Understanding visitor's motivation at sites of death and disaster: the case of former transit camp Westerbork, the Netherlands

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Understanding visitor’s motivation at sites of death and disaster: the case of former transit camp Westerbork, the Netherlands

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This study begins to fill the gap in research of people’s motivations to visit sites of death and suffering and to contribute to a deeper understanding of dark tourism consumption within dark conflict sites. The article aims to examine the motivations of visitors to former transit camp Westerbork as an iconic dark site in the Netherlands. The research process involved a self-administered survey questionnaire filled by 238, randomly selected Dutch visitors. Data are analysed by means of exploratory factor analysis to decide upon the relevant factors for representing the motivations of visitors to Westerbork. The findings show that people visit Westerbork mainly for ‘self-understanding’, ‘curiosity’, ‘conscience’, a ‘must see’ this place and ‘exclusiveness’. This is the first study to examine visitors’ motivations to Westerbork as a dark site. Most research on visitor motivations is not based on empirical data, but on theoretical research.

Keywords: dark tourism; tourist motivation; Westerbork; iconic site

Introduction

Dark tourism has emerged as an academic field of study in recent years (Foley & Lennon, 1996; Seaton, 1999), but remains as one in which there has been a relative lack of empirical research (Seaton, 2012), and little clarity or agreement about terminology and definitions (Dunkley, Morgan, & Westwood, 2011).

Travel to and experience of places associated with dark tourism is increasingly common within contemporary society (Wilson, 2008). A number of quite different tourism and leisure activities are involved with dark tourism, from enjoying family picnics on battle sites in Europe, to purchasing souvenirs of the massacre at Ground Zero in New York (Stone, 2005c). These visitor activities, revolving around a particular type of site, attraction or exhibition that is related to death and tragedy have emerged as a distinctive form of tourism called ‘dark tourism’ (Wilson, 2008).

There is a growth in the number of visitors to dark tourism sites in recent years. For example, in 2010, nearly 800,000 tourists visited the Jewish Museum Berlin, a record since its opening in 2001 (Plocki & Plagemann, 2011), while the Anne Frank House (Anne Frank House, 2011) and Alcatraz Prison (Rheenen, 2011) have received more than one million visitors annually. Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia (Arlington National Cemetery, 2011) has more than four million visitors, and perhaps the most iconic dark tourism site, the Auschwitz concentration camp reached another record
number of visitors in 2011, with almost 1,400,000 (Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 2011).

Scholars have conducted a large number of supply-side-related studies on definitions of dark tourism, including sub categorisations and labels of dark tourism sites and spectrum models considering the degree of darkness (Biran, Poria, & Oren, 2011; Seaton, 1996; Seaton & Lennon, 2004; Stone, 2005a; Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Fewer studies have examined visitors’ perspectives on dark tourism, such as how people experience dark tourism sites, and why they are drawn to these sites of death and disaster. There have been very few empirical studies that have examined visitors’ experiences at these sites, including the meanings of the experience to visitors and their differentiated motives. Seaton and Lennon (2004, p. 81) claim that consumer-oriented research on visits to sites of death, disaster and atrocities ‘has hardly even begun’. In addition, Sharpley and Stone (2009, p. 250) suggest in their book ‘there is a pressing need for empirical research into the ways in which dark sites are consumed, both in terms of tourists’ motivations and experience and more generally in terms of the function of dark sites as one of many social institutions that mediate between life and death’. Poria, Butler, and Airey (2003) have noted that motivation is a key issue in discussing types of tourism.

Biran et al. (2011, p. 838) suggested Auschwitz as an iconic site in the dark tourism literature, saying it is a ‘site of paramount symbolic meaning and may be seen as a “must see” tourist attraction’. In their study on motivations to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau (Biran et al., 2011) they also call for further research on two different aspects in particular: research into less iconic or less prominent sites and research based solely on, either tourists who visited the site or participants who have not yet visited this site, but are willing to do so. This study responds to this research call and aims to reduce the gap in the literature.

This study examines motivations of visitors to a former Second World War transit camp, Westerbork in the Netherlands, from which people were transported to concentration camps in Germany and Poland. However, Westerbork predates the Second World War, being built in the 1930s to house the German Jewish refugees. Westerbork is an iconic site in the Netherlands through its links to one of the ‘darkest’ sites of all, Auschwitz, although the site itself is perhaps less ‘dark’, in that it was not directly related to death, and this enables us to throw light on the motivations of visitors to a dark site, which has not previously been studied.

The article begins by analysing the dark tourism literature and highlighting specific aspects of the tourist experience, namely motivations for the visit, which are important to the conceptualisations of dark tourism. This discussion is followed by a description of the methodology and presentation of the findings of this study. The main implication of this article is to challenge the view that dark tourism is defined by characteristics of the site itself, and instead looks at visitor experience in order to define whether a site is ‘dark’. The findings also support the idea that dark tourism is socially constructed and not just fact – (see Jamal & Lelo, 2011, p. 40) there is no ‘essence’ of darkness that imbues visitors to a site.

**Literature review**

**Dark tourism: supply side**

Existing studies have highlighted the growing fascination of tourists with sites of death, suffering, tragedies and atrocities (Cohen, 2011; Logan & Reeves, 2009; Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Examples of these types of tourist attractions include the sixth floor in the Book...
Depository, Dallas, Texas (Foley & Lennon, 1996; Vowell, 2005), graveyards and cemeteries (Seaton, 2002; Winter, 2009), Holocaust sites (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Beech, 2000, 2009; Biran et al., 2011; Cole, 1999), slavery-heritage attractions (Dann & Seaton, 2001; Rice, 2009), atrocities (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005), and prisons (Dann & Seaton, 2001; Strange & Kempa, 2003; Wilson, 2004, 2008).

Foley and Lennon (1996) coined and popularised the concept of dark tourism as an area for research, but there have been other attempts to describe the phenomenon of visiting sites associated with death and atrocity, such as Thanatourism (Seaton, 1996), Fatal Attractions, Black Spots (Rojek, 1993), Morbid Tourism (Bloom, 2000), Atrocity Tourism (Ashworth and Hartmann, 2005) or Difficult Heritage (Logan & Reeves, 2009). It is only in recent years that this phenomenon has been collectively referred to as dark tourism and appears to have become widespread and more popular, both in terms of visits to sites and in the context of academic research. Travel to sites, attractions and events linked with death, suffering, violence or disaster has occurred for as long as people have been able to travel (Stone, 2005b). Examples are the religious pilgrimages to sites of death and violence during the Middle Ages or the medieval public executions (Seaton, 1996).

More recently, dark tourism has been categorised into different ‘shades’ of dark. For example, Miles (2002) subdivided dark tourism into dark, darker, and darkest; Sharpley (2005) classified it into black, grey, or pale; and Stone (2006) into lightest and darkest.

Visits to dark sites have been conceptualised and studied under wider frameworks such as: heritage tourism (Poria et al., 2003) dissonant heritage tourism (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996) and pilgrimage (Belhassen & Santos, 2006) and examined from an interpretative perspective (Uzzell & Ballantyne, 1998).

The diversity of death-related attractions, from the ‘Dracula Experience’ in Whitby, UK or Vienna’s Funeral Museum to the sites of celebrity deaths (James Dean, Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley – see Alderman, 2002), or major disasters (for example, Ground Zero), make a comprehensive classification extremely complex. Stone (2006) is one of the few researchers, who has made an attempt to classify these dark tourism attractions. Although some writers introduced the phenomenon during the 1980s, such as O’Rourke (1988) with his book Holidays in Hell, dark tourism did not generate academic interest until the mid-1990s, and many aspects of dark tourism still require further investigation to reveal the complexity of the phenomenon (Stone, 2005c).

The descriptive conceptualisation of dark tourism covers tourist attractions that are most often considered and categorised as heritage sites. This is certainly true for what Stone (2006) termed the darkest camps of genocide (e.g. Auschwitz), and darker conflict sites (e.g. Westerbork, which is the focus of the current study). Stone’s Dark Tourism Spectrum framework and the seven Dark Suppliers categorisation implies that there are different levels or ‘shades’ of macabre or ‘darkness’ in which a dark tourism product can be categorised. Although, Stone’s (2006) categorisation is bluntly irrational since people may experience dark or less dark emotions, arguably, sites do not experience anything and cannot be classified in this way.

Therefore, it is suggested here that a different approach is needed to understand the tourist motivation and experience of visitors to sites of death and disaster, and that such an approach should draw on heritage tourism studies. Accordingly, there is a need to examine how these sites are, in this case Westerbork, associated with death and suffering, consumed by visitors, primarily focusing on motivations for the visit. Seaton and Lennon (2004) support this idea when they argue that dark tourism sites, like heritage sites, often involve ideological and political issues. Literature focusing on visits to heritage sites and attractions can allow a more meaningful understanding of tourist experiences at dark
sites. In particular, the heritage literature identifies the multifunctional nature of sites providing a variety of symbolic meanings of death on display (Biran et al., 2011). For instance, sites of atrocities and death can be captured as a place for remembrance, for mourning, for a spiritual experience, as a demonstration of national identity, educational experiences, or merely a random visit (Austin, 2002; Logan & Reeves, 2009; Slade, 2003).

Seaton (1996) implies that two aspects of the experience are important to complete his definition of the subject. The first aspect is that Thanatourism is behavioural, which means that tourists and their different motivations to visit attractions, distinguish whether a site is dark or not, more than the specific site characteristics. The second aspect is that Thanatourism works on a ‘continuum of intensity’ (Seaton, 1996, p. 240), which involves two features. First, it is dependent on whether a visit has a single motivation or many, and second, whether the degree of the interest in death is more general or person-specific centred. From these aspects Seaton (unlike Lennon & Foley, 2000) argue that visitor motivations have a significant role in death and disaster tourism.

Nevertheless, in line with the descriptive understanding of dark tourism, a demand-oriented approach follows the assumption that the presence of tourists at death-related sites reflects to some degree ‘thanatouristic’ motives (Salde, 2003). As such all tourists to ‘dark conflict’ attractions – Westerbork, for example – are seen as dark tourists. This line of approach overlooks the possibility that the reason for visiting might be completely devoid of any interest in death itself. Several empirical and conceptual studies support the approach that visitation support thanatourist motives or lack of interest in darkness (see Ashworth, 2004; Edensor, 2000; Hughes, 2008; Slade, 2003; Tarlow, 2005; Teye & Timothy, 2004; Timothy & Teye, 2004).

Of particular importance to this study of Westerbork is Smith and Croy’s (2005) conceptualisation of dark tourism. They argue that it is the perception of the site as dark (rather than a site’s attributes per se), which determines whether tourists are motivated to visit and the nature of their motivation. Smith and Croy’s (2005) conceptualisation, draws attention to the possibility that not all tourists to sites associated with death and suffering are seeking a dark experience. Moreover, other studies of dark sites reveal that some tourists are not familiar with a site’s attributes (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2004), and several studies have highlighted educational experience (Austin, 2002; Teye & Timothy, 2004) as a key motive of [motivation for] visits to sites of [with] dark attributes.

The discussion and viewpoints above are derived from the desire to understand the touristic consumption of sites related to death and disaster (Strange & Kempa, 2003; Wight, 2005). However, this is still incomplete in part because of the diversity of dark sites, attractions and experiences. Examination of more than the supply side of dark tourism is necessary to resolve still outstanding issues, and therefore, this study of Westerbork contributes to deeper understanding of dark tourism consumption through tourist motivations.

**Dark tourism: demand side**

Stone and Sharpley (2008) state that the motives for visiting death-related sites have not yet been fully or systematically examined, thus, allowing only weak conceptualisations of dark tourism. This lack of detailed knowledge can be attributed to a number of reasons. First, tourism motivation has been examined in relation to diverse sites of death and suffering, among them the Holocaust sites (Lennon & Foley, 2000), prisons (Wilson, 2008), battlefields (Hyde & Harman, 2011), and sites of slavery and Apartheid (Austin, 2002). Second, studies have mainly taken a descriptive approach, following the supposition that one’s presence in death-related sites necessarily reflects dark tourism motives (Slade,
Finally and perhaps most importantly, the motives identified have frequently not been based on empirical research, but are largely drawn from theoretical research (Seaton & Lennon, 2004; Wight, 2005).

One clear alternative is to examine why tourists go to such sites, in other words, their motivations for visiting these ‘attractions’. Motivation refers to the inner forces which arouse and direct human behaviour (Beh & Bruyere, 2007; Boo & Jones, 2009). Inherent in the concept of tourist motivation are human needs – which require satisfaction, as well as the need to maintain a balance between under-stimulation and over-stimulation (Crompton, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Pearce, 1993). Therefore, understanding the motives for travelling contributes towards understanding tourism and is frequently used as a means for defining and separating tourism segments (McCain & Ray, 2003).

A range of motives for dark tourism have been proposed and conceptualised in the tourism literature (see Rojek, 1997; Seaton, 1999; Tarlow, 2005; Wight & Lennon, 2002) and most widely by Dann (1998). Dann (1998) suggests that ‘dicing with death’ – that is, seeking experiences that challenge tourists or heighten their own sense of mortality – may be considered one reason for participating in dark tourism (Joly, 2010; Pelton, 2003). Stone and Sharpley (2008, p. 576) point out that the identified eight ‘influences’ of dark tourism of Dann (1998), while insightful, were ‘largely descriptive and may be related more to specific attractions, destinations, or activities rather than individuals’ motives’. In addition to the idea of ‘dicing with death’, Dann’s influences include: desire to celebrate crime or deviance; fear of phantom; the search for novelty; nostalgia, bloodlust, and interest in mortality. Seaton (1996) conceptualised five categories of behaviour regarding thanatourism: travel to witness public enactments of death; travel to sites of mass or individual death; travel to interment or memorial sites; travel to synthetic sites of material or symbolic representations of death; travel for re-enactments or simulations of death. Sharpley (2005) argues that interest or fascination with death by visitors is not the only motivation that brings visitors to a site.

In his article Ashworth (2002) describes motives, such as curiosity, horror and empathy and self-understanding. In a later study, he also noted that motives range from pilgrimage, search for identity, quest for knowledge, and a sense of social responsibility, to darker motives, such as interest and indulgence in violence and suffering. Ryan (2007) suggests a conceptualisation useful in understanding the motivations for battlefield tourism in citing the 11 ‘possible motives’ for thanatourism identified by Dunkley (2007). These include: special interest, thrill/risk seeking, validation, authenticity, self-discovery, iconic sites, convenience, morbid curiosity, pilgrimage, remembrance and empathy and contemplation. To these Ryan (2007, pp. 251–254) suggests the addition of motives ‘for preservation, recording, and memory’ that include legitimisation, economic resurgence, discovery of heritage, acts of remembrance and personal aspirations. These represent a very curious mix of elements, some are emotions, some others are site characteristics, while others are actions and attributes. The research of Dunkley et al. (2011) on battlefields in France and Belgium where many visitors showed motivations, such as pilgrimage, remembrance and special interest, as did Mowatt and Chancellor (2011) in examining tourist motivations to visit a slave castle in Ghana, where it was, that many visitors wanted to connect with their culture.

The research conducted by Biran el al. (2011) reveals that motivations could be grouped into four factors, namely: ‘see it to believe it’ (participants’ interest in seeing the site out of a need to believe that such atrocities really happened); ‘learning and understanding’ (participants interest in being educated about Second World War and the atrocities that took place in Auschwitz); ‘famous death tourist attractions’ (general interest in sites of death,
willingness to see the real site, and feel empathy with the victims); and ‘emotional heritage experience’ (the desire to connect to his/her heritage and have an emotional experience) (see also Kang, Scott, Lee, & Ballantyne, 2012).

Other motivations identified through empirical studies include educational reasons, the popularity and awareness of a site and interest in war and military itself (Dunkley et al., 2011). The study conducted by Braithwaite and Lieper (2010), at the ‘Death Railway’ on the Kwai River, however, found motivations of recreational purposes since a lack of knowledge about the site meant that some tourists were not aware of what exactly they were visiting. However, the situation is more complex than Leiper suggests. The motivations of distinct visitor groups cannot be classified as same. For example, the Australians are usually experiencing dark emotions linked to the war whereas the Thai people and other visitors are just having fun in what is a resort town of Kanchanaburi.

Sather-Wagstaff (2011) explored ‘memoryscapes’ of 9/11 and how tourists construct and disperse knowledge through performative activities, which makes painful places salient and meaningful both individually and collectively. Hughes (2008), when exploring Tuol Sleng Museum of genocide crimes in Cambodia, recorded that tourists may visit a site merely because it is a ‘must see’ site. Consequently the awareness, as well as the knowledge of a site may influence the different motivations visitors might have, in line with the findings of Braithwaite and Lieper (2010) above.

To conclude, two key points made by Seaton (2012) are that there is ‘too much emphasis on the conceptualisation of dark tourism and not enough on the individual visitor perspectives’ and that dark tourism ‘is not a single concept’. In other words, there is a need for more empirical research that undertakes the consumption of dark tourism, more comparative observations and meanings and differentiated motive identification. Consequently, this study responds to these key points that aims to fill the gap in research of people’s motivation to visit sites associated with death and suffering.

Method

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study using a self-administered survey questionnaire consisting of four sections. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to identify visitors’ purpose of trip, the frequency that visitors had been to Westerbork and the length of stay in Westerbork. The second part of the questionnaire contained questions about visitors’ perceptions towards Westerbork and general reasons why Westerbork should be visited. The third part of the questionnaire identified and measured visitors’ own travel motivations. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of 20 visit motivations on a seven-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The last part involved the demographic profiles of respondents. The questionnaire was written in Dutch. Two faculty members (one native in Dutch and one in English respectively) checked the questionnaire to ensure that phrases, meanings of motivations and words were correctly translated from Dutch to English for further analyses. To ensure the logical validity of questionnaire another group of tourism and marketing experts from the same institution checked all questionnaire items and to what extent they represent the entire range of possible items the test should cover. A pilot study was conducted in Westerbork to assess reliability and validity of the motivation items while also testing for ways to improve the questionnaire. A sample of 68 respondents was achieved in Westerbork. The results of this pilot test resulted in improved research design, wording and measurement items.

After changes were made in the questionnaire resulting from the pilot survey, the refined instrument was used to collect data from visitors from 16 July to 10 September 2011.
Westerbork

Westerbork served as a transit camp in the east of the Netherlands from which to transport prisoners, mainly Dutch Jews, to camps in the east of Europe during the Second World War. During the Second World War the Westerbork camp had a ‘double life’. While most prisoners stayed here only for a short period before their deportation, another group of circa 2000 people mostly German Jews, Jewish council members, and camp employees lived here permanently (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2012).

After the Second World War, the camp was used for other purposes including housing ex-KNIL personnel from Indonesia 1949–1950. In 1949, The ‘Foundation 40–45’ started an initiative to build a memorial for resistance fighters who died in the camp. The ‘Foundation 40–45’ wanted to preserve the crematorium of the camp, though the Jewish community wanted to demolish it all. In 1983, the Commemoration Center Camp Westerbork was opened by the Dutch Queen Beatrix to emphasise three principles of commemoration, remembrance and contemplation. In 1983, when the ‘Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork’ opened, 40,000 visitors went to the site. This increased to 140,000 visitors in 2010 (Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork, 2012). The large majority of visitors to camp Westerbork are Dutch nationals.

Research findings

The survey was administered on-site (i.e. face to face) using a random sample method. Every third person was asked to participate in this survey. Visitors who were 18 years and older and not residents of the Westerbork area were allowed to fill out the survey. In total, 317 individuals were intercepted and 266 have participated in the study, resulting in a 74% response rate. From the 266 collected questionnaires, 28 were deleted because of missing data (i.e. more than 10% of items in these questionnaires were not completed), resulting in 238 useable responses.

The sample consisted of 54.6% female and 45.4% male tourists, with a median age in the range of 31–40, and 68.5% had attained university education. Over a quarter (26%) of the respondents had visited Westerbork before with an average frequency of twice, and 59.7% of respondents had visited other sites related to the Holocaust before. Almost 27% of visitors were day-trippers and 73.1% respondents were on holiday in the surrounding vicinity. The average stay of respondents on the Westerbork was two hours.

Motivations

The mean scores on motivation scale of the respondents’ motivations are summarised and presented in Table 1. Among the 20 motivations measured, all motivations except four had mean scores of 3.5 or higher, based on a seven-point scale. Particularly, visitors wanted to visit Westerbork with the hope that such a horrific occurrence may never happen again. They were also wondering about the place and wanted to see with their own eyes what had happened there in the past. They may believe that encountering ‘real’ evidence from the WWII and Holocaust would increase their sensibility about the past of Westerbork and happenings.

To reduce the 20 motivations into a smaller number of meaningful factors, as well as to identify underlying structure in the data matrix, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal components analysis was applied. Regarding the adequacy of the sample size, in this study there is a 11.9 to 1 ratio of observations to variables (20 motivations in 238
observations) that is within acceptable limits (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The sample size of 238 also provides an adequate basis for the calculation of correlations between motivations. First a variable-by-variable (bivariate) correlation matrix was calculated; the majority of variables were significantly correlated with each other. The Bartlett’s test, which assesses the overall significance of correlations, showed that correlations were significant at .000 level and the null hypothesis of sphericity was rejected. This meant that a dimension reduction of this data set was possible. A Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of .840 revealed that sufficient correlations existed between the motivations and there was a good sampling adequacy. To select the number of components, in other words determining the dimensionality of data, three criteria were applied: Kaiser eigenvalue greater than one rule, Cattell’s scree plot and Horn’s parallel analysis (1965). Five components’ eigenvalues were greater than one; both Scree plot and Horn’s parallel analysis indicated five components to be retained. Although the Kaiser eigenvalue greater than one rule is widely used, it has been shown highly inaccurate and can overestimate the number of components to retain. Several empirical and simulation studies have shown results supporting the implementation of Horn’s parallel analysis as a favored technique to determine dimensionality of the data (Glorfeld, 1995; Hubbard & Allen, 1987; Zwick & Velicer, 1986). According to Horn, in a non-correlated data each principal component would be expected to have an eigenvalue of 1.0. However, Horn noted that due to sampling error, some eigenvalues will be greater than one and some will be less than one. His strategy was to contrast sample data eigenvalues to those from a randomly generated dataset with the same sample number of variables and observations. The cutoff point for determining principal components is assumed to be where the graphs intersect. Keeling (2000) created a regression equation to easily generate these comparison eigenvalues. Using Keeling’s method, observed and expected eigenvalues were plotted. The mean eigenvalue crossed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I visited Westerbork (because)</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>such a horrific occurrence may never happen again</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to understand what happened there</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am curious to know what happened here</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this is the place where it really happened</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is an uncommon place to visit</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of empathy for the victims</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to learn more about the Holocaust/Second World War</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we speak for those who no longer can, but also for humanity more generally</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel responsible for the coming generations</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to tell the story further to next generations</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to commemorate the victims</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is a part of my history/heritage where I want to know more about</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to see expositions/evidence/artifacts</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is a moment of coming to one’s senses and thankfulness</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid that something can happen in the future again</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I became interested in the subject after the theme Holocaust/Second World War</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at school</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to see it to believe that something can happen</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see it as a pilgrimage spot</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have family/friends who were victims of the Holocaust</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the sample eigenvalue at five. All three criteria supported the retention of five principal components for interpretation.

Initial factors were rotated using Varimax rotation, which is orthogonal and assumes that these factors are uncorrelated. Further loadings were used for interpreting the factors. Accordingly, the higher the loading of a variable, the greater was its influence on a variable and vice versa. However, there are no guidelines in establishing how high should be considered high. Traditionally, researchers have used a loading of 0.5 or above as the cutoff point (Hair et al., 1998). Among the 20 loadings presented in Table 2, only 2 loadings were lower than 0.5 (i.e. I visited Westerbork, because I became interested in the subject after the theme Holocaust/Second World War at school; I visited Westerbork, because I have family/friends who were victims of the Holocaust). Both statements also had rather low means and low communalities with other statements. Consequently, they were both removed from the scale and 18 loadings were kept for further interpretation. Altogether these explained a total variance of 63% and each yielded factor contained between 2 and 5 items. To examine the internal consistency of each of these factors Cronbach’s alpha was used. For the first four factors, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranged from .72 to .70 and they were acceptable and can be regarded as internally consistent and stable. However, for the fifth factor, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .54 and internal reliability for this factor remained unacceptable. Deletion of any item did not improve reliability for this factor.

The findings reveal that people visit Westerbork mainly for ‘self-understanding’, ‘curiosity’, ‘conscience’, ‘a must see place’ and ‘exclusiveness’.

Factor 1 contained five variables (I want to commemorate the victims, out of empathy for the victims, I want to tell next generations, it is a moment of coming to one’s senses and thankfulness, it is a part of my history/heritage, which I want to know more about) with the highest eigenvalue of 5.78 and the variance of 32%. The five items related to getting better insights about the place and to feel sympathetic towards the victims, and this factor was labelled as ‘self-understanding’. Factor 2 consisted of four variables (to see expositions/evidences/artefacts, to learn more about the Holocaust/Second World War, I am curious to know what happened here, I want to understand what happened here) with an eigenvalue of 1.94 and explained approximately 10.8% of total variance. These items in this factor related to eagerness to know. Accordingly, this factor was labelled as ‘curiosity’. Factor 3 included four variables (I feel responsible for the coming generations, we speak for those who no longer can, but also for humanity more generally, such a horrific occurrence may never happen again, I am afraid that something can happen in the future again) accounted for 8.1% variance with an eigenvalue of 1.46. The items in this factor differ from those in Factor 1 in as much as they represent feelings and emotions related to the visitor’s conscience and concerns for the future, and therefore the factor was labelled as ‘conscience’. Factor 4 contained two variables (this is the place where it really happened, it is an uncommon place to visit) with an eigenvalue of 1.16 and accounted for 6.4% variance. These two items were related to the place and its uniqueness, therefore it was labelled as ‘must see place to visit’. Factor 5 contained three variables (I need to see it to believe that something can happen, it is a famous destination in the Netherlands, because I see it as a pilgrimage spot) with an eigenvalue of 1.00 and accounted for 5.6% variance. These three items were related to both the place and visitor experience and therefore, it was labelled as ‘exclusiveness’.

An ordered logit model is carried out to examine the characteristics of respondents across their motivational preferences. While five factor loadings are used as covariate variables; age, gender, education level, income level, frequency of visit are used as dependent
### Motivation items

Table 2. EFA results of Westerbork visitors’ motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation items</th>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 1: self-understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I visited Westerbork (because)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to commemorate the victims</td>
<td>0.780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is a moment of coming to one’s senses and thankfulness</td>
<td>0.770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of empathy for the victims</td>
<td>0.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to tell the story further to next generations</td>
<td>0.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is a part of my history/heritage where I want to know more about</td>
<td>0.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to see expositions/evidence/artifacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to learn more about the Holocaust/Second World War</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to understand what happened there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am curious to know what happened here</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel responsible for the coming generations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>such a horrific occurrence may never happen again</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid that something can happen in the future again</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we speak for those who no longer can, but also for humanity more generally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>this is the place where it really happened</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is an uncommon place to visit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to see it to believe that something can happen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is a famous tourist destination in the Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because I see it as a pilgrimage spot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalue | 5.78 | 1.94 | 1.46 | 1.16 | 1.00 |
Variance | 32.12 | 10.80 | 8.12 | 6.42 | 5.55 |
Cumulative variance | 32.12 | 42.92 | 51.04 | 57.46 | 63.02 |
Cronbach’s Alpha | 0.80 | 0.77 | 0.72 | 0.77 | 0.54 |
Number of items | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 |

Notes: Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.
variables. A first important covariate is age of the respondents. Relatively young visitors who are 40 years old and younger tend to have self-understanding and conscience motivations, while older visitors above 50 years old are only motivated by self-understanding to visit Westerbork transit camp. Education follows a similar pattern, while lower-educated tourists have a higher motivational preference to visit for the ‘exclusiveness’, and highly educated visitors are motivated more by the ‘conscience’ factor. Women tend to have stronger motivations of the visit to Westerbork, than men.

Furthermore, no significant motivational preferences have been found across income level groups and frequency of the visit to Westerbork transit camp.

**Discussion**

To the best of our knowledge this is the first study to examine the motivations of visitors in Westerbork transit camp. The outcomes of this study challenge the current literature about dark tourists’ motivations. Even though a visit to a concentration camp is seen as dark tourism (Dunkley, Morgan, & Westwood, 2007), motives considered ‘dark’ were not mentioned by any of the participants in the survey. Indeed, the findings reveal that interest in death is no reason for the visit. This is one of the key points revealed in this research study. This finding is in agreement with many academics (e.g. Ashworth, 2002, 2004; Braithwaite & Lieper, 2010; Brian et al., 2011; Dunkley et al., 2007; Hughes, 2008; Ryan, 2007; Sharpley, 2005), who suggest (but without empirical data to support their views) that various motives to visit ‘dark’ sites extend beyond a fascination with death. These ideas correspond with the findings of this study and support the argument that the motivations of tourists to ‘dark’ places are varied, and indeed that ‘dark’ attractions are sites for various experiences, many of which are often devoid of dark aspects. Thus tourists at dark sites are not automatically ‘dark’ tourists. In other words, visitors at dark tourism attractions or accurately, sites associated with death and suffering have various emotions and motivations for the visit, and therefore, by calling a site ‘dark tourism’, you are highlighting that the motives of visitors to this site is dark, which is not the case. Accordingly, dark tourism attractions should be replaced by sites associated with death and suffering.

Butler and Suntikul (2013, p. 292), in their book about tourism and war pointed out and articulated ‘the many different motivations that there are for tourists to seek out war-related destinations, to avoid the blunt and misguided categorisation of all war-related tourism as ‘dark tourism’, associated with death and suffering’.

The majority of visitors were on a holiday in the surrounding areas of Westerbork and the main purpose of their holiday was not visiting Westerbork. Accordingly, this visit to Westerbork can be seen as a day out or a random stop, as suggested by several scholars (Austin, 2002; Logan & Reeves, 2009; Slade, 2003). Dark tourism often occurs as a form of derived demand (i.e. people can visit a site as a set of possibilities in which a visit to the dark tourism site was not pre-planned).

The findings also reveal that curiosity is one of the motives to visit Westerbork. Tarlow (2005) suggests that visitors of dark sites, especially those connected to the Holocaust, are driven by sense of curiosity and that a visit is ‘the thing to do’. Additionally, Ashworth (2002) emphasises motives, such as satisfying curiosity about the unusual as one of the motives for visiting sites related to death and atrocities.

Hughes (2008) identified in her research ‘must see’ a major motivation and this is supported by this study. Others (Biran et al., 2011; Dunkely et al., 2011) have found that visitors have a need to visit a place to validate that certain events really happened, and to make sure that events like this can be avoided in the future and this was also found in Westerbork.
Many participants mentioned that they were visiting Westerbork, because they want to learn about the Holocaust and want to see what had happened, with their own eyes. Other motivations were related to exclusiveness, such as ‘I need to see it to believe that something can happen’, as a motive too was revealed in the study of Biran et al. (2011) at Auschwitz.

Ashworth (2004) also notes that motives range from pilgrimage, search for identity, and a sense of social responsibility (i.e. ‘lest we forget’, ‘never again’) to darker motives, such as interest and indulgence in violence and suffering. Conscience, such as horrific occurrence that may never happen again was one of the motives found in this research study.

As revealed in this study, motivations to visit Westerbork were not dark at all. Visitors wanted to learn about and feel empathy with the victims and did not go to these sites for sensation-seeking purposes. They were curious about what really had happened there. These findings support the concept of dark tourism as best defined by the motivation of the visitors, and not by the characteristics of the destination. This is in contrast to the ideas of Stone (2006), who argued that it is what had happened on the site itself that makes the distinction a dark site or not. However, the findings of this study do not disprove Stone, they show that tourists to a dark site may not be dark or driven by dark motives, but in sense they support Stone, as people come to this site, because it is known as a dark site, in that, it is clearly related to the Holocaust. This discussion supports the idea that dark tourism is socially constructed.

Dark tourism is currently conceptualised as visits to sites centred or linked to death, atrocities, and human tragedies (Seaton, 1996). Studies of many so-called dark tourist attractions have tended to focus on the on-site presentation, often ignoring questions surrounding the visitor’s experience (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Disregarding the visitors’ experience may explain the aggregation of diverse, unrelated, visits to death or transit camps (e.g. Westerbork), sites where celebrities were killed or buried, war museums, cemeteries and sites associated with violent crimes falling under the all-encompassing ‘umbrella term’ of dark tourism. This could realistically be extended to include every town, castle and even historical museum that could be (and usually are) linked in some way to death and human atrocities. Such a broad outlook may explain Stone and Sharpley’s unequivocal non-apologetic claim that the research literature on this theme is ‘eclectic and theoretically fragile’ (Stone & Sharpley, 2008, p. 575). This over-simplification of lumping all visitors to such sites together, disregarding the multi-functionality of meaningful spaces (Terkenli, 2001), and ignoring the fact that the same tourist space provides stages for different crowds (Edensor, 2000), results in ignorance of the diversity and complexity of the visitor’s experiences at such sites. There is evidence that different visitors at sites that are associated with death and suffering are involved in various experiences often of completely different natures. For example, Robben Island is a popular tourism and recreation destination, visited by foreign tourists mostly because of its associations as a former prison, incarcerating, among others, Nelson Mandela. However, it is also a wild life sanctuary, noted for penguins and an excursion and picnic destination for locals, visitors who may be quite indifferent to its dark associations (Ashworth, 2004).

Tarlow (2005) notes that heritage sites, which are often presented as case study examples of dark tourism (e.g. Auschwitz, Ground Zero, Anne Frank House, Massada), are spaces where tourists are involved in various, often unrelated, experiences. These could be heritage experience (if the site is part of the visitors’ heritage), educational cultural experience (for those who wish to gain knowledge), as well as other tourism experiences (e.g. because the site is a must-see place). More specifically, it is argued here that even Auschwitz, the ‘spot that symbolises the pinnacle of European dark tourism’ (Tarlow, 2005, p. 45) and the ‘epitome of a dark tourism destination’ (Stone & Sharpley, 2008,
p. 587), because it has become a must-see tourist attraction, provides an arena for a variety of tourist experiences, some of which have few or no dark elements.

The argument here is that visits to attractions in which death is presented do not necessarily constitute dark tourism, nor make those visitors dark tourists. Therefore, the conceptualisation of dark tourism and dark tourists should be based on the links between the site’s attributes and the reasons why tourists visit that site, rather than on the site’s attributes alone. Those links, which affect a tourist’s behaviour before the visit (motivations and interest), during the visit (the actions on-site), and following the visit (impact of the visit and recollections), are essential to the understanding of the social phenomenon of dark tourism.

Conclusions
This study aimed to enhance the current understanding of visitation to sites presenting death and tragedies, employing a quantitative approach to identify the motivations of visitors. This study examines the motivations of visitors to a dark tourism site, namely Westerbork.

This study reveals that people visit Westerbork mainly for ‘self-understanding’, ‘curiosity’, ‘conscience’, to experience a ‘must see place’ and ‘exclusiveness’.

The findings reveal that visitors are driven to visit the site for different reasons. Some of those reasons are similar to general tourist motivations, and others to specifics related to the attraction of the specific site. This is the first study that examines visitor motivations to Westerbork, a site associated with death and suffering, and contributes to deeper understanding of tourist consumption of sites associated with death and disaster.

Limitations and future research
While methodologically, the exploration of a multidimensional theoretical construct (such as motivation in this study) preferably requires an extensive number of statements obtaining relatively high Cronbach’s alpha scores for a question set, another way of measuring motivation can be done through interviews. In such manner, participants would have the opportunity to mention other types of motivations. This article exclusively reviewed the literature of dark tourism motivations, and measures for other types of motivation were disregarded. Further research would permit respondents to mention other types of motivations.

Another limitation of the study is that as in any research focusing on motivations, it could be claimed that fascination with death was not exposed, because people are reluctant to reveal or admit to ‘less socially acceptable’ (Ashworth, 2004, p. 96) motivations. For instance, participants were not asked whether they have ‘interest in death’ or ‘morbid curiosity’. It would be interesting to examine differences across respondents, whether some groupings have particular interest in death and sufferings.

Clearly, there is much more empirical research needed to understand visitor motivations on sites of death and disaster more fully. Such sites include those related to the Holocaust, and other very different destinations attracting visitors of many different nationalities, with wide ranging motivations. Additionally, while this study concentrates on visitor motives only, a future study should be useful to include the tourist emotions that moderate the motives.

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References


