

## Global Dark Tourism: A Comprehensive Review and Conceptual Model Analysis

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### Abstract

Dark tourism, the practice of visiting sites associated with death, suffering, and tragedy, has garnered significant academic and public interest. This review paper examines the phenomenon of dark tourism globally, exploring its historical context, visitor motivations, ethical considerations, and economic impacts. By analyzing key dark tourism sites around the world, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of this complex form of tourism.

### Keywords

Dark Tourism, Thanatourism, Genocide, Memorials Disaster Sites

### Introduction

Dark tourism encompasses travel to locations historically associated with death, disaster, and the macabre. These sites range from genocide memorials and former prisons to disaster zones and battlefields. This review synthesizes existing literature on dark tourism, examining its historical development, the reasons why people visit such sites, and the ethical implications involved. Furthermore, it assesses the economic impact of dark tourism and explores case studies of prominent dark tourism sites worldwide.

### Literature Review

#### Conceptual Framework

Dark tourism, as conceptualized by Lennon and Foley (2000), involves visiting sites of death, suffering, and tragedy. This form of tourism is multifaceted, incorporating historical, cultural, and psychological dimensions. It includes various subcategories, such as thanatourism, which specifically focuses on death-related tourism (Seaton, 1996).

#### Historical Development

The roots of dark tourism can be traced back to medieval pilgrimages to sites of martyrdom. However, its modern incarnation began in the 20th century, with increased interest in visiting locations associated with World War II, such as concentration camps and battlefields. The proliferation of media coverage of disasters and tragedies has further fueled the growth of dark tourism.

### Visitor Motivations

Visitor motivations for engaging in dark tourism are diverse. Stone (2006) and Biran et al. (2011) identify several key drivers:

- Curiosity: A natural human interest in understanding death and tragedy.
- Educational Interest: Desire to learn about historical events and their impacts.
- Commemoration: Honoring the memory of victims and paying respects.
- Emotional Engagement: Seeking an emotional connection with the past.

### Ethical Considerations

Dark tourism raises significant ethical questions. Sharpley and Stone (2009) discuss the potential commodification of tragedy and the fine line between respectful commemoration and exploitation. Ethical management of dark tourism sites is crucial to maintain respect for victims and survivors.

### Methodology

This review paper employs a qualitative approach, synthesizing findings from academic articles, books, and case studies on dark tourism. Data on visitor statistics and economic impacts are drawn from official reports and site management records.

### Types of Dark Tourism Sites

Dark tourism encompasses a wide range of sites, each with unique characteristics and historical significance. These can be broadly categorized as follows:

**Sites of Death and Suffering:** Locations where significant loss of life has occurred, such as battlefields (e.g., Normandy, Gettysburg), concentration camps (e.g., Auschwitz, Dachau), and genocide sites (e.g., Killing Fields in Cambodia).

**Disaster Sites:** Areas affected by natural or man-made disasters, including Chernobyl in Ukraine, the site of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Thailand, and the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in India.

Memorials and Monuments: Structures erected to commemorate tragic events and their victims, such as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, the 9/11 Memorial in New York, and the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin.

Former Prisons and Detention Centers: Facilities where political prisoners or criminals were held, such as Robben Island in South Africa, Alcatraz Island in the USA, and Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia.

Sites of Historic Tragedies: Locations tied to significant historical tragedies, including the Anne Frank House in the Netherlands and the House of the Black Madonna in Prague, associated with the Prague Uprising.

### **Key Dark Tourism Sites in India**

#### **1. Partition Museum, Amritsar**

The Partition Museum, located in Amritsar, Punjab, was established to commemorate the traumatic partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, which led to widespread violence, displacement, and death.

- Visitor statistics: Over 500,000 visitors annually.

- Significance: It documents the experiences of those affected by the partition, preserving oral histories, artifacts, and documents from the time.

#### **2. Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar**

Jallianwala Bagh is a public garden in Amritsar that is infamous for the massacre on April 13, 1919, when British troops, under the command of General Dyer, opened fire on a peaceful gathering, killing hundreds.

- Visitor statistics: Approximately 1.5 million visitors annually.

- Significance: The site has become a symbol of colonial oppression and the struggle for Indian independence.

#### **3. Cellular Jail, Andaman and Nicobar Islands**

The Cellular Jail, also known as Kala Pani, was a colonial prison used by the British to exile political prisoners during the struggle for India's independence.

- Visitor statistics: Over 300,000 visitors annually.

- Significance: It stands as a stark reminder of the brutal treatment of Indian freedom fighters and the harsh conditions they endured.

#### 4. Bhopal Gas Tragedy Memorial, Bhopal

This memorial is dedicated to the victims of the 1984 Bhopal disaster, one of the world's worst industrial catastrophes, which resulted in thousands of deaths and long-term health consequences for the local population.

- Visitor statistics: Around 50,000 visitors annually.
- Significance: The memorial serves to remember the victims and raise awareness about industrial safety and corporate accountability.

#### 5. Tsunami Memorial, Tamil Nadu

Several memorials along the coast of Tamil Nadu commemorate the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami that struck on December 26, 2004, leading to massive loss of life and property.

- Visitor statistics: Varied, with significant local and regional visitor engagement.
- Significance: These memorials pay tribute to those who lost their lives and highlight the resilience of the affected communities.

#### 6. Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad

While not typically classified under dark tourism, Sabarmati Ashram is a place of significant historical interest, particularly due to its association with Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian independence movement. The ashram is also associated with the tragic assassination of Gandhi.

- Visitor statistics: Over 700,000 visitors annually.
- Significance: The site is an important educational and inspirational resource, offering insights into Gandhi's philosophy and the Indian freedom struggle.

#### 7. Raj Ghat, Delhi

Raj Ghat is a memorial dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi, located in Delhi. It marks the spot where Gandhi was cremated following his assassination in 1948.

- Visitor statistics: Over 1 million visitors annually.
- Significance: The site is a major pilgrimage point for those wishing to pay their respects to Gandhi and reflect on his contributions to India's independence.

#### 8. Ground Zero of Mumbai Attacks, Mumbai

Sites associated with the 2008 Mumbai attacks, such as the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, have become points of interest for those wishing to understand the impact of terrorism.

- Visitor statistics: Combined, these sites attract hundreds of thousands of visitors annually.
- Significance: These locations serve as stark reminders of the threat of terrorism and the resilience of the city's residents.

#### 9. Kargil War Memorial, Drass

The Kargil War Memorial, located in Drass, Jammu and Kashmir, commemorates the soldiers who lost their lives during the Kargil War between India and Pakistan in 1999.

- Visitor statistics: Over 100,000 visitors annually.
- Significance: The memorial honors the bravery and sacrifices of Indian soldiers, offering a space for reflection and national pride.

#### 10. Bhuj Earthquake Memorial, Gujarat

This memorial marks the devastating earthquake that struck Bhuj, Gujarat, in 2001, leading to extensive loss of life and destruction.

- Visitor statistics: Around 50,000 visitors annually.
- Significance: It serves as a reminder of the natural disaster and the community's efforts to rebuild and recover.

These sites represent a range of dark tourism locations across India, each with its unique historical context, significance, and visitor demographics. They collectively highlight the importance of remembering and learning from past tragedies to foster a more informed and compassionate society.

### Key Dark Tourism Sites across the World

#### 1. Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland

Auschwitz-Birkenau is one of the most infamous Nazi concentration and extermination camps, where over a million people were murdered during World War II.

- Visitor statistics: Over 2 million visitors annually.
- Significance: It stands as a poignant reminder of the Holocaust and the atrocities committed during the war.

## 2. Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, Japan

The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park commemorates the victims of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.

- Visitor statistics: Approximately 1.5 million visitors annually.
- Significance: The park promotes peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons, remembering the tragic consequences of the bombing.

## 3. Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, Ukraine

The site of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, which led to a massive release of radioactive material and the evacuation of the surrounding area.

- Visitor statistics: Around 100,000 visitors annually.
- Significance: It offers insights into the catastrophic impact of nuclear accidents and the long-term consequences for human health and the environment.

## 4. 9/11 Memorial and Museum, USA

The 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City honors the victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

- Visitor statistics: Over 3 million visitors annually.
- Significance: The site serves as a place of remembrance and education about the events and impacts of 9/11.

## 5. Killing Fields, Cambodia

The Killing Fields are sites in Cambodia where mass killings and burials took place during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979).

- Visitor statistics: Over 500,000 visitors annually.
- Significance: These sites highlight the horrors of the genocide and the suffering of the Cambodian people.

## 6. Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Cambodia

Formerly a high school, Tuol Sleng was converted into a prison and interrogation center by the Khmer Rouge.

- Visitor statistics: Around 1 million visitors annually.

- Significance: The museum documents the atrocities committed and serves as a stark reminder of the brutality of the regime.

#### 7. Robben Island, South Africa

Robben Island, located off the coast of Cape Town, was used as a prison during the apartheid era, most notably housing Nelson Mandela.

- Visitor statistics: Over 300,000 visitors annually.

- Significance: It symbolizes the struggle against apartheid and the triumph of human spirit and resilience.

#### 8. Anne Frank House, Netherlands

The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam is the hiding place where Anne Frank wrote her diary during World War II.

- Visitor statistics: Approximately 1.3 million visitors annually.

- Significance: The museum educates visitors about the Holocaust through the story of Anne Frank and her family.

#### 9. Alcatraz Island, USA

Alcatraz Island, located in San Francisco Bay, was home to a federal prison known for housing notorious criminals.

- Visitor statistics: Around 1.4 million visitors annually.

- Significance: The site provides insights into the history of American penology and the lives of its infamous inmates.

#### 10. Ground Zero, New York City, USA

Ground Zero is the site of the World Trade Center, which was destroyed in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

- Visitor statistics: Part of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum visitation numbers.

- Significance: It is a place of reflection and remembrance for the nearly 3,000 victims of the attacks.

#### 11. Pompeii, Italy

The ancient city of Pompeii was buried under volcanic ash following the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

- Visitor statistics: Over 2.5 million visitors annually.
- Significance: Pompeii offers a unique glimpse into the daily life of an ancient Roman city, preserved in time by the eruption.

#### 12. Berlin Wall, Germany

The Berlin Wall, which divided East and West Berlin from 1961 to 1989, is a potent symbol of the Cold War.

- Visitor statistics: Millions of visitors annually to various sections and memorials.
- Significance: It represents the division of Germany and the broader ideological divide of the Cold War era.

#### 13. Holocaust Memorial, Berlin, Germany

The Holocaust Memorial, also known as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, commemorates the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

- Visitor statistics: Around 3.5 million visitors annually.
- Significance: It serves as a stark reminder of the atrocities committed during the Holocaust and the importance of remembrance.

#### 14. Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site, Germany

Dachau was the first Nazi concentration camp, opened in 1933, and became a model for subsequent camps.

- Visitor statistics: Over 800,000 visitors annually.
- Significance: The memorial site educates about the history and horrors of the Nazi regime.

#### 15. Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Atomic Bomb Dome), Japan

The Atomic Bomb Dome is a UNESCO World Heritage site and part of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, preserved as a symbol of the devastation caused by the atomic bomb.

- Visitor statistics: Included in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park visitation numbers.
- Significance: It stands as a poignant reminder of the destruction caused by nuclear warfare and the importance of peace.

These sites represent a wide range of dark tourism locations around the world, each with its own historical context, significance, and visitor demographics. They collectively highlight the



importance of remembering and learning from past tragedies to foster a more informed and compassionate society.

### **Push Factors towards Dark Tourism**

Push factors in tourism refer to internal motivations that drive individuals to seek out travel experiences. In the context of dark tourism, these factors are often deeply personal and psychological. Here are some key push factors that lead individuals to engage in dark tourism:

#### **1. Curiosity and Morbid Fascination**

- Description: A natural human interest in death, tragedy, and the macabre. This curiosity often leads individuals to explore dark tourism sites to satisfy their interest in the unusual or taboo aspects of history.
- Examples: Visiting sites like Chernobyl, where the fascination with the nuclear disaster drives tourism.

#### **2. Educational Interest**

- Description: A desire to learn about historical events, understand their causes and consequences, and gain insights into human behavior and societal impacts. Dark tourism sites often serve as powerful educational tools.
- Examples: Schools and universities organizing trips to Holocaust memorials to teach students about World War II and the Holocaust.

#### **3. Commemoration and Respect**

- Description: A need to pay homage to the victims of tragic events, acknowledge their suffering, and reflect on the human cost of such events. This is often a deeply emotional and respectful motivation.
- Examples: Visiting the 9/11 Memorial in New York City to honor the victims of the terrorist attacks.

#### **4. Personal or Familial Connections**

- Description: Individuals may have personal or familial ties to the events commemorated at dark tourism sites, prompting visits to these locations as a way of connecting with their own history or the experiences of their ancestors.
- Examples: Descendants of Holocaust survivors visiting concentration camps where their relatives were imprisoned.

#### **5. Search for Meaning and Reflection**

- Description: A desire to reflect on the human condition, mortality, and the moral and ethical lessons that can be drawn from past tragedies. Dark tourism provides a space for personal introspection and existential contemplation.
- Examples: Visitors to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial seeking to understand the implications of nuclear warfare and the importance of peace.

#### 6. Empathy and Emotional Engagement

- Description: The need to emotionally connect with the past and develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of others. This can foster empathy and a sense of shared humanity.
- Examples: People visiting the Anne Frank House to empathize with the experiences of Anne Frank and others who suffered during the Holocaust.

#### 7. Media Influence and Popular Culture

- Description: Media coverage, documentaries, movies, and books about tragic events often spark interest and drive people to visit related sites. Popular culture can play a significant role in raising awareness and creating a desire to see these places firsthand.
- Examples: Increased tourism to sites like the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone following the success of the HBO miniseries "Chernobyl."

#### 8. Historical and Cultural Interest

- Description: A broader interest in history and culture, including the darker aspects of human civilization. Understanding the full spectrum of human experience, including its tragedies, is a key motivator for some tourists.
- Examples: Tourists visiting battlefields like Gettysburg to gain insights into historical conflicts and their cultural significance.

#### 9. Catharsis and Psychological Healing

- Description: For some individuals, visiting dark tourism sites provides a form of catharsis or psychological healing, especially if they have been personally affected by similar events. It can be a way to process grief, trauma, or loss.
- Examples: Survivors of natural disasters visiting similar disaster sites as part of their healing process.

#### 10. Social and Ethical Awareness

- Description: A motivation to raise awareness about social injustices, human rights abuses, and ethical issues. Visitors often seek to understand these issues more deeply and advocate for change.
- Examples: Activists and human rights advocates visiting sites like Robben Island to learn about apartheid and support social justice causes.

### Pull Factors towards Dark Tourism

Pull factors are external attractions that draw individuals to specific destinations. In the context of dark tourism, these factors are the unique features and characteristics of dark tourism sites that attract visitors. Here are key pull factors that make dark tourism sites appealing:

#### 1. Historical Significance

- Description: Sites with profound historical importance often attract tourists who are interested in learning about significant events, understanding their context, and seeing where history unfolded.
- Examples: Auschwitz-Birkenau (Poland), where visitors learn about the Holocaust; Gettysburg (USA), a pivotal Civil War battlefield.

#### 2. Educational Exhibits and Interpretive Programs

- Description: Well-designed educational programs, exhibits, and guided tours enhance the learning experience, providing visitors with detailed information and deeper understanding.
- Examples: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum (Japan) offers extensive exhibits on the atomic bombing and its aftermath.

#### 3. Memorials and Monuments

- Description: Memorials and monuments serve as focal points for commemoration and reflection, attracting those who wish to pay their respects and honor the memory of victims.
- Examples: 9/11 Memorial and Museum (USA), which commemorates the victims of the September 11 attacks.

#### 4. Unique and Unusual Attractions

- Description: The unique and often eerie nature of dark tourism sites can attract visitors looking for unusual and memorable experiences.

- Examples: Catacombs of Paris (France), known for their extensive underground ossuaries.

#### 5. Media and Popular Culture Influence

- Description: Coverage by media, documentaries, movies, and books can significantly boost interest in dark tourism sites, making them popular travel destinations.
- Examples: Increased visits to the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (Ukraine) following the HBO miniseries "Chernobyl".

#### 6. Accessibility and Infrastructure

- Description: Good accessibility and well-developed infrastructure, including transportation, visitor facilities, and amenities, make dark tourism sites more attractive and easier to visit.
- Examples: The Anne Frank House (Netherlands) offers well-organized tours and facilities that accommodate large numbers of visitors.

#### 7. Authenticity and Preservation

- Description: Authentic, well-preserved sites that accurately represent historical events attract tourists who value genuine and intact historical locations.
- Examples: The preserved remains of Pompeii (Italy) offer an authentic glimpse into ancient Roman life and the impact of the volcanic eruption.

#### 8. Emotional and Reflective Atmosphere

- Description: Sites that provide a solemn, reflective atmosphere can attract visitors seeking emotional engagement and personal reflection.
- Examples: The Kigali Genocide Memorial (Rwanda), which offers a quiet space for reflection on the Rwandan genocide.

#### 9. Cultural and Heritage Significance

- Description: Sites that are integral to cultural heritage and identity attract visitors interested in understanding and appreciating the cultural and historical context.
- Examples: Robben Island (South Africa), significant for its role in the apartheid struggle and Nelson Mandela's imprisonment.

#### 10. Comprehensive Visitor Services

- Description: Availability of comprehensive visitor services, including information centers, guided tours, multimedia presentations, and educational resources, enhances the visitor experience.
- Examples: The Holocaust Memorial Museum (USA) offers extensive resources and educational programs for visitors.

#### 11. Event Commemorations and Anniversaries

- Description: Special events, commemorations, and anniversaries related to historical events can attract visitors looking to participate in these significant occasions.
- Examples: Annual commemoration events at Pearl Harbor (USA) on December 7, the anniversary of the attack.

#### 12. Scenic and Architectural Appeal

- Description: Some dark tourism sites are located in areas of natural beauty or have significant architectural appeal, attracting visitors for both their tragic history and aesthetic value.
- Examples: The beauty of Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park (Japan) juxtaposed with its tragic history.

### Conceptual Model for Dark Tourism: Push and Pull Factors

Based on the above factors a conceptual model for dark tourism was designed incorporating both push and pull factors to explain the motivations and attractions driving individuals to visit dark tourism sites. Push factors are internal, personal motivations, while pull factors are external attractions and site characteristics.

#### Conceptual Model Components

1. Push Factors (Internal Motivations)
  - Curiosity and Morbid Fascination
  - Educational Interest
  - Commemoration and Respect
  - Personal or Familial Connections
  - Search for Meaning and Reflection
  - Empathy and Emotional Engagement
  - Media Influence and Popular Culture
  - Historical and Cultural Interest
  - Catharsis and Psychological Healing
  - Social and Ethical Awareness

## 2. Pull Factors (External Attractions)

- Historical Significance
- Educational Exhibits and Interpretive Programs
- Memorials and Monuments
- Unique and Unusual Attractions
- Media and Popular Culture Influence
- Accessibility and Infrastructure
- Authenticity and Preservation
- Emotional and Reflective Atmosphere
- Cultural and Heritage Significance
- Comprehensive Visitor Services
- Event Commemorations and Anniversaries
- Scenic and Architectural Appeal

Conceptual Model of Dark Tourism Diagram:

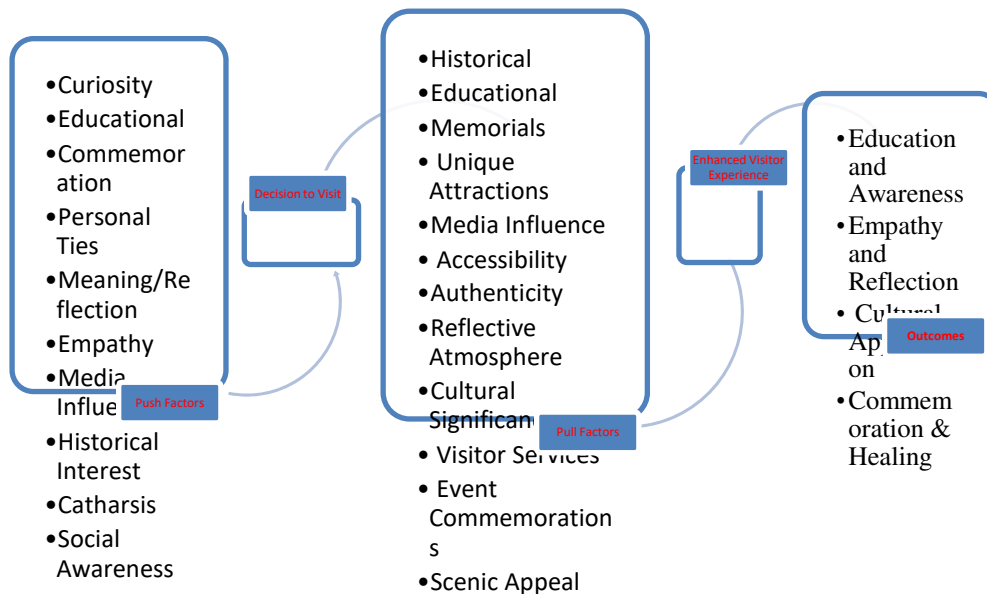


Fig 1: Figure displaying the Conceptual Model of Dark Tourism

Explanation of the Model

1. **Push Factors:** These are internal drivers that motivate individuals to seek out dark tourism experiences. Factors such as curiosity, educational interest, commemoration, and personal connections push individuals towards the idea of visiting dark tourism sites.

2. **Decision to Visit:** When internal motivations align with an individual's interests and values, the decision to visit a dark tourism site is made.
3. **Pull Factors:** Once the decision to visit is made, external factors play a crucial role in attracting visitors to specific sites. Historical significance, unique attractions, educational exhibits, accessibility, and media influence are among the key factors that pull visitors to dark tourism destinations.
4. **Enhanced Visitor Experience:** The combination of push and pull factors leads to an enhanced visitor experience, characterized by a deeper understanding, emotional engagement, and a respectful commemoration of historical events.
5. **Outcomes:** The ultimate outcomes of dark tourism include increased education and awareness, empathy and reflection, cultural appreciation, and opportunities for commemoration and healing.

This conceptual model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations (push factors) and attractions (pull factors) that drive dark tourism. By considering both sets of factors, stakeholders can better manage and promote dark tourism sites, ensuring they serve educational, commemorative, and reflective purposes while respecting the memory of those affected by the tragic events commemorated at these sites.

### **Economic Impact of Dark Tourism**

Dark tourism significantly contributes to local and national economies. Sites such as Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 9/11 Memorial generate substantial revenue from entrance fees, guided tours, and related services. Moreover, these sites create employment opportunities for local communities, including roles as guides, maintenance staff, and administrative positions.

#### Revenue Estimates

- Partition Museum: Estimated annual revenue of INR 10 million.
- Jallianwala Bagh: Estimated annual revenue of INR 15 million.
- Cellular Jail: Estimated annual revenue of INR 5 million.
- Bhopal Gas Tragedy Memorial: Estimated annual revenue of INR 1 million.
- Tsunami Memorials: Varied, with significant local economic impact during peak periods.

### **Ethical and Managerial Considerations**

Effective management of dark tourism sites is essential to balance educational and commemorative purposes with respect for victims. Ethical considerations include:

- Visitor Management: Implementing guidelines to ensure respectful behavior.
- Educational Programs: Providing historical context and fostering understanding.

- Preservation of Integrity: Avoiding commodification and sensationalism.

## Conclusion

Dark tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses historical, educational, and ethical dimensions. It allows visitors to engage with difficult aspects of human history, fostering understanding and remembrance. However, it also raises important ethical questions regarding the commodification of tragedy. Effective management and ethical considerations are crucial to ensure that dark tourism sites serve as places of respectful commemoration and education.

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