



Dark Tourism potential in Pakistan: Tourist Motivation and Visit intention

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Abstract: This study aims to understand tourist behavior and intentions towards dark tourism by utilizing Theory of Planned Behavior with the combination of Dark Tourism construct, which can help develop marketing strategies and improve the visitor experience for dark-tourism destinations of Pakistan. Based on a questionnaire filled by 400 respondents, the quantitative approach reveals that educated people and women know more about dark Tourism. This study aims to give valuable insights into the relationship between Theory of Planned Behavior and dark tourism constructs by providing baseline for further research. However, the study's limitations include the use of self-reporting participants and the lack of consideration for specific dark tourism destinations, which should be considered when interpreting the results. Future research can be done by incorporating other factors that influence tourist behavior and intentions toward dark tourism, such as the cultural and historical significance of the destination, and by expanding the study to include a more diverse sample population.

Keywords: Engaging Entertainment (EE), Dark Experience (DE), Dark tourism (DT), Casual Interest (CI), Motivation(M), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)r, Behavioral Intentions(BI)

1. Introduction

According to Lewis et al. (2021) and Schneider et al. (2021), Dark Tourism is defined as a form of tourism that involves visiting sites associated with tragedy, death, and suffering. This concept has gained popularity worldwide since the early 90s. Tourists visit these sites for a variety of reasons, including education, curiosity, family legacy, recreation, and pilgrimage, as noted by Khaydarova and Joanna (2022). Emotional and cognitive experiences also drive tourists to visit dark tourist sites. Dark tourism ranges from light forms, such as dark exhibitions and fun factories, to the darkest forms, such as visiting camps of genocide. Although 'real death' may not be the only criterion for determining a dark destination, symbolic death can also broaden the tourist base, as suggested by Schneider et al. (2021).

As Fonseca et al. (2015) explain, examples of dark tourism sites include concentration camps, natural disaster sites, battlefields, and memorials to victims of atrocities. Although ethical considerations must be considered when it comes to dark tourism, it remains a compelling and complex topic that raises questions about how we remember and commemorate the past. Therefore, exploring the motivations behind dark tourism, the potential benefits and drawbacks, and how we can approach these sites with sensitivity and respect are essential, as suggested by Pimentel Biscaia and Marques (2022). Dark tourism is a global phenomenon, and Pakistan is no exception; considered the home to several sites that have witnessed tragic events or have a dark history, attracting visitors interested in learning more about them. One of the most prominent examples of dark tourism in Pakistan is the Khyber Pass, a historically important trade route that has been the site of numerous battles and conflicts. Visitors can explore the

area and learn about its history, including its use by militants and terrorists in recent years. Another notable site is the Makli Necropolis in Sindh, a vast cemetery that dates back to the 14th century and is considered as largest funerary sites in the world. Visitors can see elaborate tombs and mausoleums, some of which have been damaged over the years due to natural disasters and neglect. Baloch and Rehman (2015) state that Karachi, a city in Pakistan, has numerous dark tourism sites, including the Quaid-e-Azam Mausoleum, which is the final resting place of Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The city also has Mazar-e-Quaid, the mausoleum of former Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, who was assassinated in 1951.

While dark tourism in Pakistan may be less developed or as popular as in other countries, some sites attract visitors interested in exploring the darker side of the country's history. As with any form of tourism, it is essential to approach these sites with sensitivity and respect. Although Dark Tourism has gained popularity and importance, there is still a limited understanding of the phenomenon due to the lack of research in this area. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate why death, tragedy, and memorials motivate people to visit such sites and, if not, what other factors drive people to visit these locations. Further research can shed light on the motivations behind dark tourism and help us understand this complex phenomenon more thoroughly. The study aims to: a) Examine the factor that motivates dark tourists, b) Explore the intentions and interests of Dark tourism among people, and 3) The study intends to contribute by exploring the knowledge gap and hidden potential in the dark tourism sector of Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

As defined by Foley and Lennon (1996), dark tourism, also referred to as Thana tourism or grief tourism, is a form of travel that involves visiting sites associated with death, tragedy, or suffering. Such sites may include battlefields, memorials, museums, and locations that have experienced natural disasters or human atrocities.. The phenomenon has gained increasing attention in the tourism and hospitality literature recently. Seaton and Lennon (2019) examined the social-psychological aspects of dark tourism and suggested that it can be used for emotional regulation, social bonding, and moral education. Dark tourism could provide opportunities for visitors to learn about and process complex topics, connect with others who share similar experiences, and develop a more nuanced understanding of ethical and moral issues. Jafari and Scott (2019) explored the concept of authenticity in dark tourism and argued that the authenticity of the Experience is a crucial factor that drives tourists to visit such sites. The authors suggested that the authenticity of dark tourism experiences can be enhanced by creating immersive and emotionally engaging experiences that allow tourists to connect with the past and those affected by tragedy or suffering. (Nistal, 2021) examined the relationship between dark tourism and sustainable tourism development and suggested that dark tourism can contribute to the sustainable development of destinations by preserving cultural heritage, promoting education and understanding, and supporting local communities. The authors also argued that sustainable tourism development could enhance the quality of the dark tourism experience by reducing negative impacts and improving visitor satisfaction. Much work under the umbrella of research has been done on the concept of dark tourism worldwide. However, people need help understanding and exploring the potential associated with dark tourism in Pakistan because it has several historical sites that could attract dark tourism enthusiasts. One such location is the Taxila archaeological site, the center of Buddhist learning and culture over 2,000 years ago. The site was destroyed by invading armies, and its ruins remain a powerful reminder of the past.

Additionally, Pakistan has several locations associated with the 2005 earthquake that devastated the country, including the ruins of Balakot, which could interest dark tourism enthusiasts. So this study will examine the dark tourism construct's impact on tourists' behavioral intentions and explore the hidden potential that Pakistan's Dark tourism has. Moreover, this study will highlight the relationships between Dark Tourism constructs and the theory of planned behavior with the moderating effect of motivation. This study will help policymakers highlight the dark tourism location and support maintaining and preserving the essential Locations. The research will provide baseline information for future research to explore more aspects of Dark tourism and its impact on the culture and heritage of Pakistan.

3. Methodology

3.1 Survey Instruments

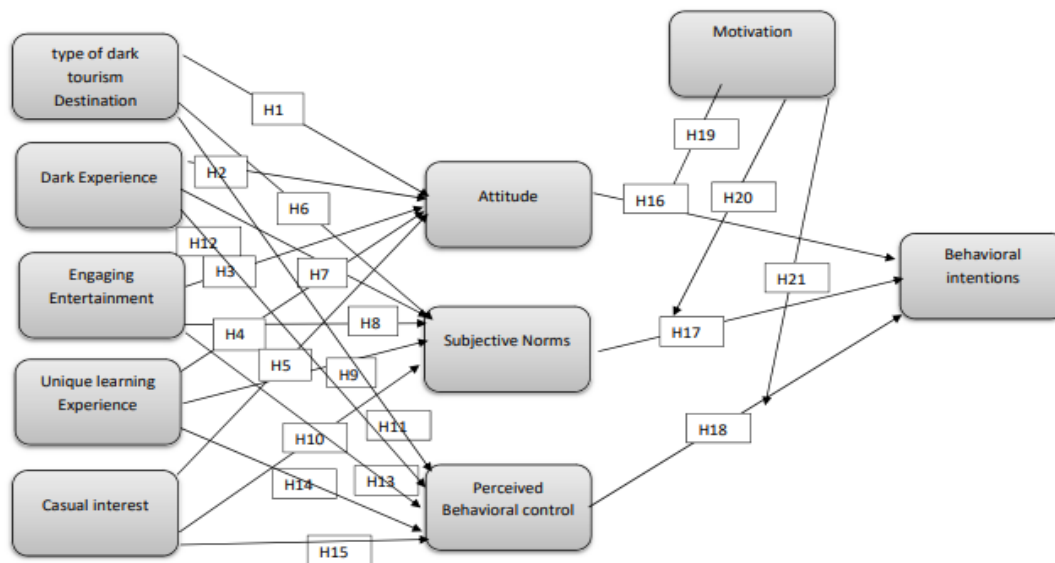
All the information regarding the variables of Dark tourism, Theory of Planned Behavior, and socio-demographic background was collected through an adapted questionnaire filled out by general people, university Students, and Professionals. The survey questions used in the study to measure dark tourism constructs were adapted from previous studies by Biran et al. (2014), Bissell (2009), Lam and Hsu (2006), and Molle and Bader (2014). These

questions were modified to ensure relevance to the research topic, resulting in 32 scale items being used to test the five dark tourism constructs. The dimension of dark experience was measured by four statements that checked personal curiosity, witnessing the act, fascination with abnormal and bizarre events, and knowledge about the dark tourism location. Five travel commitments were analyzed, including engaging in entertainment as a hobby, for fun and entertainment, to get away from routine, and to try something new or out of the ordinary. Casual interest in dark tourism was measured by options such as natural scenery, personal safety, having an enjoyable time with family, the attraction of service quality, reputation, and fame. Unique learning experience was measured by five items, including reconnecting with individuals associated with the dark tourism location, experiencing a part of one's heritage, increasing knowledge, visiting a place many people have not been to or wish to visit, and experiencing paranormal activity as seen on mainstream media (i.e., television shows, the internet, social media). The study aimed to assess planned behavior related to visiting dark tourism destinations using a four-dimensional construct of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions. The construct was measured using a total of 16 item statements. The construct was measured using 16-item statements on a five-point Likert scale from extremely unimportant-5 to extremely important-1. Attitudes and behavioral intentions were each assessed using five-item statements (e.g., "Visiting a dark tourism destination is enjoyable" and "I will visit a dark tourism destination in the next 12 months") on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1 - Strongly disagree" to "5 - Strongly agree." Perceived behavioral control was measured using three-item statements (e.g., "I am independent to choose whether or not I visit a dark tourism destination") on the same five-point Likert scale. For the subjective norms dimension, each item was measured using a different five-point Likert scale, for instance, the statement "Many people I know would choose a dark tourism destination for spending their vacation" was rated on a scale ranging from "1 - Strongly disagree" to "5 - Strongly agree." The study used the theory of planned behavior to explore attitudes and motivation motivations dark tourism potential in Pakistan. A random sampling technique was used to gather data, with 450 questionnaires distributed and 401 responses recorded. Statistical processing tool SPSS was used to compute variables to check frequencies, correlation, and regression results of the variables, while Smart-PLs was used to test the hypothesis and factor loading results of variables.

3.2 Hypothesis Development

- H1: There is a positive relationship between the type of dark tourism destination and attitudes.
- H2: Dark experiences have a positive relationship with attitudes.
- H3: Engaging entertainment has a positive relationship with attitudes.
- H4: Unique learning experiences have a positive relationship with attitudes.
- H5: Casual interest has a positive relationship with attitudes.
- H6: There is a positive relationship between the type of dark tourism destination and subjective norms.
- H7: Dark experiences have a positive relationship with subjective norms.
- H8: Engaging entertainment has a positive relationship with subjective norms.
- H9: Unique learning experiences have a positive relationship with subjective norms.
- H10: Casual interest has a positive relationship with subjective norms.
- H11: The type of dark tourism has a positive relationship with perceived behavioral control.
- H12: Dark experiences have a positive relationship with perceived behavioral control.
- H13: Engaging entertainment has a positive relationship with perceived behavioral control.
- H14: Unique learning experiences have a positive relationship with perceived behavioral control.
- H15: Casual interest has a positive relationship with perceived behavioral control.
- H16: Attitude has a positive influence on behavioral intentions.
- H17: Subjective norms have a positive relationship with behavioral intentions.
- H18: Perceived behavioral control has a positive impact on behavioral intentions.
- H19: Motivation moderates the relationship between attitude and behavioral intentions.
- H20: Motivation moderates the relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intentions.
- H21: Motivation moderates the relationship between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intentions.

3.3 Framework



4. Discussion

65.4% of female respondents reported having visited or planning to visit dark tourism locations in the next 12 months, compared to 34.6% of males. Most interested in dark tourism has a strong educational background and understanding of the subject. The study found a significant correlation between the theory of planned behavior and the dark tourism construct, indicating that dark tourism locations influence tourist attitudes. Constructs such as engaging entertainment, unique learning experiences, dark experience, and casual interest positively impact tourist attitudes towards revisiting dark tourism locations. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement scales. The results indicate that the items used to measure each construct are reliable and valid measures of the intended constructs. The study found that dark experience supports subjective norms, not an attitude or perceived behavioral control. Engaging entertainment positively influences attitude and subjective norms but not perceived behavioral control. The study also found that motivation supports all constructs of the theoretical framework positively, and the moderation of motivation between attitude and behavioral intentions, subjective norms and behavioral intention, and perceived behavioral control and intention are positively related. The study concludes that subjective norms drive individual behavior and social pressure to visit dark tourism locations and that visitors are attracted to unique learning experiences when visiting dark tourism destinations.

5. Conclusion and Future Research

The research findings suggest that tourists visiting dark tourism destinations are primarily motivated by their desire for new and unusual experiences rather than an interest in death and dying. The study also revealed that tourists seek fun experiences at these destinations and are not restricted by societal norms. Furthermore, the study found that tourists primarily visit dark tourism destinations for attitudinal experiences, and their intention to visit is influenced by perceived behavioral control. However, the study did not find strong support for the casual interest

dimension, which measures tourists' interest in connecting with the information presented at the destination while still having a pleasant experience. Additionally, the unique learning experience dimension was not a primary motivator for tourists visiting dark tourism destinations.

The study also indicates that subjective norms play a role in tourists' behavioral intentions, and tourists seeking unique learning experiences may face negative social pressure from their family and friends, who are not supportive of their decision to visit dark tourism destinations. Overall, the study provides insights into the motivations and intentions of tourists visiting dark tourism destinations and highlights the importance of perceived behavioral control and attitudinal experiences. However, these findings may not necessarily apply to all dark tourism destinations or tourists who visit them. Further research may be necessary to fully understand the complexities of tourists' experiences at these destinations. Nonetheless, the study's results can be useful for tourism operators and policymakers seeking to understand and manage this unique form of tourism.

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