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DARK HORIZONS: IDENTIFYING AND LEVERAGING MICRO-NICHES IN DARK TOURISM

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Abstract: The concept of "dark tourism" encompasses the phenomenon of individuals being drawn to sites associated with death, disaster, and suffering, sparking travel interests. Recent years have witnessed a surge in public health crises, extreme natural calamities, and malevolent human acts around the world. These events, while causing profound human and economic losses, have endowed us with invaluable resources for dark tourism. Brown (2013) offered an expansive definition of dark tourist destinations, encapsulating them as "locations linked to death, pain, and tragic events." Consequently, numerous sites globally can be categorized as providers of dark tourism experiences. These dark tourist attractions not only serve as tangible repositories of historical lessons but also carry collective and individual memories of calamities. An increasing number of tourists seek to engage with the tension and emotional gratification associated with death through dark tourism. Thus, there is a critical need to accurately position and chart the future development of this distinct niche in the field of tourism.

Keywords: Dark Tourism, Disaster Attractions, Travel Behavior, Memory Tourism, Tourism Development

Introduction

The term "dark tourism" refers to the attraction of death and disaster to people, which inspires travel behavior. In recent years, public health events, extreme natural events or malicious human actions have occurred frequently worldwide. While causing serious casualties and property losses, it has left us with precious black tourism resources. Brown (2013) took a particularly broad approach to define dark tourist destinations, simply interpreting them as "sites related to death, pain, and terrible events." In this way, many scenic spots around the world can be classified as providers of dark tourism. Dark tourist attractions are the most direct material for drawing lessons from history, and they also carry collective or personal disaster memories. More tourists hope to feel the tension

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and spiritual satisfaction of death through black tourism, which requires accurate positioning and future development direction of this kind of special interest tourism.

1. Historical development of Dark Tourism

The origin of dark tourism can be traced back to the dark period of Europe. In 1996, Lennon and Foley put forward the term "dark tourism", which refers to travel related to death and tragedy in history. Some people call it "negative tourism", "pathological tourism", and death-focused travel. The integration of environmental interaction and experience in the design of dark tourist attractions allows visitors to realize their thoughts and needs, so that they can obtain introspection and inspiration from negative events (Eleanor & Katherine, 2016). Consequently, the main attraction of dark locations is their historical value, not their connection to death and pain. Dark tourism that is too violent, cruel, and dangerous is not encouraged in any region and at any time. Only after certain "filtering" and "packaging" can it become a "dark tourist destination". It is not difficult to find that the coverage of dark tourism is very broad. With the increase in research and investigation on the nature of dark tourism, more and more scholars believe that dark tourism should be regarded as part of the interdisciplinary system of nature, culture and heritage, and emphasized that the value of education should be regarded as the main inference of motivation (Zahari & Hanafiah, 2016). For example, some tourists who pay tribute to national or national heroes will arrange to visit local war sites or memorials. This is not only a dark tour, but also a heritage tour, it also has a certain educational significance. If the destination has an emotional or material connection as the motivation, for example, some pilgrims will go to the crucifixion of religious figures. This is also a type of cultural tourism. So dark tourism is just an ordinary part of its entire travel experience.

2. The Motivation of Dark Tourism

The motivation of tourists in dark tourism is often studied from the perspective of tourists' needs.

Yan&Bing-Jin (2016) divides the motivation of tourists into three dimensions: education, leisure, and curiosity from the internal and external factors. Through dark tourism, people can wake up from the cruelty and viciousness of human beings, trigger people to reflect on mankind and society, nature, minimize the possibility of recurring tragic history, which has certain educational significance. A more intuitive educational motive is to encourage tourists to cherish peace, love life, understand history, and pay attention to the harmony between man and nature through visits to war sites, disaster sites, martyrs' cemeteries, and memorials. Similarly, curiosity as motivation and selfish desire, the prying into unknown things, and private enclosed spaces is reflected in many tourists. For example, visiting the Vampire Castle, the Catacombs in Paris, France, and the "Bone Church" in the Czech Republic. Uncommon things can always attract some tourists to explore. Dark tourism can provide not only an educational experience, but also an emotional travel experience, which can play an emotional or potential therapeutic role by understanding important information related to past events. Besides, Dunkley, Ria & Morgan (2011) mentioned that the monuments in dark tourism represent the attention paid to the generation, maintenance, and reappearance of visitors' past expressions. They play an important role in helping to maintain group memory, reminding us that commemoration is for any country. Ethnic-centric motivation is the main reason why the tourism industry attracts so many tourists. People can gain a sense of national identity or a sense of national pride by going to places of pilgrimage or war sites. Dark tourism and cultural tourism are part of the same content, such

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as war memorials, using modern buildings to commemorate the people who lost their lives. Therefore, dark tourist destinations have international or national significance.

3. Development of Micro-niche Markets

"Niche Tourism" (Novelli, 2005) refers to customized products to meet the needs of specific audiences. Compared with other industries, the connection between tourist consumers and niche markets may be easier to identify. The broad-spectrum characteristics of the tourism industry enable it to be divided into highly specialized market segments and develop and promote tailor-made and personalized products. The micro-niche market represents a small number of consumers and customers from the broader market. The more you detail your product or service, the more segmented is your audience, so, the number of visitors is smaller. This happens because tourists who search for micro-niches have a better understanding of what they're looking for. Therefore, it will increase product sales, improve service quality, and customer satisfaction.

Dark tourism as a type of SIT, its micro-niches market has many different classification methods. According to the form of dark tourism, the website "Dark tourism" divides dark tourism into grave tourism, Holocaust tourism, genocide tourism, prison, and persecution site tourism, community tourism, cult-of-personality tourism, Cold War & Iron Curtain tourism, nuclear tourism, disaster area tourism, icky medical tourism, these nine micro-niches markets (Categories, 2020). The website "Grief tourism", which focuses on tourist destinations, divides dark tourism into six parts: battlefield tourism, grave tourism, disaster tourism, massacre tourism, prison tourism, and death tourism (Jame, 2020). Similarly, Stone (2006) proposed seven dark suppliers: Dark Fun Factories, Dark Exhibitions, Dark Dungeons, Dark Resting Places, Dark Shrines, Dark Conflict Sites, Dark Camps of Genocide. But here he ignores the existence of Dark Disaster Sites. Dark tourism theory can be used in post-disaster destinations to help researchers understand the attributes of the destination and possible changes in tourist behavior (Biran, Avital & Liu, 2014).

If we take Stone's (2006) seven dark suppliers and other Dark Disaster Sites as micro-niche markets, each of these categories can also be divided into more detailed micro-niches markets. For example, Dark resting place can be subdivided into cemeteries, graves (famous individuals), catacombs, crypts, Rosemarie (most famously the Sedlec ossuary in the Czech Republic), and mausoleums (some real cult-of-personality big shots, e.g. Atatürk's in Ankara, Turkey). Dark conflict sites can be subdivided into different types of wars and even divided by war names, such as revolution or resistance sites, missile launch sites, or World War I and World War II sites, cold war sites. The dark campus of genocide includes persecution, repression, slavery, genocide, holocaust, etc. If tourists want to go to dark tourist attractions related to the Holocaust, they can recommend the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall in China or a Nazi site in a more targeted manner. As well as the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia are all related to the genocide concentration camp. Of course, dark disaster sites can also be regarded as a type of SIT, so natural disasters and man-made disasters belong to the macro-niche market. The micro-niches markets of natural disasters can be other environmental disasters, such as volcanoes, tsunamis, earthquakes, etc. Man-made disasters can be segmented into nuclear disasters (Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Japan,) and other industrial disasters.

4. Potential Future Directions and Micro-niche markets

With the transformation of human society from a service economy to an experience economy, the demand for tourism has increased, the quality of tourism demand has improved, and tourism demand has become more

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diversified. Tourists pay more attention to impressions, feelings, and experiences during the travel process. If tourists can experience the excitement, fear, and sadness at the scene of natural or man-made disasters or through witnessing or through scene simulation, it will greatly increase the attractiveness of dark tourism. Therefore, the general trend of dark tourism in the future should be to strengthen the dark tourism product portfolio to create a satisfactory experience for tourists. Based on the characteristics of dark tourism resources in various regions and guided by the source market, we will create a unique and distinctive dark tourism theme image. For instance, performance-type participation, dark tourism should not just look at pictures and take photos, but plan experiential activities, simulate field battles, participate in military and civilian production, life scenes, and so on during the war. Various media should be used in dark product development, such as modern digital media technology, stereo technology, and 3D film and television technology to reproduce the process of events. Especially in the process of catastrophic events, a stronger visual impact will leave a better psychological impact and a better sense of satisfaction. Through the niche market, find precise positioning, establish and improve information communication technology and promotion platform, and form a complete dark tourism supply chain. The high attention of public opinion is conducive to the construction of infrastructure in dark tourist destinations. For example, the development of dark tourism activities after the disaster will arouse great attention from all parties in the society, which objectively helps the residents, governments, and developers of tourist destinations to build tourist destinations with greater motivation. Enhancing the development of commercial products for dark tourism will inevitably create more employment opportunities for the region and will inevitably provide the endogenous driving force for economic growth.

Every country has earthquake relics, battlefield sites, anti-Japanese revolution memorials, martyrs' cemeteries, and other natural or man-made disaster sites with great educational significance and tourist value. Although most of them have been used as scenic spots, they have not been accepted as a means of dark tourism activities. Some concerns, the value of tourism, and the significance of education are far from being used. To achieve sustainable development of dark tourism, in terms of the development of mega trends, it will be more educational niche nature. Dark tourism products perform best in education and empathy, it presents the problem of natural disasters to tourists appropriately, so that they can raise their environmental awareness.

5. Recent New Product Innovations

The theme of dark tourist attractions is at the expense of memory of death and disaster, it is difficult for the public to consume, and it is also easy to cause external controversy and disgust from tourists. So it is necessary to endow education and warning with significance. For example, after the airing of the miniseries "Chernobyl" produced by the US HBO television network, the travel bookings for "Ghost City" surged by 40%. The Chernobyl nuclear power plant exploded due to the No. 4 nuclear reaction caused by human factors, becoming the most serious nuclear power accident in human history. Due to the leakage of a large amount of radioactive material, 30 kilometers around the reactor was designated as a quarantine zone, all residents were forcibly evacuated, and the city of Chernobyl was abandoned. Through the visit, many people have learned what happened in Chernobyl, Viewing the Chernobyl area can make people understand the history of tragedy and once again realize the importance of the safety of nuclear facilities. Moreover, after the movie "Tangshan Earthquake" was released, the number of visitors to the Tangshan earthquake site and the popularity of tourists also increased rapidly. It was more of an educational factor that led people to pay more attention to the knowledge of earthquake prevention.

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Tangshan has vigorously developed seismic science tourism and formed various tourism products related to seismic tourism. The tourism development driven by the "Great Earthquake" has expanded the tourism market and created considerable tourism revenue. According to a report by the Voice of America (VOA), "In the past 10 years, the number of tourists visiting Cambodian massacre sites has more than tripled. When tourists visit Cambodia, he feels that visiting the killing fields is a very important itinerary because this helps him better understand the history of Cambodia. Its role is to educate tourists and make local people aware of it.

Another innovation is to encourage the development of the "dark tourism" industry in disguise, making dark tourism products richer and easier to combine. The recent dark tourism pays more attention to the sense of experience, and the experience brought by dark tourism cannot be replaced by other types of tourism. Like the area around the ruins of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant has become a new tourist attraction. The site of the worst nuclear accident in history is open to ordinary tourists (but must wear protective clothing). Tourists must obey the instructions of the tour guide and do not act without authorization. Every individual and vehicle that leaves no man's land must undergo a radiation dose inspection. Only qualified personnel can leave. If the radiation dose exceeds the standard, they must stay to receive cleaning and treatment. Moreover, there is no lack of official forces to contribute to the flames.

For many traumatized countries, wars or killings can be themed and packaged as tourism resources. It can both alert future generations and make money along the way. For example, Vietnam has launched a joint ticket discount for the Vietnam War ruins and the War Museum. After visiting the tunnel, you can also experience the AK rifle for free. In the early 1990s, when the regime of the former Yugoslavia fell, Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, suffered a siege of more than three years. Large-scale ethnic cleansing, the brutal rape of a large number of women, and the brutal massacre caused more than 200,000 casualties. And the guides of these dark spots are many survivors of the war. They tell you the situation of the war in the first place, walk into the historical scene, personally contact the survivors after the disaster, and touch the historical relics. It is more profound and shocking than reading history in front of a book or a screen.

6. Conclusion

As a type of special interest tourism, dark tourism has always had a limited audience. Compared to some tourist attractions that deliberately consume "pain" in order to attract tourists, correctly guiding the educational significance of dark tourism is the way to sustainable development of special interest tourism. This requires maximizing the value of dark tourism from the perspective of social benefits. Deeply explore "dark culture" as the core attraction, and create a diversified and technological product. Additionally, utilize technologies such as sound and light to visualize and realistically restore real scenes, attracting more segmented target customers. To summarize, this paper focuses on the literature review and niche market segmentation of dark tourism, identified its enormous development potential. Based on the customer needs of the segmented market, further determine the target development direction of dark tourism, and combine the innovative use of dark tourism products with a large number of examples to illustrate. This makes the expression of future development trends clearer.

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