

# THE MAGIC OF DARK TOURISM

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## *Abstract:*

*The dark tourism is a form of tourism that is not unanimously accepted by the whole society, but in spite of this fact, the practitioners of dark tourism is a viable segment. Indeed the concept that defines dark tourism is none other than death, and perhaps this is why it will always be a segment that will not be attracted by this form of tourism. Many questions about dark tourism arise. Among them: (1) is dark tourism an area of science attractive for researches? (2) which is the typology of dark tourism? (3) what are the motivating factors that determine practicing dark tourism? This paper provides a detailed analysis of publication behaviour in the field of dark tourism. The article also includes the main results obtained by achieving a quantitative marketing research among students of Sfântu Gheorghe University Extension in order to know their opinion, attitude towards dark tourism.*

*Keywords: dark tourism, publishing behaviour, destinations/attractions, segmentation, motivations*

## **Introduction**

According to Constantinescu and Nistorescu, tourist destination itself can be seen as a complex tourism product “characterized by various types of attractions, products and services which are combined in various ways according to each tourist’s preferences and with the final scope of enjoying a pleasant experience” (Constantinescu and Nistorescu, 2013, p. 58).

Research in tourism show that in identifying those elements that determine the attractiveness of a region is a key factor for knowing those aspects that encourage people to travel. (Gârbea, 2014, p. 84).

The level of attractiveness of a region can be also given by the tragic events that occurred on the territory of the tourist destination whatever the time of their occurrence. This assertion is supported by the occurrence of the phenomenon that is known in the literature as Dark Tourism.

Dark Tourism is a controversial form of tourism. This form of tourism includes destinations/attractions that have a direct connection to death, natural disasters or any other tragic event. Although, the notion of dark tourism has recently been introduced in the literature, the practice of this form of tourism has a tumultuous history. It is enough to mention execution of gladiators that were common events according to the rules defining the society of that epoch or the historical novel *Quo vadis?* (Where are you going?) written by Henry Sienkiewicz, for which in 1905 he received the Nobel Prize. According to "The Dark Tourism Forum" the notion of "dark tourism" appeared in 1990 and was introduced in the specialized literature by the professors John Lennon and Malcolm Foley from Glasgow Caledonian University (Niemelä, 2010).

In the literature related to dark tourism notions such as:

- thanatan tourism (Thanatos in Greek means the passing/death), Knudsen is convinced that “thanatourists are interested in feeling alive and feeling the past: but they also want to relate to the difficult past and not least to its victim” (Knudsen, 2011, p.69)

- disaster tourism,
- morbid tourism,

Blom (2000) sees a strong connection between morbid tourism and myth tourism.

- phoenix tourism,
- dark spot tourism,
- grief tourism (Stone, 2005, in: Niemelä, 2010) are also used.

Bowman and Pezzullo (2010) believe that due to the negative connotations, it is time that 'dark tourism' to disappear from the literature

Analyzing the events that occurred lately internationally, we can say that dark tourism has become a global phenomenon, therefore the number of places that support dark tourism is a high one. But, there are few destinations/attractions in the world that undoubtedly will remain among the most frequented tourist destinations that support dark tourism. These include: Pripjaty (Chernobyl), Auschwitz, Toul Sleng Museum, London Dungeon, Vezuv, Bezidu Nou, Nanjing, Hiroshima, Ruanda Murambi. (Árbócz, 2011).

The objectives of this paper are:

- capturing those items, based on the specialized literature, defining dark tourism,

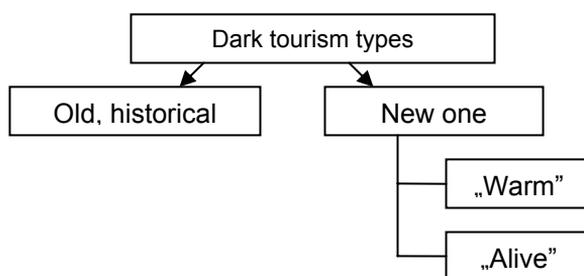
- presentation of the results of the quantitative marketing research conducted among students from Sfantu Gheorghe University Extension, Department of Business Administration.

- to identify the:
  - number of articles/pages published in the field of dark tourism in the period analyzed. The period of analysis is 1984-2013.
  - publishing behaviour of those authors who believe that dark tourism is a research topic more than interesting by gender,
  - level of interest for dark tourism in the years included in this analysis.

### Current state of the research

According to Tarlow, tragedies have a remarkable influence on our lives, not only emotionally, but also socially and politically (Tarlow, 2005 in: Novelli).

Dark Tourism, in Palanca's conception, means nothing but visiting those places that have been devastated by natural disasters without any charitable intent. In the last two decades, according to the author, the literature has outlined two major forms of dark tourism (Figure no. 1) (Palanca, 2012).



**Figure 1. Typology of dark tourism**

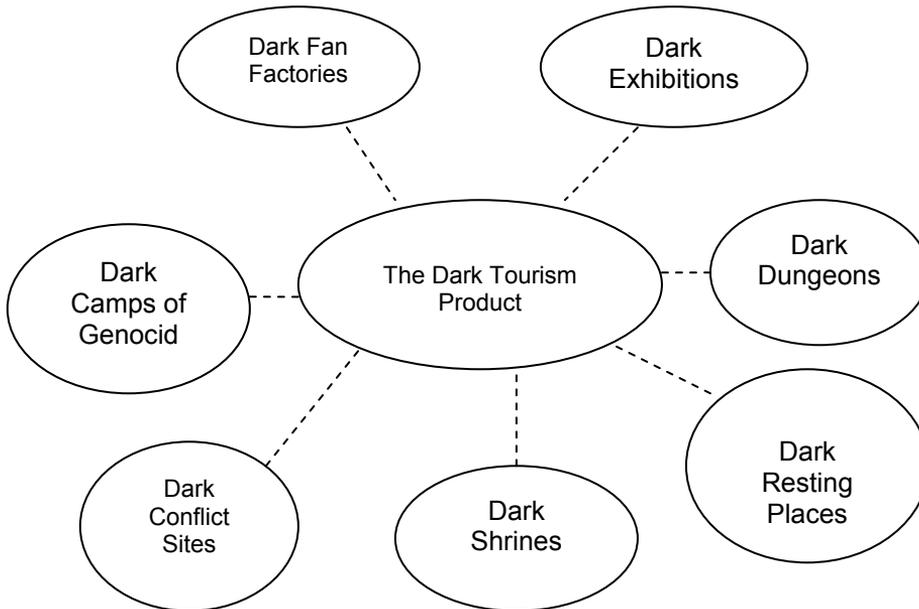
Source: Palanca, *What is in fact dark tourism*, 2012, p.23

The first category of dark tourism (the old, historical one) reflects both

piety trips, such as the pilgrimage and the trips whose main motivation is

curiosity. Visiting these historic places firstly means the desire to dedicate to some feelings such as thrill, also the need to accumulate as much information, to enrich the volume of knowledge plays an important role among motivational factors. The difference between "warm" and "live" dark tourism comes from the fact that the tourist is present at the time of the disaster or visits destination in a time

closest to the time of the disaster (Palančsa, 2012, p. 23). Based on the information reported by Stone (2006), another prominent author in the field of dark tourism, in his article entitled "A Dark Tourism Spectrum: towards a typology of death and macabre related tourist sites, attractions and exhibitions" identifies forms by which dark tourism is manifesting. (Figure no. 2).



**Figure 2. The Dark Tourism Product**

*Source: Stone, A Dark Tourism Spectrum: towards a typology of death and macabre related tourist sites, attractions and exhibitions, 2006, pp.153-157*

According to Tarlow, there are four basic emotions that have a remarkable influence on the psychology of those who practice dark tourism: uncertainty, gratitude, respect, the feeling of superiority (Tarlow, 2005 in: Novelli).

Palančsa identifies the types of tourists who, in his opinion, may be classified as dark tourism practitioners. Among these are:

- The segment of so called off-beat. This segment includes tourists who break any relationship with tradition, model for them is not the everyday man. Usually part of the younger generation, they are very

energetic and exhibitionist. For them, the danger is something very appealing.

- Explorers - are "second age" tourists who have a good financial situation, who want to know new things, to venture.

- The segment of the so called allocentrics - their group has a keen interest to new destinations, they are attracted by everything that have to do with risk. They want to live original/unusual experiments.

- According to the specific characteristics that define dark tourism in the Euro-style pattern, dark tourism

advocates are part of the young tourist group. (Palancsa, 2012, p. 25)

According to the authors Biran and Hyde dark tourism looks beyond individual experience, this form of tourism has become an undeniable socio-cultural phenomenon. (Biran and Hyde, 2013)

Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are no statistics on the number of tourists in the dark tourism. In order to understand the motivational system of those people who visit a destination/attraction that has to do with dark tourism, the design of marketing research is inevitable. In this regard, both qualitative and quantitative marketing research can be made.

Because of the fact that according to the place of origin of dark tourism practitioners, tourism is divided into national tourism and international tourism, special attention should be given to designing the questionnaire. A major problem in the design-completion of questionnaire is given by the risk of losing the content of questions with translation.

There are two methods for the content of the variables that make up the questionnaire remain the same: retranslation or parallel retranslation (Malhotra, 2005).

According to Stone "dark tourism as a distinct focus of pedagogy is being increasingly delivered in colleges and universities across the globe, as well as being a popular choice for postgraduate independent study." (Stone, 2011a)

Next the main results of two marketing research conducted in Zagreb (Bittner), Budapest (Niemelä) shall be presented.

(1). Thanatological attractions: From December 2010 to January 2011 qualitative marketing research was conducted by Bittner in Zagreb. More specifically, the semi-structured depth interview was used. From the research conducted it was found that thanatological attractions are part of the culture of that destination and is actually

an important historical legacy. It was also observed that experiences gathered during the visit varies by type of attraction or by the amount of information accumulated before the visit (Bittner, 2011).

(2). House of Terror Museum: The purpose of this quantitative research conducted in 2009 by Niemelä was to identify motivational factors, namely knowledge of the views, among those tourists who visited the House of Terror in Hungary. It should be noted that this research included only tourists who practice international tourism. Questionnaires were completed by 54 travellers. Among the reasons that have led respondents to visit the House of Terror include: knowledge of history for the place, respect for those who perished in the Second World War, House of Terror is a tourist attraction known among dark tourism practitioners, leisure, House of Terror is an important part of Hungarian history. (Niemelä, 2010).

Researchers increased interest in Dark Tourism, in Stone's opinion, is extremely useful as this will lead to "an examination of the contemporary commodification of death." (Stone, 2011b, p. 329).

## **Research methodology**

This research used:

(1) The quantitative marketing research among students of Sfântu Gheorghe University Extension in order to know their opinion, attitude towards dark tourism

- The survey was the method of obtaining primary data being based on the questionnaire. Specifically, face to face survey was used inside the Department of Business Administration.

- Among the main types of scales are: the ordinal scale that enables ranking of investigated alternatives according to a certain criterion, Likert's scale is used especially for the study of respondents opinion and the nominal scale.

## (2) Content analysis

- The research included those articles that contain in the title or among the keywords or content dark tourism, thanatan tourism, disaster tourism, morbid tourism, phoenix tourism, dark spot tourism, grief tourism concepts which have been published in the period 1984-2013. These articles were identified using the search engine Google Scholar. Having identified the articles, a list of those journals among which dark tourism is a topic of interest was drafted.

(1) Knowledge the opinion, attitude of students from Sfantu Gheorghe towards dark tourism:

- The quantitative marketing research was conducted among students in year one, two and three from Sfantu Gheorghe University Extension, Department of Business Administration.

- The quantitative marketing research included all students who participated in a course or seminar in the first semester of academic year 2013-2014.

- It should be noted that the questionnaires were responded only by students who were willing to be included in this research.

- A total of 47 questionnaires have been included in this research.

After processing the raw data obtained, it was noticed that the share of those who had heard of the existence of dark tourism was considerably higher (80.9%) compared with the share of those who have not heard of this form of tourism (19.1%).

According to respondents, dark tourism practitioners are those who want to know the past, are curious, want to accumulate a vast amount of knowledge/to improve their general culture, are attracted by new places, are brave, want to evoke the events occurred, are seekers of thrill.

From primary data analysis it was found that 87.2% of respondents want to visit destinations/attractions related to dark tourism, while 12.8% of respondents do not feel any attraction to this form of tourism.

Respondents were asked to order the destinations/attractions depending on their level of attraction. Table no. 1 contains the average score for each tourist destination/attraction that supports dark tourism.

**Table 1****Ordering answer variants - Descriptive Statistics**

Destinations/attractions	Mean	Destinations/attractions	Mean
Auschwitz (1)	3.30	House of Terror Museum (7)	6.26
Pompeii (2)	4.48	Bezidu Nou (8)	7.13
Hiroshima (3)	4.74	Ruanda Murambi (9)	7.98
Ground Zero (4)	4.98	Nanjing (10)	8.20
London Dungeon (5)	5.11	Tuol Sleng Museum (11)	8.80
Chernobyl (6)	5.30		

From the results obtained for the analyzed variable it is noted that "Auschwitz" takes the first place as a tourist destination related dark tourism

where those included in the research want to make a trip. "Pompeii" is ranked the second, "Hiroshima" no. 3, "Ground

Zero" 4<sup>th</sup> place and "London Dungeon" is ranked no. 5.

It can be seen that the difference between the variant ranked 1<sup>st</sup> and the one located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> place is quite large, but we cannot make any judgment on this distance since the ordinal scale gives us no clues about the distance between values, only contributing to the creation of a hierarchy (Constantin, 2006, p. 97).

In order to further deepen the analysis undertaken, the U test was applied in order to determine if there are significant differences between respondents gender in ordering those destinations/attractions where they want to visit in the near future and which support tourism dark. The results obtained from the application of U test (Table no. 2 and 3) are shown in the following table.

**Table 2****The values of U test - Test Statistics**

	(4)	(6)	(1)	(8)	(3)	(10)
Mann – Whitney U	181.500	150.000	229.000	129.500	228.500	197.000
Wilcoxon W	334.500	303.000	664.000	564.500	381.500	350.000
Z	-1.488	-2.227	-.410	-2.687	-.416	-
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.137	.026	.681	.007	.678	.253

**Table 3****The values of U test - Test Statistics**

	(5)	(2)	(9)	(11)	(7)
Mann – Whitney U	239.500	231.000	207.000	185.000	191.500
Wilcoxon W	674.500	384.000	360.000	620.000	626.500
Z	-.161	-.356	-.909	-1.419	-1.259
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.872	.722	.363	.156	.208

It can be noticed that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is less than .05 in only two cases. Consequently there are significant differences between respondents gender and ordering those destinations/attractions that respondents want to visit in the near future only with Chernobyl and Bezidu Nou.

Among the reasons determining the respondents to visit such locations are: cultural recreation (18.4%), respect for those who perished (13.2%),

accumulation of information (63.2%), the need for travel (2.6%) and curiosity (2.6%).

The question that arose during raw data analysis was whether there are significant differences between the two groups, consisting of the respondents' gender in the population studied on the claim that dark tourism will enjoy increasing popularity in the future.

Table no. 4 contains values calculated for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 4

## The calculated values for Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

	„In the near future dark tourism will enjoy a high popularity.”
Most Extreme Differences Absolute	.041
Positive	.041
Negative	-.029
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.136
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000

According to the data obtained (Table no. 4) we cannot conclude that there are significant differences between respondents' gender and the claim that dark tourism will experience a high popularity in the near future.

(2) Dark tourism was and is the central theme of several scientific articles that have been published in prestigious journals including:

- Annals of Tourism Research,
- Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research,
- Asian Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research,
- Current Issues in Tourism,
- e-Review of Tourism Research,
- International Journal of Tourism Anthropology,
- International Journal of Culture and Hospitality Research,
- International Journal of Heritage Studies,
- International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration
- International Journal of Tourism Research,
- International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education
- Journal of Heritage Tourism,
- Journal of Hospitality and Tourism,

- Journal of Research for Consumers,
- Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change
- Journal of Unconventional Parks, Tourism & Recreation Research,
- Journal of Vocation Marketing,
- Leisure Studies,
- Managing Leisure,
- Norwegian Journal of Geography,
- Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences,
- Public Archaeology,
- Social and Cultural Geography,
- Tourism Management,
- Tourism Recreation Research,
- Tourism: An Interdisciplinary International Journal,
- Tourist Studies.

According to the results presented in the table no. 5 it can be seen that:

- the total number of researchers who published articles in the field of dark tourism is 106 in the period analyzed,
- the number of those researchers who are attracted by dark tourism belonging to male gender is higher (63) as compared to the number of those belonging to the fair gender (43).

**Table 5****Table of frequencies**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	63	59.4	59.4	59.4
	Female	43	40.6	40.6	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	

Further the number of articles published in the field of dark tourism shall be presented in relation to the number of authors who contributed to these publications.

**Table 6****Table of frequencies**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sole author (1)	38	33.3	33.3	33.3
	With a co-author (2)	46	40.4	40.4	73.7
	With two co-authors (3)	15	13.2	13.2	86.8
	With three co-authors (4)	4	3.5	3.5	90.4
	With four co-authors (5)	5	4.4	4.4	94.7
	With five co-authors (6)	6	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	114	100.0	100.0	

After processing the data (Table no. 6), it was found that the share of those authors who have published articles with a co-author is the highest (40.4%), followed by publications written individually (33.3%).

The share of articles that were published from collaboration between

two co- authors is 13.2%. The results of investigation of those characteristics, traits that define dark tourism have been published in collaboration with four co-authors in a share of 4.4%. The share of those articles that were made after collaboration between five authors is 5.3%.

Table 7

## Contingency table based on absolute frequencies and shares

		The typology of the articles depending on the number of authors that contributed to the publications					Total	
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		(6)
Gender	Count	21	31	6	4	2	4	68
	% within Gender	30.9%	45.6%	8.8%	5.9%	2.9%	5.9%	100.0%
	% within Type	55.3%	67.4%	40.0%	100.0%	40.0%	66.7%	59.6%
	% of T.	18.4%	27.2%	5.3%	3.5%	1.8%	3.5%	59.6%
	Count	17	15	9	0	3	2	46
Female	% within Gender	37.0%	32.6%	19.6%	.0%	6.5%	4.3%	100.0%
	% within Type	44.7%	32.6%	60.0%	.0%	60.0%	33.3%	40.4%
	% of T.	14.9%	13.2%	7.9%	.0%	2.6%	1.8%	40.4%
	Count	38	46	15	4	5	6	114
	% within Gender	33.3%	40.4%	13.2%	3.5%	4.4%	5.3%	100.0%
Total	% within Type	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of T.	33.3%	40.4%	13.2%	3.5%	4.4%	5.3%	100.0%

T. = Total

Inside the table no. 7 we can see that of the total sample, the share of those authors who have individually published the results with dark tourism and belong to male gender is 18.4%.

If with men the highest share (27.2%) is for articles published with a co-author, with women the highest share was recorded in the sole publications (14.9%). But the share of

female authors of articles published with two co-authors (7.9%) and four co-authors (2.6%) is higher than for men.

The following table (Table no. 8) contains the:

- total number of pages published,
- amplitude of the values of the variable,
- minimum value of the variable,
- maximum value of the variable.

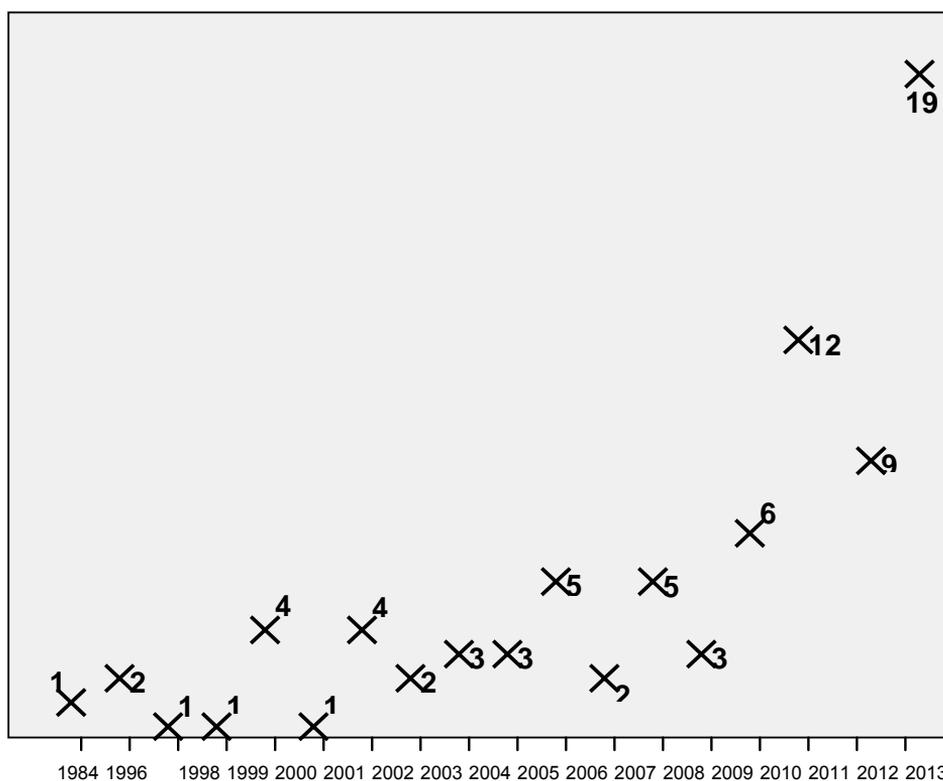
**Table 8****Descriptive statistics**

Number of page	Range	Min.	Max.
1,224	31	3	34

The authors included in the analysis have written in total 1,224 pages. The minimum recorded number being 3 pages while the maximum number is of 34 pages. An amplitude of 31 pages is realized, as the difference between maximum and minimum value. It should be noted that this analysis

includes only those articles that had minimum 3 pages.

The chart below (Figure no. 3) shows that 2013 is located on the first place (19 articles) in terms of the number of articles published in the field of dark tourism. The year 2011 is ranked second (12 articles) and 2012 third place (9 articles).

**Figure 3. Frequency distribution**

Source: SPSS – based on the secondary data introduced

## Conclusions

First of all, it should be mentioned the fact that this research has some limits, among which:

- articles/papers published in the mentioned journals have only been included in the analysis so there is the possibility that are also articles published in field of dark tourism in other journals, with a reduced horizon.

- those papers that have been published as books or those articles which were published in a language other than English, i.e. those that have been presented in seminars/conferences, were not included.

According to the results obtained, it was found that:

(1) Dark Tourism enjoys popularity increasingly higher among authors who publish scientific articles. Men are attracted to dark magic tourism to a greater extent than women. It should also be noted that the behaviour of publication with dark tourism is different for men compared with the publishing behaviour of authors who belong to the fair gender.

(2) Dark Tourism is a complex form of tourism because it takes specific characteristics of cultural tourism, educational tourism, noting that dark tourism practitioners are attracted to places where natural disasters, tragedies, massacres, executions or eccentricities took place. According to some views, dark tourism is nothing but the outcome of those persons who are thrill "hunters".

According to other opinions, such destinations/attractions are needed because they allow people to reflect on what happened. There are and there will certainly be people who will never practice dark tourism, but in our opinion,

the segment of those people visiting destinations/attractions that support dark tourism should not be blamed. The fact that dark tourism is not accepted does not cancel those events that had a remarkable influence on the evolution of history.

Visiting such destinations/attractions primarily means a final tribute to those who perished. After all, this tourist only investigates the incident on spot thus becoming a kind of researcher.

After 20 years from the massacre in Rwanda, Pieter Hugo has made a truly disturbing photo series. Each photo shows two people: the murderer and the victim. The true value of these photos is that these photographs draw attention to values that are difficult to implement knowing the history of what happened in Rwanda in 1994. This value is no other than the power to forgive. (<http://hir.ma/kulfold/ruandai-nok-es-a-szeretteiket-kiirto-gyilkosok-megrazo-fotosorozat/220357>)

According to the authors Friedrich and Johnston, educating the new generation about the tragic events that occurred in the past is inevitable to understand "their responsibility in a peaceful future" (Friedrich and Johnston, 2013, p. 316)

In future we want to identify:

- the type of research used in the marketing research conducted in the field of dark tourism,

- research area (local, regional, national or international) in the field of dark tourism,

- nationality of the authors, bringing added value in terms of dark tourism,

- the level of collaboration between researchers who didn't have the same nationality.

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