Chapter 42
Fifty Shades of Dark Stories

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ABSTRACT

Dark tourism is a special type of tourism that involves visits to tourist attractions and destinations that are associated with death, suffering, disasters, and tragedies. Reasons and motives for the visit are varied, such as curiosity, learning, memory, horror, survival guilt, nostalgia, and empathy. Dark tourism in Slovenia is very poorly developed compared to the rest of the world. Therefore, the chapter proposes a typology of dark tourism heritage in the world and in Slovenia. The research based on in-depth analysis of literature and fieldwork gives a variety of new opportunities based on storytelling for development of future dark tourism products in Slovenia with emphasis on the design of a dark and innovative thematic trail in connection with witchcraft.

INTRODUCTION

Dark tourism is a special type of tourism, which involves visits to tourist attractions and destinations that are associated with death, suffering, disasters and tragedies venues.

Visiting dark tourist destinations in the world is the phenomenon of the twenty-first century, but also has a very long heritage. Number of visitors of war areas, scenes of accidents, tragedies, disasters, places connected with ghosts, paranormal activities, witches and witchhunt trials, cursed places, is rising steeply. Reasons and motives for the visit are varied. Dark tourism has been recognised as a distinctive tourism phenomenon of the twenty-first century, with increasingly significant numbers of visitors and tourists going to dark tourism attractions and sites, new dark tourism products and attractions emerging, and modern global communication media generating interest in dark tourism attractions, while at the same time affecting the image of destinations. The phenomenon of dark tourism has been examined in academia from the mid-1990s. Since then, study of this phenomenon has increased, and the scales of relevant studies have been enlarged.

Dark tourism in Slovenia is very poorly developed comparing to the world and it is mostly limited only on tourist sites connected with both wars. Therefore the theme is a novelty in Slovenia, as well as in Slovenian professional and scientific literature where is almost unknown.

The main purpose of this article is to explore the current situation of dark tourism and propose a typology of dark tourism in the world and in Slovenia, which should serve as a basis for further efforts in the design of a new dark tourism products based on the dark heritage in Slovenia and other countries, as shown below in the case of witchcraft.

The research is based on in-depth analysis of literature and fieldwork in Slovenia which contains the method of unstructured interviews with curators in Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Museum of Ribnica and Celje Regional Museum as well as the method of observation with participation in a guided tour through the exhibition at Ljubljana Castle: The Barbarism of Torture.

BACKGROUND

The term dark tourism was coined by Foley and Lennon (1996: 198) to describe the attraction of visitors to tourism sites associated with death, disaster, and depravity. Other notable definitions of dark tourism include the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre (Stone, 2006: 146), and as visitations to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred and that continue to impact our lives (Tarlow, 2005: 48). Scholars have further developed and applied alternative terminology in dealing with such travel and visitation, including thanatourism (Seaton, 1996), black spot tourism (Rojek, 1993), atrocity heritage tourism (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996), and morbid tourism (Blom, 2000). In a context similar to »dark tourism«, terms like »macabre tourism«, »tourism of mourning« and »dark heritage tourism« are also in use. Among these terms, dark tourism remains the most widely applied in academic research (Sharpley, 2009).

The concept of dark tourism is in contrast to marketing slogans that prefer the broader promotional aspect and call this type of tourism »historic tourism«. Major encyclopedias of tourism identify »dark tourism« also as »thanatourism«, in which the core meaning of the term relates mostly to visits to the tombs, cemeteries and memorials of prominent people (Gosar, 2015a).

Although this is a newer type of specialized tourism, researchers can speak as one of the oldest types of tourism, because death is historically always attracted human inquisitiveness. Some kind of organized »thanato tourism« were already gladiator games in the Coliseum of ancient Rome (Gosar, 2015b). Popular festivals in the past have been a public hanging, beheading and burning of witches. Walking and paid visits to the battlefield at Waterloo in Belgium, the place of Napoleon's last battle between the English nobility had been ongoing since the time of the battle in 1815. Therefore the kind of dark tourism has a very long heritage.

Dark tourism relates to tourist travel, which interprets the heritage through tragedies and conflicts and is raising awareness of dark historical realities, or the heritage of it (Stone, 2013). The central research centre for dark tourism is located at the University of Central Lancashire, in England. The Institute for Dark Tourism Research (iDTR) is led by Dr. Philip Stone. According to iDTR, the main contours of dark tourism destinations are to be found in three groups of geographically expressed areas: destination of the death, burial, and/or the tragedies of celebrities, destinations of great battles and falling soldiers, destinations of collective suffering and death.

Visiting such sites can play a significant part in a tourist's experiences, and in turn, that there will most probably be anxiety about the development of these sites as tourist attractions (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005; Ryan, 2007; Sharpley & Stone, 2009; Wilson, 2008). These concomitant aspects of dark

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