

The Dark Tourist: An Insight into the Appeal of Dark Tourism

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Abstract

Tourism is a multifaceted sector, which is manifested in various forms, including dark tourism. Of late there seem to be an increase in the number of tourist opting for Dark Tourism. This paper studies the motivating factors that influence tourists to visit places that have a past which may be haunted, have a sinister past or is related to death.

Keywords: Dark Tourist, Death Tourism, Tragedy

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that a person is influenced by social and cultural activities or happenings. A tourist may get persuaded and one's perception of travelling may relate to one's perception of the World. However, there are so many things or people, from whom a traveller gets carried away and these inspirations work as motivators to travel a particular place. The environment and other activities make a person what he is. Not even two persons have the same psychological acceptance to something or someone. In other words, a person's demand depends upon the type of behaviour and intellect that one carries. But, what does it make people to travel. No matter whether from the internal voice or the external influence, a person may feel deprived when his actual stage is different from his desired stage. This arises in a person the feeling of getting a need fulfilled to reach his desired stage. Similarly, a person who wants to have experience or entertainment instead, would try to find a particular place to complete his wish. A spot that sounds attractive or appealing attracts tourists from different places. It's the individual requirement of a tourist that where

he wishes to go to for entertainment, recreation, holiday, business etc. The person fond of exploring the unexplored may be interested in knowing about what happened to the victims of a non-happening or at haunted places, by visiting that place and exploring it. These are those places on the globe that relate to death, atrocity, disaster, tragedy or destruction, having sinister pasts that attract the tourists from different parts of the world and this forms the basis of the term 'Dark Tourism'. In other words, people travelling to various spots having dark history, is termed as 'Dark Tourism' or 'Grief Tourism'.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Rachael Raine (2013) in her study on dark tourists states that, tourists can be identified as darkest to the lightest depending on the type of places they like to visit and their motivating factors for the same. She further went on to identify nine types of dark tourists in her study.
- Philip Stone (2013) in his study has referred to dark tourism as Thana tourism and he also mentions that it is the act of tourists visiting sites that are linked to death, disaster and other such acts with tend to attract attention. He also states that inspite of the amount of literature present as well as the growing attraction of visitors, the study is still in its infancy stage. The author also offers critical insights into thana tourism scholarship.
- Jeffery Podoshen (2013) in his paper examines the consumption of dark tourism motivations for tourists. He makes use of a mixed approach and traces the dark tourism motivations specifically related to "backpackers" and also takes into account the fans of the musical performance of the band black

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metal. His study included participant observation, content analysis, simulation along with emotional contagion were discussed having larger theoretical implications.

- Dr Takalani Mudzanani (2014) in his study sought to analyze the factors that motivate visitors to visit the Hector Peterson Memorial and Museum. In order to achieve the goal of the study, travel motivations were analyzed by conducting in depth interviews with 15 visitors who visited dark tourism sites which bring about novelty, some escape enhancement of relationships, education, relaxation and media knowledge. He also further recommends to the management of Hector Peterson Memorial and Museum to create an environment that permits relaxation.

- Yong Tang (2014) This study investigates the factors that motivates Chinese tourists to visit the seismic memorial sites that have been created after the Wenchuan earthquake of 2008. The empirical evidence also reveals the interrelated patterns between motivations experiences and benefits of these type of travel.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the awareness of the concept of dark tourism among Indian travelers.
- To understand the reasons as to any why tourist would undertake dark tourism as compared to other forms of tourism.
- To study the challenges faced by tourists while they are undertaking dark tourism.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

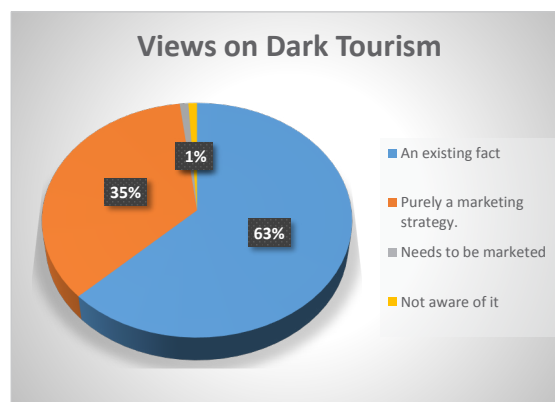


Fig. 1: Views on Dark Tourism

The above data mentions that with respect to Views of respondents on Dark Tourism, 63% of respondents state that 'It is an existing fact', while 35% feel that it is 'Purely

a marketing strategy' while 1% state that it needs to be marketed more strongly as well as are 'Not aware of it'.

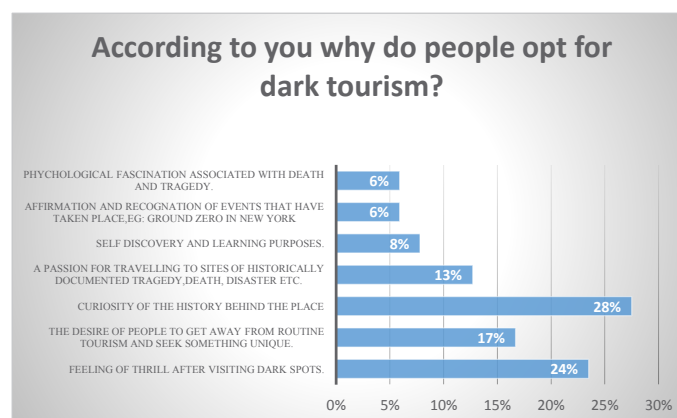


Fig. 2: According to You Why Do People Opt for Dark Tourism

There are various reasons as to why Tourists today opt for Dark Tourism as compared to any other form of tourism. The data above depicts that ‘Curiosity of the history behind the place’ is a major attraction to dark tourists (28%) and the ‘Feel of thrill after visiting Dark spots’ followed closely behind (24%). ‘The desire of people to get away from routine tourism and seek something unique’ (17%). ‘A passion for travelling to sites of historically documented tragedy, death, disaster etc (13%).

Some of the least reasons as to why Tourist would opt for Dark Tourism were stated as Self-discovery and learning purposes (8%), Affirmation and recognition of events that have taken place eg: Ground Zero in New York (6%), Psychological fascination associated with death and tragedy (6%), respectively.

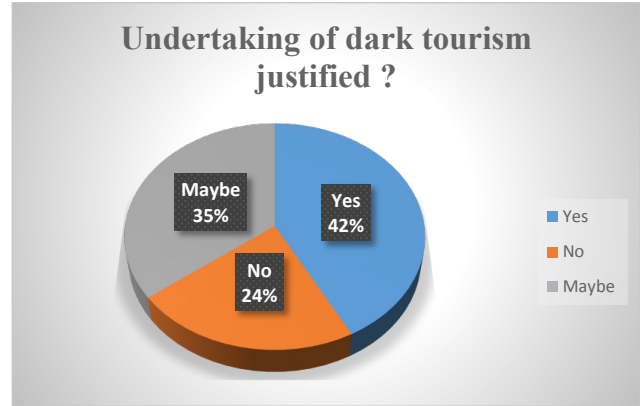


Fig. 3: Undertaking of Dark Tourism Justified

The above data states that with respect to the ‘Undertaking of Dark Tourism’, 42% of respondents feel that it is justified, and 24% state that it is not, while 35% of respondents, mention that it May be justified.

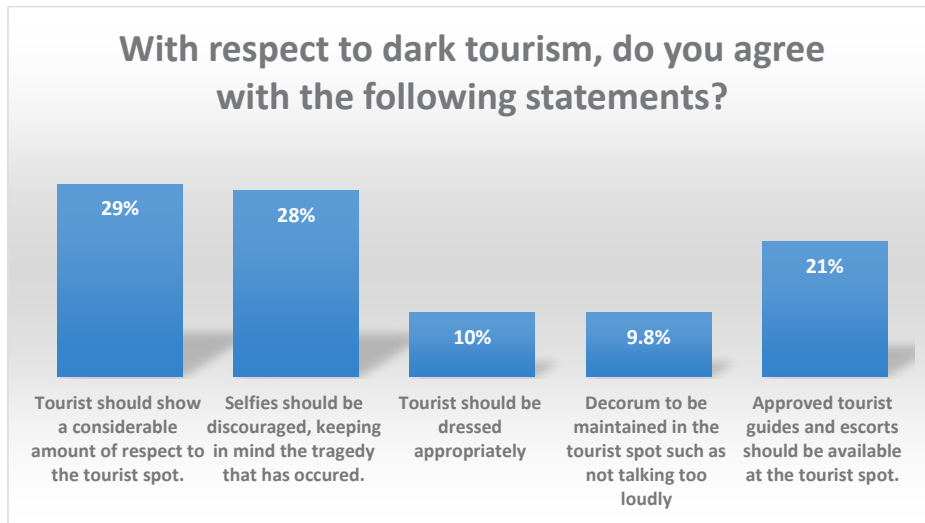


Fig. 4: With Respect to Dark Tourism, Do You Agree With the Following Statements?

During the study, respondents were also given a few statements on which they had to reply as to whether they agreed or not. 29% of respondents agreed that ‘Tourist should show a considerable amount of respect to the tourist spot’, 28% respondents mentioned that ‘Selfies should be discouraged, keeping in mind the tragedy

that has occurred’ in the concerned spot. 21% tourists stated that ‘Approved tourist guides and escorts should be available at the tourist spot’, 10% stated that ‘Tourist should be dressed appropriately’ and 9.8% ‘Decorum to be maintained in the tourist spot such as not talking too loudly’.

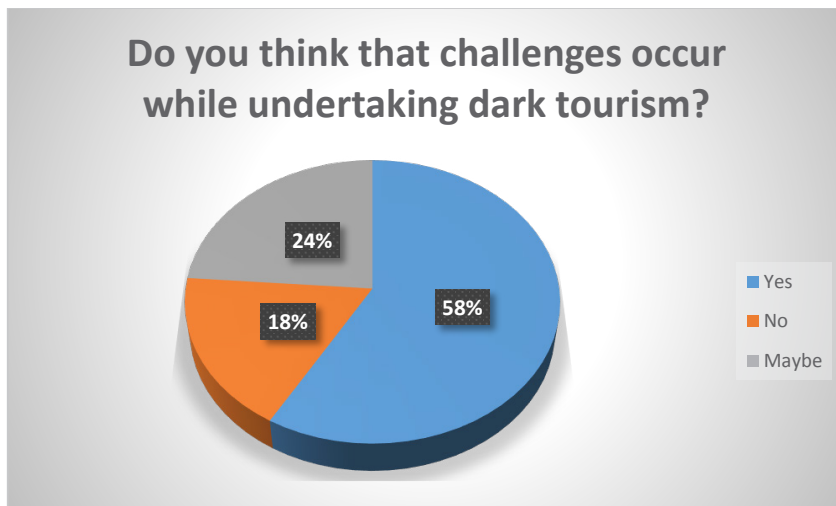


Fig. 5: Do You Think That Challenges Occur While Undertaking Dark Tourism?

With regards to the challenges that occur while undertaking Dark Tourism, 58% have mentioned that there are challenges that they face, while 18% have replied No and

24% have said that there may be certain challenges faced while undertaking Dark Tourism.

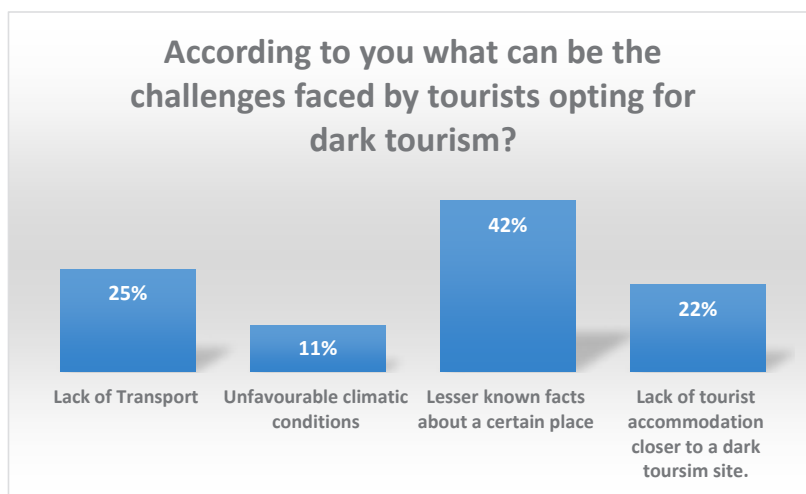


Fig. 6: According to You What Can Be the Challenges Faced by Tourists Opting for Dark Tourism?

The above data clearly mentions that ‘Lesser known facts about a certain place’ leads to the maximum number of challenges (42%), followed by Lack of Transport (25%), Lack of tourist accommodation closer to a dark tourism site (22%) and Unfavorable climatic conditions (11%).

FINDINGS

1. Indian travelers are well aware of the concept of Dark Tourism (63%) and are also willing to explore further.
2. Curiosity about the place is the major reason for tourists to visit a Dark site, this being a fact that the Unknown attracts.
3. Apart from just visiting the Dark Tourism sites, respondents also feel that certain amount of respect needs to be paid to the dark site as they have a certain amount of history attached to it.
4. Although dark tourism has been undertaken by Indian tourists, they still reckon that the type of facilities offered to tourists visiting dark tourism sites are plenty. One of the most common challenge is

with regards to lesser known facts about a place, having certified tourist guides for Dark tourism would help tackle this challenge to an extent.

CONCLUSION

By this research study it has been stated that there is lack of awareness amongst Indian tourists with regards to dark tourism and tragic sites. People take a place of tragic accidents as a tourist spot and are not aware of the consequences that they can face in those sites. People should not take tragic sites as a leisure place for tourism instead they should be aware of the actions taken place in that area. People feel there is lack of transport going to that place. So they should be made aware of the consequences that they can face in that places or else it can harm their life in various ways that can lead to disrespect of the sites of importance. These tragic sites lose their importance as people tend to take and spend leisure time in such places which can harm they should maintain a decorum of silence and peace at its best instead of making those sites places of leisure.

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