limitation. In order to obtain a deeper insight into the experience of dark tourism, future studies will need to focus on examining such experiences by taking a holistic perspective, and by conducting mixed methods research.

References


Further reading


About the author

Kadir Çakar is a PhD at the Higher School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Mardin Artuklu University. His PhD Degree examined the motivations and experiences of travelers visiting Gallipoli Peninsula, which is known as a dark tourism destination. His main research interests include tourism education, eTourism, destination marketing and management, issue of governance at destination level and crisis management. Kadir Çakar can be contacted at: kadircakar@artuklu.edu.tr

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How does embodiment work in dark tourism “field”? Based on visitors’ experience in Memorial Hall of the victims in Nanjing Massacre

Yanjun Xie and Jiaojiao Sun

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the actions of different senses on visitors’ embodied experience in dark tourism “field,” including embodied emotions/cognitions.

Design/methodology/approach – This research uses qualitative analysis by applying tourists’ reviews from two main Chinese tourism websites and the software of MAXQDA. It identifies the senses applied in the embodiment process in dark tourism “field” and matches these senses to the specific types of embodied emotions/cognitions.

Findings – This research identifies four main senses. The visual sense has the greatest influence on 27 embodied emotions and 7 embodied cognitions. Auditory and temperature sense create particular emotions. This research also points out the phenomenon of “banned behavior.” At last, to achieve accessibility/acceptability, Nanjing Memorial Hall applies two strategies to distance the extreme historical events from visitors: the construction of aesthetic elements and the way it shows historical objects.

Research limitations/implications – It uses both qualitative and quantitative data to identify the classifications and degrees of senses, emotions and cognitions as well as the relations between them. However, there are difficulties in the coding process because of the language differences, which requires a good understanding of the context of the tourism experience.

Practical implications – The research results could be used as a psychological reference and in the design of dark tourism product.

Social implications – It provides a specific understanding of the way in which visitors interact with dark tourism objects and environment.

Originality/value – This is the first research that explains the dark tourism experience from the perspective of embodiment. It provides conceptual as well as empirical reference for a new research topic.

Keywords Dark tourism, Senses, Embodied cognition, Embodied emotion, Present experience, Tourism field

Paper type Research paper

The need to consider the experiences and benefits gained by visitors in tourist attractions should be addressed (Prentice et al., 1998). Given the specificity of dark tourism, present experience is especially the most significant way for visitors to satisfy their emotional/cognitive needs and, thus achieve dark pleasure (Xie et al., 2015). Dark tourism, as defined by Foley and Lennon (1996), encompasses the presentation and consumption of real and commodified death and disaster sites. Philip Stone (2006) also pointed out that dark tourism may be referred to as the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre. Dann (1998) divided dark tourism sites into five categories, namely perilous places, houses of horror, fields of fatality, tours of torments and themed thanatos. Although there are various descriptions regarding dark tourism sites, such as space, field, atmosphere, or dystopia (Podoshen et al., 2015), aura (Knudsen, 2011) and specific location (Lennon and Foley, 1999) these concepts all include two characters, namely the objective physical atmosphere and the subjective psychological
experience of the tourists. Thus, they can be observed under a phenomenological concept: field, which roots in Koffka’s concept of “psycho-physical field” and was introduced into tourism study to address the experience problem (Xie, 2005). The “field” concept was noticed in previous tourism experience studies and further attention must be paid to another closely related concept: embodiment, which possesses high interpretability on the explanation of the experience in the field, as in our case, the tourism experience in tourism field. Thomas proposed that a paradigm of the embodiment can be elaborated for the study of culture and the self, and the paradigm refers to a consistent methodological perspective that encourages new questions for empirical research (Csordas, 1990). The study regarding this concept in tourism is still scarce. However, it is a useful approach to elucidate dark tourism and carry the “field” research toward a more practical and operational direction. Especially for the study of dark tourism which requires proper and careful design of the physical environment and cause complicated psychological results in tourists, the application of field concepts offers researchers a new and thorough approach.

1. From the dark tourism “field” to embodiment

Several similar concepts are used to describe the dark tourism sites, such as magical reality (Nemeth and Che, 2013), phantasmal destinations (Gao et al., 2012), surreal (Goulding et al., 2013), dystopian (Podoshen et al., 2015) and hyperreal (Podoshen, 2013). Stone (2013) introduced Foucault’s concept of “heterotopia” in the study of dark tourism in Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which implies the unique dark tourism field characterized by isolation from the outside daily life field as well as the regular tourism field. Seaton (2009) concludes that thanatourism sites are unique auratic spaces. They all refer to a unique dark tourism atmosphere which is the opposite of or parallel with normal life. And this kind of atmosphere considers not only physical environment – Biran et al. (2011) clarified the relations between the symbolic meanings assigned to dark tourism sites and tourist experience, pointing out that attention has to be paid to tourists’ perceptions of the site during the conceptualization of the tourist experience. These above concepts try to describe the interaction between the subjective dark tourism environment and the objective psychological experience. The encounter of these two parts is realized in the “field” which fuses the subjective environments and objective experiences together. Thus, a core concept from these researches can be summarized as the “field.”

Koffka was impressed by “the relation between consciousness and the underlying physiological processes, or, in our new terminology, between the behavioral and the physiological field” (Luchins and Luchins, 1999). As research continues, the concept of field has also highlighted its value. Xie (2005) started from the explanation of “field” in Gestalt psychology and interpreted “tourism field” systematically. The proposition of “present experience” has become a key starting point in the discussion of tourism field. As Lewin (1943) said, “one should view the present situation – the status quo – as being maintained by certain conditions or forces”, and this is the necessary way of understanding any situations (Burnes, 2004). Xie (2005) introduced the concept of “situation” into tourism study in China and divided it into tourism “behavioral situation” and “atmosphere situation.” In dark tourism research, the studies regarding motivation, emotion, behavior and experience are fundamentally related to the analysis of the “present experience.” The multiple motivations of dark tourism are actually reflected by dark tourists’ various “present experiences.” For example, Seaton (1996) defined dark tourism as the travel dimension of thanatoposis, which emphasizes the “encounters” with death; Robb (2009) explored the aesthetics in the experiences of visitors. Psychological field, physical field and situation are basic concepts in the study of tourism experience, and the concept of embodiment is inseparable from them for the reason that it is the dynamic approach and realization procedure of tourism experience in the tourism field. Thus, the concept of embodiment should be viewed as a basic concept and be observed deeply in the tourism experience theory system.

When it comes to experience, tourists’ senses must be understood. Turner and Peters (2015) pointed out that with the assemblage of visibility, materiality, performance, sociality, technology with bodies – something larger and more encompassing can be produced, namely atmospheres. This notion refers to the function of embodiment in experience. The concept of embodiment starts from the subject of experience and explains the mechanism of the fusion of psychological field and physical field. Researchers working on embodiment proposed that “like the poles which
The concept of embodiment emphasizes on the movements of body and the psychological results of body movements. For example, there are five ways of translating it into Chinese, including corporality/leiblichkeit (Pang, 2001), body involvement; embodiment (Li and Xiao, 2006), and experienced (Wang, 2002). Although the translations are different, they share the same core idea which interprets the interactive mode among human body, human mind and the world (Xu, 2010). Thus, Everett (2008) used food tourism as a lens to observe embodiment and the poly-sensual nature of “new” forms of tourism. Embodiment involves two aspects, namely embodied cognition and embodied emotion. Embodied cognition is the most significant and representative orientation in the rising of the second generation of cognitive science, it advocates the integrality of the human body, actions and situation during the whole cognition process (Fan and Ye, 2014). The embodied cognition theory does not only find roots in philosophical theory which is a significant theoretical origin of embodiment concept (Yang and Xu, 2014), it was also proved by evidences from Neuroscience (Wang and Sang, 2012). As to embodied emotion, the essential theory is that the expression, perception, processing and understanding of emotion are highly related to human body (Zhang and Chen, 2010). And current embodiment theories suggest that the body helps to constitute the mind in shaping an emotional response (Barrett and Lindquist, 2008). In tourism study, Lee (2016) found positive relationships between emotional experience and cognition in battlefield tourism. Researchers also studied the differences between emotional and cognitive experiences in dark tourism space (Yan et al., 2016).

The concept of embodiment is crucial to tourism experience study, especially to dark tourism which involves specific cognitive and emotion consequences. Soica (2016) showed the way in which embodied experiences, practices and performances shape the significances we attach to objects and how meaning is made by tourism promoters and tourists. This meaning attachment process is typical in dark tourism experience. Thus, embodiment is a powerful tool to research tourism “field.” In the exploration of this concept in tourism study, Yu and Peng (2015) described the embodiment process during the trip; Qu and Ma (2015) interpreted embodiment in the classification of tourism situation. In order to explore this concept in a deeper way, we need not only the theoretical clarification but also the analyses on the empirical level.

2. Data collection and analysis

To explore dark tourists’ experience, this research takes Memorial of the Victims in the Nanjing Massacre as example, which is the largest and most influential dark tourism site in China. It is a memorial of the 300,000 victims in the Nanjing Massacre committed by Japanese troops in 1937. Cohen (2011) proposed the term of in populo to describe dark tourism sites at a population and spiritual center of the people to whom a tragedy befell, which the Nanjing Massacre victim museum is. Or as Seaton’s (1996) definition, it is the sites of mass deaths after they have occurred, or Miles’ (2002) definition of sites of death, disaster and depravity. Since our research object is tourists’ experience, we chose the travel notes from tourists as analyzing units. As the study of Netnography points out, with many people now using online communities such as newsgroups, blogs, forums, social networking sites, podcasting, video-casting, photo-sharing communities and virtual worlds, the internet is now an important site for research (Bowler, 2010). The travel notes are voluntary and open descriptions of self-experience without the presupposition or involvement from researchers, thus, can be seen as a proper tool to study the authentic tourists’ experience. The travel notes were collected from two main Chinese travel notes website – Mafengwo and Lvmama. From November 2015 to October 2016, we collected 51 travel blogs containing 81,928 Chinese characters and 445 photos. The unrelated material is
eliminated on the preliminary selection phase, which leads us to a final textual material of 21,608 Chinese characters and 445 photographs.

The analysis process uses qualitative narrative analysis based on the textual and pictorial material. Quantitative narrative analysis is a methodological approach to narrative texts that exploits invariant properties of narrative to make a statistical analysis of words possible (Franzosi et al., 2013). Under this methodology, the texts and photographs are analyzed through three phases – open coding, axial coding and selective coding by applying the software of MAXQDA, which is regarded as one of most powerful tools for the quantitative analysis of narrative texts (Franzosi et al., 2013). By using the software of MAXQDA, this research conducts the structural analysis of these texts, teases out involved senses and embodied cognitions/emotions in the dark tourism present experience in Nanjing and matches different senses to their specific influences on embodied cognition/emotion through code relationship matching. At the first step, namely the open coding phrase, 366 codes are established. These codes are not attached to any preexisted categories and constitute the basic elements of the following analysis process; they are called the codes on the third (bottom) level. Then in the phrase of axial coding, these 366 codes are categorized into 44 different groups according to their meanings. The code groups produced on this level are summarized as the codes on the second (middle) level. They are connected with each other logically. At the third step, namely the selective coding phrase, three significant groups are teased out, namely cognition, emotion and senses, and they are called the codes on the first level which constitute the main trunk of the entire codes system. Based on the codes on the first level and their subordinate codes on the second level, a code relationship matching process is applied in which different senses are matched to emotional and cognitive groups based on the frequencies of the codes co-occurrence. Meanwhile, this research also explores tourists’ experience modes by using “thick description” to interpret the results from above analysis and matching process deeply. Furthermore, this research also conducts the numerical and proportion analyses regarding the types of collected photographs.

3. Embodiment under sensory system in dark tourism “field”

The experience result acquired in a specific environment is caused by the integration of psychological field and the physical field. As to the tourism experience, attention should be paid to the synthetic action realized by multiple senses, such as visual sense, auditory sense, tactile sense, the sense of space and temperature, etc. Thus, this research explores the correlation between senses and embodiment. This correlation answers two fundamental questions: first, which senses influence tourists’ embodied experience most? And second, what results could these influences bring to embodied emotion/cognition? Some researchers have already identified the specific emotional experience and cognitive experience through speculative research (Xie and Sun, 2016). In this study, a conclusion can also be drawn from the interaction between tourists’ sensory system and the physical environment of the memorial in Nanjing (Figure 1): in the

**Figure 1** The embodied cognition and emotion in the present experience

![Diagram showing embodied cognition and emotion](image)

*Note:* For simplicity, only the top 10 types of the embodied emotions are showed out of 27
realization of experience, the four most important senses are visual sense, auditory sense, the sense of temperature and space; the detected embodied cognition includes seven categories: the knowledge of death number, historical facts, war crime, design information of the museum, the reflection on the Holocaust, the stories of heroes and the understanding of peace; the embodied emotion contains 27 types: patriotic, never-forgetting, heavy-hearted, pain, solemn, stunning, shock, maestoso, sympathy, seriousness, depression, mood of praying, sadness, miserableness, dismal, hopefulness, humiliation, respect, resentfulness, indignation, gruesomeness, plaintiveness, sorrow, heartbrokenness, dreary and unreconciled feeling.

Figure 2 shows the result of the code relations analysis results (the square areas represent the effect degrees of each sense respectively on embodied cognition/emotion). It can be observed that the visual sense is the most influential sense on both embodied cognition and emotion followed by the sense of space, auditory sense and sense of temperature. As researchers have pointed out, the cognition is more of a process than an instant phenomenon (Liu et al., 2009), the emotion is, however, a more immediate consequence induced by stimulation (Zheng et al., 2012). At the meantime, there is a relationship between embodied emotion and cognition, as Gieser (2008) argued, through synchronization of intentions and movements, emotions spread over and change the practitioners' perception accordingly; or like Horberg et al. (2011) believes, distinct emotions amplify different moral judgments. Empirically, Stone (2010) used multiple case studies to explore the emotional engagement and embodiment in dark tourism. Also, the acquisition of cognitive results will cause emotional consequences. Knowledge, as a cognition result, as Ignatow (2007) proposed, ought to be conceived as fundamentally embodied, because sensory information is a fundamental component of experience as it is stored in long-term memory. The research on dark tourism experience also shows that there is a kind of dark pleasure obtained from the acquiring of cognitive knowledge, and its long-lasting effect continues when people’s feelings gradually transform from the present experience to past experience (Xie and Sun, 2016).

3.1 Embodied cognition in dark tourism present experience

Theories of embodied cognition hold that higher cognitive processes operate on perceptual symbols (Niedenthal et al., 2009). Cognition relies on the experiences of the subject. However, these experiences stem from the human body which owns its specific sensory ability and mobility, these abilities are connected with each other and together form the organism which owns memory, emotion, language and life. By matching the senses and embodied cognition, it is found that visual sense is the most influential sense in the realization process of embodied cognition. Furthermore, the major cognitive results under visual sense are found as follows: the knowledge of historical facts, the knowledge of war crime, the design information and the death toll. Second, the sense of space and auditory sense are also important to embodied cognition. The sense of temperature is, however, irrelevant to the realization of cognition embodiment (Figure 3). Thus, an unbalance in the field design could be observed: the tourism experience produced here is highly dependent on visual sense, while other sense channels are less used, such as the tactile sense and olfactory sense.

To be specific, the influence of visual sense on historical facts are mainly realized by visual objects, such as the sculptures symbolizing the victims, the text descriptions hanging on the wall, historical photos, the display of historical objects and the presentation of the victim’s names and files. For instance, “the photographs, the historical files, and the published books, they all disclose...
Japanese Army’s atrocities” (M-01-07); and “the sculptures outside the buildings are telling
the stories of this incredibly cruel massacre […]” (M-06-110). This result proves Horberg’s
theory that distinct emotions could amplify different moral judgments. At the meantime, the
number of the 300,000 turns out to be a highly impressive cognitional result. And this result is
achieved by the large-scale stonework carved with the Arabic numerals of “300000.” One
example is, “when I entered into the square, I suddenly saw this carving of ‘victims 300000’,
it was overwhelming” (M-04-48).

As to the influence of space on the cognition, the physical field constructed the atmosphere of
solemnity by the design of huge scale and space to make visitors realize the severity and the
significant meaning of the viewing objects. The results are demonstrated as follows:
“the appearance of the memorial is grand [sense of space], solemn and serene[atmosphere]”
(M-04-48); “this memorial covers an area of 28000 square meters, building area covers an area
of 3000 square meters, buildings are assembled with huge marbles, it’s really spectacular [sense of
space], solemn and serene [atmosphere]” (L-03-157). Furthermore, inside the exhibition building,
photographs and files are intentionally densely arranged. The contrast between this dense
arrangement of files and the huge empty space forges the tourists’ cognition of the scale of this
historical catastrophe. To illustrate, “the shelf was about three story high, and it was full of the files
of victims […] It felt like reading the humiliation in the history and experiencing the heaviness of life”
(M-03-26). Also, the spatial configuration is also used as a reinforcement of the cognition of this
massacre. For instance, “when I tried to take a picture of the room, no matter how I held the
camera, I could neither keep the frame horizontal nor vertical, then I realized that the floor is tilted.
People were in disaster” (M-05-79).

3.2 Embodied emotion in dark tourism present experience

The research of emotion in dark tourism study is relatively scarce (Stone and Sharpley, 2008).
Nawijn and Fricke (2015) summarized the detected emotions in dark tourism research, which
includes anger, anguish and sorrow (Austin, 2002); discomfort and rage (Montes and Butler, 2008);
hope, love, despair, anger, frustration and sadness (Lisle, 2004); sadness and fear
(Krakover, 2005); and disgust (Sharpley, 2012). Perceiving and thinking about emotion involve
perceptual, soma to visceral, and motoric re-experiencing (collectively referred to as “embodiment”) of the relevant emotion in one’s self (Niedenthal, 2007). Tourism researchers are becoming more
and more aware of the theoretic significance of tourists’ present experience. As a specific example,
we can identify specific kinds of emotions which should be explained by the tragedy aesthetics
theory in the exploration subjects’ present experience in dark tourism, such as the specific pleasant
emotion in tragedy and negative pleasure. At the same time, we can also find the emotion of the
sublime, affective empathy and moral pleasure which are under the framework of aesthetic theories
(Xie and Sun, 2016). These complex emotions are involved in the dark tourism experience, implicating the nature and deepest motivation in dark tourism.
By matching the four senses to the emotions in dark tourism experience, it can be found in Nanjing Memorial that visual sense stands in a dominant position, followed by a sense of space, auditory sense and sense of temper. In general, the non-vision experience provided in Nanjing, such as the auditory or temperature experience, are relatively less in quantity compared with the visual experience. And some types of sensation like the tactile or olfactory experience are not used. But in fact, the non-vision channel has significant potential in constructing tourism experience.

In all, 27 emotions can be identified in the experience in Nanjing Memorial; the corresponding senses that influence these 27 emotions are visual sense, the sense of space, auditory sense and the sense of temperature. The visual sense exerts the most influence in general. The sense of space mainly produced the feeling of solemn, maestoso and seriousness. Auditory sense produces specific emotional results like stunning and shock. Last but not least, the temperature design also creates a particular emotional result. The application of the low temperature inside the museum creates the feelings related to “sad and cold”, such as: “Although the temperature outside was 40 centigrade, when I walked into the museum building, a cold blast rushed to me, I began to tremble in this atmosphere, and a dismal feeling of cold and sad struck me […]” (L-02-144). Psychological research shows that the change in environmental temperatures, such as touching cold or warm objects, affects human’s social behavior, especially the social behavior related to emotion (Du et al., 2013). Also, the application of auditory sense played an important role in generating a specific emotion – stunning. When visitors hear the sound of water drops falling into the pole every 12 seconds in a silent and dark room, which symbolizes the disappearance of one life in every 12 seconds, the psychological experience is, “I closed my eyes, listening to the sound of the second hand on the clock and the sound of the water drops. It’s stunning, and the sound penetrated my heart” (L-01-137).

The embodiment theory regarding emotion believes that the body feedback will lead to the processing of emotional stimulation. Psychological experiments show that the simulation of the smiling facial expression results in the process of positive words; the suppression of the smiling expression leads to the process of negative words. This supports the theory that the emotion comprehension is a procedure of embodiment (Zhang and Chen, 2010). William pointed out, “we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, not that we cry, strike, or tremble because we are sorry, angry, or fearful, as the case may be.” The emphasis of embodied emotion is that the processing of emotional information needs the involvement of human body, facial expression and body movement (Yang and Xu, 2014). And the controlling of the facial expression or body movement are closely related to the emotional expression, which affects individual’s perception, understanding and processing of the emotion (Ding et al., 2009).

These theories are proved in the present experience in Nanjing Memorial. A memory hall inside the museum is designed for visitors to mourn the victims. This memory hall is dim and silent, and a monument with candle lights is built at the end of it. Visitors light the lotus candles, put them in front of this monument and express their feelings in quiet. This series of movements become a significant source of emotion. A visitor who finished this ritual has recorded his body movements and feelings as follows, “in front of the monument which has eternal lights, I kneeled for a very long time, kept in silent tribute and prayed for the people who died in this way,” this series of behaviors also triggers a patriotic emotion: “I dreamed one day […] there will be a day […] our country […]” (M-02-13). Kidron (2013) also proved that the co-presence in sites of atrocity enables the performance of survivor emotions tacitly present in the home thereby evoking descendant empathy and identification. In this psycho-physical field, the symbolic meaning constructed by the space also constructs the visitors’ behavior, and furthermore, this behavior constructs visitors’ embodied emotion experiences. Based on these theories, a typical phenomenon was found – the “banned behavior.” It refers to the specific behavioral taboos in dark tourism which affect the visitors’ embodied emotion in a profound way. In Nanjing Memorial, the “banned behavior” includes two most important taboos: one is the restriction of taking photographs, and the other one is the prohibition of steeping in specific gravel pools based on its symbolic meaning. This banned behavior will be discussed hereinafter.
3.3 The embodied experience of the “banned behavior”

Dark tourism has the uniqueness of the death contemplation, as Blom (2000) noticed, “focus on sudden death and attracts large numbers of people […] it is an attraction-focused artificial morbidity-related tourism”, or like Tarlov’s (2005) theory: “(dark tourism means) visitations to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred,” or as Philip Stone’s (2006) definition: “dark tourism may be referred to as the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre”. As it is closely connected to death, dark tourism visitation usually has specific behavioral taboos. And these taboos develop a behavior order, namely a kind of “banned behavior,” which affects the visitors’ embodied emotion profoundly. As the underlying agreement in dark tourism field pointed by Robb (2009), one should not eat, one should be quiet and reverent, one should take pictures but only tasteful ones. In Nanjing’s case, the “banned behavior” is significantly showed by the gravel pools on the outside square. Visitors should walk along the footpath beside these gravel pools. The staff members in the memorial keep warning visitors that it is forbidden to walk on these gravels because they symbolize the victims. This kind of banned behavior intensely catches visitors’ attention, such as, “when I walked out of the building, I saw two kinds of gravels, one is black gray with sharp edges representing the painful souls of the victims, the other represents numerous living lives” (M-05-94); “I was warned by a staff who kept blowing his whistle all the time to tell the visitors to walk along the road and do not walk on the gravels” (L-05-173). This kind of banned behavior produces a respectful and solemn emotion in visitors’ feelings, such as, “no matter what, when you are here, please behave as you were told and be one hundred percent respectful” (L-05-173). Furthermore, this banned behavior does not stop at this passive phase. After being restricted by the bans, people turn themselves to positive subjects supervising and urging others to comply with this ban. As Robb (2009) noticed, tourists have frequently discussed how they felt they should behave, and how alarming it was to watch others behaving in ways they considered disrespectful. In the case of Nanjing, this result can be observed as follows, “I saw a little child walked on the gravels, an old lady pulled him out and said, ‘you are tread on my heart’” (L-01-138). The warning from the museum staff and the following behavior of “not treading” are based on the symbolic meaning of these gravels. First, this symbolic meaning restricts visitors’ behavior; second, the body movement of complying with the ban produces the emotion of solemnness and respect, which further makes tourists to supervise others. A circle can be identified in this process: be reminded of the behavior ban – behavior 1 (behavior of not treading) – emotions (solemn and respect) – behavior 2 (supervising others).

Another typical example of the “banned behavior” is shown by the restrictions in taking photographs. Photo shooting are forbidden in some areas of Nanjing Memorial, and visitors interpreted this restriction as follows: “it is a way to pay respect to the victims” (L-09-192). Actually, not only the visitors could be emotionally affected by this prohibition, but the emotions they acquired also influence their behaviors. In the 51 travel notes which also recorded the visiting in other tourism spots on the same day or during the same trip (one to three days), all the visitors took selfies or photos of their companions and posted them online. However, in the photos taken in Nanjing Memorial, the number of selfies or photos of their companions is zero. Furthermore, some visitors in Nanjing Memorial Hall expressed their dissatisfaction with the behavior of taking pictures in the dark tourism sites. These are all the results from the interaction of emotion and behavior. For example, “please let me express my contempt for those who postured beside the statues of the victims and smiled beside the statues” (L-03-162).

4. The correlation of aesthetic elements between embodiment

Nanjing Memorial is based on Nanjing Massacre in 1937. Since this kind of dark tourism is based on real tragedy events, the visitation often confronts controversies, such as the study of “intrapersonal constraints” (Zhang et al., 2016) or “inner struggle” (Zheng et al., 2016). In the book The Psychology of Tragedy, Zhu (2012) pointed out that “the reason that tragedy can be watched is the distance between the tragedy and the real life.” In order to be a tourism destination, Nanjing Memorial has to apply a distancing procedure by which the massacre happened in the past can be gazed and reflected upon by today’s tourists. The first distance is the time distance between the historical event and present life, which makes the tragedy a remote past and let the visitors...
know that they are not experiencing the misfortune at the present. Thus, the horrifying history can be diluted by time and visitors could ponder instead of feeling threatened in front of the view, and they can adore the heroes and experience the multiple significances derived from the historical tragedy. As a result, the visitors are able to gain a rich vein of emotions and cognitions. Based on this procedure, the memorial obtains the legitimacy of being a tourism destination. From the face values of the concepts of distancing and embodiment, it appears that they are contradictory. Actually, the distancing procedure in dark tourism field discussed here refers to the tourists’ psychological distance achieved by the time distance between the present and the past and also by the aesthetic distance constructed by the aesthetic elements in dark tourism field. The distancing procedure reduces the psychological and moral barriers between tourists and the place where real tragedies happened, it brings the possibility of tourists’ access to dark tourism field and their embodiment inside the field. Thus, the relation between embodiment and aesthetic are mutual: the aesthetic elements provide the precondition of tourists’ embodiment; and an important part of the embodied is the experience of aesthetic elements including the aesthetic of architectures/sculptures and the aesthetic of sublime, human spirit, and heroism, etc.

In the statistical analysis of the photos taken by the visitors, seven categories regarding the photo contents are identified: sculptures and architectures (54 percent), historical descriptions and photos (17 percent), historical objects (8 percent), heroes (7 percent), names and files of the victims’ (7 percent), memorial places (6 percent) and other visitors (1 percent). It can be found that the distancing procedure in Nanjing is achieved through two approaches; the first one is the construction of aesthetic elements by which the memorial achieves the possibility of displaying the massacre. It also enables dark tourism sites to provide visitors with the psychological access and keep the visitors’ experience in a moderate state. The aesthetic elements include two aspects. The first one is the generalized aesthetic elements creating the possibility of the aesthetic appreciation of the statues, architectures, spatial structure and decorations. As the statistical analysis shows, sculptures and architectures occupy a proportion of 54 percent. This kind of aesthetic appreciation is showed as follows, “the appearance of Nanjing Memorial is magnificent, solemn and serene, the wall is built with gray and white marble, there is a set of huge statues which is very dynamic on the background of the pool water” (M-04-48); or “I really love the architecture styles here, although it is a heavy-hearted place” (L-01-136). These statements reflect the distance achieved by using art in dark tourism site. The second kind of aesthetic elements is tragedy aesthetic elements including the aesthetic of the heroism and great human spirit. In dark tourism research, researchers proposed the concept of “negative pleasure” (Xie and Sun, 2016) and the sublime atmosphere, namely the passion coming from the feeling occurring in front of enormous and overwhelming objects (Eco, 2010), such as the greatness of human spirit and the meaning of life. In Nanjing Memorial, the wide-range dark tones, the space layout, the thick walls and rough construction materials are artistic approaches of creating the feeling of sublime. The psychological origin of this sublime feeling is the pondering of the grand questions regarding life, death and disaster.

The second approach of distancing is the selection and processing of the historical objects for exhibition. Because of the authenticity of this massacre, the museum has to make choices of what to display and how to display them in order to keep the tourist experience on an appropriate level. Taking the display of the victims’ skeleton for example, they are half buried under the ground and located in a far and lower position from the viewers, thus it is impossible for the visitors to watch closely or touch them; weapons and torture instruments are kept behind the glass cabinets with explanation boards; warm lights and lotus candles are used in the memory room. The result can be demonstrated in visitor’s notes such as “the atmosphere was solemn and serene, there’s not too much exposure of the bloody and cruel scene. It’s also appropriate for a child to visit” (L-03-160).

5. Conclusion

It is found in this study that visual sense, auditory sense, the sense of space and temperature are four most influential senses that affect the embodied experience in the visitor’s present experience in Nanjing Memorial. This embodied experience includes embodied cognition and embodied emotion. This research also proves the interactions between cognitive and emotional
consequences pointed out theoretically by Gieser (2008) and Horberg et al. (2011). Furthermore, the mechanisms of these interactions in dark tourism are discovered.

More specifically, on the embodied emotion side, visual sense has the most impact, followed by the sense of space, auditory sense and the sense of temperature. These four types of sense produce 27 embodied emotions. On the side of embodied cognition, the visual sense also plays the most important role. The main cognition results are the knowledge of the historical fact, the crime committed by the Japanese army, the design information and the knowledge of the death toll. Second, the sense of space and the auditory are also important to embodied cognition. This conclusion is an expansion of the existing research which focuses mainly on visual, auditory or smell sense. Besides, “banned behavior” exerts a significant influence to embodied emotion. In general, Nanjing Memorial puts most of its efforts on the applying of tourists’ visual sense and the sense of space during the constructing of dark field experience. However, it worth pointing out that the visitor’s auditory sense and the sense of temperature actually show great potentials in producing specific emotions. Other than the above four senses, Nanjing Memorial does not efficiently apply the other senses such as the tactile sense and olfactory sense.

At the meantime, Nanjing Memorial conducted a distancing procedure between the real historical event and today’s visitor to achieve its accessibility/acceptability and make itself a legitimate gazing object. This distance provides the precondition of tourists’ embodiment by reducing tourists’ moral and psychological barriers. This distancing procedure is completed through, first, the construction of aesthetic elements including the generalized aesthetic elements and the tragedy aesthetic elements; second, the selection and processing of the historical objects displayed in the museum. Through the above approaches, Nanjing Memorial creates a dark tourism field that can be experienced by visitors today.

In sum, this research starts from the theoretical level, not only proves the existing theories of embodiment in dark tourism, but also pushes them forward by using empirical research in Nanjing. More specifically, this study discovers the constructive mode of Nanjing’s dark tourism field and points out the defects and potentials in it based on theories and empirical findings. The analysis applies the data coming from tourists’ spontaneous comments which were not interfered by the researchers. On the one side, this helps the researchers to study the authentic tourists’ experience. On the other side, however, the depth of the research is limited without proposing questions to tourists during interviews. In the further, a participant observation can be used to combine the authenticity of the data and the depth of the research together.

References


**Further reading**


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Plymouth, Montserrat: apocalyptic dark tourism at the Pompeii of the Caribbean

Jonathan Skinner

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to present contrasting approaches to the descriptive case study of tourism to the buried city of Plymouth, Montserrat, an example of the marketing and burying – the supply and demand – of apocalyptic dark tourism on the island.

Design/methodology/approach – A case study mixed-methods methodology is adopted, and findings are derived from tour guiding fieldwork, guide and tourist interviews, and an analysis of travel writing and tourism marketing campaigns.

Findings – Dark tourism is viewed as a contentious and problematic concept: it attracts and repels tourism to the former capital Plymouth, Montserrat. After 20 years of the volcano crisis, the islanders, government and Tourist Board are commemorating resilience living with the volcano and regeneration in a disaster scenario. Marketing and consumption approaches to dark tourism elucidate different facets to the case study of “the buried city” of Plymouth, Montserrat, and the Montserrat Springs Hotel overlooking Plymouth. The disjunct between these two types of approach to dark tourism, as well as the different criteria attached to working definitions of dark tourism – and the range of interests in apocalyptic dark tourism into the city and its surrounds – show some of the problems and limitations with theoretical and scalar discussions on dark tourism.

Research limitations/implications – The paper’s implications are that both supply and demand approaches to dark tourism are needed to fully understand a dark tourism destination and to reconcile the disjunct between these two approaches and the perspectives of tourist industry and tourism users.

Originality/value – This is a descriptive dark tourism case study of a former capital city examined from both supply and demand perspectives. It introduces the apocalyptic to dark tourism destination analysis.

Keywords Caribbean, Tourism, Disaster, Dark tourism, Apocalypse, Montserrat

Paper type Case study

Today, Plymouth and its environs stand abandoned and frozen in time, looking like the set of an apocalyptic sci-fi movie. Behind the locked gates prohibiting entry into the “Exclusion Zone,” a deep drift of mud, lava and ash almost buries the clock tower of the former courthouse and rises to the upper stories of other buildings, prompting descriptions of a modern-day Pompeii (Bachelor, 2014).

Introduction

The city is an emblem of modernity. It is a landscape of opportunity and main point of departure and destination for tourism. Globally, the city trip has seen soaring growth between 2007 and 2016 to represent 22 per cent of all global holidays. In Europe, by 2014, city trips had grown to represent some 20 per cent of all holiday trips. The ITB World Travel Trends Report 2015/2016 (ITB, 2015, p. 25) reports that, “In 2014, Europeans made nearly 70 million city trips to international destinations, a 60 per cent rise on 2007 which corresponds to 7 per cent per year, and booked about 400 million overnight stays”. In the UK, ABTA (2013) records a rise in the popularity of the city break as opposed to the beach holiday, from parity of 41 per cent of all tourism in 2013, to 53 per cent city breaks vs 38 per cent beach holiday by 2016 (ABTA, 2016, p. 4). Typically, the majority of tourists on city breaks have similar motivations to each other: “sightseeing, enjoying the city atmosphere, shopping, eating out, and visiting cultural attractions” (ITB, 2015, p. 24). And yet there are some tourists motivated to seek out places of death and disaster, referred to as “dark tourists” if it is considered to be a contemporary late to post-modern phenomenon (Lennon and Foley, 2004), or “thanatourists” if it is...
held to be a more embedded human practice stemming from the Christian obsession with death (Seaton, 1996, 2009). A controversial term (unhelpful, sensational, and not politically correct [Bowman and Pezzullo, 2009]), one critiqued (from supply or demand [Biran and Poria, 2012], or psychological perspective [Buda, 2015]) and typologised (placed on a slippery continuum [Stone, 2006; Hepburn, 2012]), “dark tourism” has the potential to drive niche tourism in some of the world’s most visited cities – “dark cities” according to Kennell and Powell (2016).

The dark tourism concept used in this paper is applied to a non-orthodox dark tourism setting in terms not just of developing world setting associated with geological phenomenon but also in juxtaposing the “apocalyptic” with dark tourism. This is a deliberate juxtapositioning that is in keeping with the recent opening out of conceptualisations of dark tourism. In tourism research, dark tourism is now being applied to an increasing number of locations and experiences. Frew and White (2013) take a visitor motivation and destination management dual approach in their recent volume Dark Tourism and Place Identity. They, in particular, acknowledge the open-ended nature of dark tourism with its connection to the following related terms: battlefield tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, thanatourism, atrocity tourism, morbid tourism, grief tourism, doomsday tourism, dissonant heritage, conflict heritage, undesirable heritage, negative heritage, dark events, dark exhibitions, dark shrines, dark conflict sites, dark camps of genocide, place perception, place branding and destination marketing (White and Frew, 2013, p. 277).

In short, the post-Millennium shift is away from Auschwitz and Alcatraz’s (cf. Miles, 2002; Strange and Kempa, 2003) conventional dark tourism destinations – from dark tourism at the museum and dark tourism at the memorial – to more diverse locations including exploring sites of natural disaster such as in Phuket, Thailand (Rittichainuwat, 2008), or walking slum tours of Mumbai, Nairobi or Rio de Janeiro (cf. Zeideman, 2006; Frenzel, 2013). Performance scholar Emma Willis (2014) takes this movement into the performing of dark tourism by adding the theatrical performances at dark tourism sites such as Butare, Rwanda, where 6,000 Tutsis were slaughtered. Her progressive point is to draw attention to issues of contemporary witnessing and ethical spectatorship. Conceptually, Miller and Gonzalez (2013) add death tourism to Mexico for high animal dose tranquilisers or to Dignitas in Zurich for assisted suicide to the growing dark tourism sub-categories. These examples retain the received understanding of dark tourism’s association with death, disaster and atrocity, thus excluding Cohen and Gössling’s (2015) recent research into the social isolation and spatial disorientations of flying long haul – what they refer to as “the darker side of hypermobility”. They also force a brutal but not brutalising connection between the tourist and the tourist destination that changes the tourist, often profoundly: for environmentalist Phaedra Pezzullo, the dark tourism sites “interpellate the tourist”; for anthropologist Erica Robb (2009, p. 58), “dark tourism occupies a tense intermediary zone between voyeurism and social justice”. Dark tourism has indeed become the new contact zone. This paper engages with that contact zone in the Caribbean, where tourists play out their post-apocalyptic, post-fin-de-siècle concerns.

Where Kennell and Powell (2016) examined, by content analysis, EU cities and their “dark products”, this paper presents and examines the case for or against dark tourism to Plymouth, Montserrat, in the Eastern Caribbean, billed as “the Pompeii of the Caribbean” (Reffes, 2016), “a modern-day Pompeii in the Caribbean” (Bachelor, 2014), an “intriguing Pompeii in the Tropics” (Caribbean Travel Website, 2016), “the ’Caribbean Pompeii’”(Schuessler, 2016), “a Pompeii-style ash heap” (“The Montserrat Reporter, 2003) – with respect to supply and demand perspectives. The paper also assesses whether or not tourism to Plymouth, a town buried by pyroclastic mudflow – a former town, a new non-space appealing to an urban imaginary often referred to as a city – is indeed a case of niche city tourism. The first section considers the history of Plymouth, “capital” of Montserrat, now lost and buried, with its citizens and services all relocated to the suburbs and to only recently purpose-built accommodation in the north of the island. The following section applies the supply and demand approaches to dark tourism to this case study ranging from the marketing and the promotion of the island – this part in particular – and to the tour guiding experience developed for the discerning visitor to this “desolate” destination. It suggests that there is a disjunct between these two types of approach, and the diversity of tours into the buried city, and highlights some of the problems and limitations with theoretical and scalar discussions on dark tourism.
A note on methods

This descriptive case study derives from a mixed-methods research approach to research and interpret data for the case study. This “methodological pluralism” (cf. Heesen et al., 2016) serves to develop a coherent and comprehensive framework for triangulation (see Table I). Triangulation has been shown to improve the degree of confidence in the data gathered and the validity of its analysis (Jack and Raturi, 2006). In this case study, it also provides additional dimensions to the same phenomenon under investigation from different island (from citizen to Tourist Board and tourist industry operators) and consumer perspectives: this blended research triangulates through long-term participant observation with regular follow-up visits to the island; semi-structured interviews with key individuals over the duration of the crisis; online tracking and archiving of digital marketing strategies; and a netnography of the online presence, profile and news relating to the island on social media and in the British and local Montserratian press. This is a comprehensive approach triangulating upon attitudes, approaches and reactions to the ongoing volcanic eruption on Montserrat that led to an evacuation of the capital, its burial in pyroclastic material and its recent exhumation as a working port and tourist destination. The data are accumulative and derived from the range of research methods used, was subsequently searched for keywords, and analysed for themes and specific content. Specifically, long-term participant observation was undertaken in 1994-1995 for ten months on the island examining issues surrounding identity and tourism with reference to “Black Irish” relations and the celebration or commemoration of St Patrick’s Day – the day of a failed slave insurrection in 1768 (Skinner, 2004; Skinner, 2015a). The ongoing volcano crisis started at the tail end of this fieldwork ethnography where the notions and norms of everyday life (cf. Holy and Stuchlik, 1983) and local knowledge were gained through joining in. Since the start of the volcano crisis in July 1995, periodic return visits in 2000, 2005, 2015 and 2017 have kept this research up-to-date and added a longitudinal aspect to living through a volcano natural disaster with a high level of confidence in the interpretation of research material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>A particularly involved in-person, naturalistic research method enabling the researcher to identify and fathom local issues and knowledge, and to be able to distinguish presentation from privately held beliefs and convictions. Time consuming but high in validity</td>
<td>10 months on Montserrat (October 1994 – July 1995); follow-up short research visits (December 2000, March 2005, March 2015, April 2017)</td>
<td>Extensive daily fieldnotes, index cards, newspapers, radio recordings, photographs and video clips sifted for themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>A refined but contrived data gathering technique often used in one-off encounters. Medium level reliability but highly useful and well recognised soundbite data</td>
<td>A complement to participant observation, summarising research issues with 10 key informants, and used in follow-up visits with key individuals (tour guides,Montserrat Tourist Board, ZJB Radio, Montserrat National Trust)</td>
<td>Transcripts searched for keywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netnography</td>
<td>A methodical investigation into the online social world with synchronous and asynchronous engagement. Varying degrees of reliability, and archiving and ethical permission issues</td>
<td>Extensive continuous online digital ethnography concentrating on digital media and social media content from government and news media sources, and longstanding contacts on Facebook and the Electronic Evergreen newsgroup</td>
<td>Digital archives keyword searched for relevant content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse analysis</td>
<td>The systematic meta-analysis of the social production of meaning through discourse interaction (speech as text) and non-discourse (text) for its structures and for interpretation. High levels of interpretation within the constructionist paradigm but needing a strong understanding of context and consistency</td>
<td>Long-term data mining of archives, publications, and online media for apocalyptic and dark tourism references, especially with respect to Plymouth</td>
<td>Triangulation on the research topic through the analysis of the various research method materials</td>
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Throughout the longitudinal research, key protagonists have been interviewed from bed and breakfast business owners to successive Directors of the Montserrat Tourist Board. The staff at the Montserrat National Trust have been liaised with from 1994 to present. More recently, in 2015 and 2017, tour guides have been accompanied through Plymouth, and their trainers and certificators interviewed. Interviews have been semi-structured and based around themes ranging from support and criticism of tourism strategy, disaster resilience and regeneration, dark tourism and cultural heritage with transcripts searched for keywords and emerging themes. Finally, in this comprehensive research triangulation, updates were noted and filtered as – what Kozinets (2015) refers to as “netnography” – by tracking social media, digital news feeds and online newsgroups, as well as tracking key migrants from the island and residents relocated to the north of the island from 1995 to present. There is a coherence across these primary and secondary research techniques with the material from each working to substantiate each other. Moreover, earlier research identified a similarity between the anthropologist’s ethnographic research on the island and travel writers’ fieldwork sponsored by the Montserrat Tourist Board (Skinner, 2008); travel writing representations of the island inform the public and are informed by visits to the island and so are appropriate media. Though not strictly a grounded theory, and approximating more the situational analyses approach updating on Geertz (1973) interpretative “thick description” (cf. Clarke, 2003), the data are similarly derived from the ground up until “saturation” point (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the researcher when no new insights are generated from the data.

The buried city Plymouth, Montserrat

Montserrat is a small British overseas territory in the Eastern Caribbean next to Antigua. It is shaped like a teardrop, measuring 7 miles in width and 10 miles in length, and had a working population pre-1956 of approximately 12,000; the majority descendants from those enslaved in the abhorrent sugar by slavery plantation institution practiced throughout the Caribbean until 1834. The governance of Montserrat traditionally resided in the federation of British Leeward Islands (1671-1958) with Antigua and Barbuda as one colony and St Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla and the Virgin Islands as the other. Plymouth has been the capital and main port of Montserrat and the seat of local government for approximately 350 years, ever since the west of the island was developed by settlers post-1650. While colonial settlement of the albeit uninhabited island is dated at 1632, island historian Sir Howard Fergus notes that the Plymouth goal bears an inscription, “erected in 1664” (Fergus, 1994, p. 18). It has been described as “Georgian-era” (Moran, 2010) and quaint and quintessentially colonial British. The island was settled first by Irish indentured labourers and British plantation colonists and artisans. The influences have been lasting in terms of place names around the island (Kinsale, St Patrick’s, Richmond Hill, Plymouth, Salem, O’Garros) and, contentiously, the suggestion that music, manners and ancestry are mixed to create a new “Black Irish” ethnicity (Messenger, 1973, 1975). In her history of seventeenth and eighteenth century settler society in the English Leeward Islands, Natalie Zacek (2010, p. 98) distinguishes between the Irish farmer/settlers living outside of the capital around the island and the artisans living in the capital when she characterises “the hardscrabble small farmers of St. Patrick’s and the struggling artisans and laborers who populated Plymouth”. Fast forward several hundred years to the mid-1990s and Plymouth is still full of artisans – plying their tourism trade – and there are some smallholding farmers still working their land in some parts of the island periphery. Journalist Phil Davison (2003, p. 4) describes the capital that I was familiar with all too well as “the pastel toytown capital, Plymouth”. It lies at the base of some green tropical peaks, the Soufrière Hills – the significant endpoint of some deep ghauts that wend down the side of the hills to Plymouth “like scratch marks” (Davison, 2003, p. 9).

Plymouth town, the capital of the island, the “Plymouth past”, had four streets running parallel to a harbour front where there was a war memorial tower with clock on top. Nestled in Sugar Bay, Plymouth port was a cargo port though with not enough deep water for large cruise ships. The town had a population of approximately 5,000 inhabitants with shops, a Texaco petrol station, Barclays Bank, law court and parliament buildings at its centre with Philatelic Bureau, radio station and Montserrat Secondary School, and hospital around the periphery. It was overlooked by Richmond Hill where an old windmill had been converted into a small national
museum, and where the Montserrat Spring Hotel catered for island visitors. The Evergreen Roundabout was the main town intersection and meeting point or “liming” spot (hangout) under a large ficus tree. Davison (2003, p. 10) refers to the spot, not inappropriately, as “the symbolic heart of town, a small-scale Piccadilly Circus”. Since the Caribbean-wide devastation of Hurricane Hugo in 1989, when 150 mph winds ravaged the island and destroyed 95 per cent of all the buildings on the island (Skinner, 2011), a new jetty was being constructed along with a new hospital and new Government Headquarters. In July 1995, a devastating volcano crisis began which is ongoing to this day. Key markers for Plymouth town are:

- 21 August 1995 – tephra ejected from the volcano and fell over Plymouth.
- December 1995 – temporary evacuation of Plymouth for several months.
- 25 June 1997 – large eruption killing 19 Montserratians in the east of the island and producing pyroclastic flow in the east resulting in Plymouth’s permanent evacuation.
- 4-8 August 1997 – continued eruption burns and buries the town in 1.4 m ash leading to the abandonment of Plymouth, creation of an exclusion zone and government relocation to Brades the de facto capital in the north of the island.
- 2010 – sandmining begins in the evacuation zone leading to export via the Plymouth port jetty.
- 2013 – a new port is constructed and land cleared for a new capital in the north of the island (Little Bay); though inaccessible, Plymouth remains the de jure capital of Montserrat.
- February 2015 – Saga Pearl II visits Montserrat using Plymouth jetty.

Guardian journalist Polly Pattullo (2000a) published a detailed account of the natural disaster crisis on Montserrat in 2000: Fire From the Mountain: The tragedy of Montserrat and the betrayal of its people. The main title riffs off a popular nursery rhyme “Fire in the mountain” that was used on Montserrat as the signal for the slave uprising in 1768 (Mullin, 1995, p. 219); it is also a Grateful Dead song that was allegedly being sung by the band on 12 June 1980 in Portland, Oregon, when nearby Mt St Helens had a secondary eruption. She translates and evokes the volcano crisis, from 1997 in particular, when, pre-eruption, in her chapter on “The Day of Death”, the volcano dome had grown by May in volume 65 million cubic metres, “the equivalent of a bonfire piled with 65 million sacks” (Pattullo, 2000a, p. 5). By December, it had doubled in size, leading to a Boxing Day collapse of some 46 million cubic metres of material. Still the dome grew until magma stopped reaching the surface in March 1998, leaving the dome’s height at 1,000 metres, with 300 million cubic metres of new rock poised over the south of the island – “enough to fill 3,000 Royal Albert Halls”, as Pattullo (2000a, p. 84) explains. Pattullo (2000a) notes the attraction of the volcano for residents as well as visitors, especially the son et lumiere explosions at night: “Fiery-red rocks cascaded from the summit with theatrical exuberance” (p. 82). Flying over the island, there is an unrecognisable “sea of blankness” (Pattullo, 2000a, p. 83) as landmarks become entombed. Ash covers everything “as in the aftermath of a polluted snowstorm” (Pattullo, 2000a, p. 27); heated pyroclastic flows burn and bury all before it. Plymouth is reported upon in the international press as a tropical version of Pompeii, again a moniker translated for the Old World, just as the island had been marketed previously as “The Emerald Isle of the Caribbean”: “Plymouth was written about as if it had become a post-nuclear war zone or – the most popular invocation – a tropical Pompeii” (Pattullo, 2000a, p. 87). Presciently, Pattullo (2000a) adds that modern-day disasters are unlikely to be left as ruins. Rather, their magnitude preserves them as ghoulish tourist attractions in themselves: “our way is to turn the ruins into a heritage site. Tourism is the way the Caribbean makes its living” (p. 88).

In this way, the science fiction-like eeriness of Montserrat with the foreboding of the volcano becomes the attraction. In his recent USA Today article, Mysterious Montserrat: Volcano-buried city, Beatles legacy, journalist Mark Rogers (2016) refers to the island as “beautiful and mysterious”, practically the modern-day setting for Dr Moreau, or “the set of a 1960s episode of The Twilight Zone”.

Pattullo (2000b) extends her documentary of the natural disaster into a critique of British colonialism as the UK Government and development workers adopted a “wait and see”
approach to the creeping culpabilities of the volcano. This was a hot mix of despair and denial that resulted in further evacuation to the north and overseas, and culminated in protest against the UK Government. Plymouth had become an “ash-ridden ghost-town” (Pattullo, 2000b). Five years later, and Pattullo reports from Plymouth of a Montserrat rebuilding itself, luring back its evacuees, a volcano broadly stable and “simmering”. Plymouth is unrecognisable, quite literally lost to lava and with few features beyond submerged buildings, many now swallowed completely. “Plymouth is gone, except as a 21st-century Pompeii-style tourist attraction”, writes Pattullo (2005), confirming her tourist proposition from five years earlier. Plymouth is now a dead town, buried, but visited by mourners and the morbid, souvenir hunters and those seeking schadenfreude. Pattullo’s (2005) update opens as follows:

John Wilson, Montserrat’s Minister of Communications and Works, is standing on top of 40 ft of lava in his island’s capital, Plymouth. Beneath his feet are buried streets and buildings. The aquamarine sea edging this now dead town and the minister’s turquoise shirt are the only spots of colour in a monochrome landscape. The grey vista of rubble, ash and boulders is the product of the Soufriere Hills volcano, whose first recorded eruption plunged this tiny eastern Caribbean island into crisis exactly 10 years ago. This is the new normal that the islanders in the north have come to terms with, evincing a resilient necessity. They have moved on from the “living with the unexpected” phase (cf. Possekel, 1999) associated with the late nineties. Pompeii is still the adjective for Plymouth, a “nickname” for the evacuation zone according to Irish Times journalist Lorna Siggins (2016), but it is mixed with reports of recovery and reconstruction. David Whitely (2013) accounts for Plymouth whilst writing about the new capital “city” in the north on the “volcano-ravaged island”: “Plymouth is a modern day Pompeii, completely buried and burned out. It can now only be seen by boat tour or from the top of one of the hills that overlook it; the views offering a heart-in-mouth picture of nature’s destructive force”. The views are both sensational and sublime. The contrast across the island, Atlas Obscura (2013) describes – “Half Paradise, Half Mud-Drowned Wasteland” – are extremes that appeal to the tourist seeking difference in their travel experiences. Mangold (2016) suggests that tours to Plymouth “ghost town” can save the island, as tourists are attracted to the barely recognisable “skeletal remains” still accessible such as the Montserrat Springs Hotel; the contrast is between part of “an island in aspic” and the sumptuous vegetation and breath-taking views on the other side of the island. This island is “rising from the ashes” (Mangold, 2016), a naturalistic post-disaster “Pheonix tourism” as opposed to post-conflict “Pheonix tourism” (cf. Causevic and Lynch, 2011) coined from tourist visits to Sarajevo. The recovery phase is to use this new set of resources, to turn “ash to cash” around this “modern Pompeii slowly being reclaimed by the mountain” (Schuessler, 2016). This is by investing in geothermal energy, sand mining and tourism. These clean renewables, and the low-key non-mass tourism of “lava-loving travelers”, “volcanophiles” as some guest house providers refer to them (Bachelor, 2014), provide a counter to the narrative of post-apocalyptic disaster. The two sides of Montserrat can represent a utopia and a dystopia, with the erasure of the landscape exposing the civility and tenacity of Montserratian citizens rather than the ruined state or social breakdown portrayed on screen. Plymouth has become an apocalyptic amusement park for those. Here is precarity writ large. Tourists can stand outside of themselves as they holiday adjacent to the danger zone. This is a post-disaster volcanic island: “Living with the unexpected” (cf. Lisle, 2016), or the anti-advocacy of the environmental activist “toxic tours” of polluted places (cf. Pezzullo, 2007).

The apocalypse tour of Plymouth

Ian Thomson (2012) describes Montserrat with apposite adjectives as “a smoulderingly beautiful volcanic island”. He connects the city Plymouth to Pompeii with the characterisation that “[t]he lava-stricken south of the island presents a Pompeii-like spectacle of devastation”. This is reiterated with his guided visit to the Montserrat Springs Hotel, a haunted hotel on the outskirts of the city:

No one lives in this tropical Pompeii anymore. The Montserrat Springs Hotel, once glitzy, had rusted in parts and collapsed owing to exposure to corrosive volcanic gases, acid rain and ash fall. Its few remaining rooms had been left undisturbed: shirts hung ghostly in a wardrobe, and a club sandwich (I think) stood calcified on a dust-caked table. Cecil Wade, our guide, rightly saw a potential for “disaster tourism” but joked that the hotel was haunted by “jumbie” spirits, and urged us to leave (Thomson, 2012).
Jones feels that she is living through an apocalyptic encounter in close-up. This part of the island: this part of the island – almost the entire southern half of the island includes the Soufriere Hills – is open to essential workers and “Daytime access to some areas” only (MVO, 2011), and this is when the Hazard Scale is at its lowest (level 1: more than one year with no measured activity). Other parts of the island range between restricted and controlled access depending upon the hazard-level scale of volcanic activity. To enter Plymouth necessitates special guide training, a permit from the Montserrat Police who will open the gates and accompany the visit, and continual radio contact with the Montserrat Volcano Observatory. Technically, when tourists are shown authorised parts of Plymouth, their vehicle is pointed in the direction of evacuation and left with the engine running, and the accompanying police officer ensures that tourists are continually within their sight lines. Typically, a day tour begins in Little Bay port, picking the tourists up from the ferry and driving through the emerging new capital; tours can depart to the east to the new airport and new accommodation, and on to Jack Boy hill viewing station overlooking the old airport and eastern flanks of the volcano where the tragic deaths occurred in June 1997. Returning to the west of the island, tours head south for the exclusion zone, driving across Belham Valley (an expatriate accommodation region and former 18-hole golf course now destroyed by volcanic lahar). Climbing out of the southern side of the valley, one passes the first abandoned ruins of houses in the exclusion zone, and the high levels of ash cleared to make access down towards Plymouth. Tours of the outskirts concentrate on the Montserrat Springs Hotel, an open abandoned decaying hotel with a pool full of debris, rooms for view and a balcony panorama of the volcano and its vista of destruction. With permits, tours can continue to sample parts of Plymouth leading towards the former capital’s jetty. This is where some island ferries dock temporarily to begin their tours of the island. Leaving the evacuation zone, day trippers can return passing the ruins of the iconic recording studio Air Studios, the expatriate villas of Old Towne and regenerated Vue Pointe hotel and climb Mongo Hill to visit the Montserrat Volcano Observatory. If the visitors are a large group from a neighbouring Caribbean island such as Guadeloupe, they might have a sea bath and picnic in Woodlands Bay to refresh themselves. Expatriate tourists are generally small group or family tourists who are invited to have a lunch at a local restaurant in Old Towne.

Keri Jones (2016) is a photo-journalist who took one of Sun’s Montserrat Island Tours in 2016. She is returning to the island after an ashen visit in 2010. Plymouth, for her, is a “deserted city, mothballed in metres of ash and boulders”. Jones prefaxes her visit with an interview with Rod Stewart, the Director of the MVO. Thus, before visiting Plymouth, she presents the reader with facts about the speed and danger of the volcano that can erupt and eject rock and gas at speeds in excess of 200 mph. This makes her anxious when they reach the Exclusion Zone V where they wait for the police to let them enter on a timed visit. It is the anti-thesis to a visit to a theme park. It is “not Disneyland” for all the surrealness Jones may be feeling. The contrast in her environment is stark, driving along roads surrounded by thick foliage before turning the corner to see the volcanoscape:

The tunnel of trees and foliage around us was green and verdant and gave no hint of our proximity to the site of a natural disaster. We passed an abandoned school and petrol station buildings and then, turning the corner, I saw the intimidating and towering volcano – a view I will never forget. I had seen pictures of this vibrant, colourful colonial town in years gone by. Plymouth had looked lovely, with its mix of traditional, garrison-style stone buildings and wooden villas. The view before me resembled the aftermath of a nuclear attack (Jones, 2016).

Jones feels that she is living through an apocalyptic encounter in close-up. This part of the island has been turned into “a wasteland”, roads “redrawn”, landscapes re-sculpted:

The whole scene was one of devastation. You could make out the shape of buildings, still standing but with windows broken. The ash was deep and compacted. Some structures only had their upper levels visible. In other buildings you could peer inside but there was only two or three feet of space between the ash and the ground floor ceiling. More buildings were bent out of shape by the huge boulders, which had rained down on the former capital (Jones, 2016).
They visit Angelos supermarket: the outside visible from the first floor up, and the inside viewed through the top of what were high entrance windows. On a tour with Sunny, a visiting tourist along with me were shown the empty aisles inside and a lone fan spinning in the breeze. Sunny has some melted glass tucked behind the top of the window to show tourists the intense heat that came with the pyroclastic flows. The Montserrat policeman keeps close to us for safety, and Sunny keeps his sightline to the vehicle. We pass offices with no walls, but wall planners hanging in the wind. Tourist graffiti is etched onto the outside of some of these buildings. It is as Jones (2016) describes: “Life, as it was in 1997, has been mothballed in ash and debris. You could see office wall planners and calendars stuck on that date”.

A lot of Buried City tourists visit the Montserrat Springs Hotel to the north of Plymouth, overlooking the sad eeriness of the “volcano-buried city” (Rogers, 2016). This hotel used to be a thriving weekend spot with tennis courts, spa and Lou’s beach bar. It was where expats caught up on the news and gossip. In a recent visit to the hotel with Sunny’s father, David Lea, part-time travel journalist Phil Sites (2014) thought the rooms “brimming with various plants and wildlife” – a scene from the film Jumanji. It is certainly disconcerting, with empty rooms, collapsing office furniture, fluttering hotel stationery and a silence and emptiness of human life reminding me of the science fiction films Stalker or The Andromeda Strain (Skinner, 2008). It is “Silent Hill meets Hawaii 5.0” for urbex explorer Shane Thoms (2016) in his photo-article Montserrat – 5 days in a modern Pompeii: Plymouth – Town of God. Thoms (2016) writes insightfully about his intentions and reactions to Plymouth and the hotel:

This was a privileged exploration with the intention to seek out the emotional traces that still lingered in this once thriving urban tourist space. Situated at the foot of a collapsing volcanic dome, this eerily barren, smokey landscape reveals the fragility of the human species and mother nature’s spectacular ability to reclaim her environment.

Thoms photographs the sublime nature of the abandoned and ruined urban space. Montserrat lends itself to those seeking this counter-tourism, this Sun, Sea...and Sulphur as journalist Tweedie (2006) refers to it. Others, such as Capt Eric Bergeron (2016) – guided by Sunny Lea – with his professional interview documentary “Lost City of Plymouth”, and illicit yacht crew of Sy Skye (2016) with their unsanctioned “Montserrat Volcano exclusion zone” (2016) film the site using drones and post to their YouTube channels, adding horror music to recreate the atmosphere they experienced. One of the key films covering Montserrat, Plymouth, and the volcano is directed by David Seitz (2007a), exploring the island during its annual St Patrick’s Day celebrations. Episode three of the YouTube documentary (Seitz, 2007b) – I make an unintentional cameo in episode five – walks through the Montserrat Springs Hotel, dwelling on the empty reception with room keys rusting into their place holders, the kitchens covered in ash and unusable, a toilet sunken into the flow of ash around it, roof structures open to the elements (Skinner, 2016). Five minutes in, there is a shot of Plymouth and the volcano from the hotel terrace. There is stagnant water in the pool.

Ten years later and, the pool has grown in with silt and ferns replacing the water. The water is in the view to the sea and now the tourist can walk on the “once-was” water of the pool area (see Plate 1). Tour guides have turned this water feature for the tourism-past into a waterless feature for their present-day “anti-tourists” (Edensor, 2005, p. 95). Here modernity is in decay with the roof timbers falling in on itself. The swimming pool is no longer clearly delineated by its margins. Instead, the clear sharp lines come from nature’s horizon rather than concrete leisure formations. The viewer can walk through this metaphor of capitalist decay, apocalyptic voyeurs capturing it through their camera lens. They do not have to live through it as Sunny has and is continuing to do so.

“Post-nuclear”, to return to Tweedie (2006), this southern scape of Montserrat represents a more environmental dark tourism than the typical man-made genocide, Holocaust or Ground Zero (New York/Hiroshima). Tweedie describes his visit to the Montserrat Springs as a queer, abnormal experience, one of contradiction in decomposition:

The pool is a swamp, and the darkened rooms, so carefully refurbished for a re-opening that never was, are half-filled with ash and dried mud. Used-up cheque books from a decade ago litter the floor around the reception desk, scattered by some unknown intruder. The switchboard, caked in dust, still waits for a call.
We walk along the ash beach under the beating sun, kicking up great clouds of fine white powder as we go. The air is hot and mildly sulphurous.

We could do with a drink but no bar opens in Plymouth. Only the waves break the silence; we are completely alone (Tweedie, 2006).

There are phones that will never ring. There is a pool with a solid surface. There are refurbished new rooms – from the waist down. There are bars without drinks. And there are beaches that kick-up grey ash rather than golden sand. Around the Springs are other “half-way houses”, caught mid-collapse, some with graffiti on the window glass, fingerpainted signs of visitation if not habitation (Skinner, 2016). Mangold took the same Montserrat Islands Tour (MIT, 2017) that Sunny gives, enjoying the distortion and contradiction of the island where he could become the explorer:

Climb carefully down some cracked and broken steps and enter the reception area of the former four-star Montserrat Springs Hotel. Pendulum lights still hang drunkenly from the cracked ceiling, and perfectly legible old emails and telexes with reservation requests and confirmations litter the back office (Mangold, 2016).

It is almost forensic as the journalist picks his way through the “skeletal” remains (Mangold, 2016). This “volcano tourism” is, for Mangold (2016), the potential salvation for the island, whether it is by daytrippers from neighbouring islands arriving at Plymouth jetty to see the Springs Hotel before visiting the north of the island, ferry visitors staying to explore in private or some way of harnessing the expensive helicopter tours business from neighbouring Antigua.

In his study of the attraction to industrial ruins in Britain, cultural geographer Tim Edensor (2005) makes the point that such ruins represent hybridity, alterity and fatality to the viewer. As urban ruins, these spaces and their debris are connected with dark tourism as examples of darkness and degeneration, a modern-day gothic sensibility illustrating the vulnerability and temporariness of the contemporary (cf. Edensor, 2005, pp. 13-14). The tourist views the ruin as different, exotic, alien, unstructured and no longer delineated. This presents a mortality to the tourist. “The ruin marks an end, a sudden fatality” (Edensor, 2005, p. 165) for the visitor. For Stone (2012), this dark tourism serves as a mediation point where tourists can – from a safe distance – experiment, rehearse, think through and play with their inevitable future. In this “space of defamiliarisation” (Edensor, 2005, p. 29), where the everyday has become extraordinary, the tourists are exploring under the safe guidance of Sunny. He clears a path to
the Springs’s rooms, and lets them wander, pointing out the head clearance and the ash that sinks underfoot as we walk over a sofa. It is semi-“improvisational pathmaking” (Edensor, 2005, p. 87) with our “pathfinder” (Cohen, 1985).

The dark tourism city?

For the purposes of this Special Issue on Dark Tourism and Cities, we need to ask two questions about the preceding case study: is Plymouth, Montserrat, a city? And is Plymouth – Montserrat – and the Montserrat Springs an example of dark tourism? Plymouth is referred to directly as both a town and a city. It has not been described or defined as a dark tourism destination, though the island Montserrat, as a whole, has. With respect to both topics, there are supply and consumption perspectives that can be taken. They differ in terms of marketing and expectation, and delivery and reality experienced. Disciplinary orientation also plays its part such as in Hannerz’s (1980, pp. 59-118) section “The Search for the City” in his treatise on urban anthropology when he looks at “when is the city?” Rather than taking a numerical definition, he looks to social sciences and the Chicago School of Sociology in particular, pointing out that the city is a space of heterogeneity where labour and social relations are more specialized and less kinship dependent – organic, to use Durkheim’s term. Plymouth, Montserrat, lacks the numerical density of a city, but it was qualitatively different to live in. It was the hub for the island: the centre of activity, governance, trade, tourism and industrial activity (radio station, rice milling plant, service stations and other industrial activity were based in the capital). It was not, however, ever the main reason for visiting the island. It is thus a different urban space for the tourist to the city break European destination where the city visited is the endpoint in itself. Plymouth was always the urban gateway and focalpoint of activity on the island.

Besides urban and industrial reasons for linking Plymouth with the idea of the city, there are advertising and journalistic points of association. The official Visit Montserrat website managed by the Montserrat Tourist Board promotes visits to Plymouth the former capital, a town. But its URL and its definition for the visit is one of Plymouth “Buried City”: www.visitmontserrat.com/buried-city/ (MTB, 2017). The abandonment and decay seen is not dissimilar to Liverpool’s wastelands regenerating naturally for Les Roberts (2011). These are spaces of urban imaginary, psychogeographic spots that archive the dark city as what once was, palimpsests from the past. Roberts (2011, p. 317) draws our attention to the heterotopic nature of these environments. There are layers of meaning in these spaces of otherness. The Montserrat Springs has dense temporal difference to it: it is a version of its former self, ghosting the past, tracing or “pouncing” the present. Either Plymouth present is a dystopia to the Plymouth past, or it is a stark contrast to the relatively utopic north of Belham Valley, “the green and the gritty” coined by the Montserrat Tourist Board in their former marketing campaigns (Skinner, 2015b). Plymouth is, for the tourist, an example of dystopian dark tourism, “a dystopian world – utopianism gone awry” (Podoshen et al., 2015, p. 324). This is not, however, the simulated dystopianism of a tour of killer or black metal concert examined by the authors in Western environments. Here, on Montserrat, the aesthetics are scarcely constructed for the tourist. The scene of alienation is not on a screen painting or film screen. The confrontation is with a city buried by crisis, but preparation for a future shock, nevertheless, according to the authors. The magnitude, its scale, puts it also on a world stage equivalent to volcanic eruption in historic Pompeii, earthquake and tsunami devastation in Early Modern Lisbon, hurricane disaster in contemporary New Orleans.

Lastly, Plymouth, Montserrat, is treated and experienced as a city, if now former, buried, lost. Refffes (2016) walks the “lunar landscape” with her guide Norman Cassell, reporting on the “buried city” as it is described by herself and Hon. Delmaude Ryan, Montserrat’s Deputy Premier. Plymouth is “Montserrat’s capital city”, for Bachelor (2014) and Harris (2017); “ruined capital city”, for Handy (2017); “volcano-buried city” for Rogers (2016). Melan Mag Editor in Chief Joy Joses cites Plymouth as a city of the Caribbean in her ten reasons for visiting the island:

A Modern-Day Pompeii – Montserrat’s now – buried capital city, Plymouth, has been compared to a modern-day Pompeii, minus the fossilized bodies. As the only volcanic-buried city in the Americas, Plymouth offers visitors the rare chance to witness a city frozen in time. Visitors wishing to access the city may do so through a certified tour operator (Joses, 2017).
In all of these articles, Plymouth is advertised as a former city, as the capital and urban centre of the island. It exists on the “gritty” side of the island and contrasts with the “green” side of the island that is without a city – the once-proposed but unbuilt “Port Diana”, suggested after the death of Princess Diana in 1997. This is the yin and yang of the island with its contrary environments. As Kimball (2017) describes it: “Montserrat today is actually two islands: there is the Safe Zone, to the north, which is lush and green; and the southern Exclusion Zone, which looks like a sepia-toned photograph”. This has implications for the marketing of the island: the Director of Tourism Anita Nightingale (Montserrat Tourist Board, 2015) constructed a marketing position stressing this contrast with the 2015 strapline “Go Off the Grid: Explore the Green and the Gritty”, and the explanation that Montserratians are like their island with a soft side and a harsh and resilient side. This “geography of contrasts” (Montserrat Tourist Board, 2015) did not last long with Montserrat’s marketing line being seen as too restrictive and appealing only to the adventurer. It was changed in 2017 to “Come. We have time for you”.

With respect to the second issue of whether or not this tourism experience and/or its marketing constitutes dark tourism, it is possible to examine both supply and demand perspectives, as well as the definition of dark tourism itself. In terms of a grand scale dystopian environment dramatically altered by disaster, Montserrat, more specifically Plymouth, meets the criteria of dark tourism island destination. It is not a site of atrocity, but one of disaster plus death. It is also a mediated venue with extensive visual coverage in the news media and social media. Even the Montserrat Tourist Board is complicit in the marketing of the ash weary buried city/town of Plymouth. As such, Montserrat is a dark tourism destination, one massified by technological intervention like the growth of the volcano itself. It suffers from tourist interest in “death, disaster and atrocity” product (cf. Lennon and Foley, 2004, p. 3) whether the tourist is morbidly interested, wants a different adventurous experience, or a warning engagement with forthcoming apocalypse or their inevitable demise. Further to this, whilst there is no connection made to atrocity on the island – for all the barbarity and abuses of the slave plantation system – the tour guides do sometimes make reference to those missing from the community, or those lives lost in aeroplane crashes into the Soufriere Hills mountains or offshore the former airport or, most tragically, the rescue attempts made during and after the fatal collapse of the dome and subsequent pyroclastic flow down the eastern flank of the volcano on 25 June 1997. The viewing platform from Jack Boy Hill allows the visitor to picture the spread of the destruction of the volcano down the sides of the mountain, over villages and across the island’s former runway into the sea (see Plate 2).
This is a dramatic account of death and survival, injury and warning. Like in Plymouth, the tops of buildings pock the dead ash landscape. The imagination emplots one into the narrative, empathizing with the past, perhaps testing the future and recalibrating the present as the tourist returns to the soft green side of their stay – though, to be fair, one account of the airport disasters and deaths that I was party to immediately preceded the tourists’ flight off the island.

The travel writers and journalists are very aware of the deaths on Montserrat when they write their pieces. It provides the scary backdrop for their explorations. The apocalypse is continuing and, with an element of frisson, the viewer could get caught up in it if they are not careful. Before entering Zone V with her guide Sunny, Keri Jones visits the Montserrat Volcano Observatory to speak with the Director and learn about how dangerous pyroclastic flows can be:

He doesn’t take his duties lightly. The major blast in 1997 killed 19 people. It followed two years of volcanic activity and Rob says the tragedy might have been avoided if people had followed evacuation orders. Montserrat’s volcano isn’t one of those cones that just exudes hot lava and gases. It’s potentially lethal because of pyroclastic flows and surges – the kind that are now known to have destroyed Pompeii in Roman times (Jones, 2016).

Sites (2014), Bachelor (2014) and others use the deaths as part of their introduction to the island, setting the scene before the visit to Plymouth. Refes (2016), however, makes no mention of the deaths. And Schuessler (2016) mistakenly attributes only nine deaths from the volcano. Peter Hohenhaus (2016), who runs the popular Dark-Tourism.com website, returns us to the “Pompeii” name or label that has become a metonym for volcano disasters in general. It applies to Plymouth where there has been a slow gradual burial of the capital:

Continuous lahars have since contributed to the gradual burial of the once thriving centre of life on Montserrat. It is now a “modern-day Pompeii” (they do call it that even in the mainstream tourist brochures!) – and thus is the main draw for the dark tourist (Hohenhaus, 2016).

Whilst there have been no recorded deaths in Plymouth itself, the deaths on the island have been wrought by the same volcano and its eruptions. This, then, is a deathly dark tourism destination by association for Hohenhaus. The dark tourism label depends upon the extent or range of the mortality. Lightening the shadows of Plymouth, geotourism scholars Petford et al. (2010, p. 91) refer to Plymouth as “in effect a modern-day Pompeii minus human casualties”. Certainly no casualties of the eruption from Plymouth are advertised for the searching and interrogating that visitors do in the Springs Hotel or down on the ground, the new surface that Plymouth has.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that, though not of Pompeiian proportions, Plymouth is a dark tourism destination as a place of disaster, and as, potentially and by presumed association, a place of death. It is a “shadowzone” of dark travel as conceptualised by post-colonial critics (Clarke et al., 2014), “a site traumatized by colonialism and its aftermath” (Clarke et al., 2014, pp. 221-2), compounded by natural disaster. It has shown in detail the guiding around Plymouth and its perimeter where the Montserrat Springs Hotel commands attention over the ghost town/city. Often this disaster space is conceptualised and narrated in the terms of the viewer, and frequently compared to a film that they have seen from popular horror such as The Shining or entertainment as in Jumanji, to post-apocalyptic The Stalker. Equally the politics of the protagonist feature in how they interpret the landscape as a natural place of awe as eco-criticism (cf. Carrigan, 2011) or capitalist decline – a foreboding and forewarning. Also, there is an attraction to the post-apocalyptic, to the emphatic and clear-cut in a fluid world. The dark traveller, whether journalist or tourist, is visiting Montserrat after the event, attracted to its spectacular magnitude that they go about sensationalising. They are viewing a new landscape which has an emancipatory potential about it for all its destructiveness. It has a freedom, then, to be advertised in different directions: dark, gritty, apocalyptic, Pompeian. As an empty landscape, the no-go area where tourists now go has become a city break destination with a difference. In her study of post-9/11 apocalypse narratives, Apocalypse and Post-Politics: The Romance of the End (2012), political theorist Mary Manjikian examines the public fascination with the end of things, the end of times. This apocalypse as Armageddon or Eden is played out on Montserrat. Here, the ruins of the city are revealed to the visitor, and urban society is re-narrated. But it is an orderly affair
showing that a natural disaster can destroy the physical place but that the social practices and conventions of society are not necessarily lost. Manjikian (2012, p. 228) declares the apocalyptic narrative a decentering narrative and oddly British and post-colonial in feel. This is because there is a nostalgia for the “old life”, pre-Modern, pre-industrial and pre-urban, an impulse found especially in the USA. Ironically, this nostalgia is attracting US tourists to urban Montserrat where one can experience the similar effects of colonisation and natural disaster. The land in southern Montserrat is thus doubly a terra nulla. In apocalyptic dark tourism, at least, this no man’s land is no longer a no-go area as tourism’s leisure periphery pushes back against the volcano.

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Kanchanaburi and the Thai-Burma railway: disputed narratives in the interpretation of war

John Lennon

Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to consider the history and dark tourism attractions associated with a case study of the Thai-Burma Railway in the city of Kanchanaburi, Thailand. The paper considers how history has been abridged and distorted at a number of attraction sites in order to exploit the dark tourism commercial potential. The role of film media is considered as a critical element of the site narrative and the reality of the tragic past of this place is discussed within the context of Thailand’s role in the Second World War. Kanchanaburi, through the urban attractions that constitute the primary motivations for visitation, distorts and exploits its dark history for commercial and ideological purposes. Where accurate the Second World War interpretation was identified, it was maintained by balancing the requirements of national governments and institutions with acceptable levels of ambiguity and non-controversial perspectives on this urban location’s dark past.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper draws on literature, historical documents and tourism publications related to the Second World War and the incarceration and forced labour associated with the Thai-Burma Railway and the city of Kanchanaburi. Fieldwork incorporating tourist attraction and commemorative site visitation was undertaken in Northern Thailand in January 2017. Curators, managers, operators and tourist authorities were contacted in advance of the fieldwork by e-mail to request interviews. The sites identified were the primary sites visited by tourists, and no related Second World War site in the area was excluded. For those interviewed in relation to the subject area, a standard questionnaire based on a rolling database, relevant to particular sites was utilised. Interviews were taped and transcribed.

Findings – The city of Kanchanaburi is defined by a heritage that has changed over time. Many factors imbue the meanings and content of place. This is a function of a plethora of competing influences and agendas; political, economic, cultural, demographic and historical. Yet, this destination is defined by the dark history of the Second World War which is associated with this place. The visitor attraction sites considered in Kanchanaburi provide multiple narratives around the Second World War events. They offer a range of content driven by influences as diverse as simple commercial gain to the complex interaction of political, economic and ideological agendas (cf. Gegner, 2012). In each case, the interpretation is used to articulate heritage through objects, artefacts, audio recording, place or imagery. These elements exist in environment(s) of their creation; the Second World War heritage of Kanchanaburi is developed in a nation that has only a partial and selective acceptance of its role in this conflict. The visitor attractions examined in this research and their content have all re-constructed and re-represented the past. Historical memorialization remains embedded in interests that are global, commercial, ideological but rarely neutral. The interpretation of the Thai-Burma Railway and the narrative of the many victims is associated with the construction merit respect, commemoration and consideration that is value free and not distorted by ideology or commercial imperatives.

Practical implications – This paper provides a foundation for further consideration of how such contested dark heritage is viewed not least by visitors and users. Development of research in this area would provide a valuable source of data on: consumer profiles, motivations and orientation. Relating this data to nationality and origin would provide useful comparative data to that offered by operators and managers of key attractions. Furthermore, the prevalence of social and digital media as primary tourist information source could be measured against the continued (and possibly declining) importance of the filmic narrative. Furthermore, deeper evaluation of nature and content of interpretation is merited, given the range of approaches and content observed. At a political and policy level, the treatment of this part of Thai history and the degree of sensitivity around interpretation is linked to how a nation confronts its difficult past. More thorough evaluation of treatment in national media and education curriculum also merits review. Urban heritage is an important element of urban destination marketing and evaluation based around core themes of transparency, openness, respect for the past, and sensitive treatment of tragic events offer direction for application and evaluation in other urban contexts.
Originality/value – This is the first time the heritage of this city has been considered in the context of dark tourism and the role of Thailand in the Second World War. It incorporates an analysis of all of the relevant attractions in the city and provides through the fieldwork conducted an original contribution to the tourism literature in this field. It draws on historical record, original documentation, interview analysis and tourism data. It provides further evidence of the dark tourism phenomena in a South East Asian context linked to a conflicted and selective appraisal of the past.

Keywords Dark tourism, Kanchanaburi, Thai-Burma railway

Paper type Case study

Introduction, aims and context

The city of Kanchanaburi, located in the province of the same name in north east Thailand on the border with Myanmar, is not a first stop destination for inbound tourists to Thailand. Indeed, Thailand offers the international visitor many alternative attractions, activities and contrasting experiences. Thailand welcomed more than 29.9 million international visitors in 2015, achieving an enviable 6th place in the world in terms of tourism expenditure. Performance of the nation across the years 2012-2016 is detailed in Table I.

The primary pull factor remains the capital; Bangkok, with 21.9 m overnight visitors. This is followed by the beach locations of Phuket and Pattay City achieving 9.3 and 8.1 m visitors, respectively, in 2015 (TAT, 2016). In contrast, Kanchanaburi, capital of Kanchanaburi Province, with a population of 31,327, remains much less visited. The province is in the west of Thailand, 129 km from Bangkok, and covers a total area of approximately 19,483 km², and is the country’s third largest province.

In recent years, Kanchanaburi has seen some growth in short break tourism, predominantly by Thai nationals, travelling north from the urban sprawl of Bangkok, to the closest significant natural heritage destination. Kanchanaburi benefits from proximity to two major national parks in this part of Thailand:

1. Erawan National Park (with its celebrated seven cascading waterfalls).
2. Sai Yok National Park (bordering Myanmar).

However, for some international tourists part of the attraction to this destination relates to the Thai-Burma Railway history and its representation in a range of sites in the city. The location has become synonymous with the railway and the “bridge” over the River’ Kwai and a period of the Second World War history made famous by filmic entertainment rather than historical narrative. It is now seen by some at least, as a destination associated with the dark heritage of the Second World War. The aim of this paper is to illustrate the role of dark heritage in the visibility, marketing and content of this destination. For the first time, the critical influence of iconic filmic narrative in the context of the Second World War history of Thailand is explored, and primary research on operators and owners of attraction sites is explored with reference to urban tourism to this destination.

Dark tourism and destinations associated with a tragic past

Dark tourism (sometimes referred to as thanatourism) has become established since 1996 as a specialist area of tourism study. Death, suffering, visitation and tourism have been interrelated for many centuries, but the phenomenon was identified as such and categorised by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table I</th>
<th>International arrivals Thailand 2012-2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Visitor Arrivals (m)</td>
<td>22,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% growth</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lennon and Foley (2000) and was later the subject of the defining source text: *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster*.

The phenomenon exists across a range of destinations and demonstrates some elements of commonality in a variety of locations, indeed for useful discussion of the range of such dark sites and the potential for classification; see Stone and Sharpley (2008) and Stone (2006). These dark tourism sites act as the meeting place for history and visitation where questions of authenticity and fact are sometimes juxtaposed with the operation of tourism facilities. What is celebrated, interpreted and developed is often selective, and dilemmas of commemoration are reflected in the condition, nature and content of these sites (for useful discussion in the context of the communist past). The tourist attractions at such sites become key physical elements of heritage either authentic or created that combines in whole or part: commemoration, history and record. Dark tourism attractions demonstrate a scale of contrasting demand from consumers for this type of experience. Strange and Kempa (2003) offer a valuable range of incarceration sites operating as visitor attractions that clearly have darker elements as part of the experience and appeal. However, they also constitute commemoration, historical reference, narrative legacies, and can constitute populist visitor experiences. These tourism sites in some cases become one of the few remaining commemorative elements of victims and their testimonies. In such cases, the content and its narrative interpretation take on critically important values in understanding a shared dark past.

For many years, humans have been attracted to sites and events that are associated with death, disaster, suffering, violence and killing. From ancient Rome and gladiatorial combat to attendance at public executions in London and other major cities of the world, death has held an appeal. Sites associated with death and disaster seems to exert a dark fascination for visitors and is frequently linked to crime locations and the perpetration of both lawful and unlawful acts (Lennon, 2010). The sheer diversity of forms of dark tourism sites is significant and has been the subject of research (see, e.g. Lennon and Foley, 1996, 2000; Seaton, 1996; Seaton and Lennon, 2004; Dann and Seaton, 2001; Ashworth, 1996; Sharpley and Stone, 2009).

Further useful contributions to the area include issues of interpretation and selective commemoration (White and Frew, 2012), cross-disciplinary studies in the field of the sociology of death and death studies (Mitchell, 2007), literature and writing (Skinner, 2012), problematic heritage (Ashworth, 1996; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1995), the area of criminology/crime sites (Botterill and Jones, 2010), the architectural legacy of dark sites (Philpott, 2016) and in development of scales of dark heritage (Sharpley and Stone, 2009).

Tourism and death enjoy a curious relationship. Death and acts of mass killing are a major deterrent for the development of certain destinations, and yet such acts can become the primary purpose of visitation in others. In the literature that has emerged since identification and analysis of the phenomenon, dark tourism sites have been identified as destination "pull" factors, and the relationship between crime and its attraction to visitors has been explored. The consideration to date has included:

- visits to death sites and disaster scenes, whether real or created (for useful discussion, see Stone, 2006);
- visits to sites of mass or individual death (see, e.g. Lennon and Foley, 2000);
- visits to sites of incarceration (Strange and Kempa, 2003);
- visits to representations or simulations associated with death (Seaton and Lennon, 2004); and
- visits to re-enactments and human interpretations of death (Seaton and Lennon, 2004).

Murder, execution and sites of lawful and unlawful deaths have served to attract the attention of visitors and residents from ancient times to the current day. The city of Kanchanaburi offers further evidence of the phenomenon. In this context and in other cases, education and the nature of the learning experience are frequently used to justify and explain motivation for development and visitation in the modern world. Indeed, the idea of travel as an educational experience of new and previously unvisited destinations is frequently used as a rational argument associated with discussions of modernity. It is important here to consider the significance of film, television and
communications technology that serves to heighten awareness of “dark” destinations (Lennon, 2009; Foley and Lennon, 1996) and destinations more generally (Seaton and Hay, 1998).

The paper and the material contained below provide a useful addition to the literature and will bring a focus to this part of Thailand which has seen limited exploration in mainstream tourism literature. The paper provides a case study of a city, Kanchanaburi, that has become synonymous with heritage and filmic narrative that relates directly to the tourism experience of many visitors. This provides the foundation for exploring the role of Thailand and the use and treatment of prisoners of war and native labour by the Japanese army, a hitherto underexplored aspect of Thailand’s dark heritage.

Methodology

The paper draws on literature, historical documents and tourism publications related to the Second World War and the incarceration and forced labour associated with the Thai-Burma Railway and the city of Kanchanaburi. This part of Thailand has been identified, given the significant focus on the Second World War heritage and history associated with the city and the region. It presents the largest amount of heritage and related attraction development of any of the cities of Myanmar and Thailand connected by the route of the Thai-Burma Railway in 1942-1943.

A qualitative fieldwork incorporating all related tourist attractions, monuments and commemorative sites was undertaken in Northern Thailand in January 2017. Curators, managers, operators and tourist authorities were contacted in advance of the fieldwork by e-mail to request interviews. The sites identified are detailed in Table II.

Fieldwork research sites, Kanchanaburi and region

Table II contains all of the primary sites visited by tourists and no related Second World War site in the area was excluded. In two sites, subjects were unwilling to participate; however, some nine individuals were interviewed from four of the identified sites (representing a sample of 67 per cent of all sites). For those interviewed in relation to the subject area, a standard questionnaire based on a rolling database, relevant to particular sites, was utilised, where permitted interviews were taped and transcribed. It should be noted that the subject area, seen as sufficiently sensitive by the majority of those contacted that audio recording, was deemed unacceptable, and anonymity was requested and preserved. The data below have been assembled to provide a perspective on what is both a historically problematic and ideologically conflicted use of the narrative of the part of the Second World War and its problematic exploitation.

Understanding the historical context

This area of Thailand was an important part of the narrative of the Second World War and Japan’s struggle for dominance in this part of Asia. The outbreak of hostilities in December 1941 with the simultaneous attacks on Pearl Harbour and British colonies saw the Japanese invasion of the Malayan peninsula with the goal of capturing Singapore. In February 1942, the fall of Singapore saw the surrender and capture of an enormous number of allied prisoners. In total, some 28,500

Table II | Thai Burma railway attractions and operators reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of attraction</th>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Site review and (fieldwork interview requests)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thailand-Burma Railway Centre</td>
<td>TBRC Co. Ltd</td>
<td>Yes (yes)</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The JEATH War Museum</td>
<td>Wat Chaichumpol Temple, Kanchanaburi</td>
<td>Yes (yes)</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Gallery and War Museum</td>
<td>Private Company</td>
<td>Yes (yes)</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanchanaburi War Cemetery</td>
<td>Commonwealth War Graves Commission</td>
<td>Yes (yes)</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chungkai War Cemetery</td>
<td>Commonwealth War Graves Commission</td>
<td>Yes (yes)</td>
<td>5 Km west of city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellfire Pass Memorial Burma-Thailand railway</td>
<td>Australian War Graves Commission</td>
<td>Yes (yes)</td>
<td>70 Km north west of the city</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
British, 18,000 Australians, 67,000 Indians and 14,000 local volunteers surrendered to the Japanese. This significant volume of manpower was later to be deployed in the construction of the Thai-Burma railway, sometimes referred to as the “death railway”. Burma was an important invasion target for the Japanese since it provided a critical allied supply chain to their adversary China. However, Burma also offered access to raw materials for the Japanese war machine, hence some form of rail link between Thailand and Burma was considered a necessity.

It is important to note that during the Second World War, Thailand signed a co-operation agreement with the Japanese Government in January 1942, declaring war on both America and Britain only days later. However, as the conflict in the Second World War progressed, the co-operation agreement assumed many of the characteristics of an occupation (Thompson, 2002). At a national level, there is significant sensitivity about this period of Thai history, and as Beaumont (2011, p. 26) noted:

[…] there has been something of a national amnesia about the Thai’s bystander role as war crimes were committed on their territory.

This selective attention to the history of conflict and state actions is not unique to Thailand and characterises the way many governments and nations re-represent their past. For further discussion, see Lowenthal (1997), and for a comparable example in the case of Lithuania, during the Second World War, see Lennon and Wight (2007). In the case of Thailand, the events of late 1942 were critical in understanding the extent of this process of re-representation of history. Japan ordered the development of a Thai-Burma railway in 1942-1943, given Allied pressure on sea-based supply chains. Japan had conquered much of South East Asia within six months of the Pearl Harbour attack on December 1941 (Beattie, 2015). However, the defeat of the Japanese Navy at the Battle of Midway in 1942 resulted in major supply chain problems for Japanese troops located in Burma, and the importance of a potential rail link became highly significant. The railway construction of such a route was not feasible with heavy construction plant and machinery which was impossible to transport to the site, given the terrain and climate (Thompson, 2002). Accordingly, the 415-km railway from Bang Pong (Thailand) to Thanbyuzayat (Burma) was to be constructed by Asian labourers and Allied prisoners of war.

The large number of allied POWs and the indigenous populations of some of the Japanese occupied Asian nations provided the forced labour supply. The railway was to cross a range of rivers, coastal plains, foothills and inaccessible mountainous border regions. The latter terrain often required deep cuttings into solid rock, large embankments and numerous wooden trestle bridges (Kinvig, 1992). Much of this difficult construction work was undertaken by hand by POWs and Asian forced labour, using tap drills and explosives. Forest was cleared and earth was moved manually at significant human cost (Hardie, 1983). The use of prisoners of war in such dangerous tasks, assisting their captor’s in the war effort, was directly in contravention with the Geneva Convention. However, as a non-signatory, Japan choose to deploy large numbers of allied prisoners in this task. The prison workforce was extended significantly by the use of Asian labourers (predominantly Malays, Tamils and Burmese). In total, across the duration of the construction, the workforce consisted of circa 330,000 including some 61,000 prisoners of war (Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2011) as detailed in Table III.

This workforce laboured in monsoon conditions without; adequate accommodation, food, clothing, medicine or footwear (Kinvig, 1992). Indeed, in the absence of appropriate medicines and medical care, diseases such as malaria, beri-beri, tropical ulcers, dysentery, cholera, general toxoaemia and pellagra, along with the cruelty and violence administered by the Japanese and Korean guards, all contributed to high fatality rates that characterised the construction phase (Kinvig, 1992). The imprecise nature of figures for Asian labourers (sometimes referred to as “Romusha”) is complicated by the fact that the Japanese captors, whilst recording fatalities of allied prisoners, failed to do so in the case of the Asian labourers. Furthermore, in the case of the recruitment and forced conscription of Burmese nationals, the levels of desertion were considerable and a significant unknown number are thought to have perished in the harsh environment of the Thai-Burma border. This tragic summary of the cost of this construction constitutes a major reason for visiting Kanchanaburi. However, the interpretation and content of this tragic history receives mixed treatment at a variety of sites across the city.
Results: Kanchanaburi and its Second World War heritage attractions

As previously indicated, the city comprises a number of attractions associated with this period of its history and these provide one of the primary reasons for visitation. All of the sites associated with this period of the destinations’ tragic history were visited and operators were contacted to request interviews as part of the fieldwork (see full listing below) (Table IV).

The interviews generated a range of responses to the range of topic areas identified for discussion below built around a free flowing database of questions and prompts:

- purpose of operation and ownership;
- nature of experience on offer;
- scale and profile of audience attracted;
- dwell time;
- repeat visitation; and
- revenue and profitability/use of funds generated.

The nine individuals interviewed ranged from government and charity employees to owner/operators of what they described as commercial visitor attractions. For the cemetery and memorial sites, the focus was on remembrance, sacrifice and understanding the narrative. The more commercial exploitation of such sites was seen as less acceptable.

In almost all cases, levels of visitation were approximated and data pertaining to precise visitation were not shared. Visitation profiles were overwhelmingly international with Thai, Myanmar and Burma nationals, constituting the minority of visitors and exhibiting the lowest dwell time. The majority of those visiting the sites (where interviews were undertaken) were Australian, the UK, the Netherlands and the US visitors. In these cases, visitors varied between being totally

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### Table III: Employment and fatalities on the Thai-Burma railway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Employed on Thai-Burma railway</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People of Malayan Origin (including Malays, Tamils and Chinese)</td>
<td>75,000 (Initial Japanese draft circa 175,000, Following desertion 90,000)</td>
<td>42,000 (does not include deaths of those who deserted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>30,131</td>
<td>6,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>13,004</td>
<td>2,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>17,990</td>
<td>2,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese (Singapore)</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aminese</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>239,711</td>
<td>97,652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Beattie (2015) and Kratoska (2005)*

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### Table IV: Kanchanaburi visitor attractions and sites associated with the second world war

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of attraction</th>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Paid/non-paid admission</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thailand-Burma Railway Centre</td>
<td>TBRC Co. Ltd</td>
<td>Paid admission</td>
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</tr>
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<td>City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts Gallery and War Museum</td>
<td>Private Company</td>
<td>Paid admission</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanchanaburi War Cemetery</td>
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<td>5 Km West of City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chungkai War Cemetery</td>
<td>Commonwealth War Graves Commission</td>
<td>Free admission</td>
<td>50 Km North West of the City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellfire Pass Memorial Burma-Thailand railway</td>
<td>Australian War Graves Commission</td>
<td>Free admission</td>
<td>70 Km North West of the City</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
independent, part of a locally purchased tour or part of a more organised coach-based tour. Dwell times for visitors of Australian, the UK, the Netherlands and the US origins were significant on average 90 minutes but, in many cases, in excess of 120 minutes. There was a low instance of repeat visitation, evident normally where there was a direct family association with the site; although for all operators, this was a declining consumer segment. Education visitation by local, regional and national schools constituted a minority visitation element at all sites. The use of funds raised by more commercial operators was extremely sensitive and discussion was limited. In the case of charities, the contributions raised was utilised for maintenance, dealing with depreciation, extending and renewal of interpretation or used as a fund for local community education or development areas in nearby villages and towns.

The key sites also include the “bridge over the River Kwai”, a non-paid admission, metal railway bridge to the north west of the centre of town which is still operational and serves as a major attraction for international tourists. Whilst it is not gated or staffed, its appeal is considerable. Its fame is linked primarily to filmic heritage and, specifically, a Hollywood narrative from “the bridge on the River Kwai” directed in 1957 by David Lean. This film achieved no less than seven academy awards, despite its limited historical and geographical legitimacy. It catalysed the “bridge on the River Kwai” mythology, which, as its narrative grew, became more acceptable and simpler to access than historical record. The current bridge, located in Kanchanaburi, constitutes a re-representation of heritage. The Thai-Burma Railway was composed of many bridges, developed by forced labour (Allied prisoners and Asian Labourers) across the length of the route from Bang Pong (Thailand) to Thaibyuzayat (Burma). The Thai-Burma railway traversed some 416 km across rugged relief that required frequent bridges and cuttings. The bridge which tourists visit in the city of Kanchanaburi is neither authentic nor historically pivotal. Like the river, its identity has been changed to provide a past that can be more easily commodified and exploited. As Beattie (2015, p. 7) pointedly summarised:

There was no bridge over the River Kwai. In fact there was no River Kwai.

The Thai authorities to satisfy visitor demand, changed the name of the river from Maeklaung to Kwai and the Thai-Burma railway never crossed the Khwae Noi tributary, that later achieved erroneous attention as the River Kwai. In reality, much farther north, near the Thai-Burma border, the same railway crossed a tributary of the Khwae Noi, the Song Khalia River. It was in the British POW camp at the Song Khalia crossing that some of the worst excesses of the forced construction period occurred. It is probable that this site inspired the initial book by Boule (1954), that, in turn, catalysed the film (see Boule, 1954). However, this forced labour camp was but one of approximately 55 that are re-coded on the length of the route (Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2011). This route comprised numerous bridges and many POW camps. However, the filmic record has undoubtedly influenced the appeal of the destination, the development of its attractions and activities, constructing and re-representing destinations and sites (McCannell, 1973). Beeton (2016), in her appraisal of film-induced tourism, cites case after case where impacts of representation in all forms of filmic and televisual media are shown to positively impact visitation and destination awareness.

The bridge at Kanchanaburi, whilst originally built by the Asian labourers and Allied prisoners of war, traversed the River Maeklaung (renamed Kwai) and constitutes a further misrepresentation of the “past”. The bridge is of steel construction rather than the wooden trestle bridge featured in the Bridge on the River Kwai film. Such wooden trestle bridges were the dominant construction type utilised on the Thai-Burma railway, although, as Beaumont (2009) noted, many were demolished or lost following the cessation of the Second World War hostilities (Plate 1).

The impact of this augmented historical reality was catalysed by the filmic narrative of the Bridge of the River Kwai. This clearly has parallels in other destinations with a dark history. In 1981, a generation was re-introduced to the genocide of the Khmer Rouge, through the Roland Jaffe film, The Killing Fields. This filmic narrative provided a link to a true story and an abridged consideration of the complex cause of this barbaric regime’s rise to power. The Killing Fields film has an eponymously titled tourist attraction in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh. Whilst this constitutes a significant and well-visited site (second only in visitor numbers to the Khmer temple...
complex of Angkor Wat), it fails to effectively or accurately educate visitors about the scale of this genocide. For example, the Killing Fields’ attraction in Phnom Penh fails to highlight that almost 350 such sites existed across Cambodia during the murderous period of Khmer Rouge control in Cambodia (1975-1979). Furthermore, the later loss of such heritage and historical evidence since 1979 is a further omission, appropriately tragic in its own context. Despite these facts, visitation continues to grow as Riley et al. noted:

[...] locations need not be beautiful nor the storylines positive in order to attract visitors (Op cit, 932).

Indeed, the pursuit of historical accuracy has rarely been the motivation of visitors. As Seaton and Hay (1989) recorded in their analysis of the impact of the impact of the film Braveheart on Scottish Tourism, visitors were motivated to visit Scotland to experience and visit locations featured in the film, even though much of it had been filmed in Ireland, because of a more accommodating national tax regime. Interestingly, the same tourists would often then continue on to or revisit Ireland, to experience the “faux” heritage sites which were in fact “authentic” film locations.

In the case of Kanchanaburi, the bridge is now a major attraction in the heart of the city where tourists of all nationalities visit and cross, in a seemingly endless stream of guided and independent tours. According to Beaumont (2011), this particular site offers for some:

[...] displaced significance – that is a site that lacks heritage authenticity being invested with an emotional power at the level of individual memory or popular culture [...] (Op cit, 23).

However, this bridge is distant from historical fact and geographical location. Indeed, like some of the related attractions in the city, historical accuracy has been lost as war time heritage is exploited and loosely interpreted or ignored. This leads at best to dilution and at worst to inaccuracy. The represented history of the Thai-Burma railway has also been at least partially oriented towards a narrative of Allied loss. Indeed, in the majority of the attractions in Kanchanaburi, the Asian loss is minimised and the “appropriation” of the narrative is evident. In the case of the JEATH museum (the name is an abbreviation of Japan, England, America, Australia, Thailand and Holland), the orientation towards an Allied narrative is dominant. The museum structure is a replica POW hut, and the interpretation though amateurish is focussed around the conditions, work regime, diet, disease and sickness the allied prisoners experienced. The much larger Asian sacrifice remains undocumented at this location. Interestingly, this museum was established in 1977 by the chief abbot of the Wat Chaichumpol, in Muang, near Kanchanaburi. The content and interpretation of the museum is
interestingly selective. For example, the introductory orientation makes claims which are hard to substantiate and difficult to comprehend:

       The word JEATH also replaces the word Death because it sounds too horrific. The JEATH museum is a very important part of the history of Death Railway which will complete your visit to the River Kwae Bridge (sic) (JEATH War Museum, 2016, p. 5).

       The Art Gallery and War Museum in Kanchanaburi presents a “bridge on the River Kwai” narrative with a disjointed consideration of selected historical figures of the Second World War. These elements are combined with a Miss Thailand fashion museum, an ore and jewellery set of displays along with a range of defunct and rusting contemporary helicopters and small passenger aircrafts (non-military). The museum is constructed in the style of a Chinese temple and contains a large variety of unconnected artefacts. The museum does comprise some authentic the Second World War artefacts which include deteriorating photos and sketches, poorly constructed life-size tableaux of prisoners of war and a range of “interpretive” notices such as illustrated in Plate 2.

       This private museum also venerates the original Chinese developer and his family in a shrine-like space on the upper level. The museum also displays, in a glass case, the remains of a number of prisoners of war with the following interpretation:

       In this glass monument, the remains of 104 of the prisoners who worked as labourers during World War Two are kept on the second level and the remains of another two are kept on the third level, making a total of 106 (see Plate 3).

       The quality of conservation in this museum is limited, and Beaumont (2011) has suggested that these are Romusha remains but the situation is unclear.

       In contrast, two related attractions seek to relate a more authentic and historically defensible approach to the Thai-Burma railway. They are the Hellfire Pass Memorial, Burma-Thai Railway, and the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre. The latter opened in 2003, and is a visitor, research and documentation centre. It is located within Kanchanaburi, and its development is associated with Ronald Beattie, an ex-Australian Army Civil Engineer, who has researched the Burma-Thai Railway since the early 1990s. Beattie has lobbied for conservation funds and following assistance from the Netherlands Government, the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre is now the major repository for artefacts and documentary evidence of the development and human cost of the railway. It provides a research and information service for those interested in tracing former prisoners of war and those involved in the construction. The interpretive content is deliberately non-partisan and based on donated and collected evidence, and a narrative which

Plate 2  Typical interpretation: arts gallery and war museum, Kanchanaburi

![Plate 2](image)

Source: J.J. Lennon
provides quantification of the full cost of construction in terms of Allied and Asian lives. This site also highlights the positive role of some Thai nationals in relation to the prisoners of war. The exhibition features the interventions of Mr K. Gardiner (Siam Architects Imports Co), Mr E. Heath (Borneo Co), Mr R. Hempson (Anglo-Siam Corporation), Nai Boonpong Sirivejjabhandu and Nai Lee Soon, who were all associated with the “V” corporation. These were a network of those opposed to the excesses of the Japanese “occupation” of Thailand. They were responsible for passing money and medicines to POWs. Whilst undoubtedly heroic and important, it is a small part of the wider narrative.

Hellfire Pass Memorial, Burma-Thailand Railway, is the other notable heritage site that deals with the tragic past of this place. However, its construction was not without controversy, and the nature of the multiple narratives of this place and how they changed since the initial consideration of the site in the 1980s have been documented at length by Beaumont (2011). This analysis probes how the range of nationalities were represented and charts the range of agendas and interest groups involved in the complex interplay of remembrance of captivity and conflict. This site is located 80 km north west of Kanchanaburi on the land owned by the National Security Command (i.e. the Thai Army). This location is historically important, since it saw some of the worst excesses of the Japanese captors. However, this is also an important relationship between tenant and land owner, and constitutes an “enclave” of quality heritage interpretation that remains dependent upon the Thai Government’s understanding and co-operation. As the site’s leaflet introduction to the memorial intimates:

The Memorial provides an important educational function for the people of Thailand and visitors from Australia and other countries. The memorial stands as an enduring symbol of the close relationship between Thailand, Australia and those nations whose citizens worked on the Burma-Thailand railway (Australian Government, 2015, p. 4).

The site is synonymous with the section of the rail route between Konyu and Hintok, which saw a major concentration of work on the railway construction between 1942 and 1943, involving approximately 2,000 Australian and British prisoners (Australian Government, 2015). At this site, the excavation of soil and rock was carried out with limited machinery and predominantly by hand. Prisoners mainly used hammers, drills, picks and shovels to remove rocks. As production timescales became critical to Japanese engineers, productivity was increased, at great human cost (Hearder, 2013). Shifts were extended from 12 to 18 hours, with the workplace lit by wood fires and oil pot lamps. This gave the impression of fires in a “hell like” location, hence the application of the title “Hellfire Pass” by the prisoners (Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2011). In 1995,
the Australian Government provided A$1.6 million (Australian Dollars) for the development of a substantial memorial centre and related visitor infrastructure to commemorate the events of the railway construction. The interpretation of this site makes strong use of the audio testimony of prisoners of war, in a self-guided tour. The visitor centre element incorporated illustrated and narrative-based interpretation within the memorial. It is deliberately not built around artefacts and has a clear focus on remembrance and learning, which provides due weighting to the extent of Asian as well as Allied losses.

Memory, memorial and re-representation: Hellfire Pass and beyond

It is apparent that in some cases, memory remains contested and selective in aspects of the Second World War heritage displayed in the city and environs of Kanchanaburi. The context of incarceration, forced labour, atrocity is overlaid with competing memories of differing national groups. However, this city offers a range of contrasting narratives for visitors and tourists, who may have limited understanding of the competing sensitivities and agendas present. This incarcerated and forced workforce laboured mercilessly in monsoon conditions without adequate accommodation, food, clothing, medicine, clothing or footwear (Kinvig, 1992). In the absence of appropriate medicines and medical care, diseases such as malaria, beri-beri, tropical ulcers, dysentery, cholera, general toxaemia and pellagra took their toll. This, along with the cruelty and violence administered by the Japanese and Korean guards, contributed to the high fatality rates that characterised the construction phase (Kinvig, 1992). However, as Beaumont (2011) has recorded, the site of Hellfire Pass is:

[...] vulnerable to charges of selective and nationalistic representation and is inherently dissonant with local memories and cultural practices. Hence the sustainability of such heritage is fragile, dependent upon diplomatic negotiation and a continuing perception on the part of the host country that the heritage development is to its economic and political benefit (op cit, 21).

The potential for the controversy in relation to content and interpretation within this site was considerable. Indeed, the potential impact on diplomatic and economic relations between Thailand and Japan was a concern during the site evolution and remains contentious as the Australian Government wishes to make further investment in the site form 2017 onwards. The site and content also risks drawing attention to the Thai co-operation with the Japanese during the Second World War, a period that receives limited coverage in other Thai museums. The co-operation agreement of 1942 between Japan and Thailand and the reality of Japanese occupation sits uncomfortably with narratives of nationalism and self-reliance (Blackburn, 2010). The distant Thai past of empire and conquest may present a more acceptable history for the purpose of nationhood. However, selective interpretation is also accompanied by commercialising elements. In the case of the city of Kanchanaburi, this is illustrated each year with a son et lumiere performance that relates the “history” of the “bridge on the River Kwai”. This visitor entertainment focuses on the allied bombing of the “bridge” in 1944-1945, and the civilian loss recorded. This lights and firework show attracts thousands of viewers generating significant economic impact at a local level. This spectacle and commercial exploitation of the “River Kwai” narrative from t-shirt and souvenirs to resorts utilising the River Kwai as a destination marker, evidence how an increasingly distant interpretation of the past can be capitalised upon (Plate 4).

Kanchanaburi offers a selective appraisal of the past. At least some of its attractions are located within a context of heritage that is neither neutral nor accurate. It is contingent on the political and cultural context of the national location. Heritage in such a context can be constructed, represented and re-represented to assert the primacy of national and political identity. The narrative is, at one level, appropriated by some of those with access to tangible heritage, memories and artefacts. At a second level, the main Second World War graveyards, the visitor is overawed by the scale of loss. Yet, this belies the unmarked and unrecorded loss of the so-called Romusha. The table below records burials and estimated deaths at Chungkai and Kanchanaburi cemeteries in Thailand and Thanbyuzayat in Myanmar (Table V).

During the Second World War, the Japanese forces recorded the deaths of allied prisoners and allowed burial and marking of graves. Such record keeping and understanding was not extended
to Asian labourers. Whilst it is understandable that these are fundamentally Allied War Graves, this reaffirms that remembrance of war is, at one level, political. The celebration and development of heritage shapes and sustains narratives of political legitimacy and identities (Gegner and Ziino, 2012). The physical manifestation of war memorialization in areas such as cemeteries uses distinct semiotic and aesthetic strategies to represent a sanctioned and acceptable interpretation of war. However, these are not simply the narratives of elite groups (cf. Hall, 1992) but rather they absorb a multiplicity of war narratives. The narrative of the Asian labourers, whilst represented in Hellfire Pass and the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre, is not the dominant interpretive context. This remains largely an interpretation of Allied loss, Allied struggle and ultimately an Allied victory. Heritage is contingent on the agencies that realise the narrative. This takes place in visitor centres and attractions and is sustained with funding by governments or commercial endeavour. As Eyal (2004) concurs, memory is neither immutable or given, heritage is selectively interpreted, constructed and re-constructed, represented and re-represented to assert national, religious, personal and cultural identities (Plate 5).

Table V  Burials, recorded and estimated deaths on the Burma-Thai railway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>POW/labourers</th>
<th>Chungkai Cemetery</th>
<th>Kanchanaburi Cemetery</th>
<th>Thanbyuzayat</th>
<th>Total deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>30,000+</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>3,568</td>
<td>1,588</td>
<td>6,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>18,000+</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>1,896</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>2,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>13,000+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>2,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>700+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Remains repatriated</td>
<td>Remains repatriated</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>61,000+</td>
<td>1,740</td>
<td>6,977</td>
<td>3,766</td>
<td>12,616+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Labourers</td>
<td>200,000+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80,000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>275,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94,000+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce (2011)
Conclusions

The city of Kanchanaburi is defined by a heritage that has changed over time. Many factors imbue the meanings and content of a city. This is a function of a plethora of competing influences and agendas: political, economic, cultural, demographic and historical. Yet, this urban destination is at least partly defined by the dark history of the Second World War. The critical mass of attractions focussed on the “bridge of the River Kwai”, and the history of the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway provides destination awareness and have been utilised in urban marketing and individual product marketing whether in accommodation, retail, attractions or events. The narrative of some of these products remains problematic. Operators of tourist sites, such as visitor attractions, that constitute, for some visitors, a major learning experience (cf. Lennon and Foley, 2000) have to be aware that they have potential to influence the historical, social and cultural meanings represented (Smith, 2006). The selection, interpretation and conservation of elements of the past are critical in understanding what is considered and how it is represented (Ashworth, 2008).

The visitor attraction sites considered in Kanchanaburi provide multiple narratives around the Second World War events. They offer a range of content driven by influences as diverse as simple commercial gain to the complex interaction of political, economic and ideological agendas (cf. Gegner, 2012). In each case, interpretation can be used to articulate heritage through objects, artefacts, audio recording, place or imagery. These elements exist in environment(s) of their creation; the Second World War heritage of Kanchanaburi is developed in a nation that has only a
selective acceptance of its role in this conflict. Historical memorialization remains embedded in interests that are global, commercial, ideological but rarely neutral. The interpretation of the Thai-Burma Railway and the narrative of the many victims are associated with the construction merit respect and sensitive commemoration.

Further research and practical insight

This paper provides a foundation for further consideration of how such contested dark heritage is viewed not least by visitors and users. Development of research in this area would provide a valuable source of data on consumer profiles, motivations and orientation. Relating this data to nationality and origin would provide useful comparative data to that offered by operators and managers of key attractions. Furthermore, the prevalence of social and digital media as primary tourist information source could be measured against the continued (and possibly declining) importance of the filmic narrative. Furthermore, deeper evaluation of nature and content of interpretation is merited, given the range of approaches and content observed. At a political and policy level, the treatment of this part of Thai history and the degree of sensitivity around interpretation is linked to how a nation confronts its difficult past. More thorough evaluation of treatment in national media and education curriculum also merits review. Urban heritage is an important element of urban destination marketing and evaluation based around core themes of transparency, openness, respect for the past, and sensitive treatment of tragic events offer direction for application and evaluation in other urban contexts.

References


Further reading


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