

Echoes of the Past: Understanding Domestic Desires in Sri Lanka's Dark Tourism Landscape

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Abstract

Dark tourism, characterized by travel to places associated with death and disasters, has gained prominence in global tourism. Notably, in countries like Sri Lanka, it has emerged as a novel niche category. This research delves into the motivations driving domestic travelers to partake in dark tourism within the nation. By focusing on prominent sites like war memorials in the North, the Tsunami disaster zone, and various cemeteries, the study uncovers the potential and appeal these sites hold. With a qualitative research approach, personal in-depth telephonic interviews were conducted with sixteen respondents who have visited these dark sites. Through rigorous thematic analysis, the findings reveal multifaceted motivations: factors pushing visitors include curiosity, emotions, and a dark sense of humour, while pulling factors encompass education, cultural heritage, remembrance, and location-specific attributes. In addition, elements like personal connections, historical narratives, and media influence further craft tourists' motivations. This investigation not only underscores the prevailing theories on dark tourism motivations but also enriches them. In conclusion, understanding these motivations can significantly enhance the management, promotion, and interpretation of dark tourism sites.

Keywords: *Dark tourism, Motivation, Memorials, Niche tourism, Push and pull motivations.*

Introduction

The complicated relationship between death, disaster, tragedies, and tourism presents irregularities in modern travel behavior. Throughout history, humans have exhibited a profound curiosity towards places associated with tragedy, conflict, and mortality (Zhang, 2022). The dark concept has been one of the old tourism niches despite its recent admiration. Lennon and Foley (1996) introduced the concept of dark tourism as an alternative niche of tourism, which refers to the tourism around the sites associated with death, tragedy, atrocity, and disasters. Tarlow & Novelli (2005) also defined dark tourism as having the dimension of the interaction between supply and demand as visitation to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy deaths have occurred. Over the years, such destinations have viewed a solid increase in guests, revealing a fundamental morbid curiosity within the essence of the modern tourist.

The attraction to the sites associated with anguish and devastation is not merely because of the curiosity about what is associated with sites but also the complex interactions of cultural, psychological, and socio-historical factors (Stone, 2012). Consequently, the motivations behind visiting dark sites may be of specific attention to researchers studying behaviors in distinct tourism typologies (Iliev, 2021; Lewis et al., 2021). The motives behind the formation of encouraging attitudes towards dark tourism are of utmost importance for both academia and tourism practitioners. However, the underlying motivations that trigger individuals to dark tourism are varied and multifaceted, as scholars have identified an array of both push and pull motives that inspire the visiting of dark sites (Proos, & Hattingh, 2022).

Dark tourism destinations differ mainly based on the nature of the tragedy or disaster, their geographical location, and the motivations driving visitors. The research on the issue of dark tourism is mainly location-oriented, and in recent

publications, site-based studies on dark tourism have been identical (Rajasekaram et al., 2022). Even though studies on dark tourism have been conducted in many parts of the world, the Asian regions, especially the South Asian region, remained relatively unexplored and unstudied. Sri Lanka, as a country destination, is highly augmented with a range of different types of dark tourism attractions and sites generated by civil conflict, colonial confrontations, and natural disasters (Jayalath & Samarathunga, 2022; Shome, 2023). The motivational drivers involved in dark tourism can explain why visitors visit the dark sites. However, systematic investigations and research to identify corresponding motives are sporadic in Sri Lanka's dark tourism. According to Nisthar et al. (2017), identifying dark tourism motives and potentials in the country can lead to a well-developed and popular dark tourism destination for inbound and outbound tourists. However, the attention given to the area is not sufficient, according to the authors. In the Sri Lankan context, dark tourism is an untapped niche market that has neither been well-studied nor promoted.

Given that, the objectives of the current research are twofold: to identify the motivations for domestic visitors to visit dark tourism sites and to study whether there are destination-specific motivations to classify these motivations across various types of dark sites.

Literature Review

Dark Sites in Sri Lanka

Pieris (2014) asserted that for a few decades, Sri Lanka has been a headline for different kinds of tragedies and natural disasters. On December 26, 2004, Sri Lanka faced the worst natural disaster in living history as it was hit by a tsunami caused by an earthquake in the Sumatra Islands. Yala, on the southern

shore, has an unusual sight of an elephant with the blue sea in the background, as well as monuments and the shattered foundations of a house swept away by the Tsunami of 2004. The memorial stones at the place explain the memory of the forty-seven lives that the Tsunami took. Also, Telwatta, which is located in the Galle district, is another dark place created by the 2004 tsunami (Nisthar et al., 2017). There is a massive burial ground in the Telwatta area. Many tourists were attracted to visit those memorial sculptures and burial grounds to memorize these people.

Sri Lanka has remained in many dark places due to 30 years of civil war in the country. Samarathunga et al. (2022) claimed that Cemeteries, burial grounds, and memorial sites are mainly available in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mulativ, Vavnia, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee districts. Since the end of the civil war due to ethnic conflicts in 2009, the North region has opened up to tourists, and it has attracted many tourists and become highlighted as a dark site. Moreover, there are tombstones with navy captions, and ancient Dutch memorial sculptures can be recognized in the Dutch port of Galle. Rajasekaran et al. (2022) concluded that most of the military deaths happened in Sri Lanka during the World War I period. A total of 1999 Commonwealth war dead are commemorated in the war cemeteries or plots in Sri Lanka. There are three Commonwealth war memorials in Colombo. The names of 346 Commonwealth service members and one Dutch serviceman are commemorated on the Liveramentu Memorial, while 165 Hindu servicemen are commemorated on the Cremation Memorial. The Kandy Military Cemetery in Pitakanda is particularly noteworthy, as it is often regarded as one of the world's most beautifully planted and kept war cemeteries. The names of 28 Italians who died in Ceylon between 1939 and 1945 are commemorated in a 1973 memorial placed in this cemetery (Jayalath & Samarathunga, 2022).

The records of the War Cemetery at Kandy, which has 201 war dead, including 107 Britons, 35 East Africans, 26 Sri Lankans, 23 Indians, 6 Canadians, 3 Italians, and 1 Frenchman, give an insight into the diversity of nationalities buried on this island.

Sirisena (2015) examined the Borella Kanatte cemetery, which was established in 1886, as a beautiful general cemetery in Sri Lanka, including the buried bodies of soldiers killed in both World War I and II. Their famous western resident is British-born Sir Arthur C. Clarke. Beyond the country's near history, Sri Lanka is linked with sites where deaths, tragedies, and sufferings have occurred or are being memorized. Ibbankatuwa burial grounds are such an area that stems from the prehistoric Paleolithic period (Pieris, 2014).

Dark Sites in Global Scenario

The events of September 11, 2001, shook people around the world, mainly in New York. Many compared the destruction caused by an atomic bomb with what happened after the World Trade Center's Twin Towers collapsed. As a result, "ground zero." The chapel continued to honour all of this and had developed into a popular tourist destination in and of itself, with unique artwork functioning as memorials and an educational display titled "Unwavering Spirit – Hope and Healing at Ground Zero" (Deutsch, 2014). Moreover, one of the largest Nazi concentration camps built on German territory was Buchenwald. It was located 4.5 miles northwest of Weimar, Germany, on a forested hillside. The main camp at Buchenwald was home to prisoners. A chain of sentries with automatic machine rifles, observation towers, and an electrified barbed-wire fence encircled this location (Monteath,

1994). The Bunker, an infamous punishment block, was located inside the main camp. It stood at the head of the main encampment entrance.

Le (2014) also postulated that throughout the Vietnam War, it is estimated that at least 45,000 Vietnamese men and women lost their lives protecting the Cu Chi tunnels. The Cu Chi tunnels were conserved by the Vietnamese government and added to a nationwide network of war memorial sites in the years after Saigon fell in 1975. Olson and Korstanje (2019) mentioned today that visitors visiting Vietnam could shoot an AK-47 weapon on a firing range, see command centres and deadly schemes, walk under parts among the safer sections of the tunnels, and even eat food that is representative of what soldiers residing in the underground might have eaten.

Concept of Dark Tourism

A growing number of locations linked to death, calamity, tragedy, and atrocity have become significant tourist 'attractions.' Stone (2005) posits that the old Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau is now repackaged as a modern-day complex of exhibitions and 'places of special interest.' Sites of ancient conflicts, murder, and general skullduggery are among the other 'dark attractions.' The most attractive feature of these tourist sites is their negative, sometimes brutal, historical past. People have been engaging in this, actually long-existing but still new literary tourism phenomenon for years, most of them unconscious that their acts have a "dark" and therefore rather a negative connotation in tourism literature (Deutsch, 2014). Peter Hohenhaus (2010) contends that most of us are at least a degree dark tourist, even if we are unaware of it. According to him, if we have ever been or thought of visiting war museums, memorials, and killing fields, we could potentially be a Dark tourist. In 2005, Stone stated that the theory behind dark tourism consumption is not fully developed.

Lennon and Foley (1996) defined the form of tourism in which visiting places linked with deaths and tragedies as "dark tourism." Dark Tourism is the term adopted by the authors, encompassing the presentation and consumption of actual and commoditized death and disaster sites. The dark tourists may have been motivated to experience the reality behind the media and a personal association with inhumanity. Ashworth (2004) came up with three main attributes for an event itself to become successfully turned into a tourism product. The first characteristic he mentioned is human perpetrators, as there should be a human victim. Only if this attribute is available people can identify themselves and others as perpetrators or victims. Secondly, the perpetrator took part in conscious that the victim is aware of the consciousness and intentions of the culprit, making the act barbarity. And then thirdly, he mentioned that atrocity entails exceptional seriousness or unusualness.

Stone (2005) suggests there are levels of "darkness" for different dark sites, ranging from the lightest "Dark Fun Factories," including the Merlin Entertainments Group's dungeon attractions, through to the darkest "Dark Camps of Genocide," including Holocaust death camps and sites of Nazi war crimes. He suggested the "Dark Tourism Spectrum Framework" and the "Seven Dark Supplier categorization," and there are different levels or shades of macabre or darkness into which a dark tourism product can be categorized. It ranges from darkest to lightest. A dark site is categorized according to its design features and management strategies. Different experiences are perceived when visiting Holocaust death camps such as Auschwitz or Mauthausen, which would then be a darker experience when compared to the experience that can get by visiting a Memorial like the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. (Seaton, 1996).

Dark Tourism Motives

Stone (2005) has mentioned that we have always been fascinated with death, whether it may be our own or others to respect and reverence or morbid curiosity and superstition. However, western society's apparent contemporary fascination with death, real or fictional, media-inspired or otherwise, is seemingly pouring the dark tourism phenomenon (Stone, 2006). Dale & Robinson (2011) described that people have motivations to visit sites such as graveyards and cemeteries for contemplation and possible spiritual and retrospective purposes. Some people have affirmation recognition of events, such as crime, disaster, or murder, while others have self-discovery and a learning purpose. People visit the dark sites because of their interest in local history, as nature lovers, for educative purposes, and for passive recreation by merely walking through the site (Raine, 2013). Moreover, people visit death-related sites and burial grounds because of their relationships. Friends and relatives of the deceased and people with other causes might be classified in similar categories to pilgrimage (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Walter, 2009).

According to Walter (2009), some pathologists and archaeologists tend to discover information by looking at human remains and gaining knowledge for intercession, which involves meditations and prayers to saints and spirits. Moreover, where people visit shrines to receive guidance from the dead, some people tend to have conversations with the dead to communicate news and inquire about the afterlife. When there is a death related to war memorials, the family history people travel there to involve remembrance. As Walter's idea, it is interesting to identify people's desires with relationships for the studies. Personal interpretation and attire is also vital motivation factor for dark tourism. Most of the time, attitudes toward death and tragedy are closely aligned with cultural values (Yuill, 2003).

Someone has the motivation to learn about the history behind some events and identify how things happened, such as military tactics. People come up with curiosity on those sites. Beech (2002) found that two different divisions of the people visit the sites. In his research, he discovered that the camp was divided into two sections: "...visitors with some relation to the camp, that is, survivors... and unaffiliated users who have no direct or indirect ties to the site. Yuill (2003) mentioned that heritage-motivated types of visitors might also visit due to an indirect affiliation with the events or some individuals involved, like celebrity deaths, where people's identities were shaped in part by their heroes. Many studies provide examples of areas where friends and family travel to actual or representative death sites. Holt's Battlefield Tours offers tours to the Menin Gate, Vimy Ridge, and Thièpvall, recognizing that some guests have ancestors with their dead relatives (Lennon & Foley, 2000).

Smith (1996) asserts that people who are interested in history and military strategy, both real and imaginary, walk around battlefields examining elements such as terrain, ground cover, and troop movements, reflecting that the visitors comprehend they are not directly associated with the death and disaster regions or events that drew them here. History and education are also linked, and the essential factors are the artifacts. People travel to see physical or symbolic proof of death in regions unrelated to their occurrence. "Museums where murder weapons, victims' clothing, and other artifacts are displayed" (Seaton, 1999). Kreiner, 2016 mentioned that there is a linkage between dark tourism and pilgrimage. Robinson & Heitmann (2011) stated that visitors wishing to get close to the death place where death has occurred can be connected to the fear of the unknown and the desire to gather experience.

Methodology

Research Approach, Context, and Data Collection

This study is rooted in relativistic ontology and the subjectivity associated with constructivist epistemology. Adopting the perspective that individuals' interpretations of their experiences shape social phenomena, a phenomenological approach was employed to explore the diverse motivations behind visits to dark tourism sites. The qualitative research strategy of phenomenology is apt for this inquiry as it effectively captures the real reasons and associated insights described, based on their actual experiences, by the respondents to visit dark tourism sites (Neubauer et al., 2019).

The research primarily centred on domestic visitors within Sri Lanka. In recent times, there has been a noticeable uptick in their fascination with specific dark tourism sites. This emerging interest signifies a fresh direction in the realm of Sri Lankan domestic tourism. Prominent among these attractions are the Northern Province war memorial, which commemorates the conflicts of the past; the Southern Coast Tsunami disaster sites, which stand as a dark reminder of nature's fury; and the Borella cemetery, with its unique history. Together, these sites are drawing more locals and redefining the touristic landscape of the nation (Nisthar et al., 2017).

The face-to-face- interview method was applied with a qualitative research approach with telephone interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. The one-on-one interview mode was selected as it permits the prober to probe the interviewer by generating insightful responses regarding the phenomenon being investigated (Kasim and Al-Gahuri, (2015). The telephone method was selected because of the health guidelines and travel restrictions in force in the country due to the COVID-19 outbreak (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). Using a phenomenological approach, interviews were conducted to research the

respondents' inner emotions and thoughts, specifically targeting their experiences related to the central phenomena under examination. During the interview, the researcher had control over the conversation, where participants were probed and encouraged to explain their experiences on motives and perceptions about the dark sites. With this form of conducting research, there is less risk of misunderstanding and confusion regarding the question, their intent, and how they are answering.

Data collection was carried out in December 2020. The study population included local visitors who, in recent years, had visited the Commonwealth War cemeteries in Colombo, Kandy, and Trincomalee, the Borella Kanatte cemetery in Colombo, the Tsunami disaster sites, burial grounds, and post-war areas in the Northern region. A total of 16 telephone but thorough interviews were conducted, with an average interview lasting around 30 minutes. The sample was identified and accessed employing a snowball sampling technique with a purposive aspect since the target respondent should necessarily be a dark tourist (Naderifa et al., 2017). In addition to that, the active members in the social media groups discussing the topic of dark tourism were also approached for data collection. The prospective respondents were identified using snowball sampling techniques, starting from suitable respondents known to the researcher and finding the next possible respondent through referral. The interviews were conducted with the verbal consent of the respondents, and the time of the interview was set earlier in advance with the respondent's agreement after a verbal explanation about the requirement. Table 1 shows the demographics of the 16 participants.

Table 1: The demographics of the interview participants

Participant Number	Visited dark site	Gender	Frequency of Visit
P 1	North Region war memorial sites	Female	Once
P 2	North Region war memorial sites	Male	Once
P 3	Borella Kanatte cemetery	Male	Twice
P 4	North Region War Memorial times	Male	Once
P 5	Kandy Garrison Cemetery	Female	Once
P 6	North Region war memorial sites	Male	Once
P 7	Borella Kanatte cemetery	Female	Once
P 8	Tsunami disaster area	Female	Many Times
P 9	North Region war memorial sites	Male	Once
P 10	Borella Kanatte cemetery, Livermnetu Commonwealth cemetery Jawatta commonwealth cemetery	Male	Once
P 11	North Region war memorial sites, Kandy Garrison Cemetery Trincomalee commonwealth cemetery	Male	Once
P 12	Borella Kanatte cemetery	Female	Once
P 13	Borella Kanatte cemetery	Male	Twice
P 14	Tsunami disaster area	Female	Many Times
P 15	Kandy Garrison Cemetery	Female	Once
P 16	North Region war memorial sites	Female	Once

The interviews were digitally recorded. All respondents had been to several dark sites in Sri Lanka and were from different social backgrounds and demographics, enabling a diversified sample. This diversified sample

permitted the researcher to gather a broad spectrum of opinions, experiences, and insights about the multifaceted reasons and motives behind visiting dark sites. The interviews were not highly focused on the questions related to the demographic information since the author focused on the participants' motivations to visit the dark sites. The author asked whether the participants had previous knowledge, ideas, and visiting experiences about dark destinations and whether they had done any research beforehand to visit the sites. Moreover, the respondents answered the questions concerning their visits to the above-mentioned dark destinations; after such initial questions, the author moved to address the most critical aspects of the study, "Why do participants choose to visit?" a particular dark destination.

Data Analysis

The technique of thematic analysis was employed to analyze data, which can detect the patterns in the textual data and develop themes or concepts to explain the research question or issue (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the first step, the recorded interviews were transcribed on text editing software and translated into English. As the researcher was the interviewer, the transcription process could generate some meanings, which eventually was helpful in developing central themes concerning dark tourism motivations when the analysis was taking place.

The data analysis process took several distinct steps. During the data immersion phase, the textual data from the interviews was thoroughly reviewed several times. From this examination, initial codes emerged, accompanied by concise notes to highlight potential themes and patterns. These understandings were crucial for successive interpretations. Then, by keeping the consistency of own judgment, the author examined and recognized the codable moments of the interviews. The descriptive labels were applied to the several segments of the data set according to the actions,

activities, concepts, differences, and opinions. Then, the author combined similar categories with identified links to other generated sets of codes. Finally, the potentially relevant coded data were extracted into themes that will explain the dark tourism motives of Sri Lankan domestic visitors. Moreover, eighteen travel motives were identified concerning different types of dark tourism sites under two broad categories of push and pull motivation.

The analysis used a multidimensional approach, learning the push and pull motivations behind visits to various dark sites. Throughout the process of analysis, emerging data patterns were identified to frame motivational themes specific to each place under consideration.

Results and Discussion

Motives Emerged From Data

When examining the motivations driving visits to dark sites, curiosity and the desirability of novelty dominantly emerge as push factors for tourists, especially relating to the northern region and its war remnants. As one respondent articulated, *“I have never encountered war firsthand nor seen the places, vehicles, and equipment associated with it”* (Interview 2). Another respondent highlighted the difference between media portrayal and reality: *“During the war, our experience was limited to news and images on television. I had never actually seen the war equipment, vehicles, submarines, and bunkers in person”* (interview 1).

Besides the northern province war memorial area, the impetus of novelty and curiosity was also evident in visitors' motivations. For instance, travelers were drawn to the Borella Kanatte cemetery with views like, *“... ghosts or any other invisible soul, I wanted to know what they want. What kind of behaviours they have...”* (interview 12), underscoring their desire to explore the haunted lore

and stories they had heard. The Tsunami disaster area, along with the Kandy Garrison cemetery and Commonwealth war graves, similarly attracted dark tourists, mainly driven by their innate curiosity.

The research explored profound emotional motives for visiting dark tourism sites, particularly war memorial areas. Many visitors demonstrate thoughtful respect, gratefulness, and honor for the sacrifices of war heroes, recognizing their current freedom and the opportunity to travel to once-forbidden regions to these individuals. As one participant put it, *“I was proud of our army that they had defeated this war..... I feel that we travel to these places because of them, and we should respect them. I think those feelings of freedom influenced me further. Feel honored about our Sri Lankan military...”* (interview 1). These sites serve as poignant reminders for visitors to show their appreciation. Parallely, emotional drives were evident among those visiting the Tsunami disaster area. Survivors exhibited empathy for locations that had shielded them from calamity. One Tsunami survivor mentioned, *“However, we survived despite we had to face such kind of terrible experience. So I feel there may have been something to protect us. There was a kind of protection for us; if that place protected us, I like to go there and see that place. That is why I like to go there”*. (Interview 8). This sentiment underscores the intricate bond visitors forge with these places, shaped by past traumas and gratitude.

The data further discovered that visitors are attracted to dark sites by the change and difference, victims/survivors, and a dark sense of humour emerged as compelling 'push' motivations attracting visitors to dark tourism sites. One interviewee explained *“We planned it because there were many soldiers who fought in the war and survived. Several survivors were faced with the rude experiences of the war attacks in the same lands we visited there”*. (Interview 16). Another stated, *“When we have free time if we spend some hours visiting graveyards, it really gives a new experience. I wanted to do something*

different.” (Male/ interview 10). These perceptions reflect the complex interplay of motivations that influence individuals to engage in dark tourism. However, these factors varied in their importance across different dark tourism destinations. For example, a dark sense of humor was primarily linked with visits to the Borella Kanatte Cemetery, while the stories of survival and victims were more connected to sites linked to the Tsunami and war-affected areas.

It was further revealed that factors such as educational value, the importance of remembrance, cultural heritage and identity, as well as artifacts and exhibits, and the physical location of the sites serve as 'pull' motivations for visitors. One participant highlighted education and personal interests “...*Since I am doing political science and history as my study major, I got interested in doing my report on travel to Jaffna after end of the war.... within that knowledge, I had some special imagination in my mind about the Jaffna*” (Interview 11). The significance of location was also mentioned by another respondent who appreciated the proximity of essential sites in Kandy, “*When I searched for the location it has to take few meters uphill from the Kandy national museum....important places in the Kandy are located near the area*”.(Interview 5). These motivations underscore the diverse reasons why individuals are attracted to dark tourism sites, from academic pursuits to the convenience and richness of the location.

Apart from the push-and-pull motivations to attract visitors to the dark sites, some other motives emerged with the data. Among them are history, myth/stories, finding the truth, short breaks, photography, personal links and connections, and natural background.

Discussion of Results

The discussion of this research paper focuses on the different types of motivations that drive visitors to dark tourism sites, which are associated with

the distinct characteristics of different dark tourism sites. Table 2 shows the themes that emerged with the respective initial codings.

Table 2: Themes emerged and initial coding

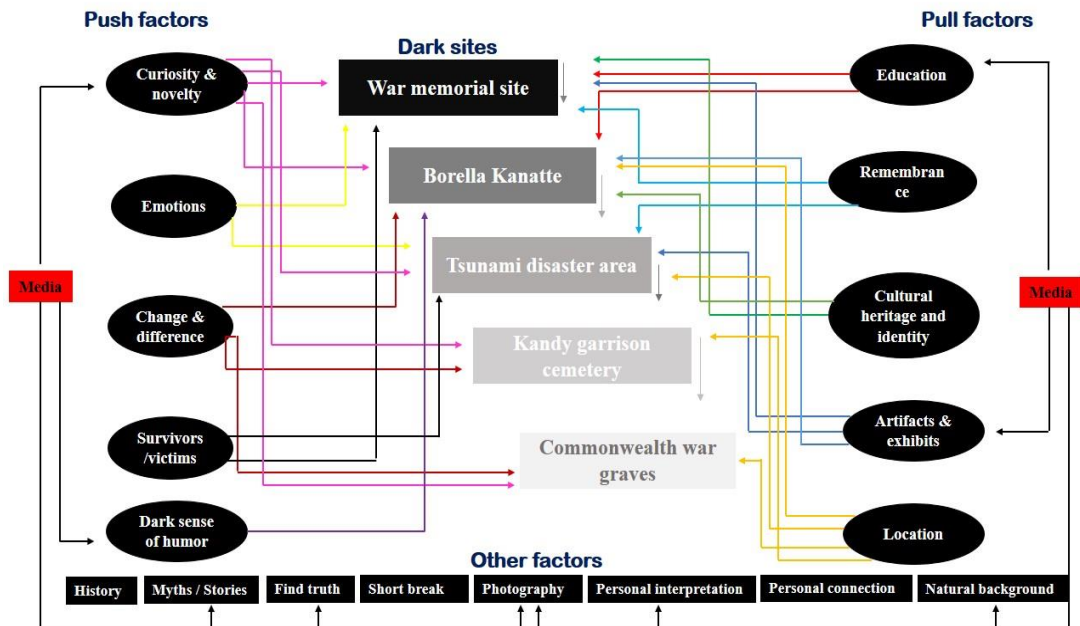
Motivations	Major Themes	Initial codes
P U S H factors	Curiosity & novelty	Motivation to see war-related things in real/Take exact idea about the area/ Searching for information/Curiosity on Well-known cemetery/Know about the real haunted areas/What is the thing can be visible/Differences and new experience/Never seen disasters, and evidence of disasters like Tsunami
	Emotions	Because of the feelings of pride and honour about the army/Feelings about freedom from the rude war/ Survivors and victims have feelings of empathy for being protected by the disasters and wars.
	Survivors and victims	They have personal experience at the occurred events/Full victimized ones sometimes like to call their memories.
	Media	Capture unusual places/ upload in social media/ Videos on the YouTube channel.
	Dark sense of humour	Travel to dark sides to have a fun and thrilling experience/Enjoy the haunted places with friends/ Rather than fear or shock, enjoy the incidents with a sense of humour
P U L L factors	Education	Searching for information Regarding the knowledge of history and politics/ Article writing/Details for research and Projects/Increases the awareness/knowledge about the historical incidents

	Cultural Heritage & Identity	About famous people in the country who are socially and historically valid in the country's culture
	Artifacts and exhibits	Interest in what the remaining of the war period/how/ watch tombstones, read quotes at cemeteries, destroyed things from the disasters / Monuments and things to watch in museums.
	Location	Closer to the main destinations/ Easiness to reach/ While on the way to the leading destination.
O T H E R factors	History	Evidence of history/Historical evidence about the location/ historical events and incidents.
	Myths & stories	Others' reported stories are motivated to visit. Some historical myths about Tsunamis/make sure that such myths/ stories are related to real-world incidents/ Trustees reported different stories about places.
	Short break/free time	Dark sites are associated with and around the places of their significant destinations of the tour.
	Photography	Taking photographs at places that usually do not travel/capture mystery incidents to the camera
	Find truth	Confirm the truth of the heard stories/ Take real experience than/ Eager to see from real eye/ Confirm about the myth and stories.
	Natural background	Well-maintained environments and graveyards/Cemeteries have their different looks/untroubled by the outside and give feelings of solitariness.

Figure 1 illustrates the research results on a multidimensional thematic map, where various motives are presented against respective dark tourism sites. According to Stone's (2006) framework, dark tourism sites can be differentiated by their immediacy to recent calamities, with the 'darkest' sites often being locations of recent tragedies. Such sites are generally more authentic and attractive but offer limited tourist facilities. On the other hand, 'lighter' sites are characterized by better-developed amenities and infrastructure and are generally geared more towards entertaining (Stone, 2006). In the situation of the present study, varying levels of 'darkness' were detected across the sites that were recently affected by incidents. It was noted that preferences for 'darker' to 'lighter' sites varied among participants, with the majority visiting war monuments and the Borella Cemetery. The gradation of 'darkness' varied with visits to the Tsunami disaster areas, the Kandy Garrison Cemetery, and the Commonwealth War Graves.

Figure 1, developed based on the current research findings, offers an understanding of the multifaceted motivations stimulating individuals towards dark destination destinations. Central to the discussion are the "push" and "pull" factors. The push factors characterize the internal stimuli originating the engagement with dark tourism. An intrinsic curiosity and novelty align with Stone's (2006) argument that people are internally motivated to oppose unfamiliar experiences. This scenario is associated with the emotional dimension, where one's narratives or cultural artefacts play pivotal roles (Biran et al., 2011). The persistent impact of the media is highlighted, substantiating its role in determining tourists' perceptions, a facet previously noted by Raine (2013). Meanwhile, the transformative potential of these sites, catering to those seeking change and difference, is suggestive of Sharpley's (2006) explanations of the educative and reflective possibilities of dark tourism.

Figure 1: Thematic Overview of Different Dark Tourism Motivations Across Site Categories



Conversely, pull factors underscore the site-specific attributes of the locations themselves. The moral potential of such sites, manifested in education, has been well-studied and documented (Robb, 2015). The significance of cultural heritage and identity as a pull motive to the dark destination is well explained by Timothy and Boyd (2006), emphasizing the role of these sites in anchoring shared and national tales. Travels through artefacts and exhibits, as explained by Ashworth (2004), provide notable experiences, further expanding tourists' associations.

Examining the locations and the specific sites, the war memorial sites north and the Commonwealth war graves, for instance, are associated with cultural heritage and remembrance motivations (Perera, 2016; Samarathunga et al, 2021). Their environments, favourable to reflection, align with the reflective nature of such sites discussed by Dale & Robinson (2011). The Tsunami disaster area, given its recency during the early 21st century, is strongly linked

with media, emotional, and transformative motives, reflecting opinions disclosed by Korstanje (2011).

The complicated nature of motivations for dark sites is further highlighted by Other Factors, ranging from logistical considerations to profound introspections. These additional factors affirm the postulations proposed by Knudsen (2011) on the multidimensional character of dark tourism motivations.

To sum up, the reasons why people visit dark places can be varied for each site and each person. The chart shows that there are many different factors at play, and while some visitors might have similar reasons, each person's experience is unique. This scenario reflects the wide range of opinions in research on this topic, acknowledging that motives can vary significantly from one site to another.

Conclusions and Implications

The exploration of dark tourism within this research has yielded new insights, particularly the discovery of a unique motivational facet, the "dark sense of humor," not previously highlighted in the literature. Remarkably, this research has highlighted that motivations for visiting dark tourism sites are varied and site-specific. The motivation to be involved with sites of disaster and memory in Sri Lanka is not only driven by a macabre interest but is also inclined by a pursuit for thrills, an aspect aligned with Stone's (2006) findings on curiosity and novelty-seeking behaviors in dark tourism. The study further has recognized that different dark sites elicit different motives for visiting, suggesting a range of darkness that classifies these sites by the intensity of their association with death and sorrow. The darker the site, the more likely it is to attract visitors with particular motivations, such as educational or

memorial intentions, compared to less dark sites, which might attract visitors looking for entertainment or leisure.

An understanding of multifaceted visitor motivations is vital for developing marketing approaches and visitor experience design in the emerging dark tourism sector of Sri Lanka. The findings of this research provide a valuable framework for future studies, which could employ quantitative or mixed methods to refine the understanding of these motivations further. Moreover, the current study opens up the potential for segmenting the dark tourism market according to the 'darkness' level of sites, which could be a revolutionary concept for Sri Lankan tourism strategies. The classification by darkness levels can aid in tailoring promotional efforts and managing the visitor experience to bring into line with the motivations acknowledged.

For tourism service providers, the findings of this research offer a basis for creating experiences that cater to the varying motivations of domestic travelers. The policymakers should consider the strategic development of dark tourism while respecting the dark sites, highlighting its educational and economic capacities. Moreover, Sri Lanka should identify lesser-known dark sites like the Aranthalawa massacre monuments and make necessary arrangements to broaden the offer of dark tourism avenues, which offer a complex interplay of history, memory, and death embodied at these locations. Comprehensively and insightfully developed dark tourism, focused on visitor motivations, can enhance Sri Lanka's tourism with sustainable, educational, and commemorative benefits.

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