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THE CONCEPT OF DARK TOURISM, VISITORS' MOTIVATION AND THE ENTAILED DISSONANCE IN SITES REPRESENTATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to explore the concept of dark tourism, focusing on the conceptual approach of dark tourism, the different terms stated for its nature, the review of its historical background as well as its main categories. Emphasis is placed on the identification of the tourists' general beliefs regarding the concept of dark tourism, their emotions related to visits to specific dark tourism monuments and the internal motives that serve as driving forces for visits to dark tourism spots of interest. The study investigates whether the contemporary representation of dark tourism monuments in Greece accurately reflects the historical background and the horrific events that took place in the past. The research aims to investigate whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the variables of dissonance in the representation of the sites, the motives and emotions of the tourists, and whether there is a statistical difference in the dissonance, emotions and motives based on the demographic results. The type of the research implemented is the primary quantitative research and the outcomes reveal that the overall picture of emotions is at an average level, with dark tourism eliciting both positive and negative emotions from the tourism audience.

KEYWORDS

Dark Tourism; Dissonance; Emotions; Motives.

*ECONLIT KEYS
M31; L83; L30*

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the current study is the examination of the concept of dark tourism, placing emphasis on the conceptual approach of dark tourism, tourists' familiarity with the term, the different terms stated for its nature, a review of its historical background, its different types and main categories. According to Kang et al. (2012), dark tourism is a term used initially in the academic field and describes the visiting of places which are associated with death, disasters - whether natural or man-made. Dark tourism can be found in many different terms and this is due to the fact that it includes many categories based on how "dark" - close to death and horror - is the term that accompanies each monument (Bristow, 2022; Philipp & Eckert, 2022).

As a matter of fact, dark tourism it is a concept that has attracted the interest of many scholars, as it is considered as an ascending type of alternative tourism or a combination of many types of the already existed forms of alternative tourism. Based on the fact that limited research has been made so far on the topic of dark tourism in the area of Greece, this is the reason why our research is characterized both by significance and originality. Taking under consideration the determining role of the tourism sector in the Greek economy, we perceive this current study as necessary as well.

Moreover, the study focuses on identifying the motives and emotions that characterize the Greek tourists who chose to visit the Greek dark tourist sites, an analysis based on both primary and secondary research. In terms of the motives of tourists who decide to travel to visit sites of death and atrocity, emotions are perceived as triggers for visiting a former concentration camp, while emotions such as "fear, despair and amazement" are closely related to some internal motivations (Nawijn et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2016).

Another dimension of the research, covered primarily by primary research, is the related dissonance in the representation of dark tourism sites. In 1995-2000, initial

publications explored the issue of dissonance at "contested heritage sites, including places of atrocity and tourists' fascination with death and tragedy: dissonant heritage, thanatourism, and dark tourism" (Hartmann, 2013). More specifically, the main objective is to focus on whether the representation of dark tourism monuments in Greece is proportional to the severity of historical events that took place in the past. The study examines whether or not the contemporary representation is successful, whether it reduces the significance of the historical events or whether it captures them successfully.

Finally, the research aims at examining whether there is a statistically significant correlation among the variables of dissonance in sites representation, tourists' motives and emotions, and if there is any statistical difference in dissonance, emotions and motives based on the demographic findings. The results gathered from this research will be generalized for the entire Greek tourism industry, satisfying in this way the research gaps that stem from our own limited current research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Regarding the conceptual approach of dark tourism, based on Lennon and Foley (2000), dark tourism as cited in Coles (2002, p.3), is a "tourist interest in recent death, disaster and atrocity that was created in the fundamental shift in the way in which death, disaster and atrocity are being handled by those who offer associated tourism products".

In addition, Lennon and Foley (2000, p.11) support that dark tourism "is an intimation of post-modernity" while, the three major characteristics are firstly that the initial interest is formed with the assistance of "global communication technologies", secondly that dark tourism products entail concerns about "the project of modernity", and thirdly that the educational role of dark tourism supports its further development as a tourism product via the character of commercialization.

Many terms have been stated regarding its nature, including the term provided by Seaton in 1996 as "Thanatourism", the term given by Ashworth and Hartmann in 2005 as "Atrocity Tourism" and the term presented by Bloom in 2000 as "Morbid Tourism",

while in the recent period the term “dark tourism” was established both as a form of tourism and as a part of the academic literature (Isaac & Çakmak, 2013).

Placing emphasis on the historical and political background of dark tourism in the tourism field, it is essential to mention that the concept of dark tourism emerged from 1985 to 2005, as during 1985-1995 there was the elimination of the travel barriers between the eastern and the western part (Iron Curtain) allowing citizens to travel to former sites of atrocity, including labor camps, extermination camps, detention camps (Hartmann, 2013).

In addition, the previous term of cultural tourism that was perceived as pretty narrow and confining was now replaced by some scholars with the term heritage tourism that embodied cultural sites, but also a great variety of tangible and intangible elements and their forms of tourism, including thanatourism (Hartmann, 2013).

With reference to Seaton (2002), Lennon and Foley (1996) began to place emphasis on the intriguing factors of fascination that affected tourists to travel to battlefields and cemeteries, underlying that some aspects of this notion had been part of medieval period and of western civilization (Hartmann et al., 2018). In the following years (from 2000 and on), numerous studies, like Dann and Seaton (2001), have expanded their research and studies on the interpretations of dark tourism and visitors’ reasons to travel. The concept of heritage tourism led researchers, like Graham et al. (2000) to a more elaborated research on the notion of heritage dissonance regarding sites characterized by controversial history, dissonant representation of messages, products, places, commodification approaches, management strategies, and association between media and visitors’ expectations/motivations.

With reference to the main categories that dark tourism consists of, the first main category of dark tourism monuments are the battle fields. Globally, battlefield attractions are a major tourist attraction with Pearl Harbor and the Battle of Gettysburg being typical examples. However, many tourists visit these places as they are interested in having a closer look to how everything they have learned from history is presented in reality (Heuermann & Chhabra, 2014).

Dark tourism also includes attractions associated with major disasters that have marked human history (Sharpley & Stone, 2008) with the example of the volcanic eruption in Hawaii (Skinner, 2018). Cemetery tourism is also famous while it is

considered as one of the most representative forms of dark tourism, due to the fact that human beings tend to fully realize, for the first time, the existence of death and its major significance by visiting cemeteries (Mionel, 2020). A typical example is the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, where Jim Morrison's tomb is located (Foley & Lennon, 1996). Ghost tourism (Hanks, 2016) is an additional dimension of dark tourism as it aims at tourists who are interested in supernatural phenomena and are triggered to get in touch with ghosts and paranormal elements in general (Hanks, 2016). A characteristic example in Thessaloniki is the so-called “red building” in Aghia Sofia, which is rumored to be a haunted building.

Over the years, there is a continuous trend towards alternative forms of tourism, moving away from the traditional holiday pattern of the “3S” (Robinson, 2015; Chountala et al., 2019). Previous research has indicated that the motivations for visiting dark places are complex and numerous, but the majority of them are related to the tourists’ willingness to get in contact with the macabre (Stone, 2012; Stone, 2018). Motivation is determined by the purpose of the visit and the dark experience is subjective, as each visitor perceives it differently. According to Biran et al. (2011), dark motives are divided into four main categories: (1) the necessity to see something in order to believe it, (2) learning and understanding, (3) the existence of famous tourism attractions and (4) the emotional heritage experience.

Tourists have the desire to visit the dark destinations up close in order to realize and be reassured that horrors and disasters have taken place in human history and that they are not just a simple human invention (Dunkley, 2005; Iliev, 2021). Some additional dominant key motivators that reinforce tourists’ overall attraction towards dark tourism spots are the necessity of an enhanced learning and deeper education on the historical elements of the tourism destination. When a tourist visits a destination, he sets as a main goal to learn the whole history of the site, as he feels that he establishes a closer connection both with the place and the victims (Biran et al., 2011; Iliev et al., 2022). Dark tourism also includes visiting cemeteries of celebrities, while the main motive is the desire of tourists to connect with the dead ones through an invisible spiritual force (Yan et al., 2016).

The reason why tourists visit dark places is not only their general interest in death factor (Biran et al., 2011), but also due to the feeling of an internal responsibility that

they must visit these specific places (Kang et al., 2012). Isaac (2015) asserts remarkable reflections on emotion related to tourism experiences and he places emphasis on the role of emotions related specifically to dark tourism. More specifically, Isaac (2015) stresses out that hedonistic locations are the opposite of dark locations. In the completed research, the approach to emotions varies from extremely positive to extremely negative. A characteristic example is the experience of the excitement of fleeing the scene of a crime. In addition, he supports that emotions are short - lived immediate reactions or a long-term mentality of changing emotions (Isaac, 2015).

In addition, Buda (2015) describes the experience of dark tourism both as emotionally intensive and as a touristic experience that offers an exchange of positive and negative feelings due to the fact that the monuments of dark tourism are thematic places which are characterized as contradictory. This particular element lies in the transition from shadow to light and the opposite as well, which has a direct effect to the tourists' emotions (Buda, 2015).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on primary quantitative data. A structured questionnaire was distributed to Greek tourists. The study investigates the motives and emotions that drive Greek domestic tourists to visit dark tourism attractions. In addition, through this questionnaire, information is collected on the general impression of tourists towards the concept of dark tourism and the accuracy of the representations of the dark tourism sites in relation to the horrific historical events that took place in the past. The research focuses on eight research questions, investigating the importance of the contribution of dark tourism in the sector of Greek tourism development, the popularity of the term, the accuracy and effectiveness of the dark tourism monuments representation in relation to the historically tragic background, the tourists' triggered emotions and motives, the statistically significant correlation among dissonance, motives and emotions and the statistical difference in dissonance, emotions and motives based on the demographics of the tourists.

The research sample of the current quantitative research consists of 181 Greek domestic tourists. It is also noted that the sampling method used is random sampling.

No other specific characteristics, such as gender, age, educational background, occupation, marital status, were considered as criteria for selecting participants for this primary research, since the random sample of respondents consists of people from different age groups and categories.

The research instrument of the current research is a fully structured questionnaire which consists of closed-ended questions. More specifically, the questionnaire consists of four parts. The first part aims at gathering information about the tourists' level of familiarity with the concept of dark tourism and their general knowledge in relation to the effectiveness of alternative tourism and dark tourism in Greece. The second part sets as a goal to collect information about the issue of dissonance in relation to the contemporary representation of the dark tourism monuments of Spinalonga as the Cretan island of the lepers, Genti Koule as the Thessaloniki's prison, Allied Cemeteries Zeitelink as the military cemetery of WWI, Chortiatis Holocaust Memorial as the massacre memorial and Kougki as the legendary fortress in the area of Souli. The particular monuments were chosen due to their historical value, their tragic background and the substantial awareness that they have gained over the years. An informative link was provided for every monument in order to offer the tourists the ability to visit the monuments online, get informed about the historical background and refresh their memories. The third part examines the emotions and motives of tourists that accompany their visit to dark tourism attractions. The last part of the questionnaire investigates the demographic results of the participants.

The research instrument for the formulation and the submission of the questionnaire is the Google Forms Online Platform. The finalized questionnaire was being forwarded to approximately 300 recipients, random sample. Afterwards, an update on the total number of completed questionnaires collected was provided. 181 completed questionnaires were received. These questionnaires were collected over a period of 1,5 month. This fact implies the existence of a response rate of 60.33%, which is considered satisfactory. Once the possibility of collecting further answers was eliminated, the data, i.e. the answers of the participants to the respective questionnaire, were automatically extracted from the Google Forms platform and transferred to the statistical program SPSS (version 23) where the statistical analysis followed. The research type is quantitative as it relies on numerical evidence, while the

methods of analysis chosen in the statistical analysis are on the one hand the descriptive statistics (e.g. frequencies, percentages, cumulative percentage, means and standard deviations) and on the other hand the inferential statistics (e.g. Spearman correlation test and Kruskal-Wallis differentiation test).

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

| | N. | Min. | Max. | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|--|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| How much do you think the development of alternative tourism in Greece attracts a larger number of tourists? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,5470 | 1,15675 |
| How much do you think the development of dark tourism in Greece attracts a larger number of tourists? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,1326 | 1,08222 |
| How much did you know the meaning of dark tourism till now? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,7680 | 1,35453 |
| Valid N. (listwise) | 181 | | | | |

Table 1. General information about dark tourism.

From the information presented on Table 1, based on the research question “How important is considered the contribution of dark tourism in the sector of Greek tourism development?,” we can easily observe that regarding the development of alternative tourism in relation to the number of tourists attracted, the mean is 3,55 which indicates that alternative tourism is considered as moderately important. With reference to the research question “How well-known is dark tourism?” the mean is 2,77 underlying that dark tourism is slightly satisfyingly known.

| | N. | Min. | Max. | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| How effective do you consider the nowadays representation of the historical monument of Spinalonga in relation to its historical background? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,4088 | 1,01035 |
| How effective do you consider the nowadays representation of the historical monument of Genti Koule in relation to its historical background? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,2320 | 1,00624 |
| How effective do you consider the nowadays representation of the historical monument of Allied Cemeteries Zeitenlik in relation to its historical background? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,1823 | 1,09286 |
| How effective do you consider the nowadays representation of the historical monument of Chortiatis Holocaust Memorial in relation to its historical background? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,9282 | 1,09053 |
| How effective do you consider the nowadays representation of the historical monument of Kougki in relation to its historical background? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,8453 | 1,03190 |
| Valid N. (listwise) | 181 | | | | |

Table 2. Effective representation of dark tourism monuments.

From Table 2 we are investigating “Which dark tourism monument is represented more accurately and which one is represented less accurately? The monument which exhibits the highest mean as the most effective representative to its historical background is that of Spinalonga ($M=3,41$), while the one which exhibits the lowest mean and is perceived as the less representative is the monument of Kougki ($M=2,85$).

| | N. | Min. | Max. | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|--|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| To what extent do you consider that the nowadays representation of the historical monuments of dark tourism in Greece, highlights the dynamics of the historical events? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,9337 | 0,99779 |
| To what extent do you consider that the modern representation of the historical monuments of dark tourism in Greece, reflects the horrific events that took place in the past? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,8895 | 1,03223 |
| Valid N. (listwise) | 181 | | | | |

Table 3. General efficient representations.

Table 3 provides us with the answer to the research question “Are the dark tourism monuments in Greece represented efficiently given their historically tragic background?” The nowadays representation of the historical monuments of dark tourism in Greece according to the degree in which it highlights the dynamics of the historical events, presents the highest mean score ($M=2,93$) in comparison with the efficiency of the modern representation of the historical monuments of dark tourism in Greece, according to the level it reflects the horrific events that took place in the past, which presents the lowest mean score ($M=2,89$).

| | N. | Min. | Max. | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| To what extent do you feel sadness while visiting historical monuments of dark tourism? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,7403 | 1,09239 |
| To what extent do you feel amazement while visiting historical monuments of the dark tourism? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,2376 | 1,10751 |
| To what extent do you feel despair while visiting historical monuments of dark tourism? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,2044 | 1,09402 |
| To what extent do you feel excitement while visiting historical monuments of dark tourism? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,2044 | 1,09908 |
| To what extent do you feel fear while visiting historical monuments of dark tourism? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,8785 | 1,16267 |
| Valid N. (listwise) | 181 | | | | |

Table 4. Emotions.

Table 4 investigates the research question “What is the emotion that triggers mostly the tourists and which is the one that triggers them less?” More specifically, sadness is the emotion with the highest mean ($M=3,74$) while fear is the one with the lowest mean ($M=2,88$).

| | N. | Min. | Max. | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| To what extent are you willing to visit historical monuments of dark tourism as a result of being interested in tragic historical events? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,5193 | 1,10851 |
| To what extent are you willing to visit historical monuments of dark tourism, considering dark tourism as the same with the other types of tourism that all constitute your tourism experience? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,3646 | 1,10538 |
| To what extent are you willing to visit historical monuments of dark tourism, considering dark tourism as an alternative type of tourism? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,1547 | 1,14423 |
| To what extent are you willing to visit historical monuments of dark tourism as a necessity to get acquainted with death? | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,6298 | 1,20692 |
| Valid N. (listwise) | 181 | | | | |

Table 5. Motives.

Table 5 provides an answer regarding the research question, “Which is the most powerful motive that drives tourists to visit dark tourism attractions and which is the less powerful one?” More specifically, the most powerful motive for visiting dark tourism monuments with the highest mean, is the interest on tragic historical events ($M=3,52$) and the less powerful one with the lowest mean is the necessity to get acquainted with death ($M=2,63$).

In order to answer the final research questions, the construction of the three variables is obligatory: Dissonance, Emotions and Motives. In order to examine whether we are capable of constructing these variables of these specific questions we

proceeded to Cronbach Alpha reliability test. The results of the Cronbach Alpha reliability test are presented on the following Table (6).

| | | Number of Questions Involved | Cronbach Alpha |
|---------|------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Variabl | Dissonance | 2 | 0,834 |
| | Emotions | 5 | 0,729 |
| | Motives | 4 | 0,762 |

Table 6. Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test Results.

In all the three cases the results of Cronbach Alpha are accepted which indicates high level of reliability. Afterwards, the construction of the three variables follows, by using the “Compute Variable” option that is given by SPSS. To the following Table (7), the descriptive statistics of each variable are presented.

| | N. | Min. | Max. | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|--------|-----------|
| Dissonance | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 2,9116 | 0,94011 |
| Emotions | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,2530 | 0,76960 |
| Motives | 181 | 1,00 | 5,00 | 3,1671 | 0,87244 |
| Valid N. (listwise) | 181 | | | | |

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of the three variables.

Finally, in order to decide whether to conduct parametric or non-parametric statistical tests to the above-constructed variables, it needs to be examined if they are following normal distribution or not. This is examined by Shapiro-Wilk test, due to the fact that the research sample consists of less than 1.000 participants. The results are (Table 8):

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a | | | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----|-------|--------------|-----|-------|
| | Statistic | Df | Sig. | Statistic | Df | Sig. |
| Dissonance | 0,164 | 181 | 0,000 | 0,955 | 181 | 0,000 |
| Emotions | 0,128 | 181 | 0,000 | 0,966 | 181 | 0,000 |
| Motives | 0,131 | 181 | 0,000 | 0,969 | 181 | 0,000 |
| a. Lilliefors Significance Correction | | | | | | |

Table 8. Tests of Normality.

Due to the fact that sig. <0,05 in all the three examined variables, the distribution is not normal. Therefore, it is obligatory to conduct non-parametric statistical tests.

To proceed, the main goal is to determine if there is a statistically significant correlation among the three variables. As a result, the Spearman's correlation test needs to be conducted. The results are presented below (Table 9):

| | | | Dissonance | Emotions | Motives |
|--|------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Spearman's rho | Dissonance | Correlation Coefficient | . | 0,374** | 0,357** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | 0,000 | 0,000 |
| | | N. | . | 181 | 181 |
| | Emotions | Correlation Coefficient | . | . | 0,594** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | . | 0,000 |
| | | N. | . | . | 181 |
| **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | |

Table 9. Correlations.

At this point, the research question "Is there a statistically significant correlation among dissonance, motives and emotions?" is answered. Due to the fact that sig.<0,05 in all the combinations of the three variables, the following three statistically significant correlations are analyzed using the t-test analysis:

1. Dissonance - Emotions: There is a positive and statistically significant correlation (sig.<0,05) between dissonance and emotions, which has low dynamics (0,374). The positive correlation indicates that as the dissonance increases the emotions are more intense.

2. Dissonance - Motives: There is a positive and statistically significant correlation (sig.<0,05) between dissonance and motives, which has low dynamics (0,357). The positive correlation signifies that as the dissonance increases the motives are higher.

3. Motives - Emotions: There is a positive and statistically significant correlation (sig.<0,05) between emotions and motives, which has moderate dynamics (0,594). The positive correlation means that as the tourists' motives increase, the emotions are higher, or similarly, as the emotions increase the motives are higher as well.

Moving on, in order to investigate the answer to the research question: “Is there any statistical difference in dissonance, emotions and motives based on the demographics of the tourists?” The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test is conducted. At this point, it needs to be justified that this test was firstly conducted for all the demographic information gathered from the research sample (gender, age, education, occupation and marital status) for all the three variables (dissonance, emotions, and motives). The only demographic characteristic that showed a statistically significant differentiation was the marital status. The results of that specific demographic characteristic are the following ones:

| | Dissonance | Emotions | Motives |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Chi-Square | 10,466 | 17,412 | 5,831 |
| Df | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Asymp. Sig. | 0,063 | 0,004 | 0,323 |
| a. Kruskal Wallis Test | | | |
| b. Grouping Variable: Marital status | | | |

Table 10. Test Statistics.^{a,b}

Based on the results gathered from Table 10, there is now the ability to answer the last research question, declaring that the variable in which there is a statistically significant differentiation in the answers of the participants based on their marital status, is that of the emotions (sig.<0,05). The following Table demonstrates these differentiations.

| | Marital status | N. | Mean Rank |
|----------|---------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Emotions | Married, without children | 9 | 95,44 |
| | Married, with children | 35 | 97,21 |
| | Unmarried | 89 | 91,14 |
| | Divorced | 19 | 107,29 |
| | Widowed | 4 | 150,25 |
| | Other | 25 | 58,34 |
| | Total | 181 | |

Table 11. Ranks.

Table 11 exhibits that among all, firstly the widowed tourists and secondly the divorced ones tend to experience the most intense emotions while visiting dark tourism spots of interest, in relation to tourists who are part of the rest of the marital or non-marital categories. Mostly, these two categories of people are emotionally more sensitive and have the tendency to get more affected by monuments related to death and tragedy.

5. DISCUSSION

Dark tourism is not differentiated from the rest alternative and non-alternative types of tourism that all constitute the tourism experience, despite the fact that it is obviously a type less known to the touristic audience. The significant finding of the statistically significant correlation among dissonance, motives and emotions underlines that the nowadays representation of the dark tourism monuments, given its historical and tragic background, is effective enough as it exerts a significant impact on the tension of the feelings of the tourists, affects greatly their motives, while with the increase of tourists' motives, emotions are also higher and vice versa.

Taking under consideration the equally substantial finding regarding the differentiated emotional experience exhibited by the widowed and the divorced visitors, it is important to mention that this is a well-explicable finding. More analytically, we tend to consider as normal some deeper emotional behaviors of people who have experienced the death of their beloved ones or a loss. Mostly, these two categories of people are emotionally more sensitive and have the tendency to get more affected by monuments related to death and tragedy.

Based on the fact that limited research has been made so far on the topic of dark tourism and the determining role of the tourism sector in the Greek economy, this is the reason why we need to elaborate on these two findings that are characterized by significance. Furthermore, emotions have a statistically significant and positive correlation with motives and both of them, with the variable of dissonance, as it was mentioned before.

An average level on the motives chosen by the participants as driving forces to visit dark tourism monuments is observed, with the interest in tragic historical events being

the most powerful one and the necessity to get acquainted with death being the weakest motive of all. The previously suggested motive of interest is similar to the term of “learning” which is used as a motive by Biran et al. (2011) and the term “education” which is used as a possible motive from Kang et al. (2012). The historic interest is also mentioned by Rittichainuwat (2008) who has also suggested the willingness of the tourists to come closer to death while they are alive, a statement with which we do not agree based on our results, as it turned out to be the weakest motive. Moreover, the particular finding is also coming in agreement with Stone (2018) who pointed out the historical interest as well. As a result, is it necessary to propose the investigation and elaboration on the matter of the effect that tourists’ life changing personal experiences exert on their motivations, emotions and tourism preferences for visiting as well.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Finally, after performing the statistical analysis, we concluded that dark tourism is considered to a moderate degree as equivalent to the other types of tourism and as an alternative type of tourism, while it also affects the overall development of the tourism sector in Greece with the mediating effect of eWOM (Fotiadis et al., 2021; Gritzali et al., 2019). This is a surprising finding, given that dark tourism is not perceived as quite popular type of tourism, since it was noticed that tourists were not familiar enough with this sector before providing its definition in the beginning of the questionnaire.

As to the results collected in regard to the present representation of the monuments of dark tourism in Greece, it seems to be moderately effective. This fact applies to all five Greek monuments of dark tourism that participated in the research, with Spinalonga perceived as the most effective in terms of its historical background and the monument of Kougki perceived as the least effective in terms of representation. Through a more holistic approach, the Greek monuments of dark tourism are less to moderately represented, both in terms of their historical gravity and their tragic dimension. This is a very significant factor as it simultaneously has a positive and statistically significant correlation with tourists’ emotions and their general motives when it comes to their decision to visit these monuments. In other words, if the dissonance is moderate, the emotions and motives will also be moderate. In this case,

we propose to maximize the quality of the content offered and create a more emblematic representation of the monuments of dark tourism in Greece that conveys and captures the horrific historical events in order to increase tourists' motives and reasons for visiting, and provide a more intense and meaningful emotional experience.

The overall picture of emotions is at an average level, with the exception of sadness, which was the only emotion felt at a higher level. Fear, on the other hand, recorded a lower to average level of emotion as it was the emotion experienced by the tourists in the least tension. Looking at the results of the primary research, we can easily see that both categories of emotions, i.e. positive (amazement, excitement) and negative (sadness, fear, despair), showed the same average level of emotion.

The same picture emerges from the results on tourists' motives. To be more precise, we observed an average level in the motives chosen by the participants as driving forces for visiting dark tourist monuments, where interest in tragic historical events was the strongest and the need to get acquainted with death was the weakest motive of all.

The fact is that people who have previously experienced negative, pessimistic and heartbreaking events in their personal lives, such as the death of a loved one (widowed) or their loss (divorced), have gone through a rather intense emotional situation and experience stronger emotions when visiting dark tourist monuments. It is also worth mentioning that this discovery gives us the opportunity to propose a further research on this topic. As a result, we need to propose the study and elaboration of what influence tourists' life - changing personal experiences exert on their motivations and involvement (Priporas et al., 2022), emotions and tourist preferences for visiting.

We must also point out that regardless of the fact that the size of the research sample is a limiting factor for the generalization of the results to the entire tourism sector; however, the results do not lack significance and reliability and remain highly relevant.

As a result, it is proposed to conduct a corresponding research with the present one based on a larger research sample. The same research is proposed, characterized in a larger scale, which can be carried out by the officially responsible bodies working in the tourism industry. The results of this research will be generalized for the whole tourism industry and in this way will satisfy the research gaps resulting from our own limited current research. Future studies could expand the present research with the

use of prescriptive statistics and enrich their results with factor and cluster analysis of the already tested components.

Finally, since the positive and statistically significant correlation of tourists' feelings and motivations with the variable of dissonance has been demonstrated, it means that if the projection and promotion of dark tourism monuments in Greece is improved, tourists' feelings and motivations towards the specific monuments will be also more intense. Therefore, it is proposed to improve the means of marketing and promotion in the presentation of these monuments. It is suggested that the specific authorities responsible for the marketing strategies must incorporate effective methods to attract the attention of tourists and arouse their emotions, with the ultimate goal of maximizing their willingness to visit these monuments.

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