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## **When Tragedy Attracts: Understanding the Motivations behind Dark Tourism**

Nuno Castelo Ribeiro

Master in Hospitality and Tourism Management

Supervisor: PhD Ricardo Jorge Godinho Bilro, Assistant Professor with Habilitation, Department of Marketing, Operations & General Management at ISCTE Business School

October, 2025



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## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Resumo**

Com esta investigação, o principal objetivo é explorar e compreender as motivações que levam os indivíduos a visitar destinos de Turismo Negro, que são locais marcados pela tragédia, morte e/ou sofrimento. Nas últimas décadas, este nicho de turismo tem vindo a ganhar mais atenção por parte do público e, para além disso, existe uma grande lacuna na literatura turística sobre o comportamento turístico no Turismo Negro.

Este estudo começou com uma revisão exaustiva da literatura, seguida do processo de recolha e análise de dados para chegar e apresentar as conclusões. O estudo empírico utilizou uma metodologia interpretativa e qualitativa, incluindo entrevistas semiestruturadas a 20 participantes que tinham visitado anteriormente pelo menos um destino de Turismo Negro. Os participantes apresentavam antecedentes pessoais e demográficos diversos, permitindo uma interpretação mais rica dos padrões motivacionais.

Os resultados obtidos mostram que o envolvimento com o Turismo Negro é impulsionado por múltiplos motivos que se sobrepõem, em vez de um único fator dominante, e que o Turismo Negro é visto não apenas como um ato turístico, mas como uma oportunidade de crescimento pessoal, reflexão pessoal e confronto emocional com o passado.

**Palavras-chave:** Turismo Negro, Comportamento Turístico, Motivações.

**Sistema de classificação JEL:** Z32; L83; Z12.



## **Abstract**

With this research, the main goal is to explore and understand the motivations that lead individuals to visit Dark Tourism destinations, which are sites marked by tragedy, death and/or suffering. In the last few decades, this niche type of tourism has gained more attention from the public and, in addition to that, there is a large gap in the tourism literature about tourist behaviour in Dark Tourism.

This study started with a comprehensive literature review, followed by the data gathering and examination process to reach and present the conclusions. The empirical study used an interpretive and qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews with 20 participants who had previously visited at least one Dark Tourism destination. The participants presented diverse personal backgrounds and demographic, allowing for a richer interpretation of motivational patterns.

The findings gathered show that the engagement with Dark Tourism is driven by multiple overlapping motives, rather than one single dominant factor and that Dark Tourism is perceived not as just a tourist act, but as an opportunity for personal growth, personal reflection and emotional confrontation with the past.

**Keywords:** Dark Tourism, Tourist Behaviour, Motivations.

**JEL Classification System:** Z32; L83; Z12.



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## 1. Introduction

Humans have always been intrigued by the macabre, leading people to explore the shadowy corners of history and encounter the lasting effects of tragedy and death, for example, the viewing of decapitations and hangings and the Roman gladiatorial games would attract large crowds. For instance, consider assassination sites, camps, cemeteries, horror museums, battlefields and disaster sites, and genocide sites. Thus, even though these sites are linked to sadness and misery, they are also among the most popular tourist destinations worldwide. (Fabros et al., 2023).

This phenomenon, known as "Dark Tourism," has become a recognized subgenre in the tourism sector, drawing more and more travellers who want to visit locations and events linked to tragedies, death, and the past.

The term "Dark Tourism" was first used by Foley and Lennon (1996) to describe the phenomenon of tourists visiting sites of death, disaster, and human suffering. Despite the seemingly paradoxical nature of this type of travel, its motivation, and experiences stem from a desire to face difficult historical truths and human psychology.

Unlike the common types of tourism, Dark Tourism involves the consumption of sorrow, trauma and tragedy which is driven by education and curiosity about the past, as well as the relationship between the emotional side of the tourist and the experiences related to death. (Cui et al., 2020).

As it is a niche type of tourism, it is still a theme with not much information in comparison with other types of tourism. (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). With that being said, this research aims to assess the relationship between the motivations of tourists to indulge in Dark Tourism and the experience of Dark Tourism itself. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the following research questions: "What motivates a tourist to visit Dark Tourism?" and "How does the tourist describe the experience of Dark Tourism?"

The objectives of this research are to define the main concepts of Dark Tourism and tourist motivation, to conduct a comprehensive literature review on Dark Tourism, examine its definitions, motivations, and ethical implications, to develop a questionnaire to gather data from tourists who have visited Dark Tourism destinations, exploring their motivations and perceived impact of the experiences, to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on Dark Tourism by presenting the findings of the research in a clear and accessible manner and, finally, to bring more attention to Dark Tourism.

The structure of this research is as follows. Firstly, a Literature Review is presented on Dark Tourism by analysing the current articles on the theme and filling the gaps that are found. Then, the methodology of the research is expressed, explaining the research content, research design, population and sampling, data collection, and data treatment. Finally, after examining all the gathered data, the conclusions of this research will be presented in a very clear and structured form.

### **1.1. Theme and Research Problem**

The following dissertation, with the theme “When Tragedy Attracts: Understanding the Motivations Behind Dark Tourism”, aims to serve as a foundation for a Master’s final project.

In recent decades, Tourism has expanded beyond leisure and enjoyment and evolved into innovative forms of travel associated with education, reflection and self-improvement. Among these growing trends, Dark Tourism has been gaining a significant prominence. Initially presented by Foley and Lennon (1996), the concept of Dark Tourism has undergone development and scrutiny in scholar discourse, emphasizing its cultural, psychological and ethical aspects.

The increasing appeal with visiting destinations like memorials, concentration camps or war sites indicate a shift in tourist behaviour towards experiences that involve themes of mortality, history and memory. With this recent increase of interest in Dark Tourism, it is of great importance to understand what motivates the tourists to engage in such a niche type of tourism. As per Dann (1998), comprehending tourists’ motivations is fundamental to the Tourism literature, particularly when examining a complex and sensitive topic like Dark Tourism.

Despite the increase of interest in Dark Tourism sites and, consequently, the increase of academic studies on tourism motivation, the research focused specifically on motivations of Dark Tourism is still very limited in comparison with other types of tourism. Previous studies, including those by Stone and Sharpley (2008), explore the intricacies of this niche type of tourism, which point out that curiosity, education, empathy and moral inquiry are very relevant when it comes to Dark Tourism motivations. However, there is still large gap of literature and investigation concerning tourists’

interpretations of these types of experiences and the personal, cultural and social aspects that motivate their visit.

Tourists' motivation to indulge in Dark Tourism may be for educational purposes or be motivated by curiosity or an interest in the morbid. This uncertainty is the base of this dissertation. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the fundamental motivations that drive tourists to experience Dark Tourism, enhancing the comprehension of tourist behaviour and contributing to the academic literature within this domain.

## **1.2. Dissertation Objectives**

The primary objective of this dissertation is to further develop the comprehension of the factors that drive tourists to explore Dark Tourism destinations, locations linked to death, tragedy, or human suffering. This study aims to enhance the academic discourse regarding the psychological, cultural, and emotional factors that influence tourist behaviour in this unique type of tourism.

This dissertation primarily intends to analyse the viewpoints of twenty participants who have partaken in some type of Dark Tourism experience. The study seeks to identify the primary motivational factors such as curiosity, education, personal interest, empathy, and moral questioning that impact the decision to visit these sites through their narratives.

The insights garnered from the semi-structured interviews, alongside the theoretical frameworks outlined in the literature review, will shed light on the main research question of this study: What motivates tourists to visit Dark Tourism destinations? This dissertation addresses the subject to enhance the understanding of Dark Tourism and elucidate its significance within the wider framework of tourism studies and cultural memory.

## **1.3. Structure**

To achieve the objectives above, this dissertation adheres to a logical and systematic structure. This report begins by defining the scope and significance of the research, emphasizing the necessity of comprehending the motivations that drive tourists

to actively look for Dark Tourism experiences and its relevance within the tourism context and its literature.

Furthermore, a literature review is built around several main points that were gathered through various articles and also presents the theoretical framework essential for contextualizing the investigation. Topics such as general theories of motivation in tourism, the push and pull framework, the conceptualization of Dark Tourism and Thanatourism and the main motivational factors identified in previous studies are some of the pillars that this research is based on.

The following chapter presents the research's methodology that outlines the qualitative method employed, the formulation of the semi-structured interview script, the sample criteria and the results analysis. Next, the study examines the findings obtained from the interviews, which include raw and processed data to support the final chapter. This chapter finalises the research by presenting its conclusion, the theoretical and managerial contributions, its limitation and suggestions for future research.



## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Motivation**

In the literature, there are many definitions of motivation. According to Guay et al. (2010), motivation can be described as "the reasons underlying behaviour.". Garrison et al (2004) identify motivation as "the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something". Turner (1995) links motivation with cognitive engagement, which he characterizes as "voluntary uses of high-level self-regulated learning strategies, such as paying attention, connection, planning, and monitoring".

Aggarwal (2019) offered another perspective on defining motivation saying that motivation is the psychological necessity or urge that explains why individuals partake in specific behaviours. Motivation involves a complex combination of ideas, perceptions, values, interests, and behaviours that are deeply tied together. As a result, various approaches to defining motivation often concentrate on cognitive actions (e.g., monitoring and strategy use), non-cognitive elements (e.g., perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes), or a combination of both. (Lai, 2011).

As Deci et al. (1999) stated "intrinsic motivation energizes and sustains activities through the spontaneous satisfactions inherent in effective volitional action. It is manifest in behaviours such as play, exploration, and challenge seeking that people often do for external rewards".

Researchers frequently differentiate intrinsic motivation from extrinsic motivation, the latter being driven by reinforcement contingencies. Intrinsic motivation is driven by personal delight, interest, or pleasure. (Lai, 2011).

Motivational study commonly covers Maslow's hierarchy of requirements. (Simková & Holzner, 2014). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is arguably the most recognized motivation theory, likely due to its simplicity and intuitive appeal. Maslow's (1970) theory of motivation presents a hierarchy that ranks individual needs. Maslow's early humanistic principles appear to have influenced him to develop a paradigm that positions self-actualization as the ultimate aspiration for humanity. He believed that if none of the needs in the hierarchy was fulfilled, the most fundamental wants, the physiological ones, would determine behaviour. If these conditions were met, they would cease to be

motivating, and the individual would be driven by the subsequent level in the hierarchy.

## **2.2. Motivation in Tourism**

Researchers consistently point out a shortage of studies about tourist motivation (Cohen, 2018; Lundberg, 1972), with much of the existing research on the topic recognizing the notion of equilibrium. (McNeal, 1973). In other words, the studies concentrated on the assumption that individuals travel to fulfil a need. Dann asserted that researching tourism would be futile without considering the motivations of tourists. (Dann, 1998).

Tourism encompasses the act of travelling for leisure, educational purposes, or business activities. Tourism involves the personality, attitudes, values, and lifestyle of tourists. It incorporates new interactions with individuals, locations, traditions, and civilizations. (Simková & Holzner, 2014). Swarbrooke & Horner (2007) state that Motivation in tourism can be described as “those factors which make tourists want to purchase a particular product or service”. Uzzell (1989) found that “Tourists are not motivated by specific qualities of a destination; rather, they match a destination’s attributed to their psychological needs”. Forero et al. (2022) presented that there are diverse motivations for tourism among which can be culture, religion, education, research, memory, family encounters, history, paranormal phenomena, and even some families that still do not find forgiveness.

Dann's (1977) push and pull theory suggests that tourists are driven by either push or pull factors toward a destination. Push factors serve as a motive, referring to the tourist as the subject and addressing the elements that predispose them to travel. (Dann, 1977). Pull factors are incentives that entice tourists to a specific destination, with their significance attributed to the travel objective. (Dann, 1977). An individual might experience multiple push factors, while a location may have several pull factors. For example, numerous Holocaust museums emphasize teaching and commemoration in their mission. (Yuill, 2003).

Dann (1977) observed that pull factors have predominated in tourist research, resulting in a lack of interest in push factors. Dann (1977) proposed that anomie and ego-enhancement represented a push factor for travellers.

Dann's concept of anomie describes a society "...whose norms governing interaction have lost their integrative force and where lawlessness and meaninglessness prevail". (Dann, 1977). The absence of meaning has developed into potential push factors, wherein the aspiration to, "...transcend the feeling of isolation obtained in everyday life..." compels individuals to escape their circumstances. (Dann, 1977).

Dann study identified ego-enhancement as a motivating factor. He asserts that individuals require acknowledgment to perceive themselves as superior to those under them. One method of this progress is through travel.

Kim & Lee (2002), in their study on travel to National Parks in South Korea, identified 12 motivating elements (push factors) that pushed people to a destination. Those factors included the need to escape the quotidian routine, seek adventure, foster friendships, enhance familial cohesion, among others. Meanwhile, Crompton & Kim (1999) identified internal push variables as escape, social recognition, socialization, self-esteem, learning, regression, novelty, and separation from crowds.

### **2.3. Dark Tourism**

Darkness is complex and subjective. Anguish, atrocity, chaos, conflict, crime, danger, death, deprivation, destruction, disaster, forbidden, hostile, lost, macabre; melancholic, morbid, murder, pain, sadness, scare, sinister, suffering, torture, tragedy, traumatic, or violence are just a few of the themes that fall under the umbrella of darkness. (Belo & Gustavo, 2023).

Dark tourism must be a behaviour in the tourism industry, society, politics, and economics that enables people to deepen their historical consciousness, recall the past, and feel death, given that death evokes essential social and cultural values. (Yan et al., 2016). Theoretical frameworks on Dark Tourism emphasize existential worry, terror, and angst. However, several recent studies highlight that when participating in Dark Tourism experiences, travellers express both positive and negative emotions, such as wonder and inspiration. This raises the prospect of beneficial results, such as social mobilization to create a more inclusive society. (Soulard et al., 2023).

The interest in Dark Tourism has grown exponentially in the last decade and it tends to grow even more in the future. (Belo & Gustavo, 2023). This can be seen by the

increased number of visitors to the Auschwitz concentration camp, which is a historical Holocaust site in Poland, from 0.5 million in 2001 to 1.2 million in 2009. (Yan et al., 2016).

Nowadays there are many definitions of Dark Tourism, but the first definition of this type of tourism was made by Foley and Lennon (1996). According to them, Dark Tourism “is the term adopted by the authors for these phenomena which encompass the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites”. Another approach to characterize Dark Tourism is from the standpoint of the experience: Dark Tourism refers to tourist's experiences that are mostly made up of 'dark' emotions, such as suffering, death, terror, or melancholy, many of which are brought on by acts of violence that aren't typically connected to intentional amusement. (Ashworth, 2008). Tarlow (2005) also presents a possible definition of Dark Tourism, describing it as “visitations to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred and that continues to impact our lives”. Kerr (2020) gives a more recent definition of Dark Tourism saying that Dark Tourism has emerged as an internationally acknowledged category related touristic locations linked to death and challenging historical narratives.

A concept linked with Dark Tourism is Thanatourism. Luna-Cortes (2022) suggested that it was important to distinguish between the two concepts. Light (2017) claimed that Dark Tourism embraces any travel experience linked to death, violence, criminality, and/or human suffering, whereas Thanatourism specifically corresponds to the motivations for visiting sites of death. Stone & Sharpley (2008) defined Thanatourism as “travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death”. In essence, Thanatourism is a behavioural phenomenon that is characterized by the reasons behind tourists' visits. It is believed that there is a "continuum of intensity" that varies according to the many reasons behind each visit and the degree to which a person's interest in death is personal or general. (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Although the terms "Dark Tourism" and "Thanatourism" are used concurrently in academia, there appears to be a preference among scholars and the public for the term "Dark Tourism.". (Martini & Buda, 2018).

According to Soulard et al. (2023), Dark Tourism exposes us to the short-term aspect of life and may inspire more in-depth introspection about what makes us human,

how we affect other people's lives, what binds our community together, and the effects of discrimination and hatred.

The primary trends in Dark Tourism include definitions and typologies, moral discussions, the political roles of these sites, the reasons behind visitors' actions and their experiences, management and marketing, and methodological questions. (Light, 2017). The Dark Tourism concept is often used as an umbrella term that includes several subcategories. (Light, 2017). Stone & Sharpley (2008) suggest five possible subcategories of Dark Tourism activity which are: seeing death scenes performed in public, visiting locations of single or group fatalities, visiting memorials or internment sites, seeing symbolic representations of death, and witnessing re-enactments of death. Dark tourism products are thought to have a rather “fluid and dynamic spectrum of intensity”. (Stone, 2006). Across the spectrum from the "lightest" to the "darkest", distinctions can be drawn between them in terms of ideology, political influence, spatial affinity, and commercial or educational ethics. (Yan et al., 2016). The concept of different shades is also studied by Stone (2006), who suggests a "spectrum of supply" that ranges from "lightest" to "darkest" types of Dark Tourism. The perceived shade of "darkness" in each given Dark Tourism product is determined by a range of spatial, temporal, political, and ideological aspects. Rami & Erdiñç (2014) highlights that a distinction between lighter and darker tourism can be made based on the location of the sites/attractions. Suggesting that there is a difference between sites associated with death and sites of death, suffering and disaster. Stone & Sharpley (2008) also give a possible way to identify different “shades” of Dark Tourism based on the degree of purpose concerning supply and demand. Different sites/experiences can be either "paler" or "darker," depending on the tourist's level of interest or obsession with death as well as how much an attraction is designed to capitalize on that interest or fascination. Thus, the areas where a fascination with death is fed by the deliberate provision of experiences meant to satiate this obsession are those experiencing the darkest tourism. (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). The concept of Dark Tourism involves a range of experiences, from the melancholiest end that revolves around a series of profound encounters related to death and mortality to the lighter end that deals with commercial entertainment. (Stone, 2006).

Stone & Sharpley (2008) state that Dark Tourism serves as a de-sequester, making death that is absent, visible by bringing it back into the public eye and conversation. Dark Tourism consumption may contribute, either directly or indirectly, to the social

neutralization of death for the individual, reducing the sense of dread that death invariably brings and enabling the pursuit and acquisition of ontological security through the creation of a new social institution (Dark Tourism). (Stone & Sharpley, 2008).

#### **2.4. Motivation in Dark Tourism**

There continues to exist a deficiency in comprehension concerning the motivations of Dark Tourism consumers. This deficiency in comprehension may result in unwarranted negative assumptions regarding the ethics of Dark Tourism participants. It may also hinder the capacity of site operators and governmental bodies to effectively promote Dark Tourism destinations to interested audiences. (Baidwan, 2022). Motivation is influenced by the visit's aim, and the dark experience is subjective, as each visitor interprets it differently. (Mavragani & Mandrinou, 2022)

Korstanje (2016) said in his published work that “we live in the stage of economic production where death is one of the main criteria of consumption. We consume death everywhere—in TV programs, novels and in reality—in order to enhance our ego. The leisure practices of our grandparents have changed to our present, more sophisticated ways that include visits to sites of disasters, mass death or human suffering such as Auschwitz, jails, disaster-spots and so forth”.

Stone (2013), in his paper titled " Dark Tourism Scholarship: A Critical Review," pointed out that “the act of travel to sites of death, disaster or the seemingly macabre – or what has commonly been referred to as Dark Tourism. The commodification of death for popular touristic consumption, whether in memorials and museums, visitor attractions, special events, exhibitions, or specific tours, has become a focus of mainstream tourism providers. Dark Tourism is concerned with tourist encounters with spaces of death or calamity that have perturbed the public consciousness, whereby actual and recreated places of the deceased, horror, atrocity, or depravity, are consumed through visitor experiences”.

Biran (2011) stated that the incentives for visiting dark sites and engaging in Dark Tourism are extensive. Motivations differed based on personal ancestry, an argument of

validation, educational reasons, reflection of death and in completely different instances even enjoyment or general interest.

In the diverse realm of Dark Tourism, it is plausible to presume that multiple incentives may drive buyers of this niche. One of the initial explorations into comprehending the motivators of Dark Tourism consumers was conducted by Dann (1998), who identified five primary motivations for this demographic: a desire for engagement with ghosts, a quest for unconventional experiences absent in mainstream tourism, a desire for nostalgia, a wish to commemorate criminality and deviance that would be socially unacceptable in their quotidian existence, and a desire to attain an understanding of mortality and its connection to their identity as tourists.

A study conducted by Min et al. (2021) indicated that tourists' motivations for visiting Dark Tourism destinations are associated with the visitors' experiences and their post-visit attitudes towards these Dark Tourism sites. The tabular presentation indicated that tourist motivations for visiting Dark Tourism sites encompass curiosity, obligation, comprehension and education, leisure, educational experiences, self-reflective experiences, moral experiences, concerns, knowledge acquisition, and personal fulfilment.

The study that Biran et al. (2011) carried out indicates that tourists' motivations for Dark Tourism can be categorized into four categories: "see it to believe it" (their interest in seeing the site out of a need to believe that such atrocities happened), "learning and understanding" (their desire to learn about the Second World War and the atrocities that occurred at Auschwitz), "famous death tourist attractions" (their general interest in sites of death, willingness to visit the actual site and feel empathy for the victims), and "emotional heritage experience" (their desire to connect to his or her heritage and have an emotional experience). (Biran, 2011).

The research conducted by Ashworth (2004), as referenced by Dornier (2011), identified three motivations for visiting Dark Tourism sites: horror, empathy, and curiosity. The study indicates that horror is connected to Seaton's (2001) ideas regarding individuals' fascination with death, whereas empathy pertains to the event's participants, and curiosity arises from the site's distinctiveness or peculiarity. Curiosity as a motivator likely elucidates the significant influence that media or literary coverage has on individuals' fascination with a dark site. Individuals who frequent dark sites do so to witness phenomena they have encountered in literature or discourse, or at times, the

depiction of the site holds greater significance than the visitor's actual experience, as indicated in the study. (Seaton, 2001).

Blom (2000) identified four similar motivations for visiting dark sites: tourists desire to encounter experiences distinct from their quotidian lives; there exists competitive demand within the tourism sector to develop novel and unique attractions; tourists seek "catharsis", attainable through confronting distressing events to which they lack personal or individual ties; and media exposure introduces unfamiliar places and individuals, thereby fostering interest in visiting such sites. On the other hand, Dunkley (2007), as referenced by Raine (2013), identified various motivations for visiting dark sites, including remembrance and empathy, pilgrimage, contemplation, morbid curiosity, special interest, thrill and risk-seeking, validation, self-discovery, convenience, iconic sites, and authenticity.

Mavragani & Manddrinou (2022), in their study, observed that “an average level in the motives chosen by the participants as driving forces for visiting dark tourist monuments, where interest in tragic historical events was the strongest and the need to get acquainted with death was the weakest motive of all.”

Philip Stone's proposal presents the Dark Tourism spectrum as a comprehensive illustration that clarifies the supply side of Dark Tourism. The framework functions along two axes, one evaluating Dark Tourism products from the darkest (e.g., educational focus) to the lightest (entertainment focus). (Hartmann, 2014). Dark Tourism places are defined by real death and suffering, originating from the most sombre end of the spectrum. Furthermore, these places possess an educational focus, historical significance, authentic product orientation and location, are non-commercially supplied, and exhibit minimal tourism infrastructure. In contrast, at the lighter end of the spectrum, places are categorized as entertainment-focused, heritage-centred, including inauthentic product representations, deliberately curated, and possessing superior tourism infrastructure. (Stone, 2006).

In a study by Robinson (2015) on Dark Tourism motivations, the findings indicated that the primary motivations for visiting lighter Dark Tourism sites were linked to family enjoyment, education, and entertainment, with a significant emphasis on sharing experiences with peers upon returning home. Consequently, the motivations for visiting darker dark sites, such as concentration camps and sites of mass slaughter, are primarily empathic towards the victims, with intellectual inquiry being central to the visit and

educational experience. The study concluded that visitors to lighter sites are primarily influenced by family and loved ones, emphasizing kinship and enjoyment, whereas those visiting darker sites exhibit a greater interest in the academic and educational quality of the sites, along with a strong interest in the historical context.

A more recent study conducted by Magano et al (2022) revealed that the primary motivations for visiting Dark Tourism sites are: curiosity, the need to see, the need for understanding, and enjoyment. Notably, all these motivations are internal, contradicting the literature that also recognizes external motivations. Numerous data suggest that the contemplation of grief, self-hatred, hostility, and psychological susceptibility traits correlates with Dark Tourism practices (e.g., the desire to observe morbid phenomena). Ultimately, the study concluded that individuals who frequent darker environments and exhibit more negative personality traits demonstrate greater levels of tourism wellbeing. (Magano et al, 2022).



### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Approach**

The objective of this study is to investigate and understand the motivations that drive tourists to visit Dark Tourism destinations. This will be achieved through a qualitative study of personal narratives and experiential reflections obtained through semi-structured interviews.

Unlike any other type of tourism, Dark Tourism evokes a unique blend of emotions, ethical dilemmas and symbolic significances. Ashworth (2004) and Seaton (2001) researches show that curiosity, empathy, fear, and the urge to confront mortality are pivotal points for tourist to want to indulge in Dark Tourism. A qualitative research methodology was considered most suitable for this research due to the subjective and emotional characteristics of this type of tourism. This method facilitates a sophisticated interpretation of the meanings, feelings, and values associated with the choice to participate in Dark Tourism.

Semi-structured interviews were deemed as the best choice for this research due to their adaptability and capacity to foster in-depth answers while preserving a clear thematic framework. In-depth interviews were performed to facilitate a detailed and direct investigation, emphasizing a profound understanding of certain characteristics (Pandey & Pandey, 2015), while gathering qualitative data.

The gathered data will undergo thematic analysis, facilitating the identification of frequent patterns and deep comprehension into participants' perspectives.

#### **3.2. Primary Data**

In this stage of the research, primary data was collected directly by the researcher. According to Sarstedt & Mooi (2011), primary data is highly specific, as the researcher sets its content and extent, enabling precise determination of the information gathered. This data collection method is typically anonymous, carried out independently and not publicly accessible, so assuring that the insights extracted remain proprietary to the study.

The script for the interviews was meticulously crafted in alignment with the conceptual framework developed throughout the literature review ensuring an alignment with the objectives of the research and the theoretical foundations.

This research aimed to gather accurate, primary data from participants who have had any kind of experiences with Dark Tourism as they are qualified to offer the best insight possible into the psychological, behavioural and cultural motivations behind the desire to visit destinations linked to death, sorrow and/or pain. Dark Tourism may awake both positive and negative feelings, presenting chances for reflection and social consciousness, elements which this research aims to explore. (Soulard et al, 2023).

This primary data collection allowed the researcher to investigate themes including emotional engagement, educational value, personal identity, and ethical considerations, all crucial for comprehending the motivation factors of Dark Tourism. The insights obtained from this study phase establish a robust basis for analysing behavioural patterns and formulating significant conclusions regarding the motivations underlying Dark Tourism.

### **3.3. Interviews' Development Process**

Every interview followed a fluid and conversational format in order to understand the participants' point of view in a genuine way, allowing a more meaningful analysis of their personal motivations and experiences surrounding Dark Tourism.

The interviews began with a brief introduction of the interviewer and a small description of the purpose of the interview, making sure that all participants had a thorough comprehension and a reminder of the subject matter in hand. Following, the dialogue progressed via the 10 questions in the interview script that encouraged the participant to contemplate their experience and provide their most genuine point of view.

The first 2 questions were "*How do you define Dark Tourism?*" and "*What first drew you to visit a Dark Tourism site, and how did you become interested in it?*" to analyse how familiar and experienced is the participant with Dark Tourism and their perspective on the topic.

Then the interviewees were asked the following questions “*Can you describe the emotions or thoughts you experienced during your visit to a Dark Tourism site?*”, “*Do you believe visiting Dark Tourism site is a form of education or entertainment? Why or why not?*” and “*How important is the historical or cultural context of a Dark Tourism site to you?*”. These questions allowed to understand how the participants perceive Dark Tourism and their experiences.

After, to perform an internal analysis of each participant’ motivations, external factors that affected their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, and emotional and cultural challenges encountered during their experience the interviewer asked “*Do you think that visiting Dark Tourism sites changes your perspective on life, death or human suffering? How so?*”, “*Have you ever felt conflicted about visiting a site that deals with tragedy, death and/or suffering? How did you resolve that conflict?*” and “*What factors influenced your decision to visit a particular Dark Tourism site? (e.g., personal interest, location, historical significance, recommendations, etc).*”.

Lastly, the participants were asked “*What role do you think social media played in shaping your desire to visit Dark Tourism sites?*” and “*Would you recommend visiting Dark Tourism sites to others? Why or why not?*” to analyse if social media is a factor that plays a role in the decision-making process to visit Dark Tourism and if they would recommend visiting Dark Tourism destinations to others.

The interviewees had the opportunity to add any further comments or suggestions for the improvement of the interview itself.

### **3.4. Criteria for sampling**

The sample of participants for the interviews was selected with careful consideration of the study’s objective. The main objective was to explore and understand what motivates tourists to engage in Dark Tourism, thus the main criteria for this selection was whether or not participants have visited one or more Dark Tourism destinations. To be able to achieve this goal, it was crucial to collect genuine reflections and experiences from participants who have already visited Dark Tourism destinations as, according to Stone (2006), Dark Tourism is personal and influenced by a wide range of human

motivations and responses, which most can be effectively understood through firsthand narratives from participants. With the sample choice in accordance with the research's aims, this study could rely solely on lived experiences rather than theoretical aims which assured a consistency across the interviews and facilitated the examination of patterns.

Since the only criteria for this sample was the experience with Dark Tourism, there were no demographic limitations such as age, nationality or educational background.

### **3.5. Interview Process**

After establishing the criteria and questions for the sample, the interview procedure proceeded by contacting the selected parents via WhatsApp or SMS. The objective of the message was to persuade the possible candidates to participate in the study. The message that was sent to potential participants was presented as “Hi, I hope you are doing well! My name is Nuno Ribeiro, and I am a Hospitality and Tourism Management Masters student in ISCTE Business School. I am currently in the process of writing my thesis on the Tourist's motivations for Dark Tourism. In order to gather data that allows me to analyse tourist's motivation I need to interview tourist that have visited at least one Dark Tourism destination. As for my knowledge, I am aware that you have already visited at least one of these locations so, I would like to know if you'd be willing to participate in an interview to contribute to my study and to the Dark Tourism literature. I would appreciate the gesture if you would be interested in taking part. Best regards, Nuno R”.

Following the interviewee's response, an argument over availability dates followed to accommodate the participant' schedules. The interviews were arranged and conducted in person or via phone calls.

In total, there were 20 participants interviewed with every interview lasting, on average, eleven minutes and when finished each interview was subsequently typed onto paper for record-keeping purposes. After the 20 interviews there was enough data to start the investigation process of the insight gathered.



## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1. Results and Discussion**

This study aims to investigate the motivations of tourists who engage in Dark Tourism. To achieve this purpose, 20 interviews were performed only with individuals who had previously visited at least one Dark Tourism location, guaranteeing that all insights were based on direct and real experiences.

### **4.2. Interviews Results**

To better analyse the data gathered from the interviews a set of four main clusters were created: Familiarity and Personal Understanding of Dark Tourism, Perception and Emotional Experiences of Dark Tourism, Internal Motivations and External influences in Dark Tourism and Media Influence and Recommendation.

Regarding the first theme, Familiarity and Personal Understanding of Dark Tourism (Table 1), it is possible to understand how each participant perceives Dark Tourism (A1 to A5 in coding). The numbers show that all 20 participants associate Dark Tourism to death, tragedy and suffering which was expected. Education was also mentioned by 3 participants when defining Dark Tourism. It was also possible to get insight on what drew the attention of each participant to Dark Tourism (A6 to A14 in coding). The two main factors that were mentioned were the “Interest in the past and in history” and the “Interest in darker periods in history and war”, showing a pattern that point out History as a key factor to create interest in Dark Tourism. 7 participants also mentioned that “Curiosity” was a factor that led to the participant to be interested in Dark Tourism.

**Table 1:** Absolute Frequency of ‘Familiarity and Personal Understanding of Dark Tourism’ Coded Answers

Code	Frequency	Code 2	Frequency
A1	20	A11	4
A2	1	A12	4
A3	3	A13	7
A4	1	A14	4
A5	1		
A6	7		
A7	4		
A8	9		
A9	19		
A10	6		

**Source:** Own Elaboration.

Within the second theme, Perception and Emotional Experiences of Dark Tourism (Table 2), the aim was to understand each participant’s perception of Dark Tourism and their experience. When asked to describe the emotions or thoughts that they felt during their Dark Tourism experience (B1-B19) we can see a wide range of answers from the participants. The most common answer was “sadness”, that was mentioned by 10 participants and “respect”, mentioned by 4 participants. When discussing if Dark Tourism is a form of education and entertainment (B20 to B30 in coding) we can see that there was a consensus in opinion, as 17 out of the 20 interviewees consider Dark Tourism as a form of education. The same cannot be said about the participant’s opinion on entertainment, as 6 participants consider Dart Tourism as a form of entertainment and 8 participants disagree. Analysing the topic of the importance of the historical or cultural context in Dark Tourism destinations (B31 to B38 in coding) all 20 participants recognize its importance for the best experience possible and, in addition to that, 6 participants affirm that without the historical and cultural context, the experience loses its value.

**Table 2:** Absolute Frequency of ‘Perception and Emotional Experiences of Dark Tourism’ Coded Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
B1	10	B11	4	B21	0	B31	20
B2	3	B12	2	B22	6	B32	1
B3	3	B13	2	B23	8	B33	1
B4	2	B14	2	B24	2	B34	1
B5	3	B15	1	B25	2	B35	1
B6	1	B16	1	B26	1	B36	1
B7	2	B17	1	B27	3	B37	8
B8	3	B18	1	B28	4	B38	1
B9	1	B19	1	B29	1		
B10	1	B20	17	B30	1		

**Source:** Own Elaboration.

Studying the Internal Motivations and External influences in Dark Tourism (Table 3), when asked if the participants think that visiting Dark Tourism sites changed their perspective on life, death and human suffering (C1 to C8 in coding), 18 interviewees confirm that visiting Dark Tourism sites changed their perspective with 6 out of the 18 participants mentioning that it made them realise how fragile life is. There is a mixed opinion on the topic of conflict (related to death, tragedy and suffering) felt during the experience in Dark Tourism (C9 to C24 in coding), with 11 participants saying that they felt an internal conflict and 9 participants saying that they did not. In the topic of motivations to visit Dark Tourism destinations (C25 to C35 in coding) there is a wide array of opinions. The main answers were the “historical significance” and “personal interest”, said by 13 participants, “recommendation” were mentioned by 6 participants and 11 participants pointed out that the “location/proximity” is a key factor for their motivation to visit Dark Tourism.

**Table 3:** Absolute Frequency of ‘Internal Motivations and External influences in Dark Tourism’ Coded Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
C1	18	C11	2	C21	2	B31	6
C2	2	C12	3	C22	1	B32	1
C3	1	C13	1	C23	1	B33	1
C4	1	C14	1	C24	1	B34	1
C5	3	C15	2	C25	13	B35	1
C6	6	C16	1	C26	11		
C7	1	C17	1	C27	13		
C8	1	C18	1	C28	3		
C9	11	C19	1	C29	1		
C10	9	C20	1	C30	1		

**Source:** Own Elaboration.

Lastly, Media Influence and Recommendation was analysed in the interviews (Table 4). It is possible to see a very divided opinion of the participants regarding the influence of media in their desire to visit Dark Tourism sites (D1 to D11 in coding) with 7 participants agreeing that media had “a lot” of influence, 3 participants said media had “some” influence, 6 participants said that media had “not much” influence and 4 participants said that media has “no” influence. Analysing the recommendations (D12 to D21 in coding), it is possible to understand that the participants enjoyed their experience(s) as 18 out of the 20 participants said that they “would recommend” visiting Dark Tourism destinations.

**Table 4:** Absolute Frequency of ‘Media Influence and Recommendation’ Coded Answers

Code	Frequency	Code	Frequency
D1	7	D12	18
D2	3	D13	0
D3	6	D14	3
D4	4	D15	6
D5	1	D16	2
D6	2	D17	1
D7	12	D18	1
D8	3	D19	3
D9	2	D20	1
D10	1	D21	1
D11	1		

**Source:** Own Elaboration.

#### 4.3. Research Process and Framework

Upon completing the literature review, gathering primary data via semi-structured interviews, this study engaged in a thorough process that directly examined the main research question: “What motivates tourists to visit Dark Tourism destinations?”. The results are supported by a conceptual framework illustrated in figure 1.

The research started by understanding the primary characteristics that can affect tourists’ involvement with Dark Tourism sites. The approach, grounded in theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, posits that motivations are multi-faceted, integrating various psychological, cultural, and societal factors to elucidate why humans are attracted to locations linked to death, tragedy, or pain.

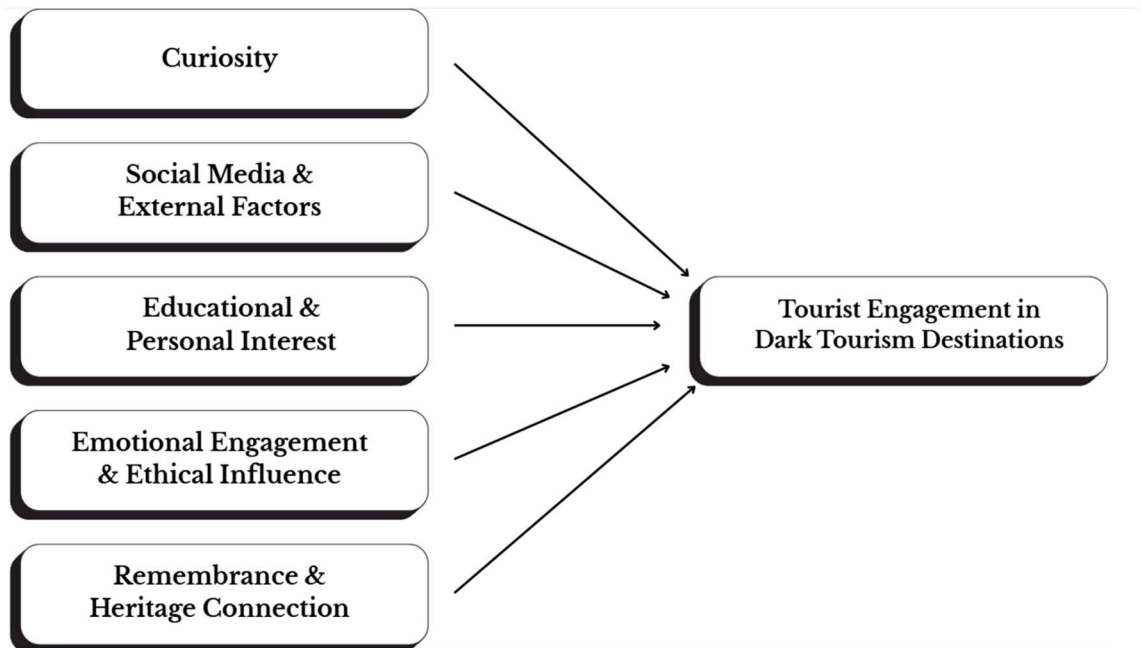
Initially, Curiosity (morbid or not) and the Desire to “see it, to believe it” surfaced as a significant motivator. Intrigue with mortality and the unknown has historically been linked to tourism behaviour, as observed by Seaton (2001). The approach posits that curiosity is crucial in motivating visits to Dark Tourism destinations. Thus, the initial proposition is articulated - P1: Curiosity affects tourist engagement in Dark Tourism sites.

Secondly, Education and Personal Interest were recognized as another fundamental motivational dimension. Numerous tourists view these locations as avenues for acquiring knowledge regarding historical catastrophes and for engaging in cultural contemplation. (Biran et al, 2011). The education factor encompasses the process of learning about History, Culture and tragedies. Consequently, the proposition - P2: Educational & Personal Interest affect tourist engagement in Dark Tourism sites. – was formed.

The third component is the Remembrance and Heritage Connection, as Dark Tourist destinations frequently serve as venues for memorial and communal memory. (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Tourists may be driven by a desire to commemorate and tribute victims, preserve memory, or sheer nostalgia. The third proposition is articulated as follows - P3: The relationship between Remembrance & Heritage Connection affects tourist engagement in Dark Tourism destinations.

The conceptual model additionally accounts for the search for experiencing intense emotions (shock, sadness, and more) and thrilling experiences, personal reflection on life and death, moral reflection and the ethical dilemmas that some may feel as influencing factors for visiting locations that frequently evoke significant emotions and may cause feelings of admiration, astonishment, or sorrow for the victims. (Ashworth, 2004). This indicates that emotional factors significantly influence participation in Dark Tourism. Consequently, P4: Emotional Engagement & Ethical Influence affect tourist involvement in Dark Tourism sites.

Ultimately, social media, mass communication channels and some external factors are considered. Motivations may be influenced by media, peer recommendations, or moral and ethical considerations regarding visits to sites of suffering. (Light, 2017). The model presents the fifth proposition – P5: Media & External Factors affect tourist engagement in Dark Tourism places.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework



## 5. Conclusions

Over the past decades, interest in visiting destinations related to death, suffering and tragedy has increased exponentially (Stone, 2006; Lennon & Foley, 2000). As Seaton (2001) highlights, the act of visiting such places is often motivated by an array of complex psychological and cultural factors. So, it is of the most importance for the Tourism literature to understand what are the key factors that motivate each tourist to engage in Dark Tourism.

This study showcases that there are multiple motivational dimensions that shape visitors' desire to engage with Dark Tourism destinations. Curiosity and interest in history and the past act as the initial triggers in the foundation of interest in Dark Tourism. Once on-site, the educational and emotional engagement derived from the experience became a central element, reflecting previous research by Light, 2017. It is also relevant to point out the importance of historical and cultural context to create more meaningful and valuable experiences in Dark Tourism. This reinforces the idea that Dark Tourism is not merely a passive act of observing but an active act of interpretation, reflection and, ultimately, education with narratives of death, tragedy and suffering.

The role of media and social networks came up as relevant, although the degree of influence varied among the participants. Some participants pointed out the importance of social media in their desire to engage in Dark Tourism, while others pointed out the same importance to documentaries, films and YouTube.

To conclude and to answer the main question of this research, personal interest, historical significance, curiosity, recommendation by peers and the proximity of the location came up as the main factors that motivate tourist to visit Dark Tourism destinations, which demonstrates that the desire to engage with Dark Tour derives from a complex interplay of personal, cultural, and social factors rather than from a single dominant motive. In addition, the fact that the proximity of the destination was an answer given by some participants shows that Dark Tourism still has a lot to grow to become the main purpose of a trip rather than a passing point.

## 5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This research has made theoretical contributions in various aspects in a topic that has not been accurately studied in prior research: the motivations of tourists to participate in Dark Tourism. This research can be characterized as exploratory, intending not to evaluate an existing theory, but to undertake a reflective analysis that will add value to the tourism literature.

Although motivation has been acknowledged as fundamental to the tourism literature (Dann, 1977; 1998), the motivating factors linked to Dark Tourism are still inadequately researched. Previous studies done by Stone and Sharpley (2008) and Biran et al. (2011) identify various factors that drive tourists to seek Dark Tourism experiences, those including curiosity, education, remembrance and morbid fascination. However, there is a lack of consensus regarding the interaction of these factors or their influence on tourist behaviour. This research addresses that gap by analysing lived experiences of visitors, providing a more in-depth comprehension of the psychological, cultural, and emotional aspect of Dark Tourism.

The results from the twenty interviews conducted highlight reoccurring themes that validate, enhance, and elaborate on prior theoretical research. Participants often identified curiosity as a primary motivator for their visits, reflecting Seaton's (2001) insights regarding the allure of death and tragedy. Simultaneously, numerous respondents underscored educational motivations, corroborating Biran et al.'s (2011) classification of learning as a primary impetus. This study elucidates the conflict between amusement and respect, highlighting the ethical quandaries that emerge when sites of pain are experienced as tourist attractions. (Ashworth, 2004).

The research demonstrates that motivations are rarely singular by elucidating these complexities. They are multidimensional, often incorporating emotional engagement, intellectual exploration, or more external factors such as mainstream media or the proximity of the destination to the visitor. This underscores the perspective of Dark Tourism as a non-uniform practice, occurring along a continuum of meanings and intensities (Stone, 2006).

Finally, this research enhances the tourism literature by contextualizing Dark Tourism within the existing framework of tourist motivation theories, like Push and Pull

factors (Dann, 1977), presents empirical evidence that substantiates and enhances current theories of Dark Tourism motivation, emphasizes the interrelation of educational, emotional, and ethical motivators, which defy simple categorization and illustrates the necessity to broaden conventional incentive models to more effectively encompass the symbolic and existential aspects of Dark Tourism.

## **5.2. Managerial Contributions**

This dissertation offers practical implications and contributions for managers of Dark Tourism sites who are responsible for planning, promotion, and management. As this research analyses the motivations of tourists who visit destinations linked with death, suffering, and disaster, it offers significant and relevant results and information destination managers, marketers, and policymakers who aim to attract more tourists to Dark Tourism and to create experiences that are both meaningful and ethical.

In a growing type of tourism, understanding the motivations of tourists is crucial to attracting and personalising the experiences offered to a wide demographic audience. This dissertation emphasizes that Dark Tourism visitors are motivated by a combination of factors such as curiosity, personal interest, education and/or the proximity of the site. Managers can utilize these findings to enhance their interpretative practices, ensuring that the sites and the experiences meet varied expectations while preserving historical authenticity and sensitivity.

This study shows to destination managers of Dark Tourism sites that there is a need to prioritize the explicit communication of the site's purpose and significance. The gathered data indicate that tourists value contextual knowledge and significant storytelling, which enhances their experience. By offering detailing explanations via guided tours, displays, or multimedia tools, it guarantees that the visitors comprehend the place in accordance with its historical and ethical objectives and provides a more meaningful experience to the visitor.

Secondly, the results show that some visitors find themselves in situations of emotional distress or ethical dilemmas during their trips. This insight is useful for managers as they can tackle this by instituting visitors support techniques like reflection

spaces, memorial places, qualified staff, or post-visit tools that help contextualizing the feelings experienced during the whole experience. In doing so, this type of niche tourism can cultivate empathy and respecting, while mitigating any complaints of exploration.

From a marketing point of view, managers or marketers must implement a balanced communication plan. The promotional strategy must refrain from sensationalism and excessive commercialization of tragedy. An emphasis on the educational and commemorative aspect of Dark Tourism should be prioritized, underscoping the significance of remembrance and cultural heritage in order to attract more visitors who are truly engaged in contemplation and education.

Ultimately, engagement with educational institutions, universities, and cultural organizations is an aspect that managers can explore. By liking Dark Tourism as a mean for education and personal growth, managers can cultivate enduring relationships with stakeholders and work towards socially responsible tourism practices.

By taking in consideration these practices, managers can guarantee that Dark Tourism continues to grow in an exponential way, while also, satisfying the visitor's expectations, upholding the obligation to preserve memory and promoting an ethical tourism practice.

### **5.3. Limitations**

While the current research and its contributions have yielded significant insights into the motivations for Dark Tourism, many limitations need to be recognized. Firstly, it is important to point out the sample size as it is limited, with only viewpoints of 20 participants who were willing to be interviewed. Despite that, the sample size of this study is enough to reach data saturation and to become exploratory qualitative research. Tough, the results would be more accurate with an increased sample size. In addition to that, this study is influenced by the participants nationality, as all 20 participants have a Portuguese nationality, and as previously addressed, motivations for Dark Tourism can vary from nationalities, culture and historical context.

Moreover, this researched gathered insight from participants who have already had previous experiences with Dark Tourism. Although this criterion is essential for

obtaining genuine insights, it does not account the perspective of tourists who have not yet visited these locations and may possess significant and relevant insights. Integrating both groups could generate more accurate conclusions.

Furthermore, the study only focused on qualitative data, not quantifying qualitative data, like surveys, suitable for statistical findings and to reach a broader population due to its characteristics.

#### **5.4. Future Research**

Considering the limitations previously identified, additional research could enhance and reinforce the conclusions of this study. For future research, it is essential to expand the sample size to encompass a larger and more diverse sample to achieve the most accurate results possible. It would also be pertinent for future studies to integrate a mixed method approach by integrating qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys. To finalize, an exploration of the enduring effects of Dark Tourism sites on its tourist would be recommended, examining the impact of such encounters on a psychological level (attitudes, feelings, memory and/or social behaviour) post-visit.



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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: Coding**

#### **A - Familiarity and Personal Understanding of Dark Tourism**

A1 – The participant associates Dark Tourism to death, tragedy and suffering.

A2 – The participant associates Dark Tourism to a polemic topic.

A3 – The participant associates Dark Tourism to education.

A4 – The participant thinks that defining Dark Tourism varies from the person's intentions.

A5 – The participant associates Dark Tourism to landmark events.

A6 – The participant points out that curiosity was a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

A7 – The participant points out that need to comprehend the human condition was a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

A8 – The participant points out that the interest in dark chapters, war and death was a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

A9 – The participant points out that the interest in history and the past was a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

A10 – The participant points out that book, documentaries and films were a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

A11 – The participant points out that the proximity of the destination was a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

A12 – The participant points out that need to see the site in person was a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

A13 – The participant points out that the need to understand what happened in the destination was a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

A14 – The participant points out that need to honour the victims was a factor that sparked the interest in Dark Tourism.

### **B- Perception and Emotional Experiences of Dark Tourism**

B1 – The participant, during the visit, felt sadness.

B2 – The participant, during the visit, felt shocked.

B3 – The participant, during the visit, felt admiration.

B4 – The participant, during the visit, felt empathy.

B5 – The participant, during the visit, felt compassion.

B6 – The participant, during the visit, felt rage.

B7 – The participant, during the visit, felt an internal conflict.

B8 – The participant, during the visit, felt curiosity.

B9 – The participant, during the visit, felt enthusiasm.

B10 – The participant, during the visit, felt that the experience would be more emotional.

B11 – The participant, during the visit, felt respect.

B12 – The participant, during the visit, felt anguish.

B13 – The participant, during the visit, felt gratitude.

B14 – The participant, during the visit, felt anxiety.

B15 – The participant, during the visit, said the emotions felt were inexplicable.

B16 – The participant, during the visit, felt injustice.

B17 – The participant, during the visit, felt disbelief.

B18 – The participant, during the visit, felt goosebumps.

B19 – The participant, during the visit, pointed out that the smell was the most striking aspect.

B20 – The participant considers Dark Tourism as a form of education.

- B21 – The participant does not consider Dark Tourism as a form of education.
- B22 – The participant considers Dark Tourism as a form of entertainment.
- B23 – The participant does not consider Dark Tourism as a form of entertainment.
- B24 – The participant considers Dark Tourism as form of learning.
- B25 – The participant considers Dark Tourism as form of visiting a new location/site.
- B26 – The participant says that associating Dark Tourism to education or entertainment depends on the past of the location.
- B27 – The participant considers Dark Tourism as form of learning.
- B28 – The participant considers Dark Tourism more of an education form than an entertainment form.
- B29 – The participant considers that the main goal of Dark Tourism is to reflect and to grow.
- B30 – The participant says that associating Dark Tourism to education or entertainment depends on the motivations of each visitor.
- B31 – The participant finds the historical and cultural context of a Dark Tourism destination very important.
- B32 – The participant finds the historical and cultural context of a Dark Tourism destination important to improve the visit.
- B33 – The participant finds the historical and cultural context of a Dark Tourism destination important to get as much out of the experience as possible.
- B34 – The participant finds the historical and cultural context of a Dark Tourism destination has a big impact in the visit.
- B35 – The participant finds the historical and cultural context of a Dark Tourism destination important to avoid sensationalist tourism.
- B36 – The participant finds the historical and cultural context of a Dark Tourism destination essential to comprehend the location.

B37 – The participant finds that visiting a Dark Tourism destination without historical and cultural context, the visit loses its meaning.

B38 – The participant finds the historical and cultural context of a Dark Tourism destination essential to a good practice of Dark Tourism.

### **C- Internal Motivations and External influences in Dark Tourism**

C1 – The participant affirms that Dark Tourism can change/has changed its perspective on life, death or suffering.

C2 – The participant affirms that Dark Tourism cannot change/has not changed its perspective on life, death or suffering.

C3 – The participant affirms that Dark Tourism visits are very transformative visits regarding the perspective on life, death or suffering.

C4 – The participant affirms that Dark Tourism visits are very confrontational regarding the perspective on life, death or suffering.

C5 – The participant affirms that Dark Tourism can change/has changed its perspective on human suffering.

C6 – The participant affirms that Dark Tourism can make you realise the fragility of life.

C7 – The participant affirms that Dark Tourism showcases the seriousness of the tragedies linked to it.

C8 – The participant affirms that Dark Tourism makes visitors more grateful for the conditions we have today.

C9 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, felt conflicted dealing with death, tragedy and suffering.

C10 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, did not feel conflicted dealing with death, tragedy and suffering.

C11 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, felt an internal conflict dealing with death, tragedy and suffering.

C12 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, felt respect.

- C13 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, felt sensibility.
- C14 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, learned.
- C15 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, paid homage.
- C16 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, affirms that if there is respect throughout the visit, the conflict can be minor.
- C17 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, affirms that to deal with the conflict he/she came prepared.
- C18 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, affirms that to deal with the conflict he/she already knew how he/she should feel.
- C19 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, affirms that to deal with the conflict he/she had previously researched.
- C20 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, affirms that to deal with the conflict he/she was able to separate the experience with its past.
- C21 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, felt that there was fine line between paying homage and the fear of ‘consuming’ tragedy as if it were an attraction.
- C22 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, affirms that to deal with the conflict he/she reminded himself/herself that by visiting these locations, homage to the victims was being paid and honoured.
- C23 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, felt conflicted dealing with death, tragedy and suffering, specially seeing other tourists taking selfies and being disrespectful.
- C24 – The participant, while visiting Dark Tourism destinations, affirms that to deal with the conflict he/she reminded himself/herself that Dark Tourism is a form of education.
- C25 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named historical significance as a factor.
- C26 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named the proximity of the location as a factor.

C27 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named personal interest as a factor.

C28 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named curiosity as a factor.

C29 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named seeking new feelings as a factor.

C30 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named risk and adrenaline seeking as a factor.

C31 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named as a factor.

C32 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named peer recommendations as a factor.

C33 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named availability as a factor.

C34 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named a country's cultural aspect as a factor.

C35 – The participant, when thinking about the motivations to visit Dark Tourism, named “see it, to believe it” as a factor.

#### **D- Media Influence and Recommendation.**

D1 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed it had a lot of influence.

D2 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed it had some influence.

D3 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed it had very low influence.

D4 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed it had no influence.

D5 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed it can influence.

D6 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed it can spark the desire.

D7 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed that YouTube Dand documentaries had more influence than social media.

D8 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed that films had more influence than social media.

D9 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed that there is a lot of misleading information on social media.

D10 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed it had mixed opinion.

D11 – The participant, when asked about the role of social media on their desire to visit Dark Tourism destinations, affirmed social media can distort the perception of Dark Tourism.

D12 – The participant would recommend Dark Tourism to others.

D13 – The participant would not recommend Dark Tourism to others.

D14 – The participant, when asked about recommending Dark Tourism to others, said it would depend on the destiny and the person.

D15 – The participant would recommend Dark Tourism to others because it is a form of learning.

D16 – The participant would recommend Dark Tourism to others because it is a new experience.

D17 – The participant would recommend Dark Tourism to others because it is form of consolidating historical events.

D18 – The participant would recommend Dark Tourism to others because it is a way to bring the visitor closer to the victims' experience.

D19 – The participant would not recommend Dark Tourism to others because it is not a type of tourism for everybody.

D20 – The participant would recommend Dark Tourism to others if it aligned with moral values and interests of the person.

D21 – The participant would recommend Dark Tourism to others because it is great way to raise awareness.

## **Appendix 2: Interview Script**

### **Introduction**

Before we start this interview, I'd like to thank you for your willingness to take part in this study. This conversation is part of my research for my master's thesis in Hospitality and Tourism Management, which aims to understand tourists' motivations for visiting Dark Tourism destinations.

The concept of Dark Tourism refers to visits to places associated with death, tragedy, or remarkable historical events, such as concentration camps, historic cemeteries, museums dedicated to natural disasters, or places of remembrance of conflicts. Although it is an often controversial phenomenon, Dark Tourism also offers opportunities for reflection, education, and the preservation of historical memory. My aim with this research is to understand what motivates visitors to choose these destinations and what experiences they seek or experience.

Your participation is essential in order to obtain a rich and diverse perspective on this topic. During this interview, which will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, I will ask you some questions about your motivations, experiences, and opinions regarding this type of tourism. There are no right or wrong answers - I just want to hear your experience and your point of view.

I would like to guarantee that all the information collected will be treated confidentially and anonymously. The data used in my analysis will not make it possible to identify the participants, and their answers will be used exclusively for academic purposes. If you prefer not to answer any questions or if at any point you want to end the interview, you can do so without any problem.

Can I answer any questions or queries before we start?

## Questions:

1. How do you define Dark Tourism?

- This gives you an understanding of how your participants perceive Dark Tourism. It also allows for the exploration of personal views on what is considered “dark” or “morbid.”

2. What first drew you to visit a Dark Tourism site, and how did you become interested in it?

- This question helps uncover the initial motivation behind the visit. It could be curiosity, personal experiences, or a deeper interest in history or culture.

3. Can you describe the emotions or thoughts you experienced during your visit to a Dark Tourism site?

- You want to understand the emotional reaction during the experience. Were they disturbed, reflective, respectful, or fascinated?

4. Do you believe visiting Dark Tourism sites is a form of education or entertainment? Why or why not?

- This question can help clarify whether tourists view these experiences as educational, emotional, or simply for leisure, and whether they believe the sites serve a deeper societal or personal function.

5. How important is the historical or cultural context of a Dark Tourism site to you?

- Investigate how much tourists value the history or the cultural significance behind the site, and whether they see it as an authentic learning opportunity or just a place to visit.

6. Do you think visiting Dark Tourism sites changes your perspective on life, death, or human suffering? How so?

- This question explores whether tourists feel that Dark Tourism contributes to a shift in their worldview, such as gaining empathy, gaining perspective, or confronting mortality.

7. Have you ever felt conflicted about visiting a site that deals with tragedy, death, and/or suffering? How do you resolve that conflict?

- Many visitors feel a moral tension about participating in Dark Tourism. This question helps you understand how visitors reconcile their emotions, ethics, and interest in these places.

8. What factors influence your decision to visit a particular Dark Tourism site? (e.g., personal interest, location, historical significance, recommendations)

- This helps you understand the practical considerations and decision-making process behind a visit.

9. What role do you think social media played in shaping your desire to visit Dark Tourism sites?

- This question investigates whether tourists are influenced by social-media or whether their interest is more self-driven.

10. Would you recommend visiting Dark Tourism sites to others? Why or why not?

- This helps gauge whether the individual would endorse the experience to others and why. It also provides insight into how people feel about sharing this kind of experience socially.