Department of Marketing

Staging, Experiences and Outcomes in Dark Tourism Settings

Praosiri Charusalaipong

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Copyright Statement

Signed: PraosiriCharusalaipong

Abstract

An increasingly popular form of tourism involves visits to sites of death and suffering, so-called ‘dark tourism’. Studies have highlighted the growing fascination with this topic; however, current research on dark tourism has paid limited attention to visitor experiences and consequences. Moreover, issues relating to design and marketing, which can shape visitors’ experiences, are underexplored. Drawing on dark tourism literature and the experience economy framework, this thesis explores the relationship between staging, experience and outcomes in dark tourism settings.

This is an exploratory study building on a qualitative research strategy using a netnographic approach. The data collected comprise 3680 online reviews posted on TripAdvisor websites. The five battlefield sites reviewed are (1) 1066 Battle of Hastings Abbey and Battlefield, (2) Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre & Country Park, (3) Culloden Battlefield, (4) Gettysburg National Military Park, and (5) Omaha Beach and Omaha Beach Memorial Museum.

The findings reveal various experience staging elements: theatrical (theme, staff, design and landscape) and functional (activities and exhibitions, visitor guidance, facilities); seven forms of experiences (physical, cognitive, flow, emotional, introspective, relational and paranormal); and three outcomes (evaluation, recollection and consequentiality). The associations among these three constructs result in a conceptual model of dark experience. Furthermore, this study suggests that the location authenticity and timescale of the event are influential factors in the dark experience model.

This research enhances the theoretical underpinning of dark tourism by conceptualising a model of dark experiences via identifying the relationship between staging and experiences and outcomes. The identification of visitor experiences and relationship to outcome components describe the experience consumption in which visitors consume ‘dark’ destinations, rather than a more generic description of the visitor experience. These findings contribute by demonstrating the characteristics of experience consumption in dark tourism settings. To influence prospective visitors and to maintain visitor interests in the destination, understanding visitor experiences is

critical for destination managers. This model offers a comprehensive insight into the holistic view of dark experience from visitor perspectives.

Previous research has focused on some dimensions of experience offerings. The second contribution of this thesis is that it is one of the first studies that fully integrates the components of experience staging in a dark tourism context. Identifying the sets of determinants that capture the uniqueness of the destination characteristics significant to visitors could provide an improved experience for future visitors. The findings contribute to the experience economy framework by demonstrating how the staging elements are used for experience engagement and meaning-making. By offering experience staging that visitors can engage and enjoy, dark tourism destinations can attract more visitors and sustain earnings from tourism throughout the year rather than only seasonal earning.

To obtain a better understanding of dark experience consumption, it is imperative to consider similarities and differences across various contexts. Therefore, the third contribution of this study is that the multi-dimensional visitor experience encapsulates both positive and negative valence and can be applied in both hedonic and non-hedonic tourism contexts.

(69,633 words excluding references and appendices)

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Table 3.1: Dimensions of visitor experiences

Experience Dimensions	Authors	Purpose/Context
Cognitive	Lee and Smith (2015)	To measure tourist experience in visiting historic sites and museums
	Otto and Ritchie (1996)	To explore components of service experience in tourism sectors (hotels, airlines, tours & attractions)
	Pekarik et al. (1999)	To explore satisfying experiences in museums
Physical	Forrest (2013)	To explore the role of the exhibition environment in the visitor experience
	Masberg and Silverman (1996)	To understand college student visitor experiences in visiting heritage sites
	Pekarik et al. (1999)	To explore satisfying experiences in museums
Sensory	Agapito et al. (2014)	To use the sensory experience for segmenting and profiling tourists in southwest Portugal
	Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland (2010)	To identify the role of landscape in shaping sensory experience in Budapest, Hungary and Spring Mill Pioneer Village, US
	Tussyadiah and Zach (2012)	To identify the influence of geo-based technology on place experiences
Relational	Jennings and Weiler (2004)	To examine the perspectives of the mediator (broker) on the quality of tourist experience
	Williams and Soutar (2009)	To measure visitor value, satisfaction and behavioural intention in adventure tourism
	Zatori et al. (2018)	To investigate how service providers can enhance authentic and memorable visitor experiences in sightseeing tours
Introspective	Collins-Kreiner (2010)	To review the pilgrimage experience in the tourism context
	Sharpley and Jepson (2011)	To explore the spiritual experience in rural tourism (Lake District)
	Pekarik et al. (1999)	To explore satisfying experiences in museums
Hedonic	Holbrook and Hirschman (1982)	To investigate the experiential consumption of leisure activities

	Lee et al. (1994)	To explore the recalled experience and the interpretation of leisure experience
	Otto and Ritchie (1996)	To explore components of service experience in tourism sectors (hotels, airlines, tours & attractions)
Restorative	Otto and Ritchie (1996)	To explore components of service experience in tourism sectors (hotels, airlines, tours & attractions)
	Xu and Chan (2010)	To explore service experiences in the context of package tours, specifically inbound package tours to China from the US
	Weng and Chiang (2014)	To explore the result of restorative experience from leisure activities
Emotional	Andrade and Cohen (2007)	To assess the intensity of negative feelings and positive feelings in the aftermath of experiences
	Larsen et al. (2001)	To explore the co-occurrence of positive and negative emotional experiences
	Lee (2015)	To identify the relationship between personal emotion and memorable experience at a culinary attraction (former heritage site)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

The human tendency to pursue pleasure and avoid pain is one of the most well-grounded assumptions in psychology and consumer studies (Andrade and Cohen, 2007). However, consumers' desire to acquire and consume emotional experiences that produce negative emotional feelings is also recognised within the literature, the mainstream media and the entertainment industry (Andrade and Cohen, 2007). People consume violent images, as well as talking, reading and writing articles about death (Goldstein, 1999). They consume displays of death in their leisure time or visit sites associated with death and suffering during their excursion trips, even if they are disturbed and disgusted by scenes of death and violence.

Among the forms of tourist experience involving the consumption of negative feelings, those feelings associated with death have arguably been an element of tourism longer than any other, often through religious or pilgrimage observances (Seaton, 2007). Various terms have been used to conceptualise the growing interest in sites associated with events of human death and suffering, for example 'thanatourism' (Seaton, 1996) and 'morbid tourism' (Blom, 2000). Scholars have commonly used the term 'dark tourism' to describe the act of travel to any site of this form of remembrance, education or entertainment. The concept of 'dark tourism' was first developed by Foley and Lennon (1996) in an editorial for the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. Unsurprisingly, dark tourism research has developed over the past 20 years, with studies and debate from contributors on topics such as battlefields, cemeteries, prisons and death sites.

Significant advances in media and technology have exposed societies around the world to the latest news of death, conflict and suffering to an unprecedented extent (Andrade and Cohen, 2007; Best, 2007). Stone (2013) highlights that dark tourism is an increasingly pervasive feature within the contemporary visitor economy. This type of tourism contributes to economic growth and creates an avenue to reflect on the experiences of societies (Boateng et al., 2018). Dark tourism attractions are gaining popularity, whether as a main attraction or as part of a larger recreational

trip (Strange and Kempa, 2003). This factor is true among British travellers: the figures from flight-booking website 'kiwi.com' reveal a 307% increase in searches from the United Kingdom (UK) to destinations associated with death and suffering since the Netflix series *Dark Tourist* aired (Finch, 2018). According to Best (2007), tourists are not only searching for an insight into issues or generally seeking knowledge, but are also eager to explore these elements in an exciting and thrilling way. The notable touristic consumption in dark tourism includes visitor attractions, museums and memorials, organised tours, special events and exhibitions, and it has become a focus for mainstream tourism providers. Visiting such sites plays a significant part in tourist experiences and the development of these sites as tourist destinations.

In service and marketing studies, the concept of the experience has become a central focus following the pioneering article of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) on experiential consumption (Binkhorst, 2005; Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Sandström et al., 2008). Traditional marketers have typically combined experiences with service but, in an 'experience economy', experiences are distinct economic offerings, as different from services as services are from goods (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). As goods and services become commoditised, the customer experiences that companies create will matter most (ibid). Experiences are physically, emotionally, intellectually and sometimes spiritually connected with customers (Petermans and Van Cleempoel, 2009); that is, experiences can 'touch' people better than goods or services (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). People attach great value to experiences because they are memorable despite being intangible and immaterial. The world of business is, therefore, moving away from fungible commodities to tangible goods, intangible services and memorable experiences, which form a fourth economic offering (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998).

In a competitive market, in which there is an abundance of buyers and sellers, businesses find it difficult to distinguish themselves from their competitors (Binkhorst, 2005). Tourism destinations face the same problem. Designing and offering excellent experiences is a way for destinations to survive in the ever-more-competitive future. Hence, the experience economy in the tourism sector no longer consists of an optional added value but is a mandatory benefit of any tourism offering (Larsen, 2007).

The 'experience' is proposed as a subjective and personal activity of an individual (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt et al., 2015). Tourists demand different things from their

experiences; for example, some tourists require positive emotions in the entertainment experience (e.g. Bigné et al., 2005) or educational experience, which is an important aspect of the museum visit (Cohen, 2011). In this sense, tourist experiences vary among individuals and cultures and can be staged in and across contexts.

This study contributes to the literature by developing a dark experience framework to explain the perspective of visitors in terms of experience staging, visitor experiences and outcomes in dark tourism settings. This research begins by addressing the framework of the experience economy, tourist experience and dark tourism within the literature. The link between dark experience provision and consumption is examined to shed new light on dark tourism experiences and practical directions for the industry. The following sections of this chapter outline the aim of the thesis and the research objectives. Finally, this chapter summarises each chapter in this PhD thesis.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

Research Aim

The overall aim of the research is as follows:

To explore the relationship between staging, experiences and outcomes in dark tourism settings.

This aim explores the consumption and delivery of experience in dark tourism settings regarding how the experiences are staged and consumed by visitors. This aim is influenced by prior research on dark tourism. First, consumers desire to acquire and consume emotional experiences that produce negative emotional feelings (Andrade and Cohen, 2007). However, the consequences of these negative responses remain underexplored (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015; Bigné et al., 2005). Nonetheless, Tarlow (2005, p.48) remarks on the importance of consequences of such a visit in his dark tourism definition: these are ‘visitations to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred, and that continue to impact our lives’. Furthermore, Biran and Hyde (2013) argue that the relationships between the consumption and the provision of dark tourism and the consequences of dark experiences are limited. This holistic view, examining both demand and supply sides, could develop a dark tourism body of knowledge.

Second, tourist experience studies typically focus on the consumption of pleasant diversions in pleasant places, and the evaluation emphasises the positive experiences and experience failures (e.g. Hosany et al., 2015; Nawijn, 2011; Strange and Kempa, 2003). However, the curious connection between negative emotions and their touristic representations has generated academic debate. Scholars have sought to address how leisure and pleasure are mixed with tragedy, such as at dark tourism sites (Rojek, 1993; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). Thus, negative feelings could be relevant for understanding consumption experiences and for capturing the complexities around dark tourism research, which has paid limited attention to visitor experiences and the design and marketing of dark tourism sites (Biran and Hyde, 2013)

Since experience is at the very heart of tourism marketing and development, visitors are perhaps the most important stakeholders (Daengbuppha, 2009; Rahman, 2019). The need to understand them is fundamental for achieving destination attraction. However, Pikkemaat et al. (2009) and Åstrøm (2017) argue that experience staging has been overlooked in tourism literature. Light (2017) supports this view; specific issues relating to marketing and management require further investigation. In this sense, the ways in which visitor experiences are shaped by marketing activities are potential areas for future research. Previous studies have explored dark tourism supply from the perspective of tourism practitioners (e.g. Farmaki, 2013). Some researchers have highlighted dimensions of experience offering (e.g. site exhibits) (Daugbjerg, 2011; Jones, 2011), tour guides (Chronis, 2005, 2012) and onsite retailing (Brown, 2013). Therefore, this present research explores how site offerings are staged from visitor perspectives, which is influenced by the 'experience economy' framework. In other words, this study explores the staging elements and how they affect visitor experiences.

Moreover, Packer and Ballantyne (2016) suggest that the connection between visitors' immediate responses (experiences) and outcomes such as memories and narratives is an unexplored issue in tourism studies. This study applies the multifaceted model of visitor experience by Packer and Ballantyne (2016), which is presented in terms of positive or pleasant experiences. Thus, this research ascertains whether all the facets of experience should be considered encapsulated in dark tourism contexts that predominantly suggest negative emotional responses.

This research aim leads to four research objectives, which are presented in the following section.

Research Objectives

Objective 1: To explore dark tourism provision in terms of experience staging.

To capture experience staging, this first objective focuses on visitor perspective in a defined setting of experiences. The objective seeks the management tools of experience staging, which are designed to deliver an atmosphere. Furthermore, these staging elements enhance the likelihood of memorable experiences.

Moreover, Pine II and Gilmore (1999) assert that memorable experiences (goods) can be staged around tangible offerings and intangible offerings (services). When these intangible service offerings are staged in a manner that results in the memorable value of the offering being the immediate experience, service offerings become experience offerings (ibid). Thus, this objective explores how both tangible and intangible offerings are staged in a dark tourism context to provide insights into how dark tourism products can be designed.

Objective 2: To explore visitor experiences at dark tourism sites.

The tourist experience is defined as the moment when tourism consumption and tourism production meet (Andersson, 2007). After exploring experience provision in the first objective, this objective emphasises the consumption aspect by exploring visitor experiences.

The content and intensity of visitor experiences vary from one context to another and from one person to another (Aho, 2001; Caton and Santos, 2007). This study applies the multifaceted model of tourist experience by Packer and Ballantyne (2016), which is guided by hedonic tourism research, to develop an understanding of visitor experiences in dark tourism settings.

Objective 3: To explore the experience outcome dimensions of dark tourism visitation.

In tourism research generally, positive experiences generate positive consequences, and many studies have centred on the interpretation of experiences (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Relatively less is known about the subsequent post-experience effects on the visitor in dark tourism research (Weaver et al., 2017). There is a definite need for this study to explore the potential outcomes of visiting a site associated with death and suffering.

This objective explores the post-visit outcomes regarding how visitors interpret the meanings attached to sites of death. In terms of consumption perspective, this study explores critical dimensions of outcomes of what makes individual experiences unique, spectacular and memorable. The findings answer the research gap concerning how consequences such as memories and narratives are an unexplored issue in tourism studies and especially in dark tourism research.

Objective 4: To explore the relationship between experience provision (staging) and consumption (experiences and outcomes).

This final objective answers the research gap on the relationship between provision and consumption in dark tourism studies. Previous studies have evaluated the production and consumption of dark tourism (e.g. Farmaki, 2013), whereby experience production is conducted with supply side stakeholders. Visitors are at the very heart of the tourism industry; to enhance visitor experience, understanding them is critical for destination managers. This study identifies how staging enriches visitor experiences and how experiences influence outcomes from the visitor's perspective.

1.3 Thesis Overview

This thesis is presented in six chapters. Each of which is outlined briefly:

Chapter 2 reviews the literature about dark tourism. Initially, the chapter summarises the concept of dark tourism, and continues by discussing dark tourism supply by introducing site classification using various criteria. Tourism entails people travelling to places outside their usual environment. Destinations need to construct narratives to attract visitors. However, the marketing and management of dark tourism studies are limited. Sites of death or that are associated with death and suffering can be staged as tourism products to attract visitors. In other words, the section reviews how dark sites are presented in the ways that portray the site features and enhance visitor experiences.

Although people are drawn to dark tourism sites, there has been a lack of attention to the visitor experience and the impact of such visits. Hence, the final part of this chapter reviews the scope of consumption in dark tourism, focusing on visitor experiences and outcomes. Dark tourism is often identified as the alternative to hedonic tourism. The experiences and outcomes of dark

tourism encompass unlikely forms that can be compared and contrasted with recent studies in the hedonic context in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 initially reviews the concept of experience. The chapter emphasises the extraordinary experience of individuals that go beyond the realm of mundane life. In the tourism context, experience holds special meaning for the visitor: a rite of passage or a moment of personal development (Morgan, 2009).

The chapter continues with the concept of experience economy (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). This concept is central in service and marketing studies and is described as a distinct economic offering that is different from commodities, goods or services. This managerial perspective emphasises why experience is significant and moves away from the production perspective. In other words, experience is an effective strategy for obtaining a lasting competitive advantage in modern markets. Since experience is at the very centre of tourism, the literature review on experience economy and experience staging in a tourism context is presented, including the significance of experiential marketing.

Many attempts to characterise different components of the visitor experience are present in both visitor studies and the broader leisure and tourism literature. The tourist experience is then reviewed to understand the visitor experience in a hedonic context, which is applied in this non-hedonic context study.

Chapter 4 presents the research design and methodology of this study. Initially, philosophical research paradigms are reviewed to justify selecting a social constructivism approach in this research. The exploratory qualitative approach is adopted using netnography. The rationales as to why TripAdvisor was chosen to collect the data from are explained.

The chapter continues with the context of this study, dark conflict sites and delineates the five chosen sites, outlining the importance of them as research sites. Then, the chapter explains the method of data collection and the strategies for establishing reliability and validity in the research. The sampling method and sample size of this study are then described. Finally, the chapter discusses thematic analysis as a method to help interpret the data using the software NVivo12.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study. This study adopts an integrative approach, incorporating both the deductive a priori template of codes approach by Crabtree and Miller (1998)

and the data-driven inductive approach of Boyatzis (1998). The findings comprise five sections: experience staging, visitor experiences, outcomes, factors influencing experiences and outcomes, and a conceptual model of dark experience.

Six elements of experience staging are identified and categorised into theatrical and functional tools based on the experience economy framework. Seven forms of visitor experiences and three experience outcomes are identified. Temporality and location authenticity are factors that influence experience consumption and delivery. Finally, the relationship among experience staging, experiences and outcomes are examined using the matrix query coding query by NVivo12.

Chapter 6 synthesises this thesis contribution in terms of theoretical and managerial implications, with suggestions for future research. The findings enhance the theoretical underpinning of dark tourism by conceptualising the model of dark experiences by identifying the relationship between staging and experiences and outcomes. This research also contributes to the experience economy framework by demonstrating how the staging elements are used for experience engagement and meaning-making. The multi-dimensional visitor experience encapsulates both positive and negative valences and can be applied in both hedonic and non-hedonic tourism contexts. This research provides a lens for considering the broader ways in which people engage with sites of death. Finally, some concluding remarks are made.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Dark Tourism

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews dark tourism in academic discourse, taking a holistic perspective and assessing both consumption and delivery. This chapter addresses the existing dark tourism literature and fosters new approaches toward an understanding of the subject. To date, dark tourism research has yet to engage fully with the experiences of tourists (Biran et al., 2011; Biran and Hyde, 2013; Miles, 2014; Sharpley, 2012). Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to the consequences of these experiences (Ashworth and Isaac, 2015; Bigné et al., 2005; Biran and Hyde, 2013). These issues remain key omissions in dark tourism research; an understanding of experience and outcomes are essential for the effective marketing and management of such sites and to enhance visitor experiences through better design and improved facilities.

This chapter first briefly summarises the definition of dark tourism and considers how scholars classify dark tourism sites. The chapter continues by explaining how dark tourism destinations are staged by focusing on theme, site personnel, landscape and settings, as well as supporting facilities that influence potential visitors. A well-defined experience staging, developed from a site's core identity, allows visitors to engage in different types of experiences. The following section presents visitor experiences and outcomes, which leads to broader tourist experiences in the next chapter.

2.1 Defining Dark Tourism

Visiting places associated with death is not new; it has featured in the touristic landscape since the pre-modern age (Heuermann and Chhabra, 2014; Roberts and Stone, 2014; Seaton, 2007; Stone, 2005). Examples of such tourism include visits to churches and shrines, the Roman Colosseum, the volcano-buried city of Pompeii, former World War One (WWI) battlefields, the Killing Fields in Cambodia, and Ground Zero in New York. These phenomena are examples of what is commonly called 'dark tourism'. The term was first coined in the article by Foley and

Lennon (1996) called 'Heart of Darkness'. They define dark tourism as visiting the sites of death and disasters or sites interpreting such events for remembrance, education or entertainment (ibid).

Dark tourism has been assigned different terminologies and meanings by various scholars. For instance, Seaton (1996 p.240) suggests that the term defines the "travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death"" as 'thanatourism'. Other researchers have used alternative terms, including 'black spot tourism' (Rojek, 1991, 1997) 'morbid tourism' (Blom, 2000), 'atrocity tourism' (Ashworth and Hartmann, 2005), 'war tourism' (Smith, 1998) and 'grief tourism' (Trotta, 2013). No single term has yet found widespread acceptance, and the label 'dark tourism' remains widely used (Light, 2017).

Although the majority of the definitions describe dark tourism as a specific type of tourism, few definitions focus on visitors in terms of their motivations and experiences. In this study, the term 'dark tourism' describes consumption and delivery within the broader tourism domain as "the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre" (Stone, 2006, p.146).

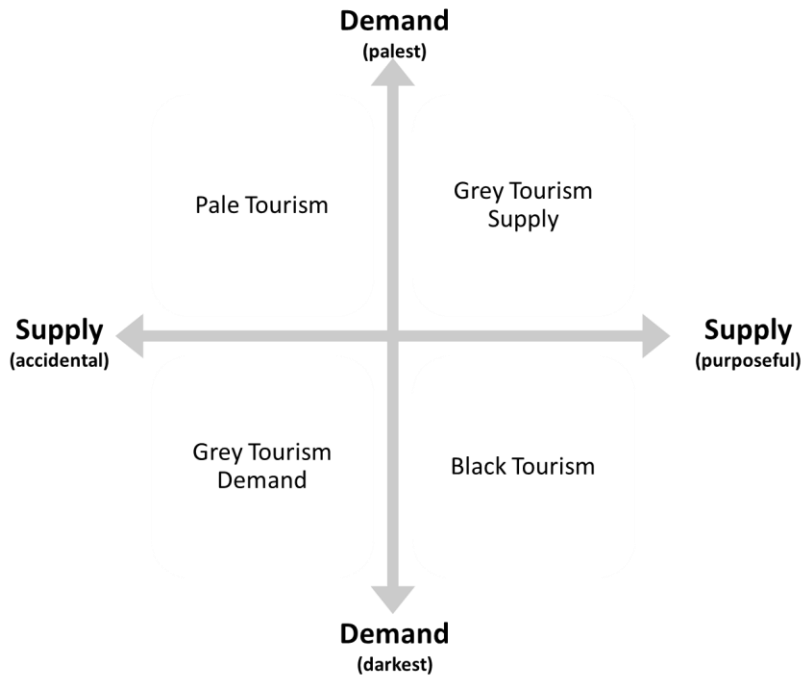
2.2 Dark Tourism Classification

Scholars have attempted to classify dark sites using various criteria; for example, Miles (2002) highlights the significant distinction between dark and darker tourism by adopting a space-time framework. Miles' study takes two dark tourism sites (the United States (US) Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC and Auschwitz-Birkenau in Oświęcim) as sites associated with death and a place of death, respectively. Locational authenticity affects darker tourism visitation; it evokes emotions through location (ibid). Beyond being a museum, Auschwitz-Birkenau is also a mass graveyard due to the crematoria. On the other hand, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum is not a site of death but converts memorial into vivid memory. Despite the superior exhibitory technology of the site, the Museum is less dark than Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nearness of events in time also distinguishes dark from darker places. This paper offers the understanding that dark tourism destinations are possible to characterise by considering their contents and distance from the event itself, which represent the tourist attraction basis.

Sharpley (2005) suggests that dark tourism is a 'continuum of purpose'. A matrix of dark tourism using demand and supply as a criterion is more appropriate for locating particular

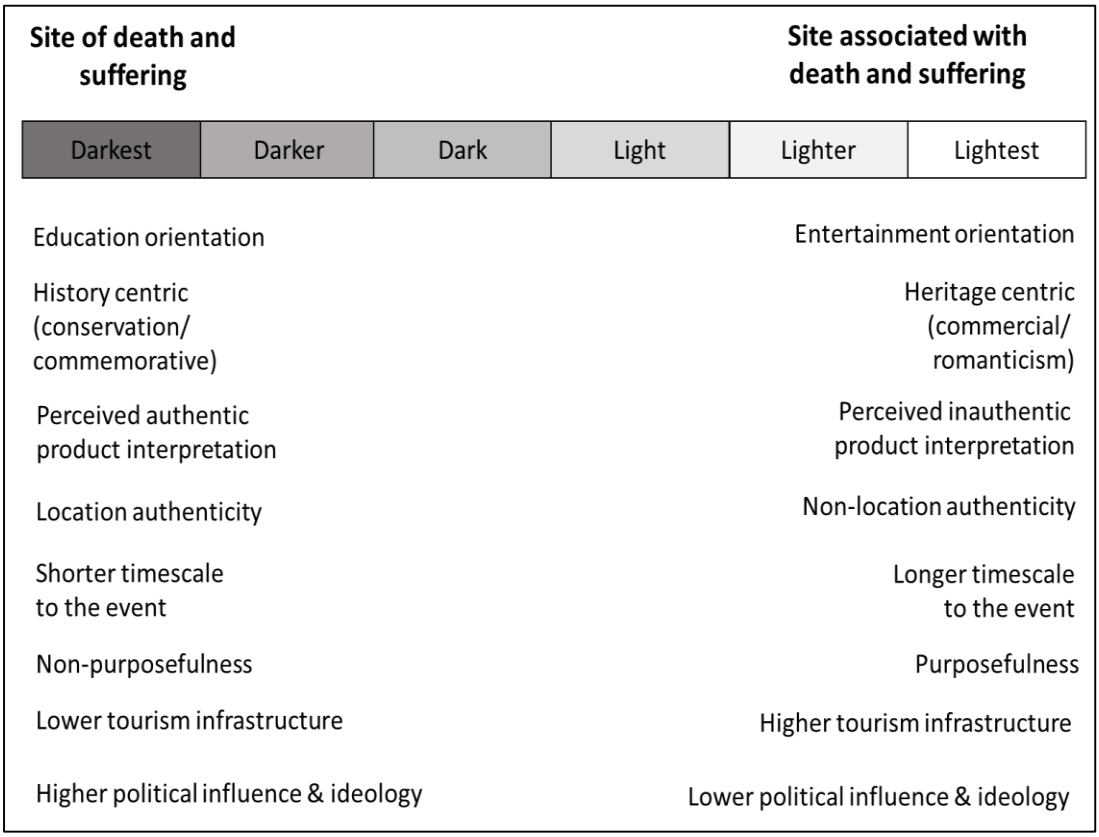
attractions or experiences. In other words, a dark tourism site may be consumed in different ways by different visitors (demand), and the site purposefully or accidentally serves as a dark tourism site (supply). Consequently, four shades of dark tourism exist (see Figure 2.1). The author argues that *pale tourism* focuses on visitors with limited interest in death who visit sites or unintended tourist attractions, for example, visits to the tomb and memorial of the late President John F. Kennedy at Arlington National Cemetery, which are motivated by an interest in his life rather than his death. Visits to recent mass death sites or accident sites are categorised as *grey tourism demand* because people are motivated by the death to see an unexpected dark tourism site. *Grey tourism supply* is exemplified by Alcatraz Island. The ex-prison attracts visitors who have some, but not a dominant, interest in death because the site is overshadowed by commerce and entertainment. *Black tourism* is pure dark tourism, in which tourists fascinated with death are satisfied by the intentional supply of experiences by death or death-associated sites. A visit to the Flight 93 Memorial in Pennsylvania (United Airline flight hijacked as part of the September 11 attacks) can be put into this quadrant.

Figure 2.1: Matrix of dark tourism (Sharpley, 2005)



Inevitably, the above analysis is open to criticism; the consumption of dark tourism experiences may vary, particularly in terms of the intensity of interest in or meaning of death associations. Perhaps, given the diversity of dark tourism attractions, using the sites themselves (purposefully or not) as a criterion does not include the multilayers of dark tourism supply. Therefore, it is prudent to identify dark tourism products that account for multiple shades of analysis. Stone (2006) proposes a dark tourism spectrum using perceived product features within a 'darkest-lightest' framework of supply (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Dark tourism spectrum (Stone, 2006)



The dark tourism spectrum ranges from darkest to lightest by characterising the dominating features, such as objectives (education or entertainment orientation), authenticity perceptions, location, timescale, tourism infrastructure and political influences. These criteria provide a basis for locating dark sites on the darkest-lightest scale. Drawing upon this spectrum, Stone (2006) outlines the 'seven dark suppliers', as summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Seven dark suppliers (Stone, 2006)

Dark Suppliers	Definitions
Dark fun factories	Attractions sites and tours that predominantly have a commercial and entertainment focus and present real or fictional death or morbid events. Examples: The Merlin Dungeons, UK, Europe, USA Dracula tours, Romania
Dark exhibitions	Sites and exhibition which primarily combine the product design to reflect the education and learning opportunities. This type of dark supply revolves around death with an educational and reflective message. Examples: The Body Worlds, UK, Europe, USA, Africa International Slavery Museum, UK
Dark dungeon	Sites that involve former jails, prisons and courthouses, typically a blend of education and entertainment, possesses a high degree of tourism infrastructure. Examples: Robben Island, South Africa Alcatraz Island, USA
Dark resting places	The cemeteries or graveyards typically conserved by the landscape and architecture. Examples: Skogskyrkogården, Sweden Père Lachaise Cemetery, France
Dark shrines	The sites of a recent death, formally or informally constructed at or very close to the location of death as a place for remembrance or paying respect. Examples: Ground Zero, USA 2011 Earthquake and tsunami sites, Japan
Dark conflict sites	Sites focusing on war and battlefields and their commodification as potential tourism products. Typically, the sites are originally non-purposeful as tourist attractions. Examples: Gettysburg National Military Park, USA Omaha Beach, France
Dark camps of genocide	Sites that have genocide as the central thanatological theme. Examples: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland Khmer Rouge Killing Fields, Cambodia

This section constructs a framework in which the various dark tourism sites can be located. The dark tourism spectrum provides a valuable opportunity to advance the knowledge of features of dark tourism supply. Additionally, seven dark suppliers allow the dynamic and fluid nature of dark sites to be plotted on the dark tourism spectrum. However, dark sites are multi-layered and shift along the spectrum according to different interpretations. By registering the existence of dark sites and noting the variety of site characteristics, dark tourism research can progress by exploring how dark tourism site is staged as a destination attraction.

2.3 Dark Sites' Experience Staging

The number of visitors to dark tourism sites has been increasing thanks to the development of technology and media, which provides people with access to television (TV) series, films and documentaries that often present dark tourism destinations, heightening people's awareness and intrigue. For example, the TV series *Outlander* portrays Culloden Battlefield (BBC News, 2018a; Campsie, 2019). However, marketing and management have not attracted as much attention as other topics in dark tourism studies (Farmaki, 2013). Much of the debate addresses broader discussions of the supply side, but there have been few studies on frameworks or models of marketing disciplines for dark sites (Light, 2017). Tourism involves the movement of people to places outside their usual environment. Destinations need to construct narratives to attract visitors. Sites of death or associated with death and suffering can utilise and enhance their locations as products to attract visitors. Brown et al. (2012 p.198) argue that, 'dark places must be packaged, promoted, priced and positioned, just like any other product or service.' Lennon and Foley (2000) suggest that the element of commodification within the interpretations and the designs of the sites introduce 'dark tourism'. Thus, a dark site needs to be 'thematically predetermined' by a historical event to attract visitors.

Seaton (2009) suggests that the 'otherness' of death has been an essential element in tourism from medieval pilgrimages to modern-day ghost tours or dungeon attractions. The implications for dark tourism are two-fold: the need to present and protect these sites in a way that orchestrates the site features and shapes visitor experiences. However, developing a site as a tourism destination raises ethical debate about the commodification of a place and its obvious entertainment value, as well as profiting from the dead, as scholars have warned (Brown, 2013;

Lennon and Foley, 1999; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). Shackley (2001) contends that the primary challenge is to have a high volume of visitors and to generate income while maintaining the historical authenticity of a site. In other words, site developments can increase footfall but may degrade the environment and over-utilise its resources.

Seaton (2009) identifies three aspects of dark tourism commodification – financial transactions in relation to a site, stakeholders and beneficiaries, and the impact of commodification. Financial transactions include entrance fees, catering outlets and souvenir shops. Charging an admission fee or advance online bookings are not only methods of funding, but also act to limit demand that might be otherwise overwhelming. The decision to operate dark tourism destinations on a commercial, semi-commercial or non-commercial basis need not be a source of dispute among multiple stakeholders. Finally, the impact of site development affects visitors, and is not mere site exploitation. Management generally intend to make dark tourism spaces more accessible and more easily understood to a broader audience. Mechanisms for such accessibility include interactive displays, user-friendly signage, visitor pathways and wellbeing facilities. These three aspects introduce a well-defined story orchestrated in such a way to benefit stakeholders and visitors. The quandary of dark tourism commodification is how to provide visitor experiences without diluting historical events and national cultures.

The following sections identify the key staging elements intended to make dark tourism spaces more accessible, more easily understood, more user-friendly and more efficient to manage. These elements are as follows: (1) themes, (2) exhibits, activities, and events, (3) personnel, (4) landscape and settings, and (5) facilities.

2.3.1 Dark Site Themes

Tourism destinations are marketed and communicated through brochures, advertisements, travel books and internet (Young, 1999). Turning a site of death into a destination attraction is not always as simple as for other types of touristic places. The term ‘destination attraction’ seems problematic for concentration camps, post-disaster areas, or sites of recent death. This section primarily concerns how dark sites theme the dominant idea without damaging the underlying nature of the sites. In other words, the specific functions of sites create an experience that first attracts potential visitors.

First, dark tourism sites act as memorials. This notion focuses on place as remembrance. Whitmarsh (2001) considers the extent to which museums play a significant role in commemoration for those who served or were killed in war. The study discusses the representation of war in two museums: the British Imperial War Museum (IWM), and the regional In Flanders Fields (IFF) Museum in Belgium. The IWM focuses on a commemorative tradition; memorials have often been constructed and interpreted with various meanings (ibid). The IWM is a national museum, covering twentieth-century conflicts involving Britain and the Commonwealth. This commemorative aspect can focus on individuals or groups, be they a nation or a specific military unit (ibid). In other words, the site offers sub-themes relational to the main theme.

The IFF at Ypres in Belgium is considerably smaller than the IWM and emphasises its locality and a much narrower period: WWI on the Western Front. The IFF's theme focuses on education for visitors to learn about the experiences of individual soldiers (Whitmarsh, 2001). The second theme of dark tourism site is as an educational resource. The IFF site constitutes knowledge and embodies the history of WWI; it captures the personal stories of how the war affected the lives of individuals of many nationalities (Visit, In Flanders Fields Museum, 2020). Today, there are fewer war veterans or veterans' family members. People who seek memorial forms are, therefore, likely to decrease in number. Instead, war museums switch to an educational focus about peace and war today. Simply put, the museum and its display intend to communicate with the next generation of visitors, rather than with the direct memorial generation.

Third, dark tourism sites become tourist attractions. This theme concerns various direct uses, such as establishing a visitor centre and developing theme trails, such as the Merlin Dungeons in the UK, Europe, Asia and the US (Stone, 2009a) and ghost tours (Fraser, 2005; Thompson, 2008). These examples identify a type of storytelling tradition and represent an entertainment focus. Indirect uses, whereby the site, rather than the history, is used as the basis of attraction, could be a recreational park. For example, Skogskyrkogården (Woodland Cemetery) in Sweden is a UNESCO World Heritage site where visitors can find fantastic landscapes and artworks in a park-like setting. The site also houses a visitor centre that includes an exhibition about the site, tourist information services, a shop, and a café (Visitors Guide: Skogskyrkogården, 2018). The cemetery acts as both a resting place for the dead and a place of peace and tranquillity for the living.

Fourth, the cultural and heritage theme generally entails notions of national and regional identity. The study at Australian Norfolk Island by Best (2007) covers convict history and heritage. The three historic settlements contribute to Norfolk Island's unique culture, of which the islanders are proud of their local heritage. The island has become a popular tourist attraction thanks to this heritage theme. Light (2007) suggests that Dracula tourism has created a vivid portrayal of Romanian cultural identity. The fictional Bram Stoker's Dracula and the historical location of Transylvania can be utilised for branding and marketing the destination, even though Dracula may be an unwelcome stereotype for Romania (ibid). The Dracula Park project demonstrates the advantage of using this myth by the Romanian Government (Tănăsescu, 2006). Overall, dark tourism sites offer key cultural marker points (Tănăsescu, 2006) and are worthy of preservation and marketing (Muresan and Smith, 1998).

Some sites can be themed with more than one specific function. For example, a study of Second World War sites in Singapore (Henderson, 2007) found private and public funds were spent enhancing Singapore's wartime sites as heritage attractions (ibid). Changi Museum was built as an attraction to tell the story of Japanese occupation and the imprisonment of civilians, and Reflections at Bukit Chandu was restored as an interpretive centre to recount the history of the Malay Regiment in defending Singapore. All the war museums and memorials in the city attempt to use the account of the war as Singaporean heritage, although each site has its own specific theme.

This section reviewed how dark sites can 'theme' their inherited resources. Several factors affect the potential of tourism, including cultural significance, the extent of physical remains, media influence, and the degree and quality of communication. Identifying a theme is how a site attempts to convey the 'underlying message' to the visitors and to captivate them in the experiences it offers. Experience staging consists of more than just a theme, however; it should offer a stimulating experience (Goulding, 1999). Theme works as a form of sensory marketing, together with other stimuli in degrees of subtleness (Åstrøm, 2017). In this sense, theme describes how the stories, history, physical objects and activities are presented. The following sections review the elements that contribute to experience staging.

2.3.2 Form of Exhibits, Activities, and Events

Dark tourism destinations can perform as museums that portray relevant histories and cultures. In other words, the sites can focus on the public learning role to serve a wide public. The self-directed learning format of a museum differs from the directed format of the classroom, underlining the significant role of the exhibits (ibid). Artefacts are the principal medium of presentation. Artefacts are 'the props that recreate the past as a lived context' (Turner, 1990 p.125). Displays are set up for the visitors to see, to learn, to stay longer and to return to the museum. Visitors must be motivated and engaged by the provided exhibits at the site.

For example, Jones (2011) analysed three war-related museums in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Germany. The findings reveal that the Museum of Communism in Prague, representing a series of scenes from life under state socialism, focuses on authentic and rare objects. Hohenschönhausen in Germany contains former prison buildings that have largely been left as they were found or reconstructed based on eyewitness testimony (ibid). The museum has no multimedia displays or symbolic representations. The originality of the museum makes the site appear to be 'frozen in time', making it easier for the visitor to empathise with the victims. Finally, The House of Terror in Budapest portrays its dominant narratives using multimedia presentations such as video interviews with eyewitnesses, telephones through which the visitor can listen to archive recordings, photographs, and documentary footage (ibid). The Budapest museum contains symbolic displays of different aspects of occupation periods. Rátz (2006 p.247) argues that this museum is 'a good illustration of the new kind of museum the function of which has gradually evolved from passive to interactive and from the authenticity of the object in the museum's collection to the authenticity of the visitor's experience.' In this regard, modern visitors seem to be looking for instant illuminations, flip events, and blockbuster exhibits rather than meticulous objects.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998 p.139) presumes the widespread multisensory and interactive offerings in museums and historical sites to be because:

> *"Visitors are no longer interested in the quiet contemplation of objects in a cathedral of culture. They want to have an 'experience.' Museums worry that they will be bypassed as boring, dusty places, as spaces of death – death animals, dead plants, defunct things."*

Dark tourism scholars support this presumption, for example, the study at Dybbøl Battlefield Centre in Southern Denmark by Daugbjerg (2011). The destination manifests multisensory communication, personal and interactive involvement with visitors, delivering its experience in sentimental rather than rational forms. In other words, the conventional glass-case museum theme is replaced by the experiential complex. In 1992, the History Centre Dybbøl Banke opened to the public as a 'story-telling-house', not a museum (Historiecenter Dybbøl Banke, 2017). As such, centre staff members explicitly encourage their visitors to reject traditional museum behaviours. The visitors can immerse themselves physically by smelling the gunpowder, hearing thundering guns, feeling the fleas in the hay-filled reconstructed blockhouse of the Danish 1864 soldiers, and watching a diorama and films (VisitSonderborg, n.d.).

According to Daugbjerg (2011), visitors have a positive evaluation of the reconstruction and living-history genre, which provides a better understanding of the context. Not everyone, however, found the centre's experiential narratives stimulating. Some visitors agreed that the centre, while interesting, fails to transmit the horror of war. They found the site to have a general feel of an adventure playground, rather than a historic battlefield. Therefore, blending interactive experience with living history has both pros and cons. Interactive exhibits must demonstrate and represent in a balancing way; the demonstration of real objects versus playful activities is needed to reduce the frictions between an experiential approach and a perspective that regards dark sites as venues for conscientious and non-involved contemplation. Finally, overloading information, leaving little to the imagination for the visitor, does not mean an excellence of exhibits and activities.

Events are a significant motivator of tourism and feature prominently in the marketing plans of destinations (Getz, 2008). Much of the appeal of events is that they are unique, and visitors have to be there to engage in the 'never the same' experience. Clarke and McAuley (2016) researched Australian tourists on a guided bus tour at the Fromelles Interment 2010 in France. This special service marked 100 years since the Battle of Fromelles – known as one of the bloodiest battles in Australian military history (ITV, 2016). This event was a formal funeral service and commemorative ceremony that focused on the Australian role in the battle and on the Australian soldiers lost (ibid). Since the Interment was associated with nationalism and considered an act of national significance, it required formal networking between multiple agencies to produce. Dark tourism events not only 'brand' a destination, but also portray a symbolic meaning that connects the present with the past through a historical event. Exhibits, activities and events are predefined

or ‘planned interpreted’ (Cheal and Griffin, 2013), aiming to assist the visitor in understanding and connecting with the site. The exhibits, activities and events are the creation of a new reality. A site needs to weave these three elements to illuminate the history and to delight the visitor along the way.

2.3.3 Role of Site Personnel

The interpretation of atrocity and death is a particularly sensitive and complicated issue (Rátz, 2006). This act may contribute to the healing process for survivors and their descendants, and features in the reconciliation process between communities and/or nations (ibid). Using the Gettysburg National Military Park case, Chronis (2012) explored how the site is presented, interpreted and co-constructed by multiple narrative agents (e.g. guided tours) through different media (e.g. cyclorama painting, film).

A this site, history is better understood as constructed stories about reality rather than direct representations of it (Chronis, 2005). This constructed nature is delivered via licenced guides as ‘storytellers’ who have to adapt to highly diversified visitors (ibid). The site personnel must communicate with visitors from different historical backgrounds and interpretational attitudes. Many visitors have ancestors who participated in the battle (ibid). Therefore, the connection with the past involves personal links with family or regions. The tour guide connects the past with the present by triggering the association between the family root and the site presentation. In Chronis's (2005) study, for example, a guide pointed out a Louisiana memorial to visitors from Louisiana during the tour performance. This connection supersedes family and regional definitions by acquiring an emotional element. This example can explain the critical attribute of experience as ‘personal’, not just customised like in services. Site personnel play a vital role in the successful presentation of the destination attraction. The tourist experience depends on the performance of staff, since they can provide visitors with an in-depth understanding and an elaborate presentation.

2.3.4 The Presentation of Landscape and Destination Settings

Although the historical event is a crucial element of any dark tourism destination, the representation of the landscape actively directs the nature of visitor engagement with that landscape (Knox, 2006). Knox uses the example of Glencoe to illustrate how the landscape can shape visitor experience. Visitors reported that Glencoe is a haunting and menacing place. The site

is depicted with dark and shaded mountainsides, abandoned settlements and memorials that evoke frightening feelings (ibid). The connection between histories and contemporary representations through promotional media of the glen supporting the landscape promotes Scottish heritage and tourism.

For destination settings, design and landscape reinforce site representation and communication (Forrest, 2013). Physical or site-created environments encompass the land or buildings, and lighting provides a physical sensation and psychological orientation that impact the quality of experience (Goulding, 1999). For instance, specific spots throughout the Gettysburg National Military Park are appropriately marked (Chronis, 2012). The site management relies on archaeological and historical finds to restore the old buildings in the area (Chronis, 2005). Another example, Cheal and Griffin's (2013) study at Gallipoli, pays specific attention to the role of interpretation of the site offerings. The memorials and gravestones are non-deliberate forms of communication. They assist the visitors in understanding and connecting with the site, though they are not erected as a means of engaging visitors. In this regard, they serve as one of the critical elements in eliciting emotional experiences. However, the site still needs to plan and manage to enhance visitor experiences.

2.3.5 The Importance of Facilities

While the purpose of museums and memorials remains education, preservation, commemoration or remembrance, the operationalisation and promotion of activities increasingly aid the tourism destination (Winter, 2009). Experience staging involves not only the activities and exhibits; several dark tourism sites now incorporate gift shops, cafés or venues for hire. The Fremantle Prison in Australia, for example, has a multifaceted role as a heritage site and tourist attraction. The site includes a museum and gallery, a café and a well-stocked gift shop (Fremantle Prison, 2019). The site actively encourages visitors and holds a Gold Award for Cultural Tourism from the Australian Tourism Awards 2017 (Australian Tourism Industry Council, 2017).

As dark tourism sites continue to increase in number, the opportunity to increase footfall and commercial revenues could be the difference between success and failure (McKenzie, 2011). While research is limited on dark tourism retailing, Brown (2013 p.278) contends that shops at dark sites ‘dress themselves as necessary educational resources to be able to profit from their emotional and contentious matter’. The attempt to repossess the experience by purchasing

souvenirs implies a sense of nostalgia (Baldwin and Sharpley, 2009), a sense of existential loss (Sturken, 2007) or the formation of political subjectivity (Potts, 2012). Spencer (2010) suggests that souvenirs can be found in the earliest forms of religious pilgrimage and indicate a 'travel status' and are evidence of an actual pilgrimage undertaken.

Examples of souvenir purchases include books, postcards, toys and other items linked in some way to the visit. Souvenirs mobilise public feeling via sentimental objects. Souvenirs are an experience reminder. Such retail products reflect the site theme to ensure both higher sales and a higher public opinion of the overall site. However, beyond the exhibits and events, the attraction site has to offer supporting facilities for a positive visitor evaluation of the experience setting.

Experience staging manifests both substantive and communicative cues (Arnould et al., 1998). In dark tourism settings, exhibits, activities and events, and site facilities are substantive staging. Communicative staging is the lens through which the destination is presented and interpreted (ibid). In this sense, the theme, site personnel and presentation of the landscape create transcendental experiences for dark destination visitors. Experience staging emphasises authenticity and transmits meanings from destination providers to visitors. The dark site transforms an empty terrain into an encoded landscape to provide historical significance and profound meaning for visitors. This transformation stems from the core identity of a particular site. Experience staging is a method of persuading the public to 'take a look' at the dark tourism destinations through site-specific characteristics, infrastructure and tourist facilities. Experience staging is comprehensively designed, which involves developing, distributing and promoting in an efficient and integrated manner to satisfy visitors. Therefore, it is vital to understand visitor experiences from these experience staging dimensions at dark tourism destinations, and this perspective is reviewed in the following section.

2.4 Dark Tourism Experiences

People are drawn to places of death, atrocity and destruction, but the experience people have and the impact of such a visit can often be forgotten (Stokes, 2013). Little attention is paid to visitor perspectives on dark tourism (Isaac and Çakmak, 2014; Preece and Price, 2005; Stone and Sharpley, 2008). The understanding of dark tourism experiences can reveal the complexities that surround dark situations, rather than merely as identifiable attractions (Buda and McIntosh, 2013).

Identifying a site's attributes or a tourist's motivation provides only a limited understanding of dark tourism consumption. Instead, considering the broader context of the relationship between sites and visitors, including the consequences for individuals, can enhance the theoretical underpinning of dark tourism (Biran and Hyde, 2013; Walter, 2009). Ashworth and Isaac (2015) state that the focus on dark tourism research has to shift to the analysis of experiences. Sites labelled as dark may not always be experienced as dark by every visitor. In other words, experiences are subjective to individuals.

Many forms of visitor experience have been explored in the context of dark tourism, with cognitive and emotional experiences receiving the most attention (Light, 2017). For visitors seeking spiritual experiences, a visit to a dark tourism destination can be an opportunity for reflection (Light, 2017; Pharino et al., 2018). Other experiences are relational in nature. Visitors share their experiences and seek to connect with the place, other visitors or engage in rituals (Light, 2017). Finally, in dark tourism settings, there can be occasions when paranormal experiences are involved (Pharino et al., 2018). Spiritual destinations and sites of death are commonly chosen as places of paranormal activity (ibid). This section reviews five significant forms of visitor experiences: cognitive, emotional, spiritual, shared and paranormal.

2.4.1 Cognitive Experience

In the context of dark tourism, cognitive experience has received the most attention. Cognitive experience refers to the learning, development and understanding of events. Notably, in war-related sites such as battlefields and genocide camps, knowledge and comprehension are central to cognitive experiences that derive from prior expectations and preconceptions about the locations (e.g. Bigley et al., 2010; Biran et al., 2011; Cohen, 2011; Kamber et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2012). For example, visitors described their sought-after benefit from visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau as enriching their knowledge about the Jewish Holocaust and World War II (Biran et al., 2011). According to Cohen (2011), tourists perceive Yad Vashem, the Shoah (Holocaust) memorial museum in Israel, as a legitimate and authentic site for learning about the Holocaust. Although authenticity of location is one of the critical elements in dark tourism, the emphasis on the story of the people involved in the tragedy makes the experience authentic also (ibid). Cohen (2011) states that including an educational dimension helps distinguish dark tourism experiences from recreational ones.

Dark tourism has a significant educational role in medicine and science, notably in anatomy and autopsy, in which medical students learn about the human body. For example, Dr Gunther von Hagens's Body Worlds exhibition displays real human specimens, including whole-body plastinates and individual organs, organ configurations and transparent body slices (Körperwelten, 2019). The exhibition aims to educate the public about the inner workings of the human body and reveal the effects of healthy and unhealthy lifestyles (ibid). The educational form is not only a cognitive experience, however; Body Worlds has an entertainment function. Like a television documentary, such exhibitions are 'edutainment'. The death of others is used to educate and entertain the masses – as seen in 18th-century public executions (Walter, 2009). Cognitive experience can educate audiences by embedding forms of entertainment in lessons. In other words, certain content is intended to teach but it incorporates deliberate entertainment value to attract and maintain the audience.

2.4.2 Emotional Experience

Tourist experiences that involve emotions are critical determinants for dark sites. Research into emotional experience focuses on identifying a range of emotions. For example, Best's (2007) study on Norfolk Island in Australia explored the role of emotions in enhancing visitor experiences and outcomes. Visitors participated in a range of self-guided and organised activities during their visits. Best's findings reveal that emotions are a significant aspect of dark experiences, and the combination of positive and negative emotions from the convict site enriches the positive, satisfying and fulfilling visitor experiences (ibid). Furthermore, this emotional experience complements the knowledge gained by the visitors (ibid). Emotions intensify cognitive experience through tangible artefacts and site remains. This combination of emotional and cognitive experience broadens visitors' thought-action behaviours (ibid). In essence, emotions are influential in shaping visitor evaluations and viewpoints.

Nawijn et al. (2016) focused on a concentration camp memorial site in the Netherlands. The findings identified three emotional clusters, namely misery, sympathy and positivity (ibid). The misery cluster holds five negative emotions: afraid, fear, despair, shame and contempt. On the other hand, the positivity cluster contains gratitude, pride, hope and fascination. The sympathy cluster holds emotions of compassion, awe, disgust and sadness. Dark site visitation can generate a mixed valence of feeling. It is important to note that clustering the emotions in dark tourism

settings allows for a better insight into an emotional experience, which serves as a basis to identify outcomes.

Unsurprisingly, the most reported emotions are sadness, horror and grief (Dunkley et al., 2011; Kidron, 2013; Nawijn and Fricke, 2015; Zhang et al., 2016). Visitors also report feelings of disgust (Podoshen et al., 2015), fear (Best, 2007) and anger (Mowatt and Chancellor, 2011). However, positive responses are presented, such as restoration (Kang et al., 2012), hope (Koleth, 2014) and national pride (Cheal and Griffin, 2013). These reported emotions can elicit altruistic behaviour (Nawijn et al., 2016). People self-examine their morality and reverence with a sense of commemoration and reminiscence.

2.4.3 Spiritual Experiences

Gatewood and Cameron (2004) studied visitor experiences at Gettysburg National Military Park to determine whether there were other responses beyond the educational experience. The site is not only an out-of-classroom history lesson, but also a place where visitors seek a spiritual experience (ibid). The descriptions of the experiences comprise three dimensions: empathy, reverence and deep engagement (ibid). Empathy refers to a strong emotional experience to an earlier event or time in which the individual tries to conjure thoughts, feelings and experiences, including for the hardships and suffering of the fallen (Gatewood and Cameron, 2004). Deep engagement or transcendence involves such concentration that the individual loses the sense of time passing or may have a flow experience of the type suggested by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Reverence or awe include the experience of being in the presence of something holy or having spiritual communion with someone or something (ibid). The essence of encounters at dark sites links intensely profound connections with the past and personal meaning, a feeling of being transported, and the tangible and symbolic nature of the object. Death sites of extraordinary figures can stir strong emotions. These three dimensions of spiritual experience reflect the interrelationship between the emotional and the experience. Battlefield pilgrims, for example, have spiritual experiences as they reflect on the site and consider its significance.

The investigation of Australian touristic experiences at the Gallipoli Battlefield by Cheal and Griffin (2013) revealed that being Australian profoundly impacted the experience, and whether visitors had relatives who served in the campaign was insignificant to the feeling connected to the site. For Australians, no battlefield is more meaningful than the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey

(ibid). Each year on Anzac Day (25 April), vast numbers of Australians and New Zealanders travel to Gallipoli because, in 1915, soldiers from these two nations landed as a part of the British Empire forces during the First World War to force the 38-mile- (61-km-) long Dardanelles Channel and to occupy Constantinople (History.com Editors, 2018). The site settings (e.g. the landscape, the stories, reading the gravestones) resulted in a sense of connectedness that underpins the Australian and New Zealand national identities. Visitors also described Gallipoli as a sacred place characterised by spirituality and serenity (Cheal and Griffin, 2013). Allowing visitors the freedom to interpret the site in their own ways proved important to the tourist experience. Visitors sought quiet time by themselves to reflect on what they had learnt and experienced. This profoundly moving and personal nature of experience lends itself to spiritual and emotional engagement. Nationalism and emotion play vital roles in activating the spiritual experience. Visiting Gallipoli on Anzac Day was identified as deeply spiritual, in part thanks to the dawn service, whereas at other times the serenity of the location itself is moving. In other words, the same site offers different experiences through different engagements.

2.4.4 Shared Experiences

Most studies have reported the individual experiences of visitors, visitor desire to stay connected with a site and to enjoy moments on their own. Often, however, interaction among tourists also significantly impacts the overall experience. The individual onsite experience becomes a sense of sharing, especially with those on similar journeys to a place of national importance (Cheal and Griffin, 2013). ‘Temporary bonds’ are considered important in enhancing visitor experiences. Relational experience occurs through the shared values and connections expressed with other visitors.

Fallon and Robinson (2017) focus on both individual and shared experiences, emphasising the direct war experiences of a veteran. The authors interviewed two family members, a living veteran and his son, who had been funded by the ‘Heroes Return’ project to make commemorative trips to the places where the father served during the Second World War. The authors drew on material from the project’s website to identify themes to inform the analysis. Data from two trips in Australia and Sri Lanka, where the veteran served in the Royal Navy, were used.

Fallon and Robinson (2017) described warfare tourism as a co-created experience. This experience results from the interaction of an individual at a specific place and time within the

context of a particular act and environment (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Fallon and Robinson (2017) findings concerned a veteran's experiences as a navy minelayer, which were both combat and non-combat related. The veteran recognised the importance of making the return trip to remember his time with lost colleagues. To confirm the pilgrimage status of returning veterans, the bond developed during the conflict is a driver for the acts of remembrance (ibid). The mixture of good and bad memories is shared with other veterans. Such memories include traumatic moments while wroking and happier moments when the veterans were on leave. These bittersweet moments are shared also with family members.

For the veteran, returning to places and reminiscing were essential motivations for the trip (Fallon and Robinson, 2017). This reconnecting to the past acted as a genuine nostalgic experience (ibid). The authors observed the father and son's enjoyment of this part of the discussion. These collective experiences helped the participants strengthen the pre-existing bond between family members, even though only the father had personal experience. For the son, his father's nostalgic moments were the memorable part of the trip, and he tried to put himself in his father's situation. The journeys provided the opportunity to learn more about each other and to grow closer, both generally and in terms of the veteran's wartime experiences. The significance of personal connection and personal experience co-create and transform individual experience into a relational experience by sharing collective memory.

2.4.5 Paranormal Experience

Paranormal experience involves belief systems beyond typical rational views and cannot be explained by traditional scientific methods (Pharino et al., 2018). Thompson (2010) explored the performances of ghost tours, especially the role of the tour guide. Ghost tours purport to bring tourists into situations in which they may encounter the paranormal experiences (ibid). The findings of the study suggest that the guides indulged in certain self-illusion to engage in their performances convincingly, but they made no effort to hide this from their audiences. Although this action may seem to undermine the ghost tour's objective to convince tourists of ghosts' existence, it typifies the basis of these tours' persuasiveness. Paranormal experiences from ghost tours serve as a playful signifier for the signified ghost beliefs that underlie them. Inglis and Holmes (2003) revealed that ghosts and other paranormal entities in the Scottish Highlands have been used to help create Scotland as a prime tourism location. The history and mysteriousness of

the Highlands and the ‘Celtic’ past result in paranormal experience. Pharino et al. (2018) assessed tourists’ onsite experiences at a paranormal site in Bali, Indonesia. Different settings of light, smell and sound at the site constructed unusual sensations and affected the tourists' onsite reactions.

The above illustrative cases suggest that those tourists with a moderate and high level of paranormal interest report more emotions (e.g. fear, sadness and curiosity) and unusual sensations (e.g. taste, sense of fear). For those with a low level of paranormal interest, the experiences highlight learning about the topic on site. Simply put, paranormal experience interrelates with emotional, sensory and cognitive experiences.

2.5 Dark Experience Outcomes

In the broader tourism literature, the post-experience phase is centred mainly on evaluation, satisfaction, repeat visits and recommendation. These dimensions are relevant to dark tourism contexts but often in a commercial parameter, without representing the deeper meanings and solemn nature of a context (Weaver et al., 2017). Cheal and Griffin (2013) are among the very few to consider the outcomes of dark experiences. The authors suggest a need to look beyond the conventional parameters and toward ‘meaningful and memorable’ visitor consequences, such as self-reflection, personal transformation and a sense of national identity. Visiting dark tourism destinations can transform people’s attitudes, improve their knowledge and influence their behaviour.

Bittner (2011) evaluated experience outcomes after visiting dark tourism attractions, asking whether these experiences create a need for another visit to the same or a similarly themed site. Bittner used a semi-structured interview approach with Croatian respondents who have visited dark attractions in certain parts of the world. The results indicate that the visitors better understood the events thematically connected to a site when they visited without preconceptions. The dark tourism theme is a part of tourist destinations and considered a vital part of cultural or historical heritage (ibid). To illustrate, the visitors agreed that memorial sites, cemeteries and buildings relate to historical figures and events. Historical monuments represent and influence culture. When asked whether they would return to a destination, the visitors reported they would, including to dark tourism sites because of personal interests. They stated also that they would return to those sites with attractive, non-dark tourism content and were willing to pay for a revisit or to visit an

attraction far from their current residence. If the visitors expected an extraordinary experience, price was irrelevant.

Hughes's (2008) research at the Genocide Museum in Cambodia revealed not only the emotional experience of the visitors, but also the outcome of this 'disturbing place' experience. Visitors to the museum remain silent for extended periods of their visit, with many feeling uncomfortable taking photographs or videos, and expressing shock at what the Khmer Rouge did during that period (ibid). The outcomes of such emotional and educational experiences can be expressed as humanitarianism. For example, after visiting the Toul Sleng Museum, some visitors have become more motivated to participate in charities and non-government organisations, while others donate money, clothes and time to local organisations (ibid). Thus, the outcomes of visits include raising the sympathies of the visitor. In such a situation, the education experience is less important than emotion; the emotional consequences remain ultimately representative in a dark tourism destination.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed academic research into dark tourism by examining key theoretical areas. First, the dark tourism phenomenon was described in terms of its distinct characteristics. Second, dark sites were classified using various criteria to advance the knowledge of the features of dark tourism supply. Third, the chapter then examined how dark destinations are managed via key staging elements. Finally, visitor experiences and outcomes were reviewed.

Overall, dark sites present settings for individuals to encounter the settings of deaths of significant others, their personal backgrounds and to interpret and shape dark experiences, rather than being a fundamental characteristic of a place. Visitors are engaged, and their visits embrace different experiences. The visitation to a site allows visitors to select information from a range of materials, which provides for the articulation of multiple and complex interpretations and memories.

This chapter provides the foundation of current understanding of experience provision and consumption in dark tourism settings. However, dark tourism destinations and their meanings may change over time; dark tourism is a dynamic form of non-hedonic tourism. Since dark tourism has been studied from a tourism perspective for only around two decades, there remain questions

regarding agendas for future studies in terms of experience staging, visitor experiences and outcomes. Therefore, the following chapter discusses broader hedonic experiences regarding how experience staging and the tourist experience in hedonic settings can be applied to non-hedonic settings.

Chapter 3

Literature Review: Experience, Experience Staging and Tourist Experiences

3.0 Introduction

Experience is subjective, highly personal and ongoing (O'Dell, 2007). In tourism, the experience is a commodified phenomenon that is staged, produced and consumed in an endless array of specific places (ibid). The 'tourist experience' is a succinct description of a complex variety of elements. Research using the experience-based approach aims to develop a better understanding of the tourist experience with the experience industry providing inputs for experiences that address and fit the needs of the tourist at a particular time (Andersson, 2007).

To identify the appropriate theoretical approach for exploring dark experience consumption and delivery, it is necessary to review the concepts of experience and experience staging in wider academic literature. The central theme in this chapter is experience as the element connecting provision and consumption in tourism settings. This chapter reassesses the extant work on tourist experience in hedonic settings since this study considers the tourist experience in non-hedonic contexts.

This chapter begins with the definition of experience, emphasising the extraordinary experiences of individuals. Then, literature related to the concept of experience economy and how experience is conceptualised and staged in tourism settings is discussed. Finally, the chapter proposes a multi-dimensional understanding of tourist experiences that can be applied to the study of dark tourism.

3.1 Defining Experiences

The distinction between the noun and the verb 'experience' serves as a point of departure in this chapter.

"Experience is both a noun and a verb and it is used variously to convey the process itself, participating in the activity, the affect or way in which an object, thought or emotion is felt through the senses or the mind, and even the outcome of an experience by way of a skill or learning for example (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009 p.503)."

The word 'experience' as a noun has long been studied in many disciplines in social science (e.g. psychology, anthropology). 'Experience' as a noun refers to an active self who not only engages in but shapes an action (Bruner, 1986). Thus, experience is a subjective and personal activity of an individual. Experience also addresses the ongoingness of life (Abrahams, 1986), represented in the mind as information (Arnould et al., 2004). Experience strongly relates to personal consciousness, often with a variety of crucial emotional significances that occur as a result of encountering, undergoing or living through things (Schmitt, 2010). Moreover, an experience differs from mere individual behaviour because it not only involves a personal feeling that takes place beyond everyday life, but also frames an activity within a describable story (Bruner, 1986; Carù and Cova, 2003).

From a psychological perspective, the intensity and the relational type of experience differentiate the concept of an ordinary experience from an extraordinary experience (Arnould and Price, 1993). An ordinary experience is an occurrence that is common, frequent and within the realm of daily life. It arises directly out of the flow of life, with little or no explicit preparation (Abrahams, 1986). An extraordinary experience, on the other hand, is uncommon, infrequent and goes beyond the realm of everyday life (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2014; Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011). Such an experience differs from the day-to-day flow of consciousness, either in its emotional intensity or its framing in time or space (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016).

The expectation of extraordinary experiences may arise from information sources (e.g. word-of-mouth, films and promotional materials) but may provide limited cues for alternatives of consumption (Arnould and Price, 1993). Due to the subjective, fluctuating nature of emotion (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) and because an extraordinary experience emerges from the dynamic interaction of participants (Arnould and Price, 1993), it is challenging for consumers to predict their extraordinary experiences despite planning.

The extraordinary experiences individuals have, and the value attached to those experiences, give meaning to people's lives (Boswijk et al., 2007). People experience the world by gathering impressions around them through their senses. These impressions lead to emotional responses and create meaningful experiences (ibid). Meaningful experiences are not merely memorable but relate also to the accumulation of the interactions within the environment and the lessons people learn from them during the process of experiencing. While mundane experiences help individuals navigate through daily life, extraordinary experiences have significant consequences for self-definition, wellbeing and life satisfaction (Abrahams, 1986; Zauberman et al., 2009). People appreciate unexpected and extraordinary moments, and this emotional response is the major difference between the two types of experience.

To advance the theoretical understanding of the tourist experience, it is essential to summarise a range of different categories of experience definitions. There are four main categories: experience as a flow of consciousness, experience as a subjective response to a stimulus, experience as a memorable impression, and experience as a staged offering. *Experience as a flow of consciousness* refers to what is received by the individual's consciousness, and we can never fully know another's experiences even they share it (Bruner, 1986). *Experience as a subjective response to a stimulus* is associated with a private event that occurs in response to some stimulation (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt, 1999). *Experience as a memorable impression* is defined in terms of unforgettable impressions that individuals take away with them, which are typically formed by encounters with products and services (Boswijk et al., 2007; Carbone and Haeckel, 1994). *Experience as a staged offering* focusses on the objective and extrinsic aspects of experience that are designed to add value to products and services (Carù and Cova, 2003; Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). The following section highlights experience as a staged offering since tourist experience is influenced by destination experience offerings. It is, therefore, reasonable to emphasise experience staging.

3.2 Experience Economy and Experience Staging in Tourism

The notion of experience is a critical element for understanding consumer experience, and there has been an increasing recognition amongst academics and practitioners of the need for marketers to understand how consumers behave, particularly regarding activities and settings. The

experience serves as a foundation for the experience economy (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). In a variety of markets and industries (consumers, service, technology, and industrial), firms have turned to experiential marketing techniques because the concept of the experience economy has been conceptualised to develop new products, to communicate with customers, to improve sales relations, to select business partners, to design retail environments and to build websites. These experiential concepts consider the views of consumers, from information-processing to the appreciation and enjoyment of the offerings beyond the utilitarian function. Marketers are moving away from the traditional features and benefits of marketing toward creating experiences for their customers.

This section presents the concept of the experience economy since experience can be staged and choreographed as an offering. The section continues by discussing experience staging in tourism to ascertain whether experiential marketing is essential in the tourism sector.

3.2.1 Experience Economy

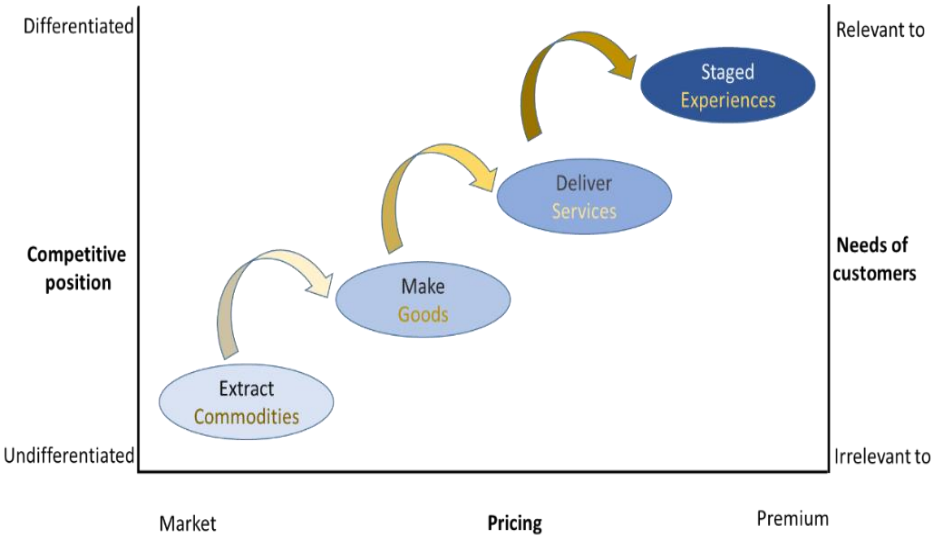
The development of the experience economy concept by Pine II and Gilmore (1998) considers as a manifestation of various shifts in many industrial sectors (Petermans and Van Cleempoel, 2009) and broader geographical influences (Ferreira and Teixeira, 2013). The emergence of the experience economy was not accidental but an inevitable trend (Zhang, 2010). The concept has grown because of the radical change of the social and economic environments thanks to three significant forces: (1) new technology to enhance innovative experiences, (2) more demanding, sophisticated customers, and (3) increasing competitive intensity (Knutson and Beck, Jeffrey, 2004). People are not only concerned with purchasing goods and services, but also with engaging experiences. Goods and services are no longer enough for the consumer.

Pine II and Gilmore (1998) introduce experience as a fourth economic offering, as distinct from services as services are from goods. Experiences are not new, but consumers and practitioners always include experiences in the service sector as an uneventful activity, such as telephone service and distribution (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011). Experiences need to create new value and occur whenever a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props to engage an individual (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011). When people buy a service, they purchase intangible activities carried out on their behalves. However, when people purchase experiences, they spend

time enjoying memorable events that a firm stages to engage the consumer in a personal way. People want to experience something that challenges firms to offer experiences. Consumers demand new aspects of products and services. Thus, the experience economy is the concept that businesses must orchestrate memorable experiences for their customers, and those memories capture their audiences to transform their value proposition (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011). In other words, experiences themselves lack tangibility but the values of experiences remain.

The experience economy encapsulates what Pine II and Gilmore (1998) call the 'progression of economic value' of each successive offering – commodities, goods, services and experiences (see Figure 3.1). Each economic offering has a distinct characteristic: commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible and experiences *memorable* (ibid). Purchasing a good leaves an individual with a physical object to keep, and services leave them with something done for them or their possessions. An experience, on the other hand, is a product that does something to a customer (entertain, educate or engage), and leaves that customer with the memory of an encounter.

Figure 3.1: The progression of economic value (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011 p.34)



The origin of the experience economy stems from customisation (Pine II and Gilmore, 2013). Customisation enables offerings to differentiate themselves, for if an offering is customised to an individual, it cannot be like every other offering. Commodities, goods, services and experiences all have a consumption phase. What differentiates experiences from other offerings is that the consumption phase itself is the main product. As services, like goods before them,

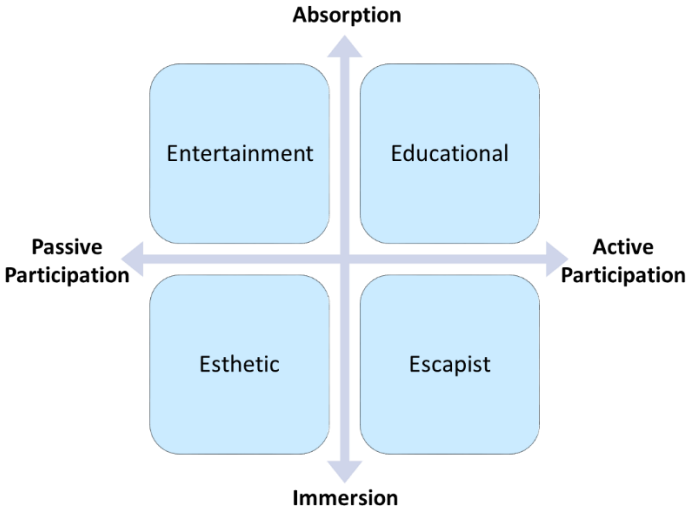
increasingly become commoditised, consumers need to find offerings they want. The essence of an experience is the occurrence between the customer and the experience provider, which intensifies the consumption phase. Hence, the value and customisation of each offering increase. Companies stage varieties of experiences that are more relevant to the wants and needs of consumers. As a result, companies are more easily differentiated from their competitors and charge premium prices based on the 'unique value' provided, not the market price of the competition.

If the business offering is an experience, firms should be perceived as if they were theatre, and every action that contributes to the total experience being staged can help create the desired impression (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). The authors argue that theatre is not a merely metaphorical term for staging experience, it is a model of business success. Businesses should not be mere service providers, but be perceived as the performing venues. The company, as an *experience-stager*, no longer offers goods or services alone, but also the resulting experience, rich with sensations, created within customers (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011). In this sense, all prior economic offerings – commodities, goods and services – are external to the buyer, whereas experiences are inherently personal because they derive from the interaction of customers, and their engagement depends on the consumer's background, interpretation and emotions (Pine II and Gilmore, 1999; Sundbo and Darmer, 2008). Experiences do not concern physical needs in the same way goods do, nor do they solve intellectual problems, such as services do (Sundbo and Sørensen, 2013). Therefore, experiences are manifold, challenging all senses. No two individuals can have the same experience even though they may engage in the same staged event.

Experiences, like commodities, goods and services, have their distinct qualities and characteristics and present their own design challenges. Pine II and Gilmore (1998) propose that experiences engage guests across two dimensions (see Figure 3.2). The first dimension corresponds to the *level of guest participation* (horizontal axis). At one end of the axis is *passive* participation, in which guests do not directly influence the performance (e.g. symphony-goers, who experience the event as observer and listener) (ibid). At the other end of the spectrum lies *active* participation, in which customers personally affect the performance or event that yields the experience (e.g. skiers) (ibid). The second (vertical) dimension of experience explains the connection between guests and the event or performance (ibid). At one end of the spectrum lies *absorption* – meaning

a person's attention by engaging mentally with the experience. At the other end is *immersion* – becoming physically or virtually a part of the experience itself (ibid). For instance, if an individual watches and feels involved in a TV programme, he/she absorbs the experience. If, on the other hand, a guest plays and goes into a virtual reality game on the programme, then she/he is immersed in the experience.

Figure 3.2: Realms of experiences (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998)



A firm, as an experience-stager, can sort experiences into four broad categories according to where they fall along the spectrum of the two dimensions: entertainment, education, esthetic, and escapist (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). According to Figure 3.2, in *educational experiences*, customers or guests absorb the information of the events before they are at the events, but still actively participate through interactive engagement (ibid). To inform guests or increase their knowledge, educational events must actively engage the mind (for intellectual education) or the body (for physical training). For example, tourists increase their knowledge and skills, either generally or specifically, through their experiences at the destination they visit. In other words, a cognitive or physical experience occurs. *Entertainment experiences*, on the other hand, occur when guests passively observe the activities or performances of others, including reading for pleasure and listening to music at destinations (ibid).

In *escapist experiences*, individuals require greater immersion and participation than for entertainment and educational experiences (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). Consumers require the actual performances or events in the real or virtual environment. To emphasise, they are in search

of authenticity and satisfying life while experiencing different events. Escapist experience can link with flow experience in terms of full immersion and focus on the activity. In the final type, *esthetic experiences*, individuals are immersed in an event or environment but have little or no effect on the environment presented to them (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). People passively appreciate or are influenced by the way the destination appeals to their senses without caring about the level of authenticity of that destination. Esthetic experience also relates to the restorative experience, which is the emotional charge and renewal of the cognitive process, which results to personal experience. Guests participating in an educational experience may want to learn; in an escapist experience they want to go; in an entertainment experience they want to enjoy; and those partaking in an esthetic experience want to be.

To enhance the genuineness of experience, the boundaries between the four realms can be blurred (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011). Many experiences typically engage one of the four realms, while many offerings mix across the experience boundaries by layering amenities and props in compelling ways, for instance, edutainment (education + entertainment) by holding attention, escasthetic (escapist + esthetic) by altering the state, and educapist (education + escapist) by changing context. Experience orchestration is a significant element of doing business, in a product and process design. Pine II and Gilmore's (2011) five experience-design principles are theme the experience, harmonise impressions with positive cues, eliminate negative cues, mix in memorabilia, and engage all five senses.

The first, crucial step toward staging experience is envisioning a well-defined *theme* (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011). A compelling theme is concise and drives all the design elements and staged events of the experience toward a unified storyline that captivates the customers and fits the character of the firm. Pine II and Gilmore emphasise that every experience has a theme; whether intentionally designed or not, whether thoroughly executed or not. While the theme forms the foundation, the experience must render the *impression*s (ibid). In other words, the takeaway of the experience affects the individuals and thereby helps fulfil the theme. The dimensions of the impression of the experience can be time (contemporary or futuristic), space (indoor or outdoor representations), technology (natural or virtual representations), authenticity (original or artefacts), sophistication (simple or complicated or luxurious) and scale (large or small).

Ensuring the integrity of the experience requires more than layering positive cues. It is vital to *eliminate negative cues* that detract from fulfilling the theme (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011). Since people generally buy certain goods to recollect their experiences, *mix in memorabilia* is another principle for designing experience (ibid). Finally, the *sensory* stimulants that accompany an experience should support and enhance the theme (ibid). The more senses an experience engages, the more effective and memorable it can be.

The progression of economic value does not stop at experiences (Pine II and Gilmore, 2011). Firms store commodities in bulk inventory goods after production, deliver services according to customer demand and reveal experiences over time; transformations, on the other hand, *sustain through time* (ibid). Memories of experience can fade over time, but transformations can *guide* toward a specific purpose. Experiences set the stage for teaching the customer to act, whereas transformations guide the core activity of the firm. Aspirants (customers of transformations) are inspired to try something different and can change their attitudes and characteristics (ibid). Transformation is the *effectual* experience outcome, not merely being memorable.

Experience creation is supposed to be a solution for avoiding the commodity trap for any type of business (LaSalle and Britton, 2003) by differentiating firms from competitors and obtaining a premium price (Carù and Cova, 2014; Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). Consequently, firms start building a set of strategies to move away from traditional marketing, focusing on features, benefits and experiential marketing (Schmitt, 2010). That is, offering consumers meaningful or extraordinary encounters by transforming them through the unforgettable experiences in which they are immersed. Carù and Cova (2014) also emphasise that emotion is central to the consumption experience. Experience creation aims to offer consumers physical and emotional sensations during their experiences.

To create an experience, Carù and Cova (2014 p.96) suggest that firms, as the experiential platform facilitators, need to provide an experiential context that contains three interrelated core elements – thematised, enclavised and securised contexts. *Thematised* contexts can be developed at the point of sale to attract attention to the experiential context (Pine II and Gilmore, 1999). The theme is not only the physical space, but also the history, symbols and artefacts that characterise that space. The context must be *enclavised* since this allows consumers to remove and escape

mundane daily routine for an enchanted and separate world where all their daily boredom and anxieties disappear. The context needs to be engaging to allow consumers to be immersed in that experience. The concept of the enclavised context has been discussed in tourism studies as 'creative space' (Richards and Wilson, 2006) and 'tourist space' (Cohen, 1979). Finally, the experiential context must be *securised* and closely monitored. The sense of security is paramount for focusing attention on the experience and eliminating distractions from other activities or any worries customers may face in everyday life. These three core elements are what Hansen and Mossberg (2013) call an 'immersion', and they are key to extraordinary experiences. In this regard, people are fully absorbed or focused on the activity or the environment; their awareness of other aspects can be lost. The concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) and absorption (Quarrick, 1989; Tellegen and Atkinson, 1974) are similar to that of immersion.

The transition to an economy in which experiences fuel the growth of business begins when firms give away experiences to sell existing offerings. In other words, the experience is infused into a product and used to enhance service to create a distinct offering. People readily exchange valued resources (e.g. time, money) for motivational and emotional experiences staged by firms. The driving force behind this extensive experience offering is individuals' needs to create their own identity, which can be shaped by product and service encounters or visits. Experiences require the involvement of the customers and engagement, as suggested by the four realms of experience. The concept of the experience economy is that experience can be choreographed into an offering. However, limited attention has been paid to this aspect in tourism literature. The following section focuses on experience staging in tourism settings in which visitors can experience a destination's products and services during their visits.

3.2.2 Experience Staging in Tourism

As tourism is typically a voluntary activity, orientation in the form of awakening interest via a destination, and attraction offerings is a starting point that leads to decisions and, later, to tourist experiences (Aho, 2001). Over the past decade, tourism has shifted toward experiences rather than goods and services. Experience is no longer an optional added value but a mandatory benefit of any tourism offer (Pikkemaat et al., 2009). Experience is the ultimate output of goods and services (Andersson, 2007). The creation of tourist experience is the crux of marketing and

promotion plans (Xu and Chan, 2010). As such, tourism providers need to 'shape, package, and sell experiences' (Sternberg, 1997 p.954).

The provision of experiences has been well studied in tourism literature; however, what is not yet clear is the staging of experience (Åstrøm, 2017). Tourist experiences rarely occur in a completely unscripted manner; destination attractions involve a great deal of planning (O'Dell, 2007). Furthermore, tourism managers are confronted with the challenges of experience staging (Pikkemaat et al., 2009). First, tourists demand attractions that offer a high experience density (Andersson, 2007), as well as attractions that offer educative and authentic experiences (Taylor, 2001; Wang, 1999). Second, tourist experiences vary among individuals and cultures. Hence, tourism experiences can be staged in cross-cultural contexts.

Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2012) suggest that the experience economy framework is a viable model to enhance the understanding of tourist experience in wine tourism. The authors summarise the 4Es (entertainment, educational, escapist, esthetic) in the literature (from 1997 to 2010) on wine tourists. In the educational aspect, tourists enhance their knowledge and skills by attending events and seminars such as wine-tasting and craft-making classes (ibid). Learning is essential in wine tourism because it imbues visitors with higher levels of sensation-seeking. Tourists entertain themselves by engaging in performances (ibid). The connection of wine to music, art or cultural heritage reflects the lifestyle of wine tourists. Esthetic tourists are enriched by sensual environments in vineyards and surrounding landscapes, which separate them from mundane life (ibid). Ultimately, escapists become engrossed by participating in a different time and place (ibid). Tourists want to do more than visit vineyards and wineries or taste wine; they want to engage in novelty and sensory activities that offer memorable experiences. The higher the number of activities offered, the greater the potential to engross the escapist dimension. The authors attempt to explain the experiential nature of wine tourism by emphasising tourist activities in terms of the level of guest participation and the connection between guest and the activity, but does not address other dimensions of experience offerings regarding how to design and deliver a holistic experience.

Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) also apply the concept of the experience economy and the 4Es, as well as how to assess experience evaluation empirically in two tourism contexts: the Ice Music Festival (temporary attraction) and the Maihaugen Museum (permanent attraction) in Norway. The findings reveal that escapism and the esthetic dimension affect the level of

satisfaction in the case of the special event, whereas education and esthetic provide a substantial effect on the destination attraction (ibid). The special event (a temporary attraction) emphasised the feeling (esthetic) and the sense of being there (escapism). The permanent attraction museum employed learning (education) and setting (esthetic). The 4Es model enhances the understanding of visitors' preferences in different experiential dimensions that depend on their associated contexts. It is essential that destination providers acknowledge which elements they should develop. These influential factors are important for the tourist experience, each factor need to be integrated in the offerings.

Mossberg (2007) highlights the concept of experiencescape by O'Dell and Billing (2005), in which tourist consumption takes place. The author proposes factors that create the circumstances and environment for tourist experiences, namely, physical environment, personnel, other tourists, products and souvenirs, and theme or story (ibid). The findings suggest that the physical environment, such as visual signals, sounds and colours, affects tourist behaviour. Visitors also interact with personnel and other tourists (ibid). Purchasing a product or a souvenir serves as a tangible way of capturing the experience (ibid). Theme or story communicates the core values in an understandable way, which plays a major role in experience offering. The implication of this study is that, no matter the type of tourism product, tourists are influenced by these factors, which ultimately create a positive tourist experience.

Åstrøm (2017) investigated the factors that enhance the visitor experience in a cruise setting: the staging components of which are name, employee interaction, and lighting. The name of the attraction is a crucial step toward staging an experience since it allows guests to know what to expect (ibid). In other words, the name relates to a guest's perception of a theme. Employee interaction, in this study, includes the employee's attire because it plays a role in constructing a holistic impression (ibid). Frontline employees are clearly as important as any meticulous sensory engagement when staging an experience (ibid). Employees directly play out a theme through scripted service because cruise ships are particularly labour-intensive experience providers (ibid). As a stimulus, lighting is an integral part of a holistic experience (ibid). Lighting is a necessary element that creates a sensation and an appealing ambience in an experiential setting. However, design and music components are not crucial in staging experiences; perhaps because of the unique

setting of cruisescapes. All these staging elements suggest that staging emerges in 'built' environments, which can be necessary drivers for experience offerings.

Müller et al. (2004) developed a model of experience staging as the marketing tool of the experience setting to deliver a positive atmosphere to visitors, including theming, concept of staging, attractions and activities, scenery, visitor guidance, wellbeing and customers. Theming is an essential tool to cohere an offering (ibid). Theming strongly influences people's decision to visit a particular attraction. As destinations are complex bundles of tourism products and service, they provide a broad range of themes. Hence, these themes aid in supporting brand strategies and must be placed in a hierarchy linked with the core theme of the destination. The concept of staging is the planning and coordination tool (ibid). By integrating single staging elements within the experience setting, the offering serves as a platform to coordinate all actors in the staging of experience.

Attractions and activities are tools to produce events and happenings to deliver an experience for visitors (Müller et al., 2004). All attractions and activities correspond with the theme and the visitors' expectations and contribute to the overall experience setting. Scenery, another aspect of experience staging, is an aesthetic tool and dominated by a destination's natural resources (ibid). Landscape influences scenery, as does illumination and architecture , all of which comprise the experiencescape for the visitor. Visitor guidance helps to manage visitors through the experience journey (ibid). Information, including signage, is a part of this tool. Design elements such as gates, resting places and viewing platforms can help to guide visitors. Wellbeing supports visitors' positive evaluations of experience setting (Müller et al., 2004). An attraction could offer, for example, cafés, restaurants, restrooms and information desks. Finally, the visitors themselves serve as an evaluation tool and may evaluate the experience positively or negatively.

Six of the seven tools (omitting the scenery dimension) of Müller et al. (2004) are applied in the wine tourism study by Pikkemaat et al. (2009). Their study was carried out by five experience testers, not the winery visitors or destination providers. The study interviewed experts regarding which factors are key for success in the wine business. Expectation and degree of satisfaction were then assessed in the visitor survey. The findings underline the potential of staging an experience in wine tourism by creating an ideal atmosphere, guiding tourists and in theming wine and wine production. Despite these findings, there is concern about how the visitors regarded

these staging tools in terms of enhancing their experiences. To optimise the experience staging, visitor points of view need to be assessed.

Although the experience industry is expanding, the experience economy concept of Pine II and Gilmore (1998) has been criticised by scholars. The first concern is that the approach relies on a top-down strategy that executives and a marketing team design and deploy within companies (Petermans and Van Cleempoel, 2009). In other words, firms are thought to hold too much power or to hold a privileged position over consumers. If the staged offerings are not consistently on cue, customers notice the variation and miss the overall idea.

Moreover, the experience economy concept is the commercialisation of experiences (Frost & Laing, 2010 p.140). Central to the experience economy is the idea of charging for experiences, the more that is charged, the better the experience should be. This concept sits uncomfortably in a web-centric era in which there is much free content and a plethora of virtual experiences. Many tourist attractions are also free to enter. Richards (2001) notes that free events or activities can create terrific experiences. Thus, admission cost cannot imply the worth of such experiences. Pine II and Gilmore (2013) contradict the firm-centred commercialisation of experience by suggesting that the experience economy helps firms to create greater economic value for their customers. The way to improve economic value for customers is to understand individual customers. As such, business success and personal wellbeing should not be seen as an either-or trade-off.

Since experiences are personal and can be affected by the emotion of the individual, experiences should not be scripted and pre-packaged (Frost & Laing, 2010 p.138). This argument challenges the experience offering to tourists because tourists are heterogeneous. Staged experiences might be perceived as inauthentic and lacking in personal engagement. Binkhorst (2005) argues that the creation of staged experiences is considered too superficial and artificial and does not always attract customers. Tourists want context-related, original and authentic experiences, and they search for a balance between the experience that stagers provide and self-determined activities (ibid). Pine II and Gilmore (2013) argue that the experience economy allows for a vast array of alternative offerings, ranging from the more or less natural/artificial to the original/imitated, self-centred/other-focused, and across all dimensions of space and time. For

developed economies to remain prosperous, a shift to experiences needs to happen; goods and services are no longer enough to propel businesses.

The experience economy framework offers a firm grounding on the importance of the experience offering, which leads to experience staging. Experience staging provides the crucial aspects of tourist consumption regarding how the circumstances and environment for tourists can be developed. Tourism plays an important role in contributing to the tourist experience; experiences are designed and staged as value-added packages. As such, exploring tourist experiences from the viewpoint of visitors offers the potential for understanding more fully what visitors want and what they value during their visits.

3.3 Tourist Experience Dimensions

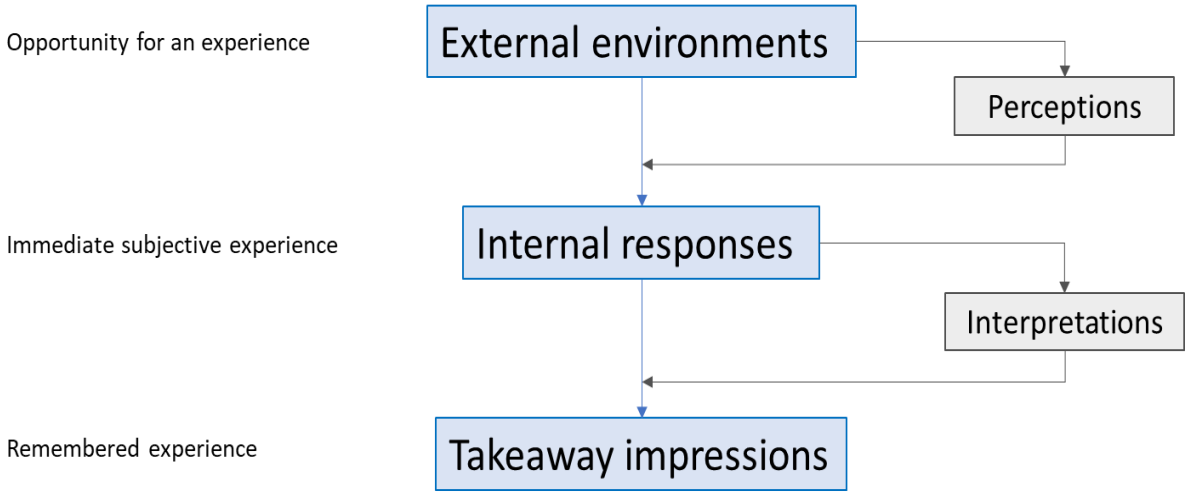
The tourist experience is when tourism consumption and tourism production meet (Andersson, 2007). It is also when 'value' is created and 'resources' are consumed (ibid). Experiences are influenced by expectancies and events, and they remain or are constructed in the individual's memory, forming the basis for new preferences and expectancies (Larsen, 2007). The tourist experience is complex and transitory and can only take shape in the mind of the tourist (Lee et al., 1994). Tourist experience emanates from the interplay of two motivational forces – to escape from mundane life or stressful environments, and to seek recreational opportunities (Mannell and Iso-ahola, 1987). From this viewpoint, the experience is frequently described as extraordinary and meaningful (Mannell, 1996). Though subjectivity of the experience is key, the interaction of the individual within the tourism system is fundamental in the creation of the tourist experience. Knutson, Beck and Jeffrey (2004) support this view: experience requires involvement or participation by a person; no matter how people try to visualise the experiences of others, they cannot truly understand that moment without experiencing it themselves.

Furthermore, tourists experience the destination as a whole entity rather than the sum of discrete sets of attributes (Vittersø et al., 2000). In this regard, experiences are no longer limited only to pre-purchased activities, nor during the activities, but include actions that can influence consumer decisions and future decisions. Volo (2009) supports the argument that experience goes beyond merely travelling, acting, feeling and evaluating: 'tourist experience happens to a person outside the *usual environment* and the *contracted time* for which a sequence of the following events

happens' (Volo, 2009 p.119). In other words, the experience is a sequence of occurrences in the non-usual environment (outside contracted time-work, committed time-household work and family care) that involves a personal sensation, perception and interpretation.

From the conceptual development of experiences and tourist experiences, Packer and Ballantyne (2016) propose three key factors associated with visitor experiences (see Figure 3.3). First, tourist experience, as an individual's response to an activity, event or setting, is open to influence from a range of external elements. To clarify, these external elements are the attributes of the activities, events and environments offered to tourists. Therefore, these elements define experiences as offerings. Second, tourist perceptions based on previous experiences, interests, expectations and motivations shape the internal response through thoughts and feelings. That is, an experience is immediate and subjective, which is the experience essence of individuals. Third, this experience essence is narrated, interpreted and transformed by visitors, leading to outcomes that may be beneficial for the individual. In other words, the takeaway impressions, such as stories, insights and memories, are the remembered experience, so experience is considered a product.

Figure 3.3: Key factors associated with the tourist experience (Adapted from Packer and Ballantyne, 2016)



Several researchers have attempted to characterise different types, dimensions or components of the tourist experience. Kim and Ritchie (2014) suggest that identifying experiential components not only contributes to an understanding of tourism experiences, but also assists practitioners in their efforts to enhance the tourist experience. Although many of classifications

overlap, the lack of a universal definition hinders comparisons between studies and the development of a unifying conceptual framework (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). To illustrate, Aho (2001) emphasises experience outcomes, whereas Chang and Horng (2010) focus on the activity and setting rather than the tourist's subjective experiences. In addition, tourist experiences are studied in various forms, for example, emotional-involvement-based experience (Gross and Brown, 2006), activity-based experience (Voigt et al., 2010) and social-interaction-based experience (Ciolfi, 2007). Some studies have focused on specific types of experience, such as memorable experiences (Kim and Ritchie, 2014), service experiences (Zehrer, 2009) or museum satisfying experiences (Pekarik et al., 1999). The variety of previous studies implies that tourist experience is multi-dimensional.

Regarding the nature and scope of tourist experiences, researchers have emphasised understanding what the tourist experience is and how it is constructed while visiting a destination. Several researchers have attempted to characterise dimensions, types or components of the tourist experience in both visitor studies and the broader tourism literature to facilitate measurement. While it is impossible to provide exhaustive aspects of experience, it is useful to list the more general types, which are drawn from hedonic tourism settings.

Packer and Ballantyne (2016) developed the multifaceted model of visitor experience, which is drawn from tourism and leisure literature and focuses on the positive experience of visitors. Various forms of visitor experience from hedonic contexts are also evident in dark tourism settings (refer to Section 2.4) because dark tourism (e.g. battlefield tourism) lies within a dichotomy of pilgrimage and tourism (Butler and Suntikul, 2013; Winter, 2011). To have a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of visitors in dark tourism settings, this study reviews tourist experience according to the model suggested by Packer and Ballantyne (2016). Selected dimensions common to the literature review on dark experience are explained in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Dimensions of visitor experiences

Experience Dimensions	Authors	Purpose/Context
Cognitive	Lee and Smith (2015)	To measure tourist experience in visiting historic sites and museums
	Otto and Ritchie (1996)	To explore components of service experience in tourism sectors (hotels, airlines, tours & attractions)
	Pekarik et al. (1999)	To explore satisfying experiences in museums
Physical	Forrest (2013)	To explore the role of the exhibition environment in the visitor experience
	Masberg and Silverman (1996)	To understand college student visitor experiences in visiting heritage sites
	Pekarik et al. (1999)	To explore satisfying experiences in museums
Sensory	Agapito et al. (2014)	To use the sensory experience for segmenting and profiling tourists in southwest Portugal
	Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland (2010)	To identify the role of landscape in shaping sensory experience in Budapest, Hungary and Spring Mill Pioneer Village, US
	Tussyadiah and Zach (2012)	To identify the influence of geo-based technology on place experiences
Relational	Jennings and Weiler (2004)	To examine the perspectives of the mediator (broker) on the quality of tourist experience
	Williams and Soutar (2009)	To measure visitor value, satisfaction and behavioural intention in adventure tourism
	Zatori et al. (2018)	To investigate how service providers can enhance authentic and memorable visitor experiences in sightseeing tours
Introspective	Collins-Kreiner (2010)	To review the pilgrimage experience in the tourism context
	Sharpley and Jepson (2011)	To explore the spiritual experience in rural tourism (Lake District)
	Pekarik et al. (1999)	To explore satisfying experiences in museums
Hedonic	Holbrook and Hirschman (1982)	To investigate the experiential consumption of leisure activities
	Lee et al. (1994)	To explore the recalled experience and the interpretation of leisure experience
	Otto and Ritchie (1996)	To explore components of service experience in tourism sectors (hotels, airlines, tours & attractions)
Restorative	Otto and Ritchie (1996)	To explore components of service experience in tourism sectors (hotels, airlines, tours & attractions)
	Xu and Chan (2010)	To explore service experiences in the context of package tours, specifically inbound package tours to China from the US
	Weng and Chiang (2014)	To explore the result of restorative experience from leisure activities
Emotional	Andrade and Cohen (2007)	To assess the intensity of negative feelings and positive feelings in the aftermath of experiences
	Larsen et al. (2001)	To explore the co-occurrence of positive and negative emotional experiences
	Lee (2015)	To identify the relationship between personal emotion and memorable experience at a culinary attraction (former heritage site)

3.3.1 Cognitive Experiences

Tourism researchers have reported that individuals wish to learn new things and develop unique insights and skills from their tourist experiences (Kim and Ritchie, 2014; Poria et al., 2006; Tussyadiah and Zach, 2012). Visitations to historic sites, heritage sites and museums support this view (e.g. Beeho and Prentice, 1997; Lee and Smith, 2015; Pekarik et al., 1999, 2014). Individuals whose experiences are clearly enhanced by contextual presentations or the contents of exhibits tend to describe cognitive experiences as satisfying (Pekarik et al., 1999). Tourists find their primary satisfaction in the interpretive or intellectual aspects of experience (ibid). Gaining information or knowledge and enriching one's current understanding are responses to the stimuli that individuals interpret and assimilate the cognitive contents of. Tung and Ritchie (2011) found that intellectual development is one of the most significant components of memorable experiences. Chang and Horng (2010) reinforce this view, stating that cognitive learning is one dimension of measuring experience quality.

A study by Pekarik et al. (2014) at Smithsonian Institution museums claims that visitors are drawn to exhibition elements where they can instinctively stop and pay attention. Then, conscious decisions are made, such as whether to enter a particular exhibition and how long to stay at a particular stop. These decisions reflect visitor engagement at a site (ibid). Tourists are involved in the process during a site visit and have a choice in that process. Hence, tourists have control over the outcome and are informed and educated via their particular involvement (Otto and Ritchie, 1996). The involvement and engagement of individuals are the characteristics of cognitive experience, which mediates by site options.

Grandjean and Peters (2011) claim that novelty processing is an essential ability of individuals to process new information to increase their knowledge. This mechanism allows individuals to detect changes in the environment and, with memory processes, to learn invariants in the environment. Novelty is not only closely related to surprise, but it also influences emotional responses (ibid). Novelty is a cognitive appraisal process for several emotions. In the tourism context, novelty-seeking is another component of subjective tourist experiences and a popular motivation for an individual to travel (Kim and Ritchie, 2014). Novelty is derived from something new by encountering different styles of trips, and it is a component of a memorable tourist

experience. Intellectualism, learning, discovery, novelty, exploration, understanding, involvement and choices are the elements of cognitive experience.

3.3.2 Physical Experiences

Physical experience is characterised by movement, action, physical stimulation and general links with tangible objects (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). At the Smithsonian museums, Pekarik et al. (1999) accumulated data from visitors to explore their views regarding a satisfying experience. Building from an empirical base of conversations with museum-goers, the authors suggest that the physical experience is derived from seeing real artefacts and odd and valuable objects during a museum visitation. Visitors can also be moved by the beauty of particular objects, such as paintings, which make them think what it would be like to own such things. In other words, it is an object's authenticity and value that stimulate experience quality.

Masberg and Silverman (1996) focused on student visitor experience at heritage sites. These experiences are multi-dimensional; the students emphasised the activities in which they had engaged. The students noticed and recalled aspects of the built and natural environment in ways that strongly suggest that the quality and condition of the physical environment are crucial components of the site visit experience. Chang and Horng (2010) suggest that the atmosphere or physical surrounding are dimensions by which to measure the experience quality. Forrest (2013) supports this view; atmospherics and environments can influence visitor behaviour via sensory and emotional mechanisms that can be manipulated in tangible ways through design choices. Therefore, the physical experience, in terms of surroundings, needs to be carefully designed and maintained because this impacts tourist experience, and it should be a critical goal for site professionals. Physical experience, then, is activated by tangible objects, activities and site settings.

3.3.3 Sensory Experiences

Tourism is associated with experiences that involve multisensory dimensions, including sights, motions, sounds, smells and tastes (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2012). Sight has, so far, dominated marketing practice (Agapito et al., 2014). Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean an ocular predominance in tourism, since cultural, social and geographical factors have historically determined shifts in sensory perception (ibid). The authors researched sensory impressions in the

natural protected area in southwest Portugal to investigate overall experiences (ibid). The findings confirm that five senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch) are essential to boost tourist experiences, with sight still attracting the most responses. In addition to the emotional and symbolic dimensions, attempts to communicate memorable tourist experiences must focus on sensory elements. In the case of the countryside, tourist experiences are highly based on diversified natural resources and mature activities offering multiple-sensory stimuli.

Tussyadiah and Zach (2012) identified the role of geo-based technology in-place experiences. Since sensation happens at the phenomenological level where tourists are aware of the destination, the interpretation of sensation leads to the process of learning and transformation at the cognitive level (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2012; Volo, 2009). Tussyadiah and Zach (2012)'s findings propose geo-based technology influences the travel experience by helping tourists to have meaningful experiences at the destination. To emphasise sensory experience, visitors recognise significant sights and attractions at the destination. They are also aware of the different activities they can partake in at the destination. Moreover, visitors associate certain sights, smells, sounds, tastes and textures with the destination. In other words, sensation and physical activities are part of the tourist experience.

Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland (2010 p.1166) state that, 'tourists roam, visually, sensorily and physically, in large cities as well as in the most scripted of destinations.' Their research at two sites (Budapest, Hungary and Spring Mill Pioneer Village in Indiana, US) suggests that the prominence of place can shape tourist experiences. Tourists in Budapest referred to everyday objects in the city, such as architecture (ibid). Although tourists rarely mentioned particular buildings consistently, they did refer to the overall impression of them. In other words, the atmosphere. Similarly, tourists at Spring Mill responded to the landscape elements (e.g. forest, wildlife, stream) (ibid). Tourists sensorily engage with the landscape, and it is the sensory experience of place in addition to the visual elements that create the tourist experience.

3.3.4 Relational Experience

Since tourists fulfil their expectations by communicating with others, relational or social experiences occur at the destination (Selstad, 2007). These types of experience refer to interactions with others, including travel companions, other tourists, residents and tourism employees at the destination (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2012). A study of satisfying museum experiences by (Pekarik

et al., 1999, 2014) argues that visitors selected interactions with other people as some of their most satisfying experiences at the museum. The authors highlight spending time with family and friends, as well as the satisfaction of watching one's children learning new things. Williams and Soutar (2009) suggest that interactions between people on a tour, the relationship among passengers and the tour guide, and the individual recognition or prestige obtained from undertaking a trip all create social value. This relational experience may be strong in a small group, similar to the communitas and bonding among participants, which is also highlighted by Arnould and Price's (1993) river rafting trips.

An illustration of how tourist social interactions make up an overall experience is the concept of mediation or brokerage in tourism experience (Jennings and Weiler, 2004). A broker or mediator is someone who assists in sense-making and in the tourist's reconstructions of his/her experience, as well as the representation of that experience (ibid). The role of the broker is not limited to tour guides but includes numerous stakeholders who interact directly and indirectly in multiple ways and at different stages of the travel experience (ibid). The authors suggest that stakeholders can have formal or informal mediating roles. Emphasising onsite experience, formal mediators (broker) are tour guides (paid or volunteer), tourism operation staff, local government tourism staff, staff at tourist information centres and even concierges in the accommodation sector (ibid). On the other hand, other tourists, local community members, non-tourism employees and family members comprise the informal mediating role (ibid).

An exploratory study by Masberg and Silverman (1996) offers interesting insights into relational experiences. The visitors recalled their visits, noting salient aspects, not only of the activities they engaged in, the information they learned or culture they experienced, but also their companions and the site personnel they interacted with (ibid). Many respondents cited the significance of their companions when describing their visit experiences as social benefits. The authors claim that the personnel at heritage sites are critical components of many student visitors' recollections. Like the physical aspects, interactions with site personnel were recalled when mainly positive or particularly negative. Given these findings, the importance of well-trained and friendly site personnel cannot be overlooked.

Zatori et al. (2018) confirm these findings. The interactions between destination providers and tourists are relevant at two levels: the element of the tour design, which relates to interaction,

and the performance of the tour guide (ibid). The performance of the tour guide as a frontline employee is a determinative factor of tourist experience creation because it defines the quality of dialogue during the consumption process (ibid). Relational experience is formed through interactions, conversations and involvement.

3.3.5 Introspective Experience

Introspective experience occurs when individuals turn inward and spend considerable time examining their thoughts. These experiences are mostly private and usually triggered by the setting or an object (Pekarik et al., 1999). Gurian (1995, p.33), for example, describes visitors to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum as preparing themselves 'to take on the visit as a journey of personal introspection.'

Pekarik et al. (1999) suggest that, when visiting the destination (in this case, museums), tourists imagine how it was like during that period from seeing the artefacts and exhibitions. Furthermore, museum visitors recall their past experiences, such as previous trips similar to the current ones, their childhood experiences (e.g. their school classes), or other memories that relate to the current visit (ibid). Individuals reflect on the meaning of what they are looking at (ibid). Visitors carefully observe and examine the facts as they are available to them from the environment and try to understand why things happen in a certain way. As experiences are multifaceted, the authors suggest that reflecting on the meaning is an introspective experience in a historical museum, but may be a cognitive experience in an art museum.

Feeling a sense of belonging or connectedness is another type of introspective experience for museum visitors (Pekarik et al., 1999). A sense of belonging is related to nationalism and pride, which involve concepts of self-respect and dignity (Best, 2007). Prominent examples of these concepts are visitor experiences at battlefield sites. As mentioned previously, Cheal and Griffin (2013) explored Australian tourist experiences at Gallipoli battlefields to understand how being Australian influenced their experiences and outcomes. Feelings of nationalism and an interest in family history are typical motivations for battlefield visits (Hyde and Harman, 2011; Slade, 2003). As pointed out in Clarke and McAuley's (2016) study, the history underscores a meaningful lesson while the modern-day event acts as national significance for visitors. In this sense, visitors feel a connection to the site. Nationalism is not only the motivation to visit, but also the experience outcome that creates a sense of connectedness and identity.

Pekarik et al. (1999) contend that visitors feel a spiritual connection during their museum visits. In this sense, visitors feel deeply connected with the exhibits and start looking back to before human existence. The physical elements provoke a constant interaction between the individuals' wish to connect their inner process with the external surroundings. Norman (2012) proposes that spiritual experience in tourism research is characterised by a self-conscious project of spiritual betterment. However, although spiritual experience and religious experience take place alongside each other, spiritual experience can be part of contemporary religious practice for a range of individuals, as well as being part of non-religious meaning and identity (ibid).

Sharpley and Jepson's (2011) rural tourism study supports these non-religious spiritual experiences; a disconnection between spirituality and religion is prominent. A variety of themes emerged from the focus group discussion, including the restorative and revitalising qualities of the area in the study, the feeling of solitude and quietness, the power of nature, the sense of privilege to be enjoying it, a sense of connectedness and a sense of history (ibid). Tourists found the natural environment of the countryside spiritually uplifting and frequently mentioned the beauty of the landscape and its features. The experience was enhanced by the actual process of travelling there, as well as spending time there (ibid). Simply put, the extra effort and the choice to go to the destination prompt such feelings.

Interestingly, though unsurprisingly, a sense of place or belonging relates to individuals' past and/or connects with the past or history in general (Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). Place attachment can influence an individual's perceptions and acceptance of a particular area, while reminders of past experiences, especially childhood memories, can evoke unique feelings and connections to a place (Manzo, 2003). A sense of personal history induces an introspective experience. In this context, the natural environment provides a profound connection, such as a deep sense of belonging or a sense of place. This introspective experience also produces a state of flow, whereby the typical differences between self and object are lost, allowing individuals greater connectivity through immersion in the surroundings.

Considering, too, the study by Collins-Kreiner (2016), the boundary between tourism and pilgrimage is fading. Collins-Kreiner states that both secular and religious pilgrimages require spatial movement and involve an emotional desire on the part of individuals to visit sites meaningful to them. Both phenomena are motivated by a desire for an experience that will add

meaning to life. Cheal and Griffin (2013) describe a secular pilgrimage as a journey outside of one's usual environment to a place with significant meaning, which leaves the visitor feeling renewed. The site is often relevant to the visitor's core identity, and the experience is generally transformational (ibid).

In essence, introspection is a deeper and more personal form of reflection (Kumar, 2009). Reflection implies a fixing of thoughts on something, whereas, with introspection, the tendency is to self-evaluate and measure (ibid). Introspection is associated with the observation or examination of one's own mental and emotional state of mind (ibid). As such, introspective experiences are interrelated with emotional and cognitive experiences.

3.3.6 Hedonic Experiences

Hedonic experience refers to excitement, enjoyment, fun and indulgence (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). Such experience reflects potential entertainment and emotional worth (Babin et al., 1994). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) contrast the information-processing and experiential views of consumer behaviour. Environmental inputs (e.g. products, communication, contents) and consumer inputs (e.g. personal resources, preferences, tasks and activities) combine in cognition, affect and behaviour. The authors argue that the experiential view of consumption involves a steady flow of fantasies, feelings and fun. This perspective is a subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses and aesthetic criteria. From the information-processing perspective, the consequences of consumer choice are typically viewed in terms of the product's useful function. By contrast, in the experiential view, the consequences appear in the fun that a consumer derives from a product. In other words, the enjoyment that the product offers and the resulting feeling of pleasure that it evokes. This view is supported by Lee et al. (1994), who explored the elements of hedonic experience. The authors note enjoyment, relaxation and freedom of choice as three salient aspects in defining leisure experience.

Otto and Ritchie (1996) argue that tourism is a service industry. Therefore, to translate consumer experience into managerial action, research into tourist experience from a service marketing perspective is warranted. As such, the authors developed and tested a scale across three tourism industries (hotels, airlines, and tours and attractions) to measure the affective component of service experience. The findings reveal that hedonic experience is the most significant experience in a tourism setting. The visitors interviewed confirmed the need to be doing what they

love or like, to have their imaginations stirred, and to be thrilled by the activities at the sites. The findings further suggest this experience is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that makes people want to share their experiences with others. Together, all these studies suggest that hedonic experience comprises positive emotions (e.g. excitement, enjoyment) and cognitive responses.

3.3.7 Restorative Experiences

Restorative experience is characterised by the escape, relaxation, revitalisation, freedom and sense of harmony obtained from attractive settings in terms of design and landscape (Ali et al., 2014; Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). Otto and Ritchie (1996) claim that 'peace of mind' is a characteristic of restorative experience, which includes both physical and psychological safety and comfort. This restorative experience offers personal security, relaxation, comfort and privacy. Involvement seems to have more to do with the process of service delivery and cognitive interpretation than the outcomes. Individuals are active and desire to have choice and control, as well as demanding to be informed. Finally, individuals require a sense of recognition from the providers, so they can feel important and confident that they are being taken seriously. This present study reveals that tourist experiences embrace affective components that can measure customers' feelings, rather than merely focusing on utilitarian functions.

Xu and Chan (2010) support Otto and Ritchie's (1996) findings. The study explored service experiences in the context of package tours, specifically inbound package tours to China from the US. The findings reaffirm that escapism, peace of mind and relaxation are tourist experiences that result in satisfaction and behavioural intention. With this in mind, hedonic and restorative experiences highlight the positive emotional experiences in the tourism context. The following experience dimension emphasises the negative emotional experiences.

3.3.8 Emotional Experiences

Although the common elements reported by individuals in leisure experiences are enjoyment, fun and relaxation, negative feelings are also recalled (Lee et al., 1994). Exhausted feelings, such as tired, drained and worn out, describe the physical efforts in various sporting events. The authors highlight that these feelings are not from physical exertion, but are purposefully achieved. Moreover, other feelings commonly described as scary, frightening or fear often happen during adventurous activities (ibid). Similarly, nervousness occurs when individuals

engage in risky activities (ibid). Disappointment also emerges when the event involves direct competition (ibid). Frustration, like disappointment, is intimately associated with defeat and poor performance (ibid).

Considering the negative emotional experience, Larsen et al. (2001) investigated whether people can feel happy and sad simultaneously. According to the emotion circumplex model from Russell (1980), happiness and sadness are opposites, and thus, mutually exclusive. Cacioppo and Berntson's (1994) evaluative space model suggests that positive and negative emotional responses are separable, and that mixed feelings of happiness and sadness can co-occur. Larsen et al. (2001) replicated and extended past research by highlighting that, sometimes, people feel both happy and sad. This mixed feeling is also evident in the consumption of negative feelings by Andrade and Cohen (2007). Their study explored why people choose to expose themselves to experiences known to elicit negative feelings, and studied the responses to such feelings. The findings reveal that individuals who pursue such aversive events experience a similar level of negative feelings as those who deliberately avoid them (ibid). Positive and negative feelings co-occurred when people were exposed to aversive stimuli, in this case, watching a horror movie (ibid).

Emotional experience is present in tourist experiences. The essence of emotional experience is the mental impression on the mind of the individual tourist. The strength of emotions varies due to the immediate reactions and the duration of that experience (Aho, 2001). The experience is not only pleasurable, but also stressful and often associated with tension (Lee et al., 1994).

To summarise, physical experiences are associated with movement and action, whereas sensory experiences focus on the perceptual, object and aesthetic aspects (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016). However, sensory experiences can be integrated with physical experience because the use of the five senses with physical surroundings. Similarly, hedonic and restorative experiences are related to the emotional responses of individuals. Hedonism concerns positive feelings of pleasure, fun, excitement and enjoyment (Triantafillidou and Siomkos, 2014), and restoration enables positive emotional changes and renews the cognitive process, which results in self-experience (Korpela et al., 2002).

Tourist experience is derived from the meaning of the activity to the individual, not from the activity itself (Ateca-Amestoy et al., 2008). The experience is based entirely on personal perception, including tastes, skills and the ability of resources. The tourist constructs self-meaningful experience, which includes personal value and emotions from the trip. The trip may be different things to different people; one activity can be meaningful and unique to one person but ordinary to another. The next section reviews experience outcomes, which are the essence of memorable experiences.

3.4 Experience Outcomes

Tourist experiences begin with the awakening interest in and expectation of what the destination offers. Then, the actual visits include the travel and activities at the destination. The process of visiting is the arena for absorbing the experiences. The tourist experience is not complete without experience outcomes. This section reviews post-experiences, which are based on discrete or multi-dimensional experiences, as explained in the previous section. The following sections comprise the outcomes of tourist experiences by reviewing the process of evaluation, recollection and consequentiality.

3.4.1 Evaluation

Evaluation, which is the appraisal of the value of visits, in this section refers to satisfaction, comparison, recommendation and advice. Experience evaluation is individuals' unique cognitive and emotional impressions about the experiences based on their interactions with the communicative elements of experience offerings (Dong and Siu, 2013). That is, a favourable evaluation of experience should delight tourists by creating memorable feelings and leaving favourable subjective memories.

Tung and Ritchie (2011) point out that satisfaction is commonly examined as the outcome of tourism experiences. Satisfaction is the total evaluation of the consumption experience (Johnson et al., 1995). Giese et al. (2016) outline three components of satisfaction: (1) satisfaction is a summary of affective response of varying intensity (emotional response predominating); (2) it is a time-specific point of determination and limited duration (link to a particular moment); (3) it is directed toward focal aspects of product acquisition and consumption (identify the focus of

interest). Undoubtedly, satisfaction plays an essential role in planning tourism products and services (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Tourist satisfaction is crucial to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of products and services, and the revisit decision (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000).

In tourism literature, assessments of tourist satisfaction have prompted various theories and models. For instance, there is a broad acceptance of the expectation and disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1980; Hui et al., 2007; Tse and Wilton, 2006). This model considers satisfaction to be the result of a comparison between expectations and the perception of the performance, so individuals feel satisfied whenever the products and service meet their expectations (Oliver, 1980). People develop expectations before they purchase products or use the service and then compare actual performance with those expectations. If the actual performance is better than their expectations, this results in positive disconfirmation, which means they are highly satisfied. Similarly, Chon (1986) suggests that tourist satisfaction depends upon the goodness of fit between people's expectations about the destination and the perceived evaluative outcome of the experiences at the destination area.

According to the perceived performance model by Tse and Wilton (1988), consumer dissatisfaction is only a function of the actual performance, regardless of consumer expectations. The actual performance and initial expectations are considered independently, rather than comparing performance with past experiences. Thus, tourist evaluations of their satisfaction with travel experiences are considered regardless of their expectations. For example, tourists do not know what they want to enjoy and experience and do not have any knowledge about their destination circumstances, and only their actual experiences are evaluated to assess their satisfaction.

Yoon and Uysal (2005) argue that satisfaction is based on whether the visit was worth the time and effort. People vary greatly in personal resources and, thus, their ability to receive extraordinary experiences. Ateca-Amestoy et al. (2008) support this statement. The authors confirm that satisfaction captures the valuation of how the leisure need individually satisfies through the provision and consumption of experiences, and it is these personal resources that maximise the individual's capacity. Tourism is one of the most time-intensive activities. Therefore,

time is an influential factor for an individual's satisfaction with an experience (ibid). As such, a worthwhile visitation based on personal resources leads to satisfaction.

Recommendation and offering advice to others is mostly referred to as consumer loyalty in marketing research (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). In the tourism context, travel destinations can be considered products, and tourists may recommend destinations and attractions to other potential tourists, such as friends or relatives. Satisfaction of experience leads to positive comments about the destination, recommending the place and encouraging others to visit (Bigné et al., 2005; Hosany and Gilbert, 2010). Interestingly, people are willing to pay more even if the price increases when they revisit or receive extra services at the destination.

3.4.2 Recollection

Recollection refers to the efforts made and actions taken by tourists to remember the experiences and to reflect on the trip (e.g. telling stories, showing photos, purchasing souvenirs) (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). During the recollection phase, tourists may intensify their experiences and render them more tangible (Dong and Siu, 2013). On-the-spot behaviour such as taking photos, collecting and keeping autographs and purchasing souvenirs and gifts are examples of experience intensification (ibid). The core idea is that tourists want to intensify and bring a favourable experience into their real lives; a more pleasant and meaningful experience boosts a stronger tendency to intensify.

Moscardo (2010) emphasises the importance of storytelling; tourists create stories during their experiences and then present these stories to others as memories of their trip. Stories told by tourists are sources of information that contribute to the destination image that tourists may have, and this image is one of the key variables in the destination choices of others (ibid). Dong and Siu (2013) confirm that tourists may seek to extend the experience after leaving the destination. This experience extension is the visitors' efforts to share the perceived affective and cognitive benefits from the experience, often by telling other people. Moreover, storytelling shapes memory and impressions over time (McGregor and Holmes, 1999). Hence, storytelling acts to both consolidate (touchpoint of narratives) and recover experiences from memory. The appreciation of storytelling provides listeners with a deeper understanding of the event-specific knowledge of the subjective experience of the storyteller.

The internet transforms tourist experiences when planning, travelling and remembering experiences (Jansson, 2007; Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017). Recent studies have indicated that the use of social media and Web 2.0, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and TripAdvisor, enables travellers to share knowledge and experiences (e.g. Daunt and Harris, 2018; Okazaki et al., 2017; Woodside et al., 2007). Sharing stories, photos and other social activities provides other travellers with the chance to learn about new travel opportunities and to get to know a destination (Wang et al., 2012). In this sense, when people share their travel experiences through social media, other people can see and experience their footsteps without physically being together. Notably, on travel review sites, tourists post comments to share their travel experiences after the trip as a way to recollect actively their experiences with other people (Jansson, 2007; Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017). Therefore, tourists are not passive consumers but information creators, editors and distributors. As a result, social networking sites and online travel communities represent a new element of communication, which helps create meaningful tourist experiences (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017).

Sharing experience links to word-of-mouth communication. Several researchers have pointed out the impact of experiences on word-of-mouth communication between consumers (e.g. Grewal et al., 2009; Terblanche, 2009; Triantafillidou and Siomkos, 2014). Word-of-mouth communication is the process that allows consumers to share information and opinions about specific products and services with other people (Litvin et al., 2008). Electronic word-of-mouth refers to the informal communications directed at consumers through internet-based technology regarding the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services (ibid). Individuals' affective elements of pleasure, satisfaction and sadness motivate consumers to share (ibid). In adventure tourism research by Williams and Soutar (2009), they confirm the consensus in the tourism industry that positive word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat purchases are necessary stimulants for future business, and that word-of-mouth communications are considered reliable and trustworthy.

Additionally, tourists want to re-experience by going back and rebuilding the memory if they think that trips are meaningful (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Recollection-influence mediation exists throughout the experiential process and happens before, during and after the trip (Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009). In a tourism setting, mediation refers to an individual's active attempt to facilitate and interpret the tourism experience of another individual (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009). When individuals recollect their experience through

storytelling to family and friends, they influence the expectations of those who may be in the planning process or, if they actually revisit the destination with other people, they are likely to be onsite mediators who directly influence other people's experiences. However, the recollection experience might not result in a revisit for two reasons (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). First, a memorable experience can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience that is unique and cannot be replicated. Second, tourists are interested in visiting other places to see other destinations, even if the destinations and types of attraction are similar to the previous destination.

People like to be reminded of special moments and experiences, and a souvenir serves as such a reminder. Souvenirs have three common purchase intentions: souvenirs as gifts for others (Gordon, 1986; Kim and Littrell, 2001), souvenirs as aids in the memory of travel experiences (Kim and Littrell, 1999; Swanson and Horridge, 2006), and as evidence of travel (Gordon, 1986). Tourists use their souvenirs to help define and reminisce about a transitory experience and to bring the quality of an extraordinary experience back into an ordinary experience (Gordon, 1986). In this sense, an actual object concretises or makes tangible what is otherwise only an intangible state. For Hume (2013), the date of production is relatively unimportant, as the date of purchase takes precedent. The date locks the memory of the collector and the experience of the site; souvenirs assist in experience recollection (ibid). In this respect, a souvenir serves as geographical artefact of where the collector buys it. Hume (2013) compares a souvenir with an artwork; the artwork has value in itself, whereas the souvenir's main value is its ability to mark the collector's experience. Thus, the correct souvenir product assortment (both depth and breadth) influences whether a tourist purchases a souvenir, shapes the souvenir preferences of the tourist and, ultimately, satisfies a tourist's desire to take home a recollection of the experience.

Lawson and Baud-Bovy (1977, p.10) define the image as 'the expression of all objective knowledge, impressions, prejudices, imaginations, and emotional thoughts with which a person or a group judges a particular object or place.' Specifically, in tourist experience, travel photos can be symbols that reflect the inner feelings of the photographers and serve as records of travel experiences (Pan et al., 2014). The use of photographs is a way of justifying tourists' journeys and travel experiences through visual authentication (Hillman, 2007). Travel photography provides the traveller and, in turn, friends and relatives, with the proof of travel to distant and exotic places, and authentic visual verification that the traveller was indeed present at the destination. In other words, photos bring a feeling of authenticity and help to construct travel memories. Recollection occurs

when tourists capture moments in the forms of photos or videos, buy products at destinations, such as souvenirs and books, and tell stories on both offline and online channels.

3.4.3 Consequentiality

Consequentiality refers to the perceived importance of the outcome of the trip, such as enhancing social relationships, developing intellectual ability, discovering self and overcoming physical challenges (Aho, 2001; Bosangit et al., 2015; Tung and Ritchie, 2011).

Interaction with other people during the trip can improve friendships and develop new friendships and increase appreciation of family and relatives, rather than merely visiting a destination with family and friends (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). The interaction is the enabler of social development. On a broader level, the contribution of museum visitations to positive relationships is commonly reported in terms of intergenerational relationships (Packer, 2008). Exhibitions provide opportunities for different generations to share experiences in a real and tangible way. Many visitors consider that a museum visit is worthwhile and feel better about themselves for having done so (ibid). As such, self-acceptance is an element of wellbeing.

Intellectual development happens when people learn more about the world and expand their perspectives on life thanks to travel experiences (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). These experiences can be some of the most memorable of a lifetime, and may involve many references, such as local culture, learning history, and language. In the museum context, Packer (2008) notes that personal growth is an aspect of learning. This consequence inspires people; visitors want to learn more and to be more aware of different topics (ibid). This permanent change of state of mind or way of life is what Aho (2001) calls being ‘transformed’. For example, in cultural tourism, tourists are inspired by the artwork. This consequentiality represents the structural changes in a person’s life or personality, as well as enhancing existing capabilities.

Self-discovery represents the permanent changes in the tourist state of mind (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). The memory of the experience may not disappear and possibly changes the way of life. Individuals consider a tourism experience an inner journey of personal growth, rather than the mere consuming of sights and places. People strive to find meaning in life and search for meaningful experience within their tourism activities. People seek a sense of physical, emotional or spiritual fulfilment through tourism, rather than pursuing mere escapism or a hollow search for

authenticity, is the transformation of the experience. The search for purpose in life sparks an interest in understanding the boundaries of existence by connecting people with their background and their environment. A theoretical approach of psychological wellbeing can be applied to identify what people take away with them by building personal meanings that improve quality of life and enable them to thrive rather than merely survive (Packer, 2008).

Travel blogs are powerful sources that reveal consumer-centric perspectives on tourism experiences, Bosangit et al. (2015) examine the experiences of backpackers. The findings reveal that challenging activities and novelty are central to the process of experience consequentiality. Challenging activities are associated with the physical and social conditions at the destination (Bosangit et al., 2015). The unexpected elements of events contrasted with people's normal realms of experience offer bloggers the ability to adapt and cope with diversity. Personal goals are typically set for these challenging activities. Challenging one's limits is essential for an evolving self; it renders the meaningful experience and becomes a self-identity consequentiality through travel. Novelty and learning about the people and culture at the destination are personalised via reference both to the self and to cultural contexts and social structures that are the symbols of familiar social worlds and norms (Bosangit et al., 2015). Consequentiality is provoked by the comparison between what tourists encounter and their own experiences. Novelty and learning about other cultures are experiences that become a means of self-development. Tourists do not merely seek an experience of place but a transformative and meaningful experience of self in that place.

Consequentiality is a revelatory experience outcome that can expand the view of the world or make one think differently about one's own life. Previous research has focused on the importance of evaluation and the recollection of the experience; the consequentiality of experience has been paid little attention. People reconstruct their experiences according to what is meaningful to them; tourism planners must be encouraged to deliver experiences that can produce memorable outcomes. There is a need to continue re-inventing the destination by promoting experiences that influence people to visit and revisit thanks to their takeaway impressions.

3.5 Conclusion

Experience is subjective and highly personal. The focus of this chapter was tourist experience, which is generated by the consumption of sets heavily dominated by experience providers. As such, the experience is viewed as a stage offering, as proposed in the experience economy framework. In tourism, the experience is a commodified phenomenon that is staged, produced and consumed by tourists in an endless array of specific places. Tourist experience is a complicated process, providing a complex variety of elements. The process of tourist experience is incomplete without experience outcomes. This chapter discussed outcomes of experience regarding how tourists evaluate, recollect and memorise their experiences.

Since the previous chapter was the literature review of dark tourism, which is generally described as a non-hedonic context, this chapter provided a broader view of experience staging, tourist experiences and outcomes in the hedonic context to consider how dark toursim fits into the non-hedonic context. This study explores the relationship between the provision and consumption of experience by applying the experience staging and tourist experience dimensions from a hedonic context. To explore the issues outlined in this chapter further, the following chapter discusses appropriated research designs, which can address the research gap and answer how provision and consumption of experience in hedonic context can be applied in dark tourism.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction

Following the review of literature on dark tourism, experience staging and tourist experiences, this chapter begins with the different philosophical positions underlying the research methods and designs. As outlined in the first chapter, research aims and objectives influence the research philosophy and strategy. This research utilises social constructivism, which is the notion of individual experience being dynamic and fluid. Furthermore, this research philosophy leads to the qualitative approach. The chapter continues with the selected method – a netnographic approach. TripAdvisor, as a data source for netnography, is reviewed, in addition to the justification of the research context and the five chosen sites. Finally, the data collection method, sampling procedure, sample size and analysis procedure are outlined and discussed.

4.1 Research Philosophy

The chosen research philosophy contains essential assumptions about how individuals view the world. Although philosophical ideas remain primarily hidden in research (Slife and Williams, 1995), they influence research practice and need to be identified (Wainwright and Forbes, 2000). There are reasons an understanding of philosophy is essential in research. First, understanding ontology and epistemology allows the researcher to have a clear sense of his/her reflexive role in the research methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The clarity of what constitutes truth and knowledge leads to issues related to the theory of knowledge and helps to create a useful research contribution. In other words, these views guide the researcher's thoughts, beliefs and assumptions about the world and society.

Second, philosophy can help to clarify research designs (Wainwright and Forbes, 2000). Philosophical assumptions inevitably shape how the researcher understands their research questions, the methods they use, and how they collect the data and interpret their findings. Philosophy offers more complete ways to answer the questions being investigated in the research

(Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Primarily, knowledge of philosophy can help researchers to recognise which designs might work. Furthermore, philosophy can help researchers to identify or develop designs that may be outside their past experiences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods methodological approaches share similar and different backgrounds, methodological orientations and research practices.

To choose an appropriate research approach, researchers need to consider what assumptions their philosophical worldview will bring to the study. A philosophical worldview is a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study (Creswell, 2014 p.6). A term often used synonymously with worldview is 'paradigm'. A paradigm provides viewpoints and rules on how to solve the problems in the study. Arguments, debates and criticism are central to the progress of philosophy (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Most of the primary debates among philosophers concern matters of ontology and epistemology, which are often framed in terms of choice between positivist and interpretivist research philosophies or between quantitative and qualitative methods (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.1.1 Ontology

Ontology relates to the nature of reality and existence, whereas epistemology concerns the theory of knowledge and helps researchers understand the methods of enquiry (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Natural and social scientists generally draw on different ontological and epistemological assumptions when developing their methodologies for conducting research. Bell et al. (2019) contend that, as a social researcher, the fundamental aim is to understand reality; different ontological assumptions determine what it is that the researcher seeks to understand through research. As a result, the researcher can design a study to help capture reality. Ontology can be separated into two positions: realism and relativism (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Ontology (adapted from Easterby-Smith et al., 2015)

Ontology	**Realism**	**Relativism**
Truth	Single truth	Many truths
Facts	Facts exist and can be revealed	Facts depend on the viewpoint of the observer

Realism is the belief that there is a single truth and that facts exist and can be revealed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). This ontology implies that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is dependent on social actors (Crotty, 1998). In other words, social phenomena act as external facts beyond our reach or influence. Realism is often taken to imply objectivism; meaning exists in objects independently of any consciousness (ibid). In contrast, in a relativist ontology, there are many truths, and facts depend on the viewpoint of the observer (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The position of relativism goes a stage further in suggesting that scientific laws are not 'out there' to be discovered, but that people create them.

Realism has been strongly influenced by the work of Latour and Woolgar (1979) concerning the way scientific ideas evolve within research laboratories. The authors notes that most of the debate and discussion explains observed patterns and phenomena. That is, people hold different views, and their ability to gain acceptance from others may depend on their status and past reputation. Thus, the truth of a particular idea or theory is reached through discussion and agreement between the main protagonists. Furthermore, it is accepted in relativist ontology that society is defined and experienced differently by different people, and this significantly depends on the class and race to which a person belongs, as well as the context and/or country they live in (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Thus, there is no single reality that one can discover; there are many perspectives. As such, this assumption of relativism is appropriate for this research's aims and objectives, which seek to understand staging, experiences and outcomes.

4.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge and ways of enquiring into the physical and social worlds. It is a theory of knowledge that follows logically on from ontology (Bell et al., 2019). In a practical sense, epistemology allows a researcher to answer the question of how a study should be conducted. Epistemology is defined by Crotty (1998 p.8) as 'how we know what we know'. Since this study seeks to make sense of business-related phenomena by gathering and analysing data, the design of the study and the employed technique need to generate a sound basis for making claims about that knowledge and informing the research practice (Bell et al., 2019). Epistemology contains two contrasting views regarding how social science research should be conducted – *objectivism,* and *constructivism* (Crotty, 1998).

Objectivist epistemology holds that meaning, and thus, meaningful reality, exists as such beyond the operation of any consciousness (Crotty, 1998). Objectivism is suggested in the context of positivism and postpositivism (ibid). Positivism represents the traditional form of research, and applies more to quantitative analysis than qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, positivism holds the realist ontological assumption (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). This worldview is sometimes called the scientific method, empirical science or doing scientific research.

Another epistemology – social constructivism – rejects this view of knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). There is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it. Truth, or meaning, comes into existence through our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge, different people may construct meaning in different ways, even about the same phenomenon. In this view of things, subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning. Relativist ontology and social constructivist epistemology seek to understand the different experiences that people make from different situations. These philosophical assumptions underpin this study. The following section delineates social constructivism within tourism research.

4.1.2 Social Constructivism within Tourism Research

Social constructivism holds a different worldview from positivism and postpositivism (Creswell, 2014). The essence of social constructivism is that 'reality' is not objective and exterior but it is socially constructed and is given meaning by people in their interactions with others (Crotty, 1998; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). As such, the task of social scientists should not only be to gather facts and measure the frequency of patterns of social behaviour, but also to understand the different constructions and meanings among humans in the role of social actors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences toward certain things, which are varied and multiple (Creswell, 2014). As a result, a researcher searches for the complexity of participants' views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The questions become broad and general, so that the participants can construct the meaning of the situation, typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons (ibid). As such, the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings. Often, subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. Such meanings are not imprinted on individuals

but are formed through interactions with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives.

As the researchers are part of what is being observed, they acknowledge that their backgrounds shape their interpretation (Creswell, 2014). They interpret meanings based on their personal, cultural and historical experiences. Researchers intend to make sense of the meanings or increase understanding by gathering rich data, from which ideas are induced. Researchers generate or inductively develop a pattern of meaning. Thus, the unit of analysis may include the complexity of whole situations (Crotty, 1998; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

Similarly, Crotty (1998) identified several assumptions for social constructivism. First, individuals construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Second, they engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives. Third, the primary generation of meaning is always social, arising through and out of interaction with a human community. These three assumptions frame qualitative research (ibid). The qualitative researcher tends to use open-ended questions, so that the participants can share their views and seek to understand the setting by visiting the context and gathering information. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggest that the methodological approach in the social constructivist research tends to work more from the bottom-up perspective, using the participants' views to build broader themes and to generate a theory that interconnects the themes. Creswell (2014) agrees that social constructivist research is typically considered an approach to qualitative research. The social constructivist research can be contrasted directly with the features of positivist research. The comparison is listed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Contrasting assumptions of Positivism and Social Constructivism (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012; Easterby-Smith et al., 2015)

	Positivism	**Social Constructivism**
Observer	Must be independent	Is part of what is being observed
Human interests	Should be irrelevant	Are the main drivers of science
Explanations	Demonstrate causality	Aim to increase understanding of the situation
Reason for doing research	To discover laws that are generalised and govern the universe	To understand and describe human nature
Place of values in the research	Science is value-free, and values have no place except when choosing a topic	Values are an integral part of social life; no group's values are wrong, only different
Research progresses	Through hypotheses and deductions	By gathering rich data from inducing ideas
Concepts	Need to be defined in order to measure	Should incorporate stakeholder perspectives
Units of analysis	Should be reduced to simplest terms	May include the complexity of the entire situation
Generalisation	Through statistical probability	By theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers, randomly selected	Small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

Experience staging and individual experiences and outcomes are of interest in this study. There are multiple truths, and reality is not objective; instead, these concepts are socially constructed by humans as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998). The researcher adopts a social constructionism approach to understand the meanings people construct around their experiences in dark tourism settings. Recent contributions in tourism research have generated increasing recognition of social constructivism (e.g. Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). Given that tourism spaces are socially, not physically, constructed, it is essential to consider how the meanings relating to those tourism spaces are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed over time (ibid). As tourism is a complex phenomenon based on interrelations and interactions, with more focus on an approach that considers the roles individual experiences and perceptions

play in constructing the tourist, or indeed the host, and the experience requires more qualitative methods of data collection (ibid).

The turn to constructivism in tourism research is reported both directly as a meta-theoretical proposition and indirectly through the incorporation of a range of data sources and methods (Botterill and Platenkamp, 2012). Hollinshead (2006) and Tribe (2006) both emphasise the implications of a turn to social constructivism in their meta-theoretical critiques of tourism knowledge. Botterill and Platenkamp (2012), on the other hand, suggest that constructivism in tourism research is mainly evidenced in a range of data sources. For example, Law et al. (2007) studied the interplay between film and tourism development, whereas Dunn (2005) explored the social meaning of Venice through a British TV programme. Tribe' s (2008) article on 'the art of tourism' suggests that constructionism can provide a thick artistic description and offer insights into the issue of art representation. Mkono (2012a) employed a netnographic examination of constructive authenticity in restaurant settings, claiming that authenticity is a product of social construction lending itself to subjectivity and negotiability.

Constructivism is a theory of learning asserting that knowledge is not simply transferred or transmitted but actively constructed by the learner's mind. Knowledge and experience must be embedded in a social context or community of learners (Dewey, 1966). Mkono (2012a) employed a netnographic examination of constructive authenticity in restaurant settings, claiming that authenticity is a product of social construction lending itself to subjectivity and negotiability. Weblogs, or blogs, are Web pages often likened to online personal journals. A weblog is the unedited voice of a person (Winer, 2003). To emphasise social media, it is often mobile, allowing for autonomous anytime, anyplace, anywhere connectivity to knowledge. The difference from other traditional evidence-based resources is that social media is authored, critiqued, and configured by non-academics and academics alike, who construct, co-construct and share these forms of digitally mediated content (Kozinets and Gambetti, 2021). In social media interactions, people construct their individual and social selves online by constantly negotiating social positions that better fit their fluid and unstable identity (ibid). Thus, a weblog or social media can be an ideal forum for social constructivist learning and sharing since it enables users to exchange ideas and share their experiences.

Social constructivism's strength is its ability to look at processual changes over time to understand people's meaning by adjusting to new issues and emerging ideas (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Moreover, the concept accepts the value of multiple data sources. There are, of course, potential criticisms. As a pluralistic method, using data and research designs provides ammunition for critics who question how to judge whether a research design is good and how contributions to scientific knowledge can be evaluated. Weak social constructionists argue for demarcation based on the appropriateness of method, although the difficulty of defining suitability remains (Botterill and Platenkamp, 2012). Strong constructivists dismiss the question and reject any demarcation of science from any other form of knowledge (ibid). Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) suggest that constructivist research can be a very time- and resource-consuming process, and the analysis and interpretation may be challenging depending on the tacit knowledge of the researchers. As such, it is the researcher's role to seek out the justification that the assumption enhances the strengths in the research design.

4.2 Research Design

After reviewing the research philosophy about the nature of reality and a set of assumptions about the methods of inquiring about knowledge, this research philosophy leads to the choice and application of particular methods. A research problem addresses an issue that comes from a void in the literature, conflicts in research, and neglected topics and so forth. Certain types of social research problems call for specific approaches.

Creswell (2014) suggests that a concept or phenomenon needs to be explored and understood because little research has been done on it, and so merits a qualitative approach. Qualitative research aims to develop an understanding of the context in which phenomena take place, focusing mainly on experiences and emotions (Altinay and Paraskevas, 2008). Moreover, qualitative methods have gained momentum in tourism studies, especially for capturing the experiential nature of tourism (Ateljevic et al., 2007; Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004), and the goal of social science research is to understand the complexity of human behaviour and experience (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

In dark tourism research, a wide range of methodological approaches have been adopted, usually reflecting the disciplinary background of the researcher. Light (2017) provides evidence

that the most common research approach involves qualitative methods. Similarly, the integration of inductive and deductive approaches has been used in earlier works on dark tourism (e.g. Koleth, 2014; Liyanage et al., 2015; Mowatt and Chancellor, 2011).

For the above reasons, together with the exploratory aims and objectives, a qualitative method using both inductive and deductive approaches was employed in this study. The following section presents the netnographic approach and the procedures, advantages and disadvantages of this technique.

4.2.1 Netnography

Netnography, or online ethnography, is a qualitative research method that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the consumer behaviours of cultures and communities emerging through computer-mediated communications (Kozinets, 2002). Netnography can be defined as a 'written account resulting from fieldwork studying the cultures and communities that emerge from online, computer-mediated, or internet-based communications, where both the fieldwork and the textual account are methodologically informed by the traditions and techniques of cultural anthropology' (Kozinets, 1998 p.366).

In contrast to the qualitative interview, ever more people spontaneously offer their opinions about brands, products and experiences on the internet (Verhaeghe et al., 2009). The rise of review sites, forums, blogs, social networks and other 2.0 applications provides customers with easily accessible platforms on which to express their thoughts. Furthermore, there is evidence that individuals may be more open online than they are in real life (Childress and Asamen, 1998; Reid, 1996). The main idea of using online platforms is that a researcher can obtain answers without asking questions. Netnography uses the information that is publicly available on online platforms as a central source of data. The approach does not deal merely with words, but also photos, drawings, audio files, visual files and other digital artefacts (Kozinets, 1998). The distinct characteristics of netnography are the axiology and the source of the data (Kozinets, 2015). The axiology means netnography aims to explore, reveal and understand human realities (needs, decision, behaviours) and social worlds as they change in a coevolutionary process with technoculture (ibid). For Kozinets, netnography is a form of ethnography because it entails the researcher's immersion in the online world under investigation. Verhaeghe et al. (2009) also

emphasise the power of social media and user-generated-content for listening to consumers rather than asking them questions or measuring their opinions.

Kozinets (2002) suggests the following methodological procedures for netnographic studies: *entrée*, data collection and analysis, interpretation, and research ethics. *Entrée* means formulating the research questions and identifying the most appropriate online communities and learning about those communities. The higher the traffic of postings, the more detailed the data in an online forum are required to obtain well-supplied and in-depth findings. In this study, TripAdvisor was chosen as the online community from which to collect the data. The choice is explained in the following section. *Data collection and analysis* occur when selecting online communities. The researcher directly copies the data from the online source and then observes and analyse the members, interactions and meaning. Computer-assisted qualitative study software (in this study: NVivo12) is then used to perform the classification and coding analysis to obtain an accurate *interpretation*. For *research ethics*, the researcher fully discloses the presence and affiliations of the online community members while conducting research. This study also considers the anonymity and confidentiality of the informants. The researcher adopts a cautious position on the private-versus-public medium issue. However, Langer and Beckman (2005) assert that consent is unnecessary if analysing data from public forums. The data in this study are from a public website.

Using netnography offers several advantages. It provides greater accessibility to a broad range of respondents (Xun and Reynolds, 2010). A researcher can recruit respondents quickly and extensively. The approach is simpler and quicker than traditional qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups (Kozinets, 2002). It is a less cumbersome method because transcription of data is not needed. Additionally, in interviews and focus groups, there are essential issues such as cultural entry, self-presentation and the researcher's role, data collection and recording. Furthermore, netnography is more likely to generate honest, candid accounts as participants join cyberspace of their own free will, and because participants may assume pseudonymous or anonymous identities (Kozinets, 1998; Langer and Beckman, 2005). Moreover, the feedback on products and services has not been influenced in any way by marketers, eliminating the researcher-induced demand effects of personal interviews or focus groups (Kozinets, 2002).

The qualitative researcher may be exposed to unfamiliar languages, long-distance journeys, or difficult circumstances that occur during their research. In contrast, the netnographic researcher can access their desired culture from a computer, downloading the information and analysing the data. This method is far less obtrusive than the traditional technique. Thus, netnography offers greater continuity in research. Furthermore, netnography is relatively cost-effective because there are no travel costs, and digital data are easy to acquire, traceable and increasingly cheap. Netnography enhances the capacity and flexibility for observation and analysis and, therefore, makes the study more feasible.

Unlike conventional ethnography, netnography research has clear differences in the time taken to obtain data and the degree of immersion and participation of the researcher in the online group under study (Mkono and Markwell, 2014). Netnography is transforming the virtual landscape of tourism (Munar et al., 2013). There has been an increase in the adoption of netnography among tourism researchers (e.g. Janta et al., 2011; Mkono, 2012a, 2012b; Rageh et al., 2013; Woodside et al., 2007). The user-generated-content sites on which travellers can voluntarily reflect on their trips or seek travel and activity information provide researchers with an unprecedented opportunity to understand tourist experiences (Mkono and Markwell, 2014). Mkono (2012b) confirms that netnography allows researcher access to highly personal accounts of traveller's experiences through online reviews. Conventional feedback surveys often offer minimal insights into traveller experiences since they may be completed recklessly or misrepresent the evaluations of experiences (Banyai and Glover, 2012; Mkono, 2012b). In other words, travellers need time to reflect on their experiences. Therefore, online reviews are more realistic representations of true experiences. Fang et al. (2016) support this view. They state that online reviews play an important role in attraction sites because reviewers rely on review content more to relay their experience. Potential visitors read reviews carefully to be acquainted with the attraction sites and to decide whether to go.

To better understand the use of netnography in tourism research, this section exemplifies the research that adopt netnography as a stand-alone method. For example, Vo Thanh and Kirova (2018) explore the wine tourism experience using the experience economy model. The authors collect 825 original reviews posted on TripAdvisor by tourists who visited Cognac, France. They argue that tourists increasingly use social networks at various stages of the tourist experience, either to prepare for their trip or to share their impressions during and after their visit (ibid). They

also emphasise that in the traditional methods (e.g. focus groups or interviews), the researcher's presence affects and interrupts the natural and regular practice of everyday life. To understand the wine tourism experience and answer the exploratory research questions, the qualitative design using netnography provides them with a more meaningful analysis of all components of the wine tourism experience.

Woodside et al. (2007) also adopt the netnographic method to probe how visitors report specific Italian cities as unique brand icons. An individual-level netnography using a purposive sampling of visitors' journal stories provides the interpretative data for this research. The authors find both positive and negative visitor journal postings of their ongoing experiences and first impressions while visiting two Italian cities, Bologna and Florence (ibid). The journal stories provide the opportunity to collect interpretative data and unobtrusively of the meanings lived by travellers. The blogs can influence substantial numbers of future visitors who go online in search of first-person unbiased reports of others' experiences.

Another consumer-based perspective study using only the netnographic method is from Dwivedi (2009). The author explores the online destination image of India through consumer queries posted on two travel message boards, namely, Lonely Planet's The Thorn Tree and Indiamike.com. Message board data resemble storytelling where tourists share their experiences within the community; other travellers may benefit from these narratives. Consumers are actively constructing their own destination image, share via the internet and available to a large audience through search engines. The study adds support to the call for user-generated data as an essential source of destination image.

Mkono et al. (2013) employ netnography to explores culinary experiences as represented in tourists' online reviews of a destination, namely, Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. The study also demonstrates the potential of internet-based, qualitative research methods to illuminate the current understanding of tourist experience (ibid). The findings clearly illustrate that netnography is an effective tool for uncovering what tourists value and recall about their experiences. The data are also representative of actual and situated touristic mindsets. Internet-based research methods like netnography hold a significant opportunity for expanding knowledge in tourism management research.

As with any methods, there may be as many challenges as benefits. To begin with, netnography raises questions about the authenticity of the respondents (Xun and Reynolds, 2010). Researchers and practitioners might question how to determine the identity of a member of an online forum. TripAdvisor, for example, provides demographic details and level of contribution for each member. However, the difficulty of generalising the results to groups outside the online community sample is challenging. Due to netnography's focus on textual data, potentially poor quality discourse can occur (Xun and Reynolds, 2010). The researcher should carefully interpret each review and analyse the chronological order of the online discussion. Furthermore, the ethical issues need to be considered because the boundary between public and private may be blurred on the internet. In this study, the researcher ensured that all the data are public. The benefits and challenges are summarised in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Benefits and challenges of netnography (adapted from Kozinets, 2002; Mkono, 2012b; Xun and Reynolds, 2010)

Benefits	Challenges
• Greater accessibility to a broader cohort of respondents • Greater continuity in research • More economically viable and time-saving than conventional techniques • Higher capacity and flexibility for observation and analysis • Eliminate the undesirable influence of the outsider to the group • Greater access to highly personal accounts of traveller's experiences through online reviews	• Respondent authenticity and instability of the user base • Difficult to generalise the data • Potentially poor quality of textual discourse • Ethical sensitivity

Therefore, it is appropriate to adopt the netnographic method in this study. The following section introduces TripAdvisor and explains why this online community is the source of data.

4.2.2 Website Selection

Several studies have explored the significance of how online reviews impact customer spending and businesses' sales (e.g. Ghose and Ipeirotis, 2011; Jansen, 2010; Miguéns et al., 2008). These studies reveal not only the popularity of engaging in online communities, but also the helpfulness to other users and the economic consequence to firms. Like other forms of social media, online consumer reviews can be defined as collaborative, user-generated and rich in information (Armstrong and Hagel, 1996; Zhang and Vásquez, 2014). The review platforms are online venues in which members provide opinions and evaluations on the products and services of firms. These sites are valuable for providing information about subjectively experienced intangible or experience goods, such as visiting a destination or activity (Zhang and Vásquez, 2014).

Mostly, online reviews are crucial for businesses that deal in high risk and costly services, such as leisure travel (Zhang and Vásquez, 2014). Vacations and travel are one of the most expensive items purchased regularly by individuals globally, and they represent a significant proportion of an individual's annual budget (Buhalis and Law, 2008). Information search is an essential part of the purchase decision process, and potential travellers now have direct access to rich information provided by travel agents, tourism organisations and, increasingly, by other travellers (Buhalis and Law, 2008). Prospective travellers have become more sophisticated and independent, using a wide range of tools to arrange their trips (Buhalis, 1998). Online user-generated content is taking on a significant role in online traveller's information search and decision-making processes by providing a platform to foster communication among travellers and between travellers and tourism providers in the tourism sector (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008; Yoo and Purifoy, 2007). The internet has changed travellers' behaviours tremendously (Mills and Law, 2004).

With over 800 million reviews and opinions, TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel site (TripAdvisor, 2019a). TripAdvisor is an American company whose website contains information on accommodation, restaurants, attractions, airlines, and other travel-related content. With its mission to help people around the world to plan, book and experience the perfect trip, the company was founded in February 2000. It is a website based on the idea that most information posted is autonomously generated by its users. Travellers can use other travellers' reviews to help plan their trips.

This study uses data from TripAdvisor for four reasons. First, TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel site, helping 463 million travellers each month (TripAdvisor, 2019a). Travellers across the globe use the TripAdvisor site to browse more than 859 million reviews and opinions about 8.6 million accommodations, airlines, cruises, experiences and restaurants (ibid). These figures reflect the *entrée* in Kozinets' (2002) netnography procedures; the higher the number of online reviews, the more detailed data are in that online forum. Therefore, collecting data from such a popular website facilitates gleaning findings.

Second, TripAdvisor offers filters of types of attractions (such as museums, sights and landmarks, nature and parks, outdoor activities) and style (e.g. popular with tourists, good for kids, good for a rainy day) in addition to ranking top things to do at each destination (TripAdvisor, 2018a). The website also provides the popular keywords related to each attraction site. For instance, for Gettysburg, the Gettysburg National Military Park is #1 of 82 things to do and is categorised as nature and parks, sights and landmarks, and battlefields. The top three keywords that travellers use are 'auto tour', 'civil war' and 'visitor center'. Furthermore, anyone can filter the reviews by choosing the traveller rating (excellent, very good, average, poor, terrible), traveller type (families, couples, solo, business, friends), time of the year (Mar-May, Jun-Aug, Sep-Nov, Dec-Feb) and review language (e.g. all languages, English, German, French). The keywords reveal what and how visitors do at the sites and their experiences, including their feelings. The rating score shows the evaluation, which reflects how extraordinary or memorable experiences are. In other words, this rating score illustrates the experience outcomes. These functions make the website appropriate for the context of this study in terms of a battlefield as a sight and landmark, the visitor centre as a museum, and the most important things to do and see at the destination. These functions demonstrate experience staging and visitor experiences and how they evaluate those experiences.

Third, as a user-generated-content website, TripAdvisor reviews have two parts: a star rating ranging from one to five, and a textual description (200 characters minimum). The site also provides information about the reviewers (e.g. resident city), level of their contributions (cities visited and posted photos) and the number of followers. This information may reflect where the reviewers are from and their nationality, as well as what impacts their experiences when visiting a place that relates to their background. Level of contribution and star rating can also indicate comparisons with their previous experiences, which is one of the experience outcomes in this

study. In other words, details of the reviewers help to judge whether the readers should consider a review.

Finally, TripAdvisor has been used in the academic community as a source of data collection in different disciplines, such as tourism, brand management, consumer research and advertising. Several studies in tourism research (e.g. hotel, restaurant, attraction) that have used TripAdvisor as a case study or TripAdvisor reviews as research data, testifying that TripAdvisor is a suitable a source of data for this present study (see Table 4.4). Although there is a considerable number of publications within hospitality and tourism, this table does not represent a full picture of the literature; the purpose is to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Table 4.4: Examples of tourism research using TripAdvisor (chronological order)

Authors	Aim	Context
Briggs et al. (2007)	Examine service quality delivery across all sizes of hotels to assess the service quality performance	Hotels in Scotland
Yoo and Purifoy (2007)	Examine the role and impact of travel reviews in the pleasure trip planning process	Travel planning
Miguéns et al. (2008)	Assess the effects of social-enhanced recommendations	Hotels in Lisbon, Portugal
O'Connor (2008)	Explore how hotels are presented on TripAdvisor as an aid to helping managers better understand how they can manage their image and positioning on the site	Hotels in London, UK
Au et al. (2009)	Identity e-complaints and the relationship between e-complaints and hotel class and age of e-complainants	Hotels in Hong Kong
Tuominen (2011)	Investigate the impact of online word of mouth on hotel profitability	Hotel in Riyadh (Saudi-Arabia), Stockholm (Sweden), Copenhagen (Denmark), Oslo (Norway), Helsinki (Finland), Tampere (Finland)
Vásquez (2011)	Identify the characteristics of online complaints	Negative hotel reviews
Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2012)	Explore traveller's perceived risk communicated on an online community	City (Helsinki-as a low- risk city, Madrid-as a medium-risk city, and Cape Town-as a high-risk city)
Rageh et al. (2013)	Explore the underlying dimensions of the tourist experience	Hotels in Egypt
Filieri (2015)	Test a model of antecedents and consequences of trust for consumer-generated media	Travel plan and intention to visit a place
Banerjee and Chua (2016)	Examine relationships between geographic region, user information and rating patterns	Hotel in 4 regions (America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, and Middle East-Africa)
Fang et al. (2016)	Develop econometric models to examine what drives perceived helpfulness of reviews	Historical attractions
Filieri (2016)	Assess the trustworthiness and untrustworthiness of online consumer reviews	Any types of TripAdvisor reviews
Cenni and Goethals (2017)	Investigate different languages on negative hotel reviews show similar or divergent characteristics	Negative hotel reviews in English, Dutch and Italian language
Ganzaroli et al. (2017)	Analyse the impact of TripAdvisor on the quality of restaurants	Restaurants in Venice, Italy
Raguseo et al. (2017)	Explore the role of infomediaries on how they drive the value creation and value capture mechanisms	Small hotels in Italy
Azer and Alexander (2018)	Conceptualise negatively valenced influencing behaviour	Hotels, restaurants, things-to-do
Compagnone and Fiorentino (2018)	Describe the linguistic behaviour of consumers in the tourism industry	Hotels in Italy
Gal-Tzur et al. (2018)	Identify the methodology for extracting the information required for transport-related decisions from Q&A forums	Transport-related information
Hoppe-Spiers (2018)	Explain the importance of TripAdvisor on how it helps the restaurant owners increase the number of diners	Restaurants
Pearce and Wu (2018)	Examine visitors' experiences and factors that influence satisfaction at performance-based entertainment	Attraction site in China

TripAdvisor is a suitable source of data collection for attraction sites because of its traffic and functions; its contents can answer the research questions in this study. TripAdvisor is gaining

popularity among tourism scholars. The following section explains the study context – dark conflict sites.

4.2.3 Study Context: Dark Conflict Sites

Smith (1998 p.248) suggests that those destinations and activities related to war 'probably constitute the largest category of tourist attractions in the world'. Locals often went to locations to watch battles at least as far back as the 17th century, and sometimes paid the price as casualties (Butler and Suntikul, 2013). Visitors may be drawn to war-related sites more by the historical significance of the place, or the architectural or scenic interest of the structures (ibid). In some cases, people may be more interested in where others were killed, or perhaps in a movie that portrayed a massacre, rather than for expressing a sense of sympathy (ibid). For visitors with a personal connection to sites, historic battlefields and burial grounds evoke strong personal emotions among battle survivors and the descendants of those who fought and died at such locations (Butler and Suntikul, 2013; Gatewood and Cameron, 2004). In other words, different motivations appear to spur a wide range of experiences.

The consequences of warfare in terms of sites, artefacts and activities serve as resources for regional and national tourism and education in the form of political, military and physical heritage (Bigley et al., 2010). Weapons and fortifications become permanent tourist markers and attract large numbers of visitors (e.g. the Wars of the Roses in England, WWII D-Day Landing sites in France, the Battle of Hastings, the site of the Norman Invasion of England in 1066). Although war sites continue to grow as tourist attractions, and their battlefields and memorials are visited by hundreds of thousands of people annually (Iles, 2008), the examination of war-related tourism has not been given due importance in the literature to date (Butler and Suntikul, 2013).

Dark conflict site, a form of seven dark tourism suppliers (Stone, 2006), is worthy of special consideration because it lies within a dichotomy of pilgrimage and tourism (Butler and Suntikul, 2013; Winter, 2011). People visit battlefields for different purposes (e.g. spiritual pilgrimage, secular tourism). Therefore, their visitations offer distinctive experiences. Today, however, these former conflicts occupy the furthest edges of living memory, and few veterans survive. Despite this, battlefield tourism continues to grow in popularity (Iles, 2008). Visits to the locations of war in the Middle East (e.g. Azaryahu, 1993), South-East Asia (e.g. Henderson, 2000, 2007), East Asia (e.g. Bigley et al., 2010; Kang et al., 2012) and the Balkans (e.g. Causevic, 2008) have widened

the scope of what is now a growing sector in the tourism industry. For instance, Gettysburg Military Park attracted over 900,000 visitors with 65 million USD visitor spending in 2018 (National Park Service, 2019). Similarly, annual visitation to Culloden Battlefield in Scotland has risen every year, with an approximate 140,000 visitors in 2018 (Purves, 2019).

Throughout this study, the term 'dark conflict sites' is used to describe the activities or sites associated with warfare that constitute a significant component of a broader destination attraction (Stone, 2006). Dark conflict sites revolve around war and battlefields and their activities as a potential tourism offering (ibid). This research examines visitor experiences in the context of dark conflict sites.

The next section discusses the data collection and the criteria for conducting qualitative research, as well as the sampling method and sample size, to ensure that data are collected in a standardised manner, resulting in a high-quality study and, thus, credible findings.

4.3 Data Collection

Before data are collected, it is essential to decide how to choose the sample and what the criteria are to ascertain that the findings can be trusted. Therefore, this section begins by establishing quality in qualitative research through reliability and validity. Without these qualities, research is worthless and loses its utility (Morse et al., 2002). Then, the section continues with the sampling method and the sample size.

4.3.1 Establishing Quality Criteria

The use of reliability and validity is common in quantitative research, and they are now applied in qualitative studies also (Golofshani, 2003). Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the study must take steps to ascertain the reliability and validity of the research findings. Although the tests and measures used to establish the validity and reliability of quantitative analysis cannot be applied to qualitative research, there are ongoing debates about whether terms such as validity, reliability and generalisability are appropriate to evaluate qualitative research (Golofshani, 2003; Long et al., 2000; Noble and Smith, 2015; Patton, 2002).

Reliability concerns a measurement method's ability to produce the same result repeatedly (Stenbacka, 2001). It is the consistency of a measuring instrument. In qualitative research, Noble and Smith (2015) suggest that reliability is the consistency of the analytical procedures, including accounting for personal and research method biases that may have influenced the findings. In quantitative terms, *validity* refers to the degree to which the instrument can measure what it is intended to measure (Stenbacka, 2001). Furthermore, it is the precision with which the findings in the qualitative study accurately reflect the data (Noble and Smith, 2015).

Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest the term 'rigour' as a criterion for quantitative research, and 'trustworthiness' for a qualitative study. In quantitative research, the requirements to reach the goal of rigour are internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (ibid). In qualitative research, the authors propose alternative terminology – credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The definition of each criterion is summarised in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Trustworthiness of qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)

Criteria	Definition
Credibility (parallel to internal validity)	Research is carried out according to the principles of good practice and measure what is intended to measure.
Transferability (parallel to external validity)	Producing a rich account of the details which refer to as a database for making a judgement about the transferability of findings to the other research problems or different contexts.
Dependability (parallel to reliability)	The replicability of the findings is possible from a logical, traceable, and documented research process.
Confirmability (parallel to objectivity or neutrality)	The interpretations and findings of the study are derived from the data, not from personal values. It is established when credibility, transferability and dependability are all achieved.

Golofshani (2003) emphasises that reliability and validity in a qualitative study are conceptualised as trustworthiness and rigour. Morse et al. (2002) agree that rigour and trustworthiness are supported by reliability and validity; however, there has been a tendency for the qualitative researcher to focus on the tangible outcomes of the research rather than demonstrating how the verification strategies can shape and direct the research during its

development. These strategies of trustworthiness may be useful for evaluating rigour, but they do not in themselves ensure rigour. Thus, this form of verification is used during the research process to contribute incrementally towards reliability and validity (Morse et al., 2002) and, thus, this study is rigorous. To achieve high quality in this study, the researcher needs to eliminate bias and increase the truthfulness of a proposition of the social phenomenon by using the following strategies (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research (applied from Morse et al., 2002)

Stage	Aim	Study actions
Methodological coherence	To ensure congruence between the research questions and the components of the method	The careful design of methodology – context of the study, netnographic approach, website selection, site selection, thematic analysis, provide practical answers to research questions. The fit of these components with the data ensures the reliability and validity of the research.
Appropriate sample	To ensure the saturation and replication of the data	The study thoughtfully considers the recruitment procedures; the earliest reviews are collected that can represent the fresh experiences of visitors.
Data collection and analysis	To form iterative interaction between the data and the analysis	Using purposive sampling – maximum likelihood consists of determining in advance the criteria (five sites) to capture a wide range of perspectives (e.g. site offerings, experiences, situations). The thematic analysis is adopted, and the codes are tested by coding exercise with eight PhD colleagues & two non-academic persons (percentage agreement is over 80%).
Theoretical thinking	To verify and reconfirm the new data	This study adopts the integrative approach, incorporating both the deductive a priori template of codes approach by Crabtree and Miller (1998) and the data-driven inductive approach of Boyatzis (1998). The researcher continuously checks and rechecks by referring to the research objectives, the literature and logging all the processes in the audit trail.

Together, these strategies incrementally and interactively contribute to the reliability and validity, ensuring rigour. In this way, rigorous qualitative inquiry can develop theoretical and practical findings.

In this study, an audit trail is also developed to provide readers with evidence of the decisions and choices made by the researcher regarding theoretical and methodological strategies throughout the study. This trail also documents the unexpected occurrences or any changes to

further analysis that led to the findings. To attain the consistency of results across items within a single study, multiple observers must agree on what they see and hear. This factor is critical when a researcher plans to study a problem at numerous sites (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). As a result, the researcher can describe phenomena in the same way and achieve a quality conclusion. Replication requires explicit identification of analytic constructs and premises (ibid). Definitions, methods of data collection and analysis are presented clearly, so that subsequent researchers can reconstruct the original analytical strategies.

4.3.2 Sampling Method

This section outlines the main sampling methods in qualitative research and what was adopted for this study. Qualitative research usually aims to reflect the diversity within a given population (Kuzel, 1992). In the past, the qualitative researcher often relied on convenience sampling, especially when the group of interest is difficult to access (Barbour, 2001). Creswell (2007) suggests that purposive sampling is useful in qualitative research. That is, the inquirers use their 'judgement', selecting individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study. This approach offers researchers a degree of control rather than being at the mercy of any selection bias inherent in the groups. This type of sampling concerns the selection of units, which may be individuals, organisations, departments, documents, etc., based on specific purposes associated with the research questions being asked (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). The idea is that the research question indicates which units need to be sampled. Hence, purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling. Bryman (2016) also emphasises that purposive sample is not a random sample; it is not a convenience sample either. Researchers understand the criteria relevant to the inclusion or exclusion of units of analysis. In contrast, in convenience sampling, the sample is selected by chance. Examples of purposive sampling in qualitative research are summarised in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Examples of purposive sampling approaches (Bryman, 2016)

Sampling Approach	Definition
Stratified sampling	Sampling of usually typical cases or individuals within subgroups of interest
Snowball sampling	Initial sampled participants propose other participants who had the experience or characteristics relevant to the research
Opportunistic sampling	Capitalising on opportunities to collect data from certain individuals, contact with who is largely unforeseen but who may provide data relevant to the research question
Maximum variation sampling	Sampling to ensure as wide a variation as possible in terms of the dimension of interest

In this study, maximum variation was selected to target specific sites related to the tourism spectrum (Stone, 2006). Creswell (2007) suggests that maximum variation is a popular approach in qualitative studies because it consists of determining, in advance, criteria that differentiate the sites (or participants), then selecting sites (or participants) that are different based on the criteria. Bryman (2016) also suggests that conducting a qualitative study in more than one setting can help identify the significance of context and how it influences ways of thinking and behaviour. This approach increases the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives, which is ideal for qualitative research. Therefore, it is justifiable to adopt site characteristic in the dark tourism spectrum as a criterion to select more than one study site from places of death or associated with death. The chronological list of selected sites contains the site name and a summary of the events that happened there to ensure variation in terms of timescale (see .

Table 4.8). Furthermore, the number of reviews of each site reflects the traffic of online postings. The high the number of reviews, the more detailed information about the site, which can offer rich and in-depth findings.

4.3.3 Site Selection

The previous section explained why dark conflict sites were chosen as the context of the study and reviewed the existing research on dark conflict sites in terms of site offerings, visitor experiences and outcomes. This section focuses on dark conflicts sites from different periods.

The Western-centric sites were chosen because they are well-managed historic battlefields and ruins preserved as visitor centres, monuments and farm fields, as well as vast cemeteries. More countries in the Eastern context, and South-East Asia in particular, are also turning to war site tourism (e.g. Cambodia, Vietnam) (Burmon, 2010; Henderson, 2000). However, the stage of development and tourism infrastructure is still challenging, and the findings from this study may yield unanswered research questions. On the TripAdvisor website, there are significant numbers of reviews in English to help answer the research questions. The list of selected sites is in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Chronological list of selected Sites (as of 1 February 2018)

Date of the Event	Site Name	Significance of the Event	Number of Reviews in English
14 October 1066	**1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield** Location: Battle, England	Battle of Hastings Battle between the Norman-French army of William, the Duke of Normandy, and an English army under the Anglo-Saxon King Harold Godwinson, beginning the Norman conquest of England.	1431
22 August 1485	**Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre & Country Park** Location: Sutton Cheney, England	Battle of Bosworth Field (Battle of Bosworth) The last significant battle of the Wars of the Roses, the civil war between the Houses of Lancaster and York that extended across England in the latter half of the 15th century.	844
16 April 1746	**Culloden Battlefield** Location: Inverness, Scotland	Battle of Culloden The final confrontation of the Jacobite rising of 1745, part of a religious civil war in Britain and the last land battle to be fought in the UK.	2660
1-3 July 1863	**Gettysburg National Military Park** Location: Gettysburg, USA	Battle of Gettysburg The largest battle of the American Civil War (and the largest battle ever fought in North America) between the Union and Confederate forces.	6814
6 June 1944	**Omaha Beach** Location: Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, France	Battle of Normandy (Operation Neptune, commonly known as D-Day) The D-Day Landings were the most vital part of Operation Overlord to liberate Europe from years of German military occupation during WWII.	867

The Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield, Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre & Country Park, and Culloden Battlefield were chosen for this study because Miles (2013) suggests that they are the main managed battlefield sites in Britain. These three sites also have accreditations and awards. For example, 1066 Battle Abbey and Battlefield won the Silver Beautiful South Awards Winners (1066Country, 2019), and Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre & Country Park won the Best Small Attraction in Leicestershire and Top Tourism Award (Leicestershire County Council, 2016). Culloden Battlefield won five stars as a visitor attraction from the Scottish Tourist Board,– the Green Tourism Business Scheme, Gold Award (National Trust for Scotland, n.d.). Therefore, these three sites can reveal experience staging (site offerings) such as exhibitions, activities and events. Moreover, these three sites hold important places in the British national consciousness as the locations of important events that brought dramatic change (Miles, 2013). The tourist experiences and consequences of these sites should reveal much in terms of individual emotional experience and meaningfulness. As the Battle of Hastings occurred in the 11th century, it is a reasonable example to use to explore how the recency of the event impacts dark experience.

The Battle of Bosworth was believed to have taken place on Ambion Hill, near Sutton Cheney in Leicestershire. However, in 2009, a study of original documents and an archaeological survey of the area have now pinpointed a site in fields more than a mile to the south-west (BBC News, 2010). As a result, the location of the visitor centre (which was believed to be at the battlefield) is not an actual battle site. Therefore, it is worth exploring the notion of location authenticity at this site, as suggested by Stone's (2006) dark tourism spectrum, and how it affects the tourist experiences. Moreover, a new exhibition (Bosworth Field Investigations: BFI) opened in 2010 to reflect the new battle site (Leicestershire County Council, 2019). As a result, staging experiences need to be explored also.

Culloden Battlefield is one of seven historic sites in the Highlands where the Jacobite uprising ended in defeat and changed the course of Scottish history (Crow, 2017). Visit Scotland's website suggests that a visit to Culloden is a poignant experience; there is no escaping the emotions Culloden evokes (VisitScotland, n.d.). As such, it is justifiable to explore visitor experiences in terms of emotions and significance of the history that impacts the outcomes. Furthermore, Culloden Battlefield was recently a filming location for a television series based upon Diana Gabaldon's historical time travel book series *Outlander*, and the site is ranked as one of the top ten filming locations for this series (Themes, 2019). Outlander's effect significantly increased visitor

numbers (BBC News, 2018b), which reveals different tourist experiences from another perspective.

Gettysburg is the site of the bloodiest land battle of the American Civil War and one of the most visited places in the US (Civil War Trust, 2018). Not only was it the largest battle of the Civil War, it was also the largest battle ever fought in North America, and it is important in terms of political significance for the US (Jones Jr, 2013). The battle changed the meaning of why wars should be undertaken. President Abraham Lincoln explained this statement in his Gettysburg Address (McNamara, 2019). Gettysburg National Military Park and other war-related sites in Gettysburg have over 15,000 reviews on TripAdvisor (TripAdvisor, 2019b). The annual number of visitors to Gettysburg National Military Park is approximately one million thanks to its rich Civil War history, breathtaking countryside, outdoor recreation, family fun and national events (Gettysburg Adams Chamber of Commerce, 2019). Godbey (2017) claims that when most people think of the American Civil War, they automatically think of Gettysburg. Regarding tourism providers, Gettysburg is first on the list of top 10 American Civil War sites (American Sky, 2019) and the third ranking historic site in the US (Triphistoric, 2019).

As a part of Battle for Normandy, Omaha Beach is the site of the largest of the Normandy landing areas. The beach was used by the Allied forces in Operation Overlord during WWII. The defeat inflicted on the Germans was one of the largest of the war and impacted world history (Keegan, 2018). This event happened in the 20th century, making it the most recent of the selected sites. Nieuwint (2015) suggests that Omaha Beach is one of 11 iconic battlefields of WWII, and it was the most daunting beaches to land on as the Germans overlooked it and had fortified the bluff more than at the other D-Day beaches. Today, the remains of German bunkers still exist and the Musée Mémorial d'Omaha Beach documents the invasion. These rationales adopted for each study site suggest practical findings in terms of timescale, location authenticity, experience staging and visitor experiences at these Western-centric sites.

According to the TripAdvisor website (TripAdvisor, 2018b), there are many sites to visit in the Gettysburg Military Park area. The Park is ranked first, and the Gettysburg Museum and Visitor Center second in ‘Top things to do’ (ibid). Therefore, the Museum and Visitor Center is included in the analysis. Ranks three to six are not included in the study because they are guided tour companies, the cemetery and a historic house (ibid). However, Little Round Top (Rank 7) and

Devil's Den (Rank 8) are included because these are parts of the battlefield (National Military Park), and many visitors who reviewed their experiences on Gettysburg National Military Park's page mention these two sites as a part of their visit. In the case of Normandy, Omaha Beach is ranked first, followed by the Omaha Beach Memorial (TripAdvisor, 2018c). Therefore, the beach itself and the memorial museum are both included in this study. For Culloden Battlefield, 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield, and Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre & Country Park, each site has only one page on TripAdvisor's website. Hence, there is only one source of data each for these three sites.

The visible physical change to the battlefield landscape and the artefact remains from each site are still evident for today's generations. These well-managed sites can help answer the research questions in terms of staging experiences and outcomes. Having finished the site selection, the following section concerns how the data were sampled.

4.3.4 Data Saturation and Sample size

During a study, the researcher needs to attain data saturation (Morse, 1995; Saunders et al., 2018) by collecting rich (quality) and thick (quantity) data (Fusch and Ness, 2015). Saturation refers to 'data adequacy' and involves collecting data until no new information is obtained (Morse, 1995). In qualitative research, there are no published guidelines, parameters or tests of adequacy for estimating the sample size required to reach saturation equivalent to those formulas used in quantitative research (Bowen, 2008; Guest et al., 2006; Hennink et al., 2017; Morse, 1995). Instead, the researcher determines the signals of saturation by evaluating the adequacy and the comprehensiveness of the results.

There are various types of saturation (see Table 4.9), the first of which, *theoretical saturation*, is rooted in traditional grounded theory for developing categories and emerging themes in the analysis process as the criterion for additional data collection (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). *Inductive thematic saturation*, the second approach, focuses on the identification of new themes or codes and is based on the numbers of such themes and codes rather than the completeness of existing theoretical categories (Saunders et al., 2018). As such, saturation appears confined to the level of analysis, and its implication for data collection is, at best, implicit. Conversely, with the third model, *a priori thematic saturation*, the data are collected to exemplify theory, at the level of lower-order codes or themes, rather than to develop or refine theory (ibid). In other words, the

predetermined theoretical categories lead the researcher from the inductive logic characteristic of grounded theory. Finally, *data saturation* refers to the degree to which new data repeat what was expressed in previous data, with no necessary reference to the linked theory (ibid).

Table 4.9: Approaches of saturation and their principal foci (Saunders et al., 2018)

Approach	Description	Focus
Theoretical saturation	The development of theoretical categories; related to grounded theory methodology	Sampling
Inductive thematic saturation	The emergence of new codes and themes	Analysis
Priori thematic saturation	The degree to which identified codes and themes are exemplified in the data	Sampling
Data saturation	The degree to which new data repeat what was expressed in previous data	Data collection

However, many authors have suggested that the combination of two or more types of saturation increases coverage. For instance, Morse (1995) argues that saturation includes both data and theoretical saturation. Similarly, Drisko (1997) states that completeness or saturation refer to the comprehensiveness of both the data collection and analysis. Hennink et al. (2017) appear to combine elements of all four models of saturation. They assess saturation, which they divide into code saturation and meaning saturation. Code saturation is the point at which no additional issues are identified and the codebook stabilises (ibid). In this sense, inductive thematic saturation and data saturation are reached. The authors believe that there is also a need to assess whether code saturation is sufficient to understand fully the issues identified. Therefore, they evaluate meaning saturation, which is the point at which the researchers fully understand issues and when no further dimensions, nuances or insights of issues can be found (ibid). The authors conclude that code saturation may be reached with a small sample, which may be sufficient for a study aiming to outline broad thematic issues or to develop scales for a survey instrument, but a larger sample is required if meaning saturation is needed to understand or explain complex phenomena or to develop a theory (ibid).

In this study, the research begins broadly and then narrows to particularly interesting aspects, and the process of inquiry narrows to a particular topic, as suggested by Morse (1995). Of

course, anticipating a larger sample size is needed to achieve both code and meaning saturation because this study considers five sites from different eras. The researcher ceased data collection when the data were sufficient to build comprehensive and convincing findings. Saturation occurred when the data quality was 'thick': in other words, new data repeated the previous data; the prior codes and themes were exemplified in the data without 'new' emerging themes. Therefore, this study includes both data and thematic saturation.

The data collection and the analysis were performed in the following order: (1) 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield, (2) Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre & Country Park, (3) Culloden Battlefield, (4) Gettysburg National Military Park, and (5) Omaha Beach Memorial Museum. As language is central in netnographic research, and it is an unobtrusive approach, this study only used reviews in English to avoid misinterpreting other languages. The online reviews were collected from the most recent posts (December 2017) and then traced back to the first review on each TripAdvisor page. Mkono (2012b) suggests that visitors might modify their posts in the presence of a researcher. Hence, the researcher should remain invisible and not be seen by other users on the study sites. The majority of the reviews are from 2016 and 2017 to obtain fresh experiences from visitors. The number of samples from the five sites is 2,106 reviews. However, this study also includes reviews from 2010 to 2015 (1,466 reviews) and from 2002 to 2009 (108 reviews) to identify emerging themes, reduce the bias of sampling and increase the research rigour.

Regarding the maximum variation sampling technique suggested by Creswell (2007), the researcher determined in advance criteria that differentiated the responses and then selected responses based on those criteria. Special events, such as annual remembrance or re-enactments on the same date (or week) the battle occurred, increase the number of reviews on TripAdvisor. Responses during event months are significant to explore how these events impact visitor experiences compared with other days. Therefore, the responses in these periods are of special focus.

The battlefield location of the Battle of Bosworth was rediscovered in 2009; it was believed to have taken place on Ambion Hill, where the visitor centre is located. However, a new study using an archaeological survey of the area and original documents has now placed the battle location more than a mile to the southwest in a field that belongs to a private owner. As a result,

new site offerings, including a guided walk and exhibition, have been added. However, there are no reviews prior to 2008 and only one review in 2008.

National Trust for Scotland built a new visitor centre for Culloden Battlefield to support 250,000 visitors annually. This new centre takes visitors on an interpretive journey through the exhibition, culminating in viewing the site from the planted roof or entering the battlefield and a viewing a memorial wall for the fallen. The centre was officially opened to the public on 16 April 2008. The new site offerings reflect the different experiences that impact this study. The sample includes reviews from 2006 to 2008 to reflect the experience staging and the extent to which this staging affects visitor experiences, although there are only 11 reviews (two from 2006, two from 2007, and seven from 2008) on the website.

This study collected data based on how much the identified themes (both priori and inductive) are presented in the data. The analysis attempted to find the emergence of new themes until the new data repeated what was expressed in previous data. As a result, this study reached saturation in terms of data collection, sampling and analysis. The numbers of reviews sampled (based on the number of reviews on 1 Feb 2018) are summarised in .

*Table 4.10: Sample size (*as of 1 February 2018)*

Sites	*Total reviews, (in English)	No. of Sample
• 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield	1,491(1,431)	650
• Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre & Country Park	849 (844)	554
• Culloden Battlefield	2,971 (2,660)	800
• Gettysburg Military Park	6,399 (6,814)	620
• Gettysburg Military Park Museum and Visitor Center	4,673 (4,580)	150
• Little Round Top	313 (310)	130
• Devils Den	306 (306)	130
• Omaha Beach	1,634 (867)	460
• Omaha Beach Memorial Museum	424 (186)	186
Total numbers of reviews		3,680

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*Table 4.10: Sample size (*as of 1 February 2018)*

Sites	*Total reviews, (in English)	No. of Sample
• 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield	1,491(1,431)	650
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• Gettysburg Military Park	6,399 (6,814)	620
• Gettysburg Military Park Museum and Visitor Center	4,673 (4,580)	150
• Little Round Top	313 (310)	130
• Devils Den	306 (306)	130
• Omaha Beach	1,634 (867)	460
• Omaha Beach Memorial Museum	424 (186)	186
Total numbers of reviews		3,680

The reviews from the five sites were collected from TripAdvisor websites, with the criteria of establishing quality in qualitative research. The next section explains how these data were analysed to reach data saturation and to answer the research questions.

4.3.5 Reflexivity and Bias

In qualitative research, the researcher must critically reflect on the self as an instrument because such studies demand that we interrogate ourselves regarding how the research efforts are shaped (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). The researcher carefully thinks about the trustworthiness of the data collected and the role of researcher bias. The data are not solely collected from the websites but recognise that, as a researcher is an integral part of the data collected due to the interaction between participant and researcher (Mantzoukas, 2005). This recognition stems from a shared understanding amongst qualitative researchers that the meaning is socially constructed (Crotty, 1998). Thus, data collection can never be a truly objective pursuit as the data, as the search for meaning is a subjective and interpretative process.

Although academic research should be handled objectively, the subjective nature of this research may make it difficult for the research to be detached completely from the data. As the researcher has visited three of the five sample sites and several war-related sites across the, the bias may happen at confirming her personal beliefs and experiences. There are no clear lines between a researcher and a tourist role. The reflexivity includes acknowledging the possibility of

bias in the research process, the choices made about the methodology, and the individual background or dispositional factors relating to the researcher herself.

While completely avoiding bias is impossible, there are several means to reduce it. Most importantly, the researcher minimises the bias by reflecting upon personal biases and assumptions that may affect how she has conducted her research, from which the research question was formulated through concluding. This methodology chapter clearly explains the processes and rationales.

4.4 Data Analysis – Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is used to interpret the findings in this study. Thematic analysis is a process for encoding data into explicit codes and for reporting patterns within the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). 'A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998 p.4). In other words, the theme builds on the codes identified by the researcher as the basis for a theoretical understanding to make a theoretical contribution to the research focus. Many authors have used thematic analysis to assist a researcher with analysis (e.g. Boyatzis, 1998; Holloway and Todres, 2003), whereas others, including this study, consider it a method in its own right (e.g. Azer and Alexander, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis differs from other analytical methods because it seeks to describe patterns across qualitative data. Rigorous thematic analysis can also produce trustworthy and rich findings (ibid). Through its theoretical flexibility, this method offers several advantages. First, thematic analysis is a flexible method to use in many studies. It provides a rich and detailed but complex account of data. As a non-complicated method with only a few procedures, it is accessible to researchers who are relatively unfamiliar with qualitative analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Moreover, thematic analysis is useful for summarising critical features of large datasets or full descriptions of the dataset because it is a well-structured approach for handling data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As a result, the approach can highlight the similarities and differences across a dataset, which can produce a clear and organised report (Nowell et al., 2017).

Admittedly, the weakness of using thematic analysis could be the process itself. Theme identification does not produce a unique solution. The lack of structural procedures may cause a novice researcher to feel unsafe regarding how to identify themes from the data (Nowell et al., 2017). The ability to sense themes and develop codes can adversely affect the findings (Boyatzis, 1998). If the themes are not well identified by the researcher, the entire process could become pointless. As a sample embeds particular characteristics, the sampling technique and sample could affect the analysis and the unit of coding. Although thematic analysis is flexible, this flexibility can lead to inconsistency when developing themes derived from the data (Nowell et al., 2017). The strengths and weaknesses of thematic analysis are summarised in .

Table 4.11: Strength and weakness of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017)

Strength	Weakness
• Flexible and relatively quick method to use • Accessible to researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research • Can usefully summarise critical features of a large body of data and offer a thick description of the dataset • Can highlight similarities and differences across the data set • Can generate unanticipated insights	• Lack of structural procedures on how to identify themes • The ability of the researcher to develop themes and codes can affect the findings. • The flexibility can lead to a lack of coherence when developing themes.

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To strengthen the advantages and avoid the pitfalls of thematic analysis, it is vital to immerse oneself in the data to the extent that the researcher is familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. Such immersion requires repeated reading. The following paragraphs explain the emergence of themes and the process of conducting the thematic analysis.

Themes are constructs that link not only expressions found in text but also those found in images, sounds and objects that the investigator identifies before, during and after analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Ryan and Bernard, 2003). A theme can come from the data (inductive approach – data-driven) or the researcher's prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon being studied (deductive approach – theory-laden). When identifying themes, the researcher searches for patterns or topics that recur repeatedly. The more the same concept occurs in a text, the more likely it is a theme. Naturally occurring shifts in the content may be markers of themes. That is, the transitions between the paragraphs in reviews can indicate shifts in topics.

Similarities and differences across units of data are also considered. For example, a comparative method involves taking pairs of reviews and asking how this experience differs from or is similar to another. This method can generate themes. If two reviews express the same experiences, the researcher looks for the degree of the experience in which the theme is articulated in both reviews. That is, the intensity of the theme may lead to the naming of sub-themes. Finally,

this study searched for missing data that are not associated with any theme. This aspect means reading the reviews repeatedly. On the first reading, salient themes are clearly visible and can be quickly marked. In the next stage, the researcher searches for themes in the data that remain unmarked. The techniques used to identify themes include repetition, transition, similarities and differences, and missing data.

Using software for data analysis has been thought to add rigour to qualitative research (Richards and Richards, 1991). NVivo12, a qualitative data analysis computer software package, was used to collect, organise and help analyse content from TripAdvisor's reviews. The reviews were gathered and imported into NVivo in text files. To establish a rigorous thematic analysis, this study adopted an approach incorporating both the deductive a priori template of the codes approach by Crabtree and Miller (1998) and the data-driven inductive approach of Boyatzis (1998). This approach complements the research objectives by allowing social phenomenology to be included in the process of deductive thematic analysis and for themes to emerge directly from the inductive coding (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The coding process is summarised in five stages.

Stage 1: Develop the code manual and template

The use of a code manual and template is the starting point of the process by defining a template or codes based on theoretical perspectives. This step is vital because it assists in organising data and provides a clear track for the credibility of the study (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Crabtree and Miller (1998) suggest that the prior structure can make it more challenging to discover new insights. The researcher was aware of this limitation; therefore, the themes were not entirely pre-identified from the literature.

In NVivo, a node is a collection of references about a specific theme or topic that a researcher gathers references for by coding sources to a node (QSR international, 2018). Hyde (2000) suggests that introducing the deductive procedure into qualitative research can represent an essential step towards assuring conviction in qualitative research findings. By focusing on verifying and elucidating what appears to emerge, the templates of visitor experiences were developed based on Packer and Ballantyne's (2016) multifaceted model visitor experience. As a result, the codes were identified using (1) the code label, (2) the definition of the code and (3) a description of how to know when the theme (code) occurs.

Stage 2: Summarising data and identifying initial themes

This process involves reading and copying the raw data from TripAdvisor to respond to the study objectives. The researcher outlined the critical points made by visitors to each site. The summary for each site reflects the initial processing of the information by the researcher and provides the opportunity to identify and note 'potential' themes in the data. Table 4.12 provides an example of the staging experiences and visitor experiences from the TripAdvisor websites.

Table 4.12: Summary of responses from TripAdvisor

Battlefield & visitor centre	Summary of Responses
Culloden	Audio guide, four wall movie, interactive displays, moving experience
Battle	Audio guide, reenactment, information boards, short-long walk, enjoyable visit
Bosworth	Guided walk, reenactment, English history, actual site, country park, actual site
Gettysburg	Auto tour, American history, awe-inspiring, hallowed ground, moving experience
Normandy	Personal accounts, small items, documentary film, humbling experience, beautiful beach, German bunkers

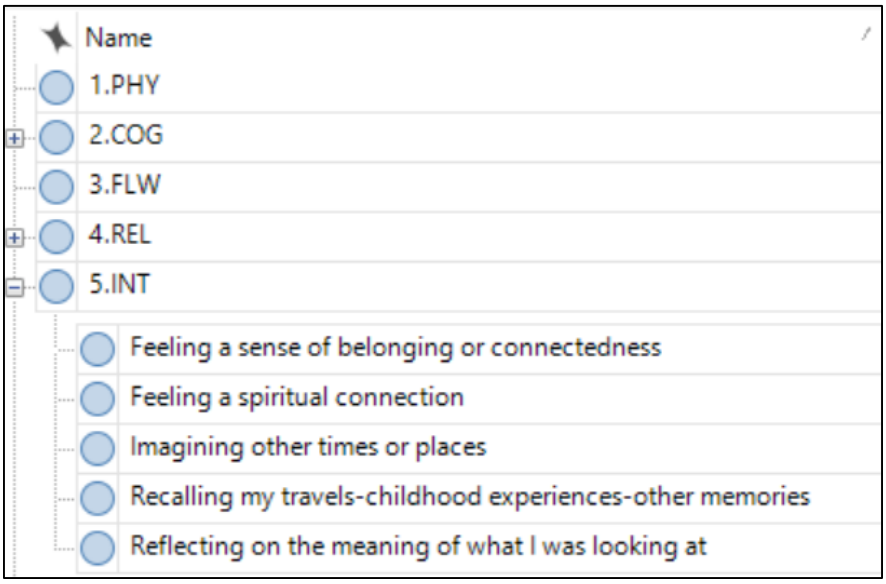
Stage 3: Applying a template of codes and identifying new codes

Once the data from all sites were entered as project documents into the NVivo program and the code templates developed, these codes were entered as nodes. The researcher then coded the text by matching the segments of data selected with the codes. The analysis in this step was guided, but not limited by, the predefined codes. Inductive codes were also assigned to segments of data and described as a new theme observed in the context. These data-driven codes were either separated from or expanded under the predetermined codes.

This stage was related to the process of discovering new codes, further connections and patterns in the data (Crabtree and Miller, 1998). The new codes were developed as secondary codes. Similarities and differences between each site emerged at this stage. Moreover, the researcher found linkages among the primary codes between the staging experiences, the visitor experiences and the outcomes of the visit at each site. Figure 4.1**Error! Reference source not**

found. illustrates the example of secondary codes (introspective experience) developed at this stage.

Figure 4.1: Example of secondary codes



Stage 4: Testing the credibility of the code

This essential step determines the applicability and compatibility of the code with the raw information (Boyatzis, 1998). The step involved reviewing and possibly rewriting the themes and codes emerging from the first step (ibid). The quotes were selected for the coding exercises, in which each exercise comprised codes from all topics. Two selected quotes from each code were chosen from each attraction site. Hence, there are 10 coding exercises from five sites. The researcher invited eight PhD students from the marketing department, Strathclyde Business School, and two non-academic individuals to perform the coding exercise. The reason behind this approach was to recheck with both marketing researchers familiar with the process of coding and with those uninvolved in marketing research. To achieve the process of coding and interpretation, the coding exercise was carefully prepared with clear instructions.

To increase the consistency of the coding process, multiple coding was applied (Barbour, 2001; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). This process ensured that the coding scheme and interpretation are illustrative of the data. Intercoder reliability is a measurement of the extent to which independent researchers make the same coding decisions when evaluating the data

(Lombard et al., 2002). The percentage of agreement was calculated based on all the coding decisions on which the coders agree. This method is simple to calculate and can accommodate any number of coders. The method is also commonly used in marketing studies (ibid). In general, above 80% is acceptable in most studies (Hiebert et al., 2003; Lavrekas, 2008). The result of the coding was 83% agreement. Furthermore, the researcher and the testers discussed the disagreement. There was no further coding modification. As such, the coding schemes are valid as applied.

Stage 5: Corroborating and producing the report

The final step of coding reflects the research questions and objectives. This is the process of confirming the findings and writing-up the report in a concise and coherent manner to convince the reader. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the write-up process not only provides the information, but also extracts and makes an argument about the research questions and objectives.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter introduced social constructivism as the philosophical assumptions used in this study, proposed the research design using a netnographic approach (TripAdvisor) and suggested dark conflict sites as the research context. Then, the chapter delineated the data collection, including the criteria that make the study rigorous, with the sampling method and sample sizes for five study sites. Regarding the data analysis method, thematic analysis involves the analysis of data to discover emerging themes via the researcher's interpretation. The researcher identified codes from visitors' reviews from TripAdvisor websites, and these themes formed patterns in terms of meaning to answer the research aim and objectives. This unobtrusive method provided the findings, which are explained in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

5.0 Introduction

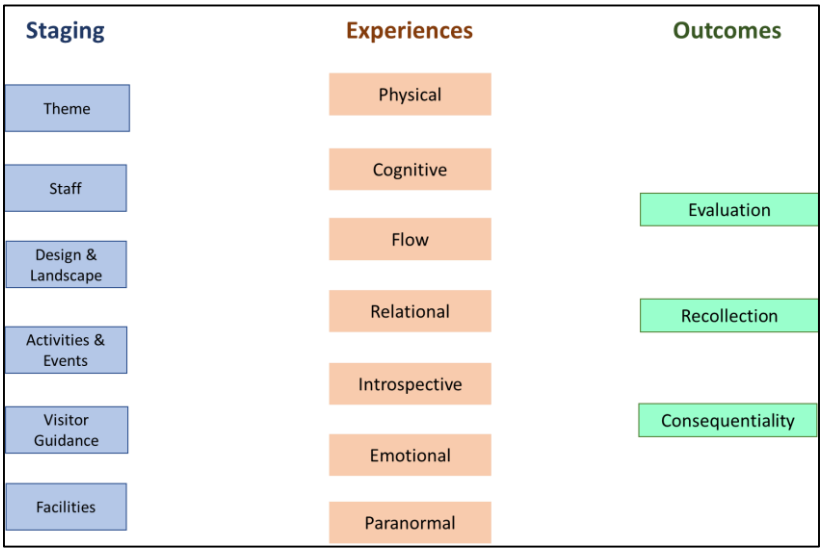
This chapter consists of six sections that present the findings of the study. This study explores the relationship between staging, experiences and outcomes in dark tourism settings. The research has four research objectives: exploring dark experience staging, visitor experiences, outcomes and the relationship between experience provision (staging) and consumption (visitor experiences and outcomes). First, the research questions are introduced. The chapter then continues with the findings of the experience staging (Section 5.1), the visitor experiences (Section 5.2) and the experience outcomes (Section 5.3). Then, the factors that influence the experiences and outcomes are presented (Section 5.4). Next, the proposed conceptual model of dark experiences is developed (Section 5.5). The similarities, differences and emerging themes are discussed in each section.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How are dark experiences staged from visitor perspectives?
2. What are the core visitor experiences at dark tourism sites?
3. What are the dark experience outcomes that are different from other hedonic sites?
4. How does experience staging enrich visitor experiences at dark tourism sites?
5. How do experiences influence outcomes at dark tourism sites?

These research questions were developed according to the research aims and objectives. Since the launch of the experience economy, business has shifted from service delivery to be repackaged and presented as 'staged' experiences that create memorable consumption experiences (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). In the tourism context, tourist experience is proposed as the connection between provision and consumption (Andersson, 2007). Therefore, this study explores the views of tourists regarding how dark sites are staged and how this influenced their visit experiences and their ultimate outcomes (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Staging, experiences and outcomes in dark tourism settings

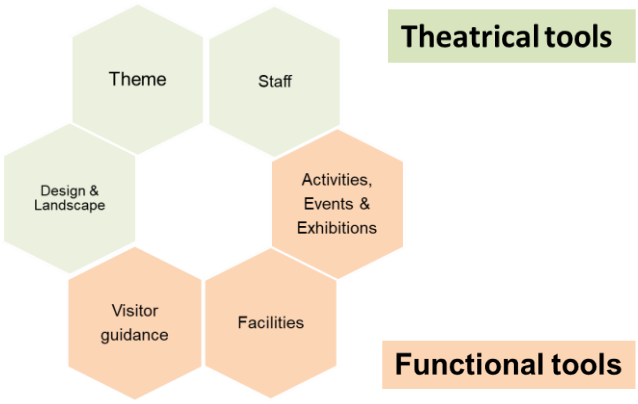


The development of the experience model in dark tourism settings is the key finding of this study. Any emphasis (bold text) in the quotes from TripAdvisor reviews in the following sections has been intentionally added by the researcher to highlight the identifying themes.

5.1 Experience Staging

This section analyses the experience offering at five dark conflict sites (see Appendix B: Official Website of Battlefield Sites for their official websites). The analysis is based on the experience staging framework by Müller et al. (2004) and previous research by Pikkemaat et al. (2009) at wine tourism settings. The findings present six elements of experience staging that were inductively derived from the data. The elements are categorised into theatrical and functional (see Figure 5.22).

Figure 5.2: Experience staging elements



5.1.1 Theatrical Elements

Theatrical elements relate to the artistic performance of every aspect of the experience offerings. They consist of theme, staff, and design and landscape.

Theme

The theme is the first element that influences a potential visitor's decision to visit the destination (Müller et al., 2004). The theme is a set of cues intended to create an imaginary journey to a different place and time. This unifying idea also creates absorbing venues where visitors can try out offerings and immerse themselves in the experience. Every single staging element displays consistency under the central theme. Visitors review the overall site offering inside the visitor centre or at the battlefield, which reflects the coherent features set within a hierarchy and linked to the central theme of the destination (Pikkemaat et al., 2009).

For example, the theme of Culloden Battlefield focuses on the emotive and atmospheric battlefield (National Trust for Scotland, n.d.) aided by technology and artefacts to explain how the 1745 Jacobite Rising came to a tragic end.

> *"What I liked about the Visitor Center was it* ***gave a timeline from both sides of the conflict****. The* ***audio visual immersion*** *was a great addition, as were the* ***artifacts and volunteers to tell the story****. Great cafe also!*
>
> *The battlefield is marked in places,* ***by gravestones, a cairn, a cottage, flags and information markers*** *giving you an idea of the placement of each force.*
>
> *Just walking around the battlefield and viewing the* ***terrain you are able to get a feeling of what each side would be facing before battle commenced****. As with any battlefield and especially one as bloody as this one, there is a sense of presence. It is very hard to describe and one can only really feel it by being at this location…"* (Culloden11).

Another example is Battle Abbey and Battlefield, for which the visitors detailed the theme of the battlefield differently. This review mentions that the site is child-friendly, and adults can lose themselves while walking in the battlefield with an audio guide along the wooden sculpture trail. Visitors learn the beginning of the Norman conquest in England at a 'fit for all' day out destination.

> *"We visited recently for the first time with our step-grandson aged 10. We experienced the facility in a new light. The new exhibitions in the tower are very child-friendly. Our grandson was given an I-pad to enable him to learn more about the items in an interactive manner. He loved it. Then there was the climbing of the tower to the look out over Battle and the surrounding countryside. There is a good* ***child-friendly playground****, and one can enjoy a nice* ***walk around the battlefield with an audio guide*** *(although one can also read the notice boards whilst going round, and spot different* ***wooden sculptures****. Then walk around the* ***abbey ruins****, before retiring to the well-stocked café, with further exhibition space below in the same building"* (Hastings11).

Another example is Omaha Beach Memorial Museum. This museum showcases an extensive collection of small weapons, personal belongings and uniforms. The museum was developed from a private collection, and the exhibits are presented in a traditional museum-style (static displays) instead of interactive displays.

> *"This museum is small and not one of the grand official sites. It has none of the triumphalism and glory of some of the more official sites. Instead, it is deeply real and deeply affecting.* ***It is the creation of a man who was five years old on D-Day and lived through the Battle of Normandy. He has spent his life gathering memorabilia of the Omaha Beach landing and its context in world history. He created this museum to provide a setting for all he has collected****. There are dioramas that are a little corny, but full of authentic artifacts. What is extraordinarily powerful, though, is the weight of first-person accounts of those who landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day. There are hundreds of excellent photos and many many informative and touching personal letters. It takes time to stop and read them all, but it is a fitting tribute to those who fought there. The film is also extraordinary. We left in tears"* (Normandy11).

War is one of the world's greatest tragedies, impacting both historical and social human experiences (Bigley et al., 2010). Visiting war and battlefield sites may involve a personal connection or religious, heritage or ethnic ties. Other visitors with no connection with the site may come for education or other motivations. As such, the crucial role of a theme is to pass on

information about the destinations that could be of 'value' in attracting visitors and providing meaning to visitor experiences with different motivations.

Typically, history and culture create the background to theme a battlefield and/or war-related destination. The findings present the overall theme of the battlefield site as the remembrance of the significant events in history. However, different sites focus on the diverse heritage and culture of their nations. In this context, regarding all battlefield sites where the battle actually happened, it is significant that the site showcases the 'real' location and artefacts while weaving all the elements into a story to attract visitors. A clear and consistent theme supported by other staging elements allows visitors to play a desirable role and provides opportunities for them to create their personalised stories. A successful visitor centre plays a vital role in telling the stories of its destination. After orchestrating the theme, other staging elements are integrated, which are explained in the following sections.

Staff

Staging experience can be enhanced through personnel (Åstrøm, 2017; Pikkemaat et al., 2009). The onsite staff, as experience-stagers, should deliver a high level of responsiveness, courtesy and clarity of communication to visitors. The following examples illustrate the role of staff as storytellers.

> *"For a very long time, I've wanted to visit the Bosworth battlefield site, and this experience did not disappoint.* ***Our guide was truly excellent, spending lots of time explaining everything, especially the 'search' for the true site; and describing the battlefield tactics and weaponry in gloriously gruesome fashion. These are people who know their craft,*** *and I'm now itching to come back for the 'long walk' experience to the battlefield itself. Thanks and God bless!"* (Bosworth11).

> *"We chose to do a private two-hour tour. We chose right.* ***The tour guide drives your vehicle and explains in great detail the three day battle at Gettysburg. The guides must pass a rigorous test in order to become a guide****. Our guide, Rich, was excellent.* ***He knew every detail and was able to answer any question we had.*** *Our tour cost $75.00 and was well worth it. It was an incredibly moving experience, and I highly recommend it. The Nat Park Service has done an incredible job with the site"* (Gettysburg11).

The following example from a Culloden Battlefield visitor highlights the role of staying in character for the on-duty staff. The staff behave like living-history interpreters who play particular roles of historical significance. Friendliness of staff is also essential. Visitors can perceive warm hospitality and find it helpful to receive information from the staff.

> *"There were also some **costumed guides** who went through some of the weapons in use at the time, and **these were very informative and pleased to answer questions and let visitors handle the items** (carefully!)"* (Culloden12).

In this sense, the onsite staff who contribute performances on stage in activities and events are staged performers with predefined scripts. However, they can also act as improvisational actors with dynamic scripts depending on the circumstances and the needs of the visitors.

This second component of the theatrical element is the interpersonal performance of hosts in their interactions with visitors (guests). Staff contribute to the overall staging experience in terms of ability to perform the promised offerings accurately and their willingness to help visitors promptly and in a friendly and politer manner. The theatrical element is characterised by reliable and responsible personnel performances using dynamic scripts.

Design and Landscape

This element represents the experiencescape for the visitor (Müller et al., 2004) and is a form of interpretive media in which the stories are self-guided through visual representation (Forrest, 2013). The destination orchestrates the central theme, which unfolds the characters and sets the staging activities through the staff and exhibits but still allows the visitors to explore and navigate them as they wish.

Visitors reviewed the battlefields and the well-preserved landscapes, which contain natural resources, flora and fauna and scenery. These appealing and unique landscapes impact visitor experiences in different ways and lead to positive memorable experiences. This atmospheric element acts as an aesthetic tool that underlies the multisensory experiencescape for visitors.

> *"Architecture is amazing, and even within the ruins, we can find ancient stones - almost 1000 years of history! It has a **walled garden, ice house, too, built in a later era, and the whole estate** is amazing with a wonderful view to the sad field where the battle happened"* (Hastings12).

Design and landscape may alter the site environment, such as decorations or permanently altering the venue with infrastructure. Extending beyond the original function of infrastructure, this visualised element influences the visitor's behaviour via sensory and emotional mechanisms and can be manipulated through various design choices (Forrest, 2013). In other words, the visual element stimulates visitors' imaginations and facilitates their ability to craft personalised experiences. Visitors mentioned the interior and exterior designs of the visitor centre at Culloden. The visitor centre represents the memorial wall that passes through the building and out into the landscape of the battlefield.

> *"**The protruding stones on the exterior wall of the visitor centre** that illustrate the number of those killed is a **poignant and innovative way to demonstrate the cost in human lives**"* (Culloden13).

Design and landscape are elements that surround the experience; the landscape communicates feelings and creates impressions, whereas design is deliberately and artfully stronger and builds more impactful connections to the visitors. Dark tourism settings do not apply the same techniques as other hedonic or recreational destinations, which generally focus on fun and fantasy. In this sense, the design interprets the overall theme as the sites as remembrance and historical significance.

Theatrical elements feature cues that help engage visitors with the performance via a central theme aided by design and landscape and the stay-in character of the staff. The theme suggests the experience-offering platform, while staff communicate the theme tangibly. The design and landscape supplement the experience with multisensory performance.

5.1.2 Functional Elements

Functional elements relate to physical and tangible aspects at a site, including the reliability and performance of the offerings. These offerings include activities, exhibitions and events, visitor guidance and facilities. Functional elements are also linked with convenience, cleanliness and assortment.

Activities, Events and Exhibitions

These are triggering tools that help to produce activities to deliver continually evolving experiences (Müller et al., 2004; Pikkemaat et al., 2009). Activities include permanent and special exhibitions, special events and battle re-enactments, and they correspond to the theme. The following review describes the activities on an event day. Special events help visitors to experience the escapism they are involved in as participants and ultimately develop memorable experiences.

> *"We went for the **950th re-enactment of the Battle of Hastings**. It cost £25 for the 3 of us (including 2 members and one full-price adult). The event was sold out so we arrived early and easily found a space in the town centre (£5 all day)…We did have **archery** and my daughter loved the war gaming taking place near the crypt, and everyone was so friendly. At about midday, we went down to **the main arena to watch the Saxons and the Norman cavalry** show us their skills. This was followed by **a falconry display** involving a falcon chasing a remote control bird which was brilliant. After an hours break, which we spent exploring the encampments and shops it was time for the battle. It involved over 1000 men and there was a commentary explaining the context of the battle and what went on. The whole event was so well organised and brilliant to watch"* (Hastings13).

A mix of activities enables a destination to cater to different types of visitors to deliver personalised experiences. The activities and exhibitions are often included in the entrance fee package, for example:

> *"The Museum ($9 per adult by itself/$15 in combination with the Cyclorama & Film shows) is largely static, but modern and well-organized, and offers a good overview of the American Civil War. The **Cyclorama & Film shows** (45 min. total) focus more on the battle of Gettysburg…Next, you have to decide how you want to tour the Gettysburg battleground, which includes the city and surrounding areas. Our small group had only a full-afternoon at the site, so we elected to spend **$42/person (including the Museum, Film, and Cyclorama package)** for the 2-hour bus tour around the area"* (Gettysburg12).

People exchange their valued resources (e.g. time, money) for experiences staged by firms that have traditionally been thought of as service firms offering services, products and commodities (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). In dark tourism settings, the fee and free parts of the experience staging result in cherished experiences. The site chooses which experiences should be free, and which to charge a fee for. The following review illustrates the free and fee concepts.

> *"Of course I don't like paying taxes, but I'm glad that some of my taxes every year have been paying for this national park. It is extraordinary. The National Park Service has done a great*

job of making this crucial Civil War battlefield accessible to visitors while maintaining its integrity. ***The battlefield itself is free,*** *but it's worth* ***paying for admission to the movie + "Cyclorama"*** *(this is of some art historical interest as it turns out) +* ***museum****…I recommend buying the shorter audio tour, a CD that guides you as you drive through the park"* (Gettysburg13).

The visitors also reviewed attending sites during special events, such as the re-enactment of the battle, which makes the experience worth the entrance fee. The following review suggests that the exhibitions alone are not always worth the fee.

*"****While we were there they were putting on a medieval re-enactment of an army camp prior to battle, very interesting to see people in costume and acting.***
The museum is OK but ***try and get there when they have an event; otherwise, you don't get much for your money****" (Bosworth12).*

The following example claims that the experience offering is not worth the admission fee. Although the site (Hastings) is of national importance, the visitor writes that there is not much to see during the visit.

"If you are like me and enjoy history, then you will find this site of interested. However, I personally feel for what is here ***and the overall experience on offer it isn't worth the cost of the price of the entrance fee of £15.*** *There a visitor centre, but it is limited, and the walks have no relevance to the battle that took place here****! I would like to see a more engaging experience to the history of the site, telling the story of what happened here.*** *I feel that there could be more signs, boards and a more hands-on approach in describing the experience of battle at the time, life for the soldiers etc."* (Hastings14).

The reviews of activities, events and exhibitions reflect visitor participation. Visitors can be highly involved as participants or simply there as observers. The seasonal mix of factors, especially special events, generates tourism expenditure by influencing new visitors and encouraging old visitors to revisit the sites.

Visitor Guidance

This element attempts to manage visitor flow (Müller et al., 2004). Visitor guidance aids in ease of movement via layout design. Particular information, including signage, gates, maps and viewing platforms help to guide visitors. Traffic flow concerns the movement of people through the exhibits, display locations and aisle spaces. The choice of space allows visitors to shortcut the exhibition sequence without missing the guided routes. This element can affect the extent to which a visitor enjoys the experience since it guides visitors around the site and emphasises where they should pause or continue. The following examples reveal that visitor guidance is a form of experience staging, in which the site can act as a platform for visitors.

> *"**The 'one-way' tour leads you from the start to finish of the uprising and hits the nail on the head by balancing detail** and brevity, mixed in with enough technology to give real flavour and bring the battle to life. **Moving outdoors, the well-laid paths and flags allow you to easily navigate the moor** (think real moor, not cricket pitch) and experience things in full scale"* (Culloden14).

> *"The walk around the site was also an enjoyable experience with **helpful signpost markers** that, when wound up, gives you more commentary on what happened, where & when"* (Bosworth13).

An underlying goal of visitor guidance is to lead the visitors to their engagement. It is common to become lost in an experiential setting and, thus, miss the underlying message due to the amount of content, interactions and distractions. Visitor guidance maps the different levels of engagement and provides clarity for the success of the visitor experience.

Facilities

Facilities act as supporting tools to enhance the experience setting. Even at non-hedonic attraction sites, visitors want to feel comfortable and have positive experiences that impact the overall experience of the destination. The following reviews mention the importance of the variety of food and shop merchandise.

> *"**The Tithe Barn restaurant** had the best ham, egg & chips I've ever seen! **Good variety of food and drink, ice creams etc**. Plenty of space for the kids to play football. **Lovely clean toilets and baby changing facilities**"* (Bosworth14).

*"**The gift shop is large and has all kinds of souvenirs/gifts for all tastes from children's clothes, to books, to jewellery, to soap**. The cafe is just okay, but we were not there for the food. Well worth the time and the admission price"* (Gettysburg14).

Accessibility to the site is another essential aspect to consider in experience staging. An easy-to-access site with good public transport and onsite parking can increase footfall.

*"…I visited the cafe afterwards, which was very nice. Good views over the battlefield while you drink your coffee. There is also a little gift shop in the centre. You don't have to pay the entrance fee to use the shop or cafe. **There are good transport links with the city centre, with the Croy bus stopping directly outside the visitor centre.** If you're driving, you have to pay £2 **parking** for a car (or more for other vehicles), unless you have a National Trust sticker on your car, in which case it's free"* (Culloden15).

Visitor also reviewed the importance of facilities in terms of visitor wellbeing. The site provides equal opportunities, not only for visitors with disabilities but also for the elderly and underserved minorities. Facilities are constructed or altered to be accessible and appropriate to the destination and to benefit visitors of all abilities.

*"For us (with a teenager in tow) this was a great place to visit…The audio tour is a must and **there is an accessible route for those in wheelchairs etc. and a longer route, round the field itself, for those more able (this is the route we took).** Beautifully carved statues along the way and boards to stop at explains a bit more about what you're seeing and numbers to key in your guide telling you how the battle itself panned out on that day in 1066…Visitor centre is worth a look too with a short video show explaining what happened and also an area where you decide whose side you agree with, i.e. Harold or William, by standing on pressure pads (good for kids). **Coffee shop on site and picnic area too.** For the three of us just over £32 including £3.50 to park... We anticipated being here only 1 - 1 1/2 hours at the end more like 3-3 1/2 and well worth the visit if you are interested in the history of our great country"* (Hasting15).

Although facilities are not deliberately designed to be the main experience staging elements, they can provide a positive experience due to the variety and uniqueness of restaurants and souvenir shops. Wheelchair access, restrooms and picnic areas are relevant to visitor

wellbeing. Convenience, such as site accessibility or onsite car parks, also influences a positive experience evaluation.

Functional elements are substantive cues that reflect the reliability of physical and tangible aspects. Multiple choices of activities and events help engage visitors, while visitor guidance aids ease movement, and facilities provide convenience and support visitor wellbeing.

5.1.3 Discussion

The provision of experience has been well studied in tourism literature. However, the development of experience staging has been rather overlooked (Åstrøm, 2017). Moreover, competition for tourists' attention exists in all types of tourism and at all levels, such as between and within cities, museums and scenic sites (Ooi, 2005). Therefore, tourism destinations demand visitors' time and energy as they are often only visiting for a short period (ibid). Similarly, dark tourism destinations must capture and direct visitors' attention. To address the research gaps, this study uses the dramaturgical metaphor to suggest that engaging experience depends on the degree to which people interact with the props and cues at dark tourism destinations.

The findings further Pine II and Gilmore's (1998) research by exploring experience staging at dark tourism settings. Experience staging emphasises the importance of experience as the core offering of dark tourism destinations, as proposed in the experience economy framework. Pine II and Gilmore (1998) argue that experience staging is spreading beyond entertainment businesses, such as theatres and theme parks. Prior research on experience staging in tourism has generally focused on the hedonic context (e.g. Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Oh et al., 2007; Pikkemaat et al., 2009). In this study, dark tourism providers develop experience staging to attempt to influence visitors' memorable experiences. As such, this study contributes to the emerging literature on dark tourism and the experience economy by identifying six typologies of experience staging and classifies them into theatrical and functional elements.

Theatrical Elements

Based on tourists' online reviews, theatrical elements comprise theme, staff, and design and landscape. The crucial step in designing memorable experiences in the experience economy is envisioning a well-defined theme (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). The theme is a set of cues intended

to evoke an imaginary journey to a different place or time (Ellis and Rossman, 2008). This study makes the important point that theme is context-specific rather than bound by time and space. According to the findings, the theme of a battlefield site is the remembrance of significant events in history, and different sites focus on the respective heritage and culture of their nations. Therefore, the results support the role of dark tourism sites as places for remembrance and commemoration for those who served in wars and as educational resources for present generations, as reported by Whitmarsh (2001).

Culloden Battlefield and Gettysburg National Military Park can be interpreted as heritage sites. The following review reflects how the visitor perceived the value of national heritage, although from the commodification of an interpretation centre.

> *"**This is our national heritage and park service done right. Everything at the Visitor Center was wonderful.** Only wish the admission fee was picked and choose instead of all-inclusive because we wanted to see the cyclorama but didn't have time for everything else. The grounds are perfectly maintained and clean. Scenic and beautiful tour road, well-marked with signage. Exactly what you would expect from the National Park Service"* (Gettysburg15).

Commemoration, history and heritage or various combinations of these themes result from the interpretation and representation that each site presents. This view reflects a preserved and narrated past in a well-managed form, while the appropriateness of the narrative is carefully considered. The themes display respect for the dead and injured. Historic battlefields present death and tragic stories with an ethical and contemplative consideration (e.g. 'It is a war grave, we ask you to treat it with respect' – a sign at Culloden Battlefield). The concern about the use of historic battlefields as tourist attractions raises fewer doubts than commercialising dilemmas that other dark tourism destinations face. For example, the dark camp of genocide (e.g. maintenance of former concentration camps, re-installation of Nazi left buildings) or the dark dungeon (preservation of slavery sites) have been the subject of debate, as they may be considered the 'unacceptable past'.

Tourism is about storytelling (Bruner, 2004; Chronis, 2005). Staff at tourism destinations are of pivotal significance to the representativeness of the theatrical performances. Living-history presenters, for example, are staff who play the roles of particular historically significant people and 'stay in' their characters, which is consistent with the theme. Their scripts and performances

are dynamic to match the needs and interests of the individual visitors and circumstances. Staff show the reliable performance, but a dynamic script can engage the visitors.

Interpreting the site is the responsibility of staff or professional park rangers or organisations, as suggested by Chronis (2012). Chronis underlines the paramount importance of tour guides, not only for delivering the historical death, but also for constructing narrative imagineering. The ability of staff to weave a narrative that draws together various aspects of the site heightens the importance of theatrical performance (Willis, 2014). Experienced employees serve as the primary channel for communication with visitors. Staff characteristics include assurance (knowledge and ability to convey the offerings) and responsiveness (visitor-orientated and prompt service provision), which all reflect the communicative staging of the destination.

In dark tourism settings, it is important to note that the history and the tragic losses are best understood as narratives. For example, visitors reviewed their experiences of the Omaha Beach guided tour by using phrases such as 'brought the experience to life', 'put things in perspective' and 'pointing out the things you don't see in the movies'. Staff and/or tour guides help bridge the distance between history and visitors by making sense, in accessible ways, of the staged environment in which visitors find themselves.

Storytelling can be shaped to the nature of the audience by simply asking visitors where they are from. Willis's (2014) study at a Vietnam War site suggests that the role of a guided tour is not merely an information disseminator, but can also provide a glimpse into the reality of Vietnamese life that exceeds the site's formal narrative. Metaphorically, visitors are motivated by the 'beyond the stage' of the performer to catch the authentic performance. The following example illustrates how the Gettysburg battlefield guide tour is tailored to the visitor's home state.

> *"Our Gettysburg Battlefield Official Tour Guide, George Maturi, was very good. I was there with friends, my husband and two couples yesterday for a 3-hour tour.* ***He customized our tour to include our home states*** *and picked us up at our B&B where the tour began. George knows the Battle of Gettysburg and shared his knowledge. Want to learn what happened at Gettysburg? Ask for George"* (Gettysburg16).

Finally, the identification of dark tourism is accompanied by extensive debate about its ethical and moral aspects (Lennon and Foley, 2000; Stone, 2009b; Wight, 2009). From such debates, the role of staff as the primary communicative channel needs to emphasise education,

remembrance and heritage. The term ‘dark edutainment’, coined by Sharpley and Stone (2009), is valid in the sense that dark tourism sites present death and suffering to visitors.

Landscape, scenery and design are other essential aspects that enhance the experiencescape for visitors. The findings indicate that the landscape of the battlefields and the architectural designs of visitor centres influence the visitor experience. Kotler's (1973) article on the retail sector emphasises the importance of the atmospherics. The author argues that this factor is the conscious designing of space to create specific effects on buyers. In the service context, design is a significant dimension that contributes to a positive effect on the overall quality of the destination (Hooper et al., 2013; Reimer and Kuehn, 2005).

In dark tourism settings, design and landscape appear to provide three significant roles. First, they serve as an attention-creating medium (e.g. the unique design of the visitor centre at Culloden Battlefield). Culloden is a site of national significance, and the visitor centre was designed by setting strict parameters for heights, views and materials (HolskinArchitects, 2020). The building, using locally sourced material, was moved away from the battlefield lines, ensuring that it would not disturb the graves and artefacts (ibid).

Second, design and landscape serve as a message-creating medium to express various meanings about a site (e.g. monuments and memorials on battlefields, as seen at the Memorial Sundial at Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park). This site tells the story of the battle as derived from the chronicle of Polydore Vergil, an Italian at the court of Henry VII (“Battle of Bosworth Field”, 2020). The monument in question marks the points of the compass and the distances to the other battlefields of the Wars of the Roses, with the three names of Richard III, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, and Thomas, Lord Stanley (ibid).

Third, design and landscape serve as an emotive medium to the visitor. The empty battlefield, the monument or the visitor centre building may directly arouse visceral reactions. The monuments around a battlefield help the visitor to imagine how the event happened and make the site more atmospheric. For instance,

> *“**The beach was completely deserted, which allowed us to visualize better what happened there and the sacrifices that were made. The Braves monument provided by the French to those US soldiers who gave their lives and liberated the region, is really powerful and worth seeing.** I wouldn't miss it”* (Normandy12).

Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland (2010) state that landscape engages visitors sensorily and imaginatively. Landscape creates an appropriate atmosphere in which visitors can sense the place and create a whole experience. Design and atmospheric elements provide the perceptions and mental images that visitors take with them, which influence their revisit or recommendation (Bonn et al., 2007). Similarly, a study at the National September 11th Memorial and Museum concludes that design preserves the remaining footprints as a 'sacred place' and a place to remember (Micieli-Voutsinas, 2017). Both design and landscape are intentionally and/or non-intentionally communicative staging elements.

Functional Elements

The functional elements of experience staging, activities and events, visitor guidance and facilities correspond to the reliability of the experience offerings. These elements are the ability to perform the promised experiences dependably and accurately. Museum-learning is self-directed rather than guided by a teacher in the classroom (Falk and Dierking, 2011). Exhibits substitute for the teacher as the central medium of instruction. In this context, the visitor centre appears to act as a history museum or a centre of public learning or a heritage centre. A notable example is the Omaha Beach Memorial Museum. The museum is based around the theme of the daily lives of those who died during the D-Day Landings. The focus of the museum is on artefacts – with displays of personal objects, vehicles, uniforms and weapons. These objects and their arrangement are put into thematic scenes from the occupation period until the landing, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the past. The museum demonstrates that it is not only modern interactive displays that visitors respond to; a site can tell a story in a simple and straightforward manner also.

Only having original artefacts on display would not be sufficient for an exhibition in dark tourism settings (Rátz, 2006). Rátz analysed the exhibitions at the House of Terror, Budapest, suggesting that the combination of high-tech methods of narrative with the control of lighting and sound results in a memorable experience. In this sense, the evolution from passive objects to interactive illustrations can paint an emotional picture of the past. The visitor's experience is developed from the artefacts and interactive presentation.

A possible explanation for this may be related to types of visitor. Visitors can be divided into two kinds: expert and novice (Boonen et al., 2018). Expert visitors are knowledgeable in a particular field and develop more sophisticated inquiries and understand the exhibits within their contexts (ibid). Novice visitors, on the other hand, have little or no knowledge of the topic, and they may take longer to view or be unable to understand the exhibits (ibid). Motivating and engaging with different levels of understanding is challenging. Visitors may arrive without preconceptions or with a more in-depth knowledge of history. Moreover, more recent generations who have not been affected by war may need a more interpretative message. Dark destinations are doing the difficult task of presenting the entire story within limited spaces and resources.

Battle re-enactments remember the dead and remind existing generations of the horrors of war and substantial loss of life. All the study sites offer this experience annually, namely, 'The Battle of Hastings' (Events at 1066 Battle of Hastings, Abbey and Battlefield, 2020); 'Bosworth Medieval Festival' (Bosworth Medieval Festival: 2020, 2020); 'Annual Commemoration Service Culloden Battlefield' (Upcoming Events, 2020); 'Annual Gettysburg Civil War Battle Reenactment' (2020 Battle of Gettysburg, 2020); and 'D-Day Festival' (D-Day Festival Normandy 2020, 2020). These special events are free (included in the site admission charge) or have an extra admission fee. This fee is what Gilmore and Pine II (2002) emphasise that, in a singular place, a business must consider how best to take advantage of the staging experience and design those experiences worthy of an admission fee.

Gettysburg National Military Park is a showcase example of activity options. The museum and visitor centre building are free to enter, but there are fees for the narrated film, Cyclorama painting and Gettysburg Museum of the Civil War. The site also offers different options of licenced battlefield guides: a car or bus tour. However, visitors can also purchase an audio CD from the visitor centre and conduct their own self-paced auto-tour. Multiple offerings present freedom of choice. Smith (1994) emphasises that a destination needs to provide visitors with options for the experience to be satisfactory. The degree of freedom of choice varies depending on the reason to visit, age, visitor group, budget, previous experience or a combination of any or all. Without freedom of choice, it may be difficult for visitors to participate wholeheartedly in the activities. The implication of choice is the potential for spontaneity and a marvellous experience. For instance,

"We got in line for ***tickets to the Museum and Cyclorama and a park tour****. There was a greeter in the line to explain the* ***upcoming choices and prices*** *and answer any questions. We opted for the* ***in-car ranger tour****. We had about two hours before our appointment time with ranger so easily spent it at the movie presentation and Cyclorama. To make it more interesting for my 8-year-old (and really for all of us)* ***we got a Junior Ranger book from the ranger info desk. The guide is set up to accommodate different ages so you can choose the number of points you want to achieve--you then get a ranking like private or corporal, a certificate of completion and a cool patch.*** *The questions are pretty hard and the ranger really did look them over and ask a few friendly questions (glad since we worked hard on it)"* (Gettysburg17).

Activities, events and exhibitions are triggering tools that help to engage visitor participation. These tools 'connect' the visitor to the experience, like a virtual time machine to the past. They are substantive materials, which are not only in a digital or physical format, but also deliver an experiencescape that serves the visitor journey across both physical and digital environments, using multiple techniques and devices.

Visitor guidance can manage the flow of visitor traffic, and it also relates to the layout of the exhibition. This element aids the ease of movement of the in-house displays and exhibits (Bonn et al., 2007). Swarbrooke (2002) suggests that signs and information boards need to help visitors decide how to spend their time onsite and to follow routes with minimum effort. Furthermore, Tzortzi (2014) argues that movement design is critical to how exhibits are perceived by visitors through spatial and visual presentations that mediate their experiences. Culloden Battlefield visitor centre showcases an example of how to manage the flow of visitors by creating a one-way route from the main entrance until at the end of the exhibition.

"This visitor centre imparts all the necessary information about the battle in an accessible way and without dumbing down. ***The timeline leads you through the story as from the government side and a separate timeline as from the Jacobite angle****. After dealing with the pre battle build-up, there is a surrounded film on four sides of a re-enactment of the battle…There is also a large horizontal flat screen showing* ***the positions and movements of the armies****, again very well done. Finally,* ***a walk on the battlefield with or without a free audioguide*** *is your choice. This is a must-visit if you are in the Inverness area"* (Culloden16).

In the above review, visitor guidance is linked with the design of the landscape. In addition to the gate, map and signage around the battlefield, the site offers a location-based audioguide to

provide visitors with an in-depth understanding of specific spots on the battlefield. Dark tourism destinations design this functional dimension to make visitors self-serving and autonomous, but the must be user-friendly. These visitor guidance elements help the visitor to create and navigate their own experiences. This approach can be described as a series of mosaics created in visitors' minds as a result of sequence viewing.

There are differences in visitor guidance at each dark tourism destination. Each site's history characterises it. The findings suggest two ends of a scale, from a relatively individualised route at Battle Abbey and Battlefield to the structured visitor routes of Culloden Battlefield. The relative uniformity of Culloden Battlefield means that visitors receive a higher orientation of the exhibit space, as opposed to Battle Abbey and Battlefield, where visitors are more likely to be disorientated by the suggested routes. Therefore, designing visitor guidance is linked to visibility, meaning that narratives are constructed as a platform from which the visitor experiences the site.

Although facilities are not expected to impact visitor experiences directly, experiences are perceived only when visitors feel comfortable and their basic needs are met (Müller et al., 2004). Shops, restaurants, parking lots and bathrooms also affect visitor wellbeing. Memorabilia refers to tangible artefacts from the site, which might range from purchased souvenirs or books to a signature wrapped paper from a memorable dinner at a restaurant (Ellis and Rossman, 2008). memorabilia are particularly powerful at enhancing experience quality when presented in a value-added or unexpected way (Matzler et al., 1996). The concept of facilities stresses the importance of a visitor centre beyond the main exhibition space. That is, facilities act as sources of preparation (e.g. cloakroom before and after entering the main exhibition, bathroom) and service (e.g. car park, café). The successful visitor attraction or heritage site is not based on only the exhibitions, activities or events, but also on sufficient onsite facilities.

The following reviews indicate that visitors choose to visit other sites or complain about sites because of the facilities, such as complicated car parks and the non-variety of food at the restaurant. This finding is related to Pine II and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy, which states that experiences should be worth the admission fee.

> *"If you use the car park, the charge is £4.50 - and* ***if you pay the very expensive entrance fees,*** *the car park* ***charge only drops by £1. Due to the expensive fees we did not enter the attraction - circa £36 for 3 adults, felt it was a rip off****!"* (Hastings16).

> *"The exhibition is well done and presents the history of this important site in an accessible, engaging and informative way.* ***It is a great shame that the Tithe Barn provides such lacklustre refreshments. The menu is old fashioned and truly uninspiring. We had dreadful sandwiches which were poorly made with tired and cheap ingredients****. It is a potentially excellent place to eat and could add hugely to the visitor experience but is currently letting the whole place down. Best to bring a picnic!"* (Bosworth15).

Since battlefields and visitor centres are intentionally created as tourist destinations, the sites must 'manage', through 'substantive staging' and 'communicative staging', to transform the 'empty field' into an attraction. When designing staging experiences, sites must be aware that they are not only developing the physical buildings and spaces, but also the tangible elements that can shape the intangible visitor experience. The offerings need to support the central theme and serve the visitor's basic needs. These points coincide with Pine II and Gilmore's (1998) experience-design principles: theme the experience, harmonise impressions with positive cues, eliminate negative signs, mix in memorabilia, and engage all five senses. Morgan (2006) reconfirms that, at the centre of the experience offerings, memorable experiences come from the enjoyment of choosing from an abundant choice, the discovery of new things and the distinctiveness of the settings.

All businesses, including dark tourism destinations, stage and choreograph experience via theatrical and functional elements. Visitors 'add the final link' and experience the staged offerings according to personal choices and situational variables. Dark sites re-enchant histories by paying particular attention to multisensorial stimulation. Layering interaction with physical and digital offerings transforms dark tourism sites into impactful and memorable destinations. Then, the site history turns into an intriguing narrative that develops the story and transforms into derivative products such as souvenirs. Finally, staging actions are undertaken by experience facilitators, and these contact points of site personnel or other visitors can guide visitors through the experience.

In dark tourism settings, the experience staging is interwoven with a dramaturgy: visitors are drawn into the stories the sites provide to illustrate the history. The dramatic arrangement influences how powerfully a sense of emplacement is evoked for visitors: where the battle took

place, where artefacts are placed for display, the narrators in the form of a tour guide or re-enactor, the architecture and landscape of the site, the activities and events visitors are involved in, the pathways plotted throughout the space, and the facilities for comfort and safety. The findings indicate that integrated offerings strengthen the theme. The theme should be concise and compelling, and the combined offerings drive all the staging elements toward the central theme.

These interweaving elements aim to strengthen the visitor experience by transforming undifferentiated terrain into a significant landscape. These elements transmit meaning that contains tangible proof of the event 'in place' and provide the sense of 'being there' to the visitors. The dark tourism destination is 'where those old history books come alive'. Furthermore, regarding experience-stagers, showmanship is replacing scholarship in traditional museums. The above discussion and explanation is supported by identifying how visitors react to these staged offerings. The following section considers visitor experiences in dark tourism settings in terms of how these elements engage visitors in memorable ways.

5.2 Visitor Experiences

Visitors come to battlefields and visitor centres for different purposes and with different preconceptions. Experiences are varied and multi-dimensional and overlapping. To answer the research question, the findings in this section are initially based on the multifaceted model of visitor experience by Packer and Ballantyne (2016). Existing theories and frameworks are not expected to provide a perfect fit with the study, and neither the framework nor the data take priority over the other. In this chapter, the dimension of experiences is presented as separate constructs (one form of experience per section) to capture the content and intensity across multiple sites. The study reveals seven dimensions of visitor experiences, namely, physical, cognitive, flow, relational, introspective, emotional, and paranormal experiences.

5.2.1 Physical Experiences

Physical experience is characterised by movement, action, physical activities and general links with tangible objects (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016; Tussyadiah and Zach, 2012). Visitors need to know the different activities they could partake in at the destination. These provide the opportunities to attend the site activities, try on the costumes or try out the weapons. The sites also

use different types of exhibits aided by technology to help visitors engage in the experience. Hands-on activities are the platform for physical experiences. For instance:

> *"The National Trust for Scotland is to be commended for creating a facility that reflects the importance of the event and tells the often complex story of the events that led up to the battle well.* ***The interpretation is via many different media - historical timelines, audio, traditional exhibit display, interactive maps, eavesdropping on deliberations among Jacobites, a short but evocative 360 degree surround film of the battle, archaeological finds, tours and displays by people in period costume, dressing up and all in a well-laid-out route and that's only inside. Outside are trails round the site of the battle itself and guided walks.*** *A bright well-stocked shop and excellent cafeteria complete the experience which could easily last half a day or more for an enthusiast"* (Culloden21).

> *"My nine-year-old daughter visited on a Sunday when they were holding a "fight like a knight" children's activity day…**My daughter loved the knight activities, she got to shoot a bow, crossbow, ballista and dress up in period costume and try on the armour.*** *There was also a short demonstration and display by Hawkwise Falconry where we saw a Buzzard and a Harris Hawk. Great value day out!"* (Bosworth21).

Visitors have the opportunity to see the real sites of historical events and real objects from the battles preserved in the museums and visitor centres. Visitors associate certain sights and textures with the destination. A visitor to Culloden Battlefield wrote the following:

> *"The Culloden Battlefield site is located in northern Scotland near Inverness. The battlefield site itself is largely vacant and has some storyboards posted to indicate the battle location and layout. The real treasure is the excellent museum at the site, which* ***contains many artefacts such as muskets, cannon, uniforms****, etc. plus a detailed description of the history. There are docents in period costume who describe and provide details and are a real treat to listen to, especially for youngsters"* (Culloden22).

In some reviews, visitors recall being moved by the beauty and scenery during the battlefield walk. For example:

> *"My partner and I visited the battlefield and enjoyed a lovely morning exploring the grounds and battlefield.* ***We enjoyed the scenic route around the battlefield really getting into the spirit of history****.* ***The cold and the frost made the walk that little bit more magical****"* (Hastings21).

Physical experiences focus on visitors using their multiple senses, including seeing, hearing, touching the objects and scenery.

5.2.2 Cognitive Experiences

Although physical objects remain valuable artefacts at battlefields and visitor centres, visitors' primary experiences are the intellectual and interpretive aspects. Cognitive experience is the mental process of knowing, including aspects of perception, reasoning, interpretation and judgement (Tussyadiah and Zach, 2012). Visitors review their visits in terms of knowledge gained and discovering new information or experiencing something they have not seen or known before. Visiting the battlefields not only enhances visitors' knowledge, but also answers questions they may have.

The cognitive experience varies because each person prefers certain learning styles and techniques. Sites should offer visual, auditory and kinaesthetic styles. The following reviews exemplify auditory cognitive experience from a tour guide and audio guide.

> *"A guided tour of the battlefield is included with admission and is well worth taking. The guide was very good and* ***we learned a lot about the battle that we didn't know before.*** *To learn about this place first hand is something everyone interested in the history of Scotland should do"* (Culloden23).

> *"We all know from our history lessons at school about the Battle of Hastings in 1066, but to actually visit Battle Abbey and see the field on which the battle took place was amazing. We had* ***an audio guide, which was very informative, and we learnt a lot*** *about King Harold and King William, who the battle progressed and why the Normans won"* (Hastings22).

Another example of cognitive experience, this one from the Omaha Beach Memorial Museum, is derived from both visual (exhibits and films) and auditory (audio stations).

> *"The museum has* ***a lot of history to read and understand what the battle was like*** *and what it meant. Spend some time to sit and check out the* ***short films****, too"* (Normandy21).

For Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park, one visitor reviewed the cognitive experience of taking a child to learn the history. This visitor mentions many kinaesthetic learning activities at the site.

> *"I took my 9-year-old son to Bosworth to help him with his school project. What a fantastic day we had. There were loads of people in period dress, very knowledgeable and very keen* ***to let my son try out the battle-axes, swords and armour. We then went into the museum which***

was very interesting and 'hands-on' like a long bow you could try to pull back which measured the distance an arrow would fly and TV screens behind battle helmet visors so you could see how much your vision was restricted*... Some museums have too many pictures and too much to read for kids but* ***this was full of things you could do or touch etc.*** *to keep my son interested. Followed by a good interactive video of the battle itself"* (Bosworth22).

By participating in the consumption process at destination settings, visitors obtain the cognitive experience. The reviews above reveal that physical activities (e.g. kinaesthetic activities, a guided walk) form direct and indirect cognitive experiences. Thus, cognitive experience is interrelated with physical experience.

5.2.3 Flow Experiences

Flow is a psychological state described by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1991) as being when people act with total involvement. Flow is the type of experience that people are drawn to because they greatly enjoy the activity and become absorbed in the moment and lose their sense of time (ibid). At battlefields and visitor centres, visitors immerse themselves in the activities and exhibitions. Visitors are in control and feel a sense of consolidation with their surroundings. The most common element to emerge from the visitors' descriptions of their flow experiences is being absorbed in the activities. Visitors become carried away with their visit, mentioning terms such as 'hooked' and 'immersed'. These terms suggest an 'absorbing' experience (Tellegen and Atkinson, 1974). The following reviews illustrate flow experiences.

"An important piece of history took place at this very location; it would be silly not to go and learn about what happened. The museum you walkthrough is very informative and intriguing; ***I immersed myself into the minds of some of the people who played important roles leading up to the great "Battle of Culloden", just to get a sense of what must have been like****. I was not disappointed"* (Culloden24).

"Exploring the battlefields ***was like walking in the footprints of the soldiers*** *that fought and died there****. I did not want to leave****"* (Gettysburg20).

During flow experiences, time seems to pass quickly when people are engaging in the activities. Visitors mention losing track of time when they enjoy their visit. Beyond a distorted sense of time, visitors describe the moment of realness and temporarily losing their self-

consciousness. Visitors become intensely focused on an activity that requires most of their mental resources. People are motivated by the quality of the experience they have while they are engaging in the activity. For example,

> *"We decided to go as it linked to our son's school topic.* ***Having thought be there for an hour or so. It turned out to be a full day trip.*** *The guided walk led by Lizzie in costume was brilliant.* ***Our son completely believed that he had seen the battle,*** *and loved the detailed explanations of the battle and the alone used. The exhibition at the visitor centre is extremely well thought out to engage children and adults alike. Superb"* (Bosworth23).

Visitors also reviewed another dimension of flow: as a challenging activity that requires skills. Flow is reported to happen within sequences of activities that require attention, and that cannot be done without certain skills. People with experience of similar activities may have a different impression of the attractiveness of the destination. In this example, below, the enjoyable activity combines reading a map, listening to an audio guide and hunting statues. The challenge of completing the hunt is stimulating, making the experience enjoyable.

> *"Our daughter is about to do a topic on the Normans at school, so we thought a trip to Battle would be helpful.* ***She was hooked from the moment she walked into the grounds. Normally she isn't a fan of this sort of day out but the children's audio guide, map and statue hunting kept her interest all the way around the battlefield.*** *The visitor's centre is one of the best we've been to with lots of interactive exhibits. She certainly learnt a lot today"* (Hastings23).

Flow suggests a state of mind that brings together physical, cognitive and emotional experiences because it concerns enjoyment during those activities. The elements that contribute to flow experience in dark tourism settings comprise challenging activities (attractiveness of the activity) and skill (visitors' knowledge about the presented topic), resulting in concentration on a task, loss of self-consciousness and transformation of time.

5.2.4 Relational Experiences

While visitors reviewed individual experiences, many shared their experiences with others, such as travel companions, staff or other visitors at sites. This form of experience relates to social interactions, companionship and connectedness among people (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016).

Personal interaction between visitors and destination providers is considered central to the business and constitutes visitor experience (Chang and Horng, 2010). The following reviews suggest that the interaction between visitors and destination employees forms a relational experience through a guided tour and an onsite activity.

> *"**Book a guided tour**. It was TOTALLY worth the $75 for our family of five. Make sure the tour guide is booked through the Gettysburg Foundation. **The guide will meet you at the Visitors Center and drive with you in your car (or drive your car as ours did)** and take you around the sites and provide the context of the battle relative to the war, describe all the specifics with how the battle went down, and show all the key places. **Very cool. This was a hit with our teenage boys and my wife as the guide made the whole tour interesting and not "boring" to them. Our guide was Dave and he was awesome. He took some great pictures of us which is another perk of having a guide**"* (Gettysburg22).

> *"Very well presented display of the background and result of the Battle of Culloden. **We enjoyed taking part in the Myths and Mysteries session** - surprised at some of the facts that came out from this session which was **well presented by a couple of re-enactors**…"*(Culloden25).

At dark sites, companionship affects the visitor experience. The following reviews demonstrate that having a great time and getting along with companions are essential relational aspects of experience quality.

> *"Really enjoyed our trip to the Heritage centre today…The exhibition was informative, with lots to read and look at. We learnt new things and added information to our existing knowledge of this period. **We particularly enjoyed handling some of the armour and chain mail - really heavy! and looking at the skeleton of a soldier who was killed in a battle and looking at his injuries to learn why he had died. It was something our whole family could enjoy, my grandad (79) my parents (50's) and myself and my sister (20s). After we had looked around the centre, we went out onto the walk around the field. A leisurely 2km walk that was just right for my grandad to be able to do without getting tired or hot** (it was a really sunny day). Would recommend to people with an interest in medieval history or if you don't want to pay for the centre you can just to walk around the circuit and enjoy the views"* (Bosworth24).

> *"For those of you that hanker for a day trip from London that is historically significant, Battle is the place to go. What a great place for the history buff or **a family outing. This place is wide open so let junior loose.** Make sure you pick up an audio guide at the entrance when you pay. Well worth it"* (Hastings24).

As a local person visiting the battle site, the relational experience comprises the interaction with other locals and visitors. Socialisation is an essential element for many visitors at a memorial,

service or re-enactment day. A sojourn to a battlefield site or to attend a memorial service with other visitors with the same motivations encourages social interaction. The compatibility between the visitor and other visitors enhances the relational experience quality.

> *"Every year around the 6th of June, there's a giant picnic at Omaha Beach at the Saint Laurent Sur Mer sector to commemorate the D-Day landings, and* ***even more so the friendship and pleasure that we can from life****. This is really a great experience. Tables are set up on the road along the beach. You can bring your picnic or buy food at stalls on site. There's music from the period, and sometimes people dance.* ***You can see re-enactors and war material from the epoch****.* ***It's a great way to meet people, locals and other foreigners because you share your table with others…Hope to see you there****"* (Normandy22).

> *"****On the nearest weekend to the 14th of the month each year the site is generally packed with spectators, re-enactors, staff and traders. People from across the globe come to witness the spectacle of Normans versus English****. Only it is not as simple as that. There were several other nationalities involved…****The event this year was attended by a sell-out audience of perhaps 10,000+ who flocked as families, couples, groups, individuals to witness the re-enactment on Caldbec Hill that sealed the fate of Harold and his brothers, Gyrth and Leofwin****. For much of the time they visited the many craft stalls run by traders from across Europe as far afield as the eastern Baltic and the Atlantic coast of France, and from Poland south to Italy. The men and women who came in period costume to take part in the 'battle' were as varied. There were musicians, actors and colourful characters by the score…****I was one of the authors who had written books and gave talks, took part in discussions on both days, Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th…We went to look around at the spectacle along with everyone else*** *on the site between 3-4pm. Before the re-enactors moved off to take their places in the English shield wall* ***I went around and between them to take close-ups and wide shots. Hopefully this will encourage you****…****See you there next year****"* (Hastings25).

> *"****Being in Gettysburg for the sesquicentennial commemoration was one of life's most moving experiences****…This was my third visit to the Gettysburg National Park. The "new' visitors' centre is bigger and more impressive than the old one but conversely there seems to be less to see with fewer artefacts…****The feeling of universal sorrow from the thousands in the crowds engendered by evoking the tragedy of the battle was summed up in the playing of 'Taps' along the High Water Mark at all the points the Confederate soldiers reached the famous wall. Sincerity and respect marked the whole occasion****. It'll never be forgotten by all who were there exactly 150 years later to the minute"* (Gettysburg23).

Relational experience involves, therefore, social interactions with destination providers, visitors' companions and other visitors. Such experience is sharing moments of individual experience.

5.2.5 Introspective Experiences

Visits to battlefields mediate the contemplation of visitors' thoughts and self-examination. These experiences are mostly private and triggered by the activities, artefacts or settings at the visitor centres (Pekarik et al., 1999). Visitors mention how the exhibitions and landscapes helped them imagine and visualise what happened in the battles. This experience results from the authenticity of the activities the visitors partake in and the landscape of the battlefield they explore. Several visitors describe their imaginary experiences, as in the following reviews:

> *"Battle is soaked in historical information which is something that really interests me. I had a great day traipsing around the battlefield, imagining what it would have been like and was helped along by some really good audio…* ***My favourite part was getting amongst it and walking out onto the field and letting my imagination paint the picture of William conquering over Harold -some gruesome stories included on the audio guide****"* (Hastings26).

> *"The Battle of Culloden was a major turning point in Scottish culture. This is a must-see for any history buff. You can easily spend 3 hours exploring the museum and battlefield.* ***The battle re-enactment movie puts you in the thick of battle and gives you a real sense of not only the Battle of Culloden but also any battle in that era****"* (Culloden26).

Visitors also recall their previous experiences, such as past trips related to wars and battlefields, their childhood experiences and other memories. Visitors compare their battlefield experiences to the history classes they studied at schools. Some visitors are veterans, coming to the site to reflect on their personal experiences. Others visit the sites for their family members' reminiscences. The following examples demonstrate both individual and family experiences:

> *"Well set up interesting walk and info center.* ***If History were like this when I was at school would probably have learnt more****"* (Bosworth24).

> *"****I'm a disabled veteran served in the military for the last 30 years, going to Gettysburg was a good reminder that freedom isn't free****. This is one of those places that you should take your family to pay your respects"* (Gettysburg24).

"This museum is a must-see for WWII historians. ***I have studied D-Day, etc. because my father served in the 4th infantry div. He could not go back to Normandy...I was proud to do it for him...he survived Utah Beach, D-Day, Battle of the Bulge.*** *This museum meant a lot to me…and worth the trip"* (Normandy23).

Visitors also reflect on the meaning of what they were looking at during their visits. The first example, below, implies that visitors can learn about why the battle happened at this location and how the country was formed. The second example describes how the visitor understood why the site had been changed.

"We took an audio guide and walked the longer route on a beautiful sunny September morning. The guide was very easy to follow and gave us a very interesting insight into the Battle of Hastings. ***It really isn't until you see the field from all angles that you understand the problems experienced by the Normans and realise that history could so easily have changed that day if only the Saxons had not broken ranks when they thought they were winning.*** *Well worth the visit - extremely enjoyable"* (Hastings27).

"A must to show your respect to the thousands who landed and lost their lives. We saw the stainless steel sculptures on the beach. ***At first, we thought the folks and families on the beach seemed disrespectful, but this is what the French want to see....a return to normalcy****. Bring a container to gather some sand for prosperity"* (Normandy24).

The described visitor thoughts are centred on the experience of what life would have been like during the war and on some of the hardships endured during and after the war. Visitors also pay respect to those who fought in the battle and honour the fact that the site is also a graveyard for the fallen. It is a feeling of spiritual connection. For instance:

"The Battle of Gettysburg was a turning point in the Civil War, the Union victory in the summer of 1863 that ended General Robert E. Lee's second and most ambitious invasion of the North. Often referred to as the "High Water Mark of the Confederacy", it was the war's bloodiest battle with 51,000 casualties. It also provided President Abraham Lincoln with the setting for his most famous address. ***Experience this most sacred and reverent location in American History. I couldn't help but cry at all the lives lost on this battlefield****"* (Gettysburg25).

*"****Peaceful and prayerful service honouring all those who fell*** *in battle and in current conflicts around the world today"* (Bosworth26).

Feeling a sense of connectedness as a part of their nation's history is reflected in the introspective experiences. All the battles were pivotal events in their countries' histories and reflect the nation's heritage. For example:

> *"If I'm honest my main reason for going was due to the fact I'm a massive Outlander Fan and if you are you won't be disappointed. But somehow that paled slightly once you get there as there was such a loss of life... for me, there was a strange and sad feeling, whispers of lives lost.* ***But I left feeling very proud to be Scottish****"* (Culloden27).

> *"A part of* ***our history****, a must-see, will make you* ***feel our past****"* (Gettysburg26).

The sense of connectedness can be triggered by deep engagement activities and exhibitions with or without the nationalism, heritage or country's history. For instance:

> *"My husband is a huge civil war buff...me? Not so much. I was along for the "ride". We took the cd self-guided tour...and by the end of 15 minutes* ***I was drawn in****. By the end of the 2 hr tour it was "real" to me. I would recommend the cd tour AND the museum. We spent the day and went back for a second day****. Even as Canadians we felt the weight of history and the sacrifices those families made.*** *Go once in your lifetime" (Gettysbutg24).*

The introspective experience is the self-examination of feelings and thoughts. It is the inward mental experiences triggered by activities and settings. Introspective experience includes imagining other times and places, recalling past experiences, reflecting on the meaning, feeling a spiritual connection, and feeling a sense of connectedness.

5.2.6 Emotional Experiences

Emotional impressions are felt and elicited by visitors' subjective experiences. Visitors' emotional responses are evoked through activities and exhibitions, as well as the service settings. Visitors interact with the service environment, staff and other visitors. Key emotions can be provoked and observed by and at these sites, including surprise, enjoyment, peacefulness, sadness, fear and awe. Emotional experiences are categorised into groups, which allows for patterns to be identified.

Grief

Visitors describe feelings of sorrow for the death and suffering, and being moved when seeing graves and hearing stories of death and survival. Regarding heritage and nationalism, visitors feel both humbled and respectful when considering the importance of the sites and the casualties associated with their families or nations. However, visitors with no connection to a site also experience a feeling of sorrow. This form of negative emotional experience is mentioned in many reviews of places where mass death occurred. For example:

> *"After visiting the museum at Utah, we thought we were prepared for the experience at Omaha.* ***Nothing could have prepared us--nothing!*** *Walking in the German casemates and looking toward the sea recalling how our troops and Allies set out to achieve an objective beyond one's imagination,* ***I nearly fell to my knees.*** *The surrounding area is untouched where the bombs dropped. The sand wall they scaled is as prominent today as it must have been then. This is truly sacred ground.* ***We walked the beach and brought home a shell for our Uncle, who was part of the invasion. He broke down in tears when we presented it to him. He had it encased and was buried with it near his heart****. Carefully meandering through the cemetery hearing taps being played added something additional to my soul that will forever change me and proudly makes me an American"* (Normandy25).

> *"The walk through the shop and things of the period. The wearing of the kilt and all goes with it. The finally the walk in the field.* ***It gave me a feeling of sorrow, tears and of the brave Scots who lost their lives.*** *After seeing all of that.* ***You would feel the whole lives of the battle field. I felt sad, heartbroken and my soul cried for the Scots****. If you go to Scotland, don't miss this. It is all about Scotland and the people"* (Culloden28).

Anger

The second group of emotional experiences relates to anger. Specifically, visitors describe emotions including fury and displeasure. These emotions are felt towards the results of the war or prisoners' treatment after the war.

> *"Absolutely haunting place. I learned so much going around the exhibition. The surround screen film made a huge impact on me and highlighted the senselessness of it all.* ***I came away feeling furious with Prince Charlie for sending all the brave, hungry Highlanders to the slaughter****"* (Culloden29).

"What a tragedy occurred at Gettysburg or for that matter, the entire war. ***How could anyone possibly think that slavery was ok to justify business profits or states' rights?*** *So very sad to have lost so many brave men, thank goodness for President Lincoln's humble spirit to keep our nation as one"* (Gettysburg28).

Fear

This feeling produces fright and discomfort, with sites being described as sobering and desolate. The feeling of fear stems from the stories told by onsite staff or interactive exhibits. The visitor reviews, below, explain the moment of fear.

"Everything was so clearly marked and recorded. In fact, a week later, I can`t stop thinking about it. The battlefield had such a distinctive, forlorn atmosphere. I am sure the past speaks to us here. Thanks for looking after it all so well. ***The re-enactment film room was scary and nearly had me in tears for those despairing souls.*** *You live on in our thoughts"* (Culloden210).

*"Often overlooked is the battlefield walks conducted by park rangers…****These walks are great for a more in-depth understanding of events and bring home the fear and courage of all*** *those that were present in July 1863"* (Gettysburg29).

Although negative emotional experiences are dominant in dark tourism settings, positive emotional experiences exist also. The following section explores these positive emotional experiences.

Restoration

Positive emotional experiences include the escapism and renewal of individuals. It is the characteristics of battlefield settings and the well-managed natural environments that are essential for visitors' restorative qualities in the sense of being away from daily life. Visitors describe feeling peaceful and relaxed during their time at the battlefield.

"A nice place to walk and soak up the views. ***Nice to switch off for a while and enjoy the sounds of nature.*** *(Bosworth27)."*

*"...This area is so **incredibly peaceful and beautiful** that it is just astonishing to imagine all of the violence and chaos that happened there. But everything is so well put together at the park that you have all of the information you need to know about what happened right where you are standing each step along the way"* (Gettysburg210).

The tranquil and breathtaking moments that the visitors report describe the 'moment of escape' during their site visit. A restorative experience occurs from a harmonious matching of built heritage and natural beauty. The landscape and natural settings have been organised by well-maintained site management.

Interest

This type of emotional experience is connected to curiosity, novelty, wonder and the joyful aspects of the dark tourism experience. The reviews describe feelings of entertainment, thrill, and general happiness when visiting the sites. Moreover, visitors are curious about how the site offerings can make their experiences memorable. Furthermore, visitors expect to see particular things at a site. In this sense, interest generates a feeling of wanting to explore, become involved and extend the self by integrating new information. Exploration aims at increasing knowledge and experience of the target of interest.

*"**I was somewhat sceptical about whether we would get much out of our visit to the site of the Battle of Hastings - after all, you are essentially just paying to visit a few fields full of sheep** (fields which may not have actually been the ones in which the battle was fought), but English Heritage have done a fantastic job of bringing the Battle of Hastings to life…10 out of 10 for English Heritage for what they have done here. What would otherwise have been a few fields with sheep and a crumbling ruin **were transformed into a very entertaining morning's visit, which inspired and excited my 7-year-old**"* (Hastings28).

*"**I particularly wanted to find the spot where Harold died and was pleased to find** a commemorative stone marking the spot"* (Hastings29).

Mixed feelings

Visitors describe bittersweet feelings that seem to contrast (positive and negative emotions). The following examples suggest that the visitors felt sad, but this feeling is derived

from a positive moment, such as pride in their nation or gratitude to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives. This nationalism is not only a part of the country's heritage, but also the visitors' ancestry. Visitors describe a serene feeling during their time at the sites, while at the same time feeling sad and depressed.

> *"Such a feeling of **sadness and pride**. To know what happened on that beach, the lives lost as Americans helped the French fight for their freedom and the world's freedom. A very solemn place"* (Normandy26).

> *"Going on the beach and walking the shore brings so many emotions to mind. It is profound, powerful, and you cannot help but feel so much **sadness and at the same time, gratitude**"* (Normandy27).

The findings suggest that emotional experiences at dark sites can be categorised into three groups: negative, positive and mixed feelings. Negative emotions include anger, grief and fear. Positive emotions consist of happiness, restoration, interest, pride and gratitude. Bittersweet and overwhelming can be described as mixed feelings.

5.2.7 Paranormal Experiences

The final visitor experience described in the battlefield context is the paranormal experience. This experience is personal and cannot be explained rationally or scientifically (Bader et al., 2017). Visitors describe unusual encounters, such as lights, voices, smells or things going wrong with their cameras or photos. They report strange sensations or extrasensory perception during the site visit.

> *"Walking about the field, it felt like moments from the past would rear up and fade in my mind. Strangely, as we walked towards what would be soon known to me as 'The Well of the Dead,' **my senses felt corrupted, and I was hit by the putrid smell of dried blood**… But then, as we were walking past the clan gravesites and towards the Scots end of the field, **I heard some unintelligible distressed male warning shouts coming.** So naturally, I asked Hugh whether there were speakers placed strategically around the field for touristic effects. To my shock, there were no speakers at all"* (Culloden211).

> *"We explored the battlefield on the double-decker tour bus the first day we arrived… We also went and explored the battlefield at dusk. That was a wonderful time to go. It seemed less crowded, and the area was very beautiful. The stories about the camera's not working at Devils Den are true! **Both my digital camera and my video camera went haywire. Everything was***

blurry and out of focus. My daughters 35mm camera rewound itself in the middle of her roll of film*"* (Gettysburg211).

Although the main feature of this factor is an underlying interest in paranormal tourism, in dark tourism, there may be elements of paranormal experiences involved. The main idea is that paranormal experience comprises sensory elements and behavioural components to which visitors respond. Moreover, these components can contribute to the overall experience in different ways.

Dark experiences are multi-dimensional and can be very complicated. The variety and intensity of visitor experiences are subjective. The different dimensions of visitor experiences are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Summary of visitor experiences

Forms of Experience	Definition
1.Physical	The experience focuses on multiple senses. • Attending activities • Seeing artefacts • Being moved by the scenery
2.Cognitive	The mental process of knowing, including aspects of perception, reasoning, interpretation and judgement. • Obtaining new knowledge • Correcting understanding
3.Flow	A psychological state that occurs when people act with total involvement. • Immersion in activity • Altering the sense of time • Challenging activity and skill • Loss of self-consciousness
4.Relational	The experience associated with social interactions, companionship and connectedness among people. • Spending time with travel companions • Spending time with staff or other visitors

5.Introspective	The contemplation of visitors' thoughts and self-examination. • Imagining other times/places • Recalling past experiences • Reflecting on the meaning • Feeling a spiritual connection • Feeling a sense of connectedness
6.Emotional	The experience characterised by intense activity and a certain degree of pleasure or displeasure. • Positive feelings • Negative feelings • Mixed feelings
7.Paranormal	Beliefs, practices and experiences not recognised by science and not associated with mainstream religion.

5.2.8 Discussion

This study identifies visitor experiences and contributes to the empirical research on dark experience in dark tourism settings. The findings address the gap mentioned by Biran et al. (2011), Biran and Hyde (2013), Miles (2014) and Sharpley (2012). This gap means that dark tourism research has yet to engage fully with the experiences of tourists. Dark tourism destinations over the past century have become more widespread and varied, including graveyards, celebrity death sites, Holocaust sites and war-related sites. As a non-hedonic tourism context, dark tourism focuses on a range of commemorational, educational or emotional experiences (e.g. Biran et al., 2011; Dunkley et al., 2011; Isaac and Çakmak, 2014; Seaton, 1999). Dark conflict sites in this study context offer distinctive experiences; people visit battlefield sites for different purposes, from spiritual pilgrimage to secular tourism (Butler and Suntikul, 2013; Winter, 2011), and this form of tourism continues to grow in popularity (Iles, 2008).

As the tourist experience generally focuses on the consumption of pleasant diversions in pleasant places, the multifaceted model of visitor experience by Packer and Ballantyne (2016) is presented in terms of positive or enjoyable experiences. This study finds that tourist experiences are multi-dimensional, encapsulating both positive and negative responses. Thus, the multifaceted model of tourist experience can be applied in non-hedonic contexts also, although the notable experiences are different.

The physical experience relates to movement and action and using the senses to respond to the surroundings. Humans have five basic senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste). These physical senses provide the data for perception and play an essential role in visitor experience and product interaction (Dal Palù, De Giorgi and Lerma, 2018). The physical experience is influenced by the activities and events staged at particular sites. This experience is in line with Tussyadiah and Zach (2012), who suggest that this dimension of experience is characterised by sensation and physical activities. Schmitt's (1999) experiential marketing study suggests that cognitive consistency and sensory variety are the fundamental principles of sensory experience. Visitors know the different activities they can partake in and the displays they can see at a destination. They can see real artefacts, wear costumes, try replica weapons, watch video presentations, listen to sound stations, walk on the battlefield with GPS audio devices or smartphones, and smell the gunfire during a re-enactment. In other words, four of the five senses are found in dark tourism settings. In other words, tourists sensorily engage with the landscape, and it is the sensory experience of place in addition to the visual elements that create the physical experience.

The visitor in this next review describes sensing the feeling of war through the re-enactment activities that supplied memorable experiences. The event captured the visitor's attention and imagination, engaging the senses like never before.

> *"Both my husband and I have been visiting this battlefield for over 30 years!...We go to this re-enactment weekend every year and are NEVER disappointed.* ***The professionalism of the re-enactors and indeed the whole experience is tremendous****…It is a wonderful 2 day experience for anyone who loves Medieval History and Richard in particular…****I return enchanted-the sounds, the music, the clothes, the smell of the cannon fire, and the actual battle re-enactment will all remain with me until next year****. If you can please try to make it next year-you will not be disappointed"* (Bosworth28).

Considering the reviews, physical experiences are threefold: (1) dark tourism attractions are described as multisensory and manifested not only by visual predominance, but also by integrated touch, sound and smell; (2) the omnipresence of technology drives physical experience; and (3) physical activities assist cognitive and flow experience.

The mental processes of knowing characterise the cognitive experience. The primary purpose of a museum is often the education experience (Kaplan et al., 1993; Korn, 1992). In the same way, battlefields and visitor centres bring history and culture to visitors. Visitors actively

participate in the activities and the exhibits to obtain new knowledge and to enrich their understanding. This experience is enhanced through their intellectual ability and creativity. Cognitive experience is in line with the 'think' dimension in experiential marketing by Schmitt (1999) and the educational aspect in the experience economy by Pine II and Gilmore (1998).

Visitors write about obtaining new knowledge from guided walking tours at the sites. The physical experience influences the cognitive experience. Volo (2009) agrees with this correlation, explaining that the interpretation of sensation leads to the process of learning and transformation at the cognitive level. Physical experience occurs at the phenomenological level, then people perceive and interpret the incoming information, and the novelty of these perceptions drives the individual cognitive experience.

Flow experience, as developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 2008), is substantially used in a variety of settings, including work, leisure and sports (e.g. Araujó and Hein, 2016; Chen et al., 1999; Jackson and Marsh, 1996; Shernoff et al., 2003; Skadberg and Kimmel, 2004). This intrinsically enjoyable state can be recognised in the dark tourism context, and it strongly links to the physical, cognitive and positive emotional experiences. Visitors identified the dimensions of flow, including concentration on the task at hand (e.g. 'immerse myself into the minds of people who played important roles leading up to the battle'); transformation of time (e.g. 'day was over quickly'); challenge-skill balance (e.g. 'interesting things to do to keep attention', 'well thought out to engage children and adults alike'); and sense of control (e.g. 'completely believed that he had seen the battle'). The distinct components of flow in this context are concentration and transformation of time. These dimensions imply that the visitors consider flow to be an enjoyable experience. The result contradicts the flow experience in a sport context – concentration, control, and challenge-skill balance (Jackson and Marsh, 1996) – in which the enjoyment dimension is less central than other aspects because of the nature of sports performance.

In dark tourism settings, an individual's attention is a heightened arousal of sensory and cognitive curiosity, and the individual's interactions with the presented activity prove enjoyable. The experience is in line with the escapist in the four realms of experience economy (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998); visitors are the active participants who immerse themselves in the current activities. Flow experience is situationally evoked and attempts to ascertain the quality of the overall experiences. Experience consumption comprises a succession of intense but short moments

of immersion, frequently interrupted by less-intense activities (Carù and Cova, 2007). As such, this specific flow experience has become the foundation of the experiential approach in dark tourism marketing.

While visitors have reported individual experiences, many share with others, and in some cases, these relational experiences significantly impact their experiences. Visitors interact with their friends and family, the staff at sites and other visitors. Relational experiences also include seeing children learning new things. Pekarik et al. (1999), in their analysis of museum experiences, suggest that museum visitors undergo social experiences by spending time with other people or watching their children learn to satisfy themselves. Cheal and Griffin (2013) discuss tourist experience at Gallipoli, with visitors describing enjoyment and perceived value in the company of other people.

Other relational experiences are evident when visitors seek to connect with others by engaging in collective ceremonies of remembrance, battle re-enactment or commemorative practice, such as placing flowers to remember the dead. This form of experience reflects the sense of communitas, either at one-off or regular events, as asserted by Sharpley (2009); visitors consume dark tourism as a play. The death of an individual or group of people is the initial driver, and the collective experience and remembrance are the dominant factors (ibid). In other words, the aspect of togetherness influences visitors' willingness to be co-creators of experience. In another sense, the relational experience develops, through the secular pilgrimage, via social interaction and cohesion. Singh (2006) states that the function of traditional pilgrimage is to reinforce or reproduce social relations among participants. Interaction among visitors creates pleasure or, in some cases, rapidly bonds groups. The crowd contributes positively to the overall experience.

As presented in the findings, visitors can imagine how the battle happened and are reminded of previous battle sites they have visited. The journey of personal introspectiveness includes recalling childhood experiences, especially when they learnt the history of the battles or when they visited particular battlefield sites. This reflection is another form of the introspective experience. Visitors reflect the meaning of what they were looking at. Visitors look inward to examine their thoughts and emotions, either unintentionally via the triggering of images and settings, or intentionally from pilgrimage. In this sense, dark conflict site visits provide an

opportunity to contemplate the significance of death, the historical impact and life. Personal experiences and observations shape visitor introspection.

Feeling a sense of belonging or connectedness is linked to nationalism and pride. The findings clearly illustrate that visitors travel to sites associated with their family history, personal memory or heritage. In particular, those who view a place as a part of their past are likely to have more significant emotional experiences than others. The sense of belonging and connectedness is in line with the feeling of national pride of visitors at Norfolk Island (Best, 2007). According to the idea of ancestral tourism by Alexander et al. (2017), visitors have deeply personal experiences when attempting to discover more about their heritage. This notion is congruent with Poria et al.'s (2006) heritage tourism study. They suggest that there is great willingness to feel emotionally connected to heritage visitors perceive as their own. The more visitors regard a site as part of their heritage, the more they feel connected. In the five studied sites, Culloden Battlefield has a high level of recognition, particularly among those of the Scottish diaspora, because of the association with Bonnie Prince Charlie and his subsequent escape aided by Flora MacDonald. McLean et al.'s (2007) study at Culloden Battlefield found that the film *Braveheart* contributes to a Scottish image of defiance against the English, emphasising the sense of belongings and connectedness.

Dunkley et al.'s (2011) study at WW1 battlefield sites (Somme and Ypres) and Biran et al.'s (2011) study at Auschwitz-Birkenau consider personal connection/diaspora as a motivation to visit. Interestingly, connectedness and sense of belonging can be described as an experience as well as a motivation to visit a site. The following example emphasises this finding.

> *"If I'm honest* ***my main reason for going was due to the fact I'm a massive Outlander Fan*** *and if you are you won't be disappointed. But somehow that paled slightly once you get there as there was such a loss of life... for me, there was a strange and sad feeling, whispers of lives lost.* ***But I left feeling very proud to be Scottish****"* (Culloden212).

A sense of spiritual connection is evidenced in this study. This finding is in line with the museum visitor's experience that museum visitors go on a journey of personal introspection, which is activated by the exhibits and settings in a museum (Pekarik et al., 1999). Spiritual experience is one of the core elements of authenticity in religious pilgrimage (Andriotis, 2009). Previous research has suggested that people visit battlefields for commemoration, pilgrimage and remembrance (Cheal and Griffin, 2013; Dunkley et al., 2011). In this study, visitors describe the

connection with the sacred and transcendent and mention reverence to people who sacrificed their lives in wars, as well as to those who survived. Thus, dark conflict sites represent a characteristic of secular pilgrimage that guides deeply held values and meaningful experience. The spiritual characteristics of visitors feature strongly in their individual experiences.

Interestingly, the oppositional nature of relational and introspective experiences is recognised. Introspective experiences occur in inner space and are enhanced by a quiet environment, whereas relational experiences are triggered by activities and engagement with other people. One visitor reports the relational experience with a tour guide during his visit at Gettysburg National Military Park, with the guide customising the tour according to the background of the visitor. Furthermore, the history of the battle and the landscape allowed the visitor to imagine what happened and to evoke an introspective experience.

> *"Every American should visit this National Park site and hear the history, as our nation's fate was changed here in only three days…Our guide, Joe McK., was incredibly detailed and knowledgeable about every aspect of the battle. He brought with him a binder of strategic diagrams and old photos, and when we stopped, he would produce these, explain the situation, try to delve into the thoughts of the commanding officers to determine their decisions for what happened, and focus our attention on the battlefield expanse.* ***His guidance and narration allowed us to easily imagine what a foot soldier would have experienced, and what a general would wrestle with, for the entire tour. By the end, when he was describing Pickett's charge, I had to walk away with tears in my eyes.*** *Our guide was also very unbiased as to his opinions on the War Between the States. He presented both political views in fair and equal balance.* ***Finding out we were from Georgia; he spent about 5 minutes regarding facts specific to the Georgia regiment.*** *The battlefield itself covers a large expanse, and the hundreds of monuments are impressive.* ***This place is hallowed - it is not intended for anyone seeking fun or adventure. It deserves our respect****"* (Gettysburg212).

Since emotions play an essential role in how individuals deal with events and issues such as death and suffering (Ryan and Deci, 2001), emotional experience is one of the most remarkable dark experiences (Miles, 2002). Biran et al.'s (2011) study revealed that visitors are not only motivated by a desire for an educational experience, but also desire emotional experiences at dark sites. It is evident from the findings that the inclusion of positive, negative and mixed feelings adheres to the nature of dark tourism.

The findings also indicate the emotional experience of anger. Visitors feel angry and resentful about the way people were treated during wartime, including convict treatment,

punishments, losing battles, and the leader fleeing the country after the war. In Cheal and Griffin's (2013) study, visitors spoke of frustration at the costly mistakes and wrong decisions made during the Battle of Gallipoli. Weaver et al. (2017) also suggest that anger and hatred arise from a geopolitical perspective because visitors are spurred by a specific antagonist. Fear is another type of emotional experience found in this study. Visitors feel unease and discomfort when they watch a re-enactment battle video or hear sobering stories about what happened during the event. Drawing on Best's (2007) study at the convict site, fear is another emotion found at dark conflict sites. Grief and empathy are present, too. Visitors identified the feelings of regret and sorrow for those who suffered and died in the battles. They also described feeling moved when hearing survival stories or when they see monuments or gravestones. Similarly, Miles (2002 p.1176) claims that dark sites 'engender a degree of empathy between the sightseer and the past victim'.

Despite the prevalence of negative emotions, visitors indicated, to a relatively large extent, that positive emotions occur also. These positive feelings include enjoyment, excitement and surprise when visitors attend live presentations, games, craft workshops, exhibitions, activities and other events. Additionally, visitors also enjoyed the guided or self-trail walks.

Novelty and discovery when visiting and learning about the conflicts are evident in the reviews. Media influence on visitors to visit the filming locations at Culloden Battlefield (TV series – *Outlander*), Omaha Beach (film – *Saving Private Ryan*) and Gettysburg National Military Park (film – *Gettysburg*) is also apparent. Relating to the dark tourism perspective, the media is another way of marketing that can raise people's awareness of what had happened at those sites (Busby and Devereux, 2015). In this sense, the influence of (1) location where the film was shot, (2) the main characters and (3) the storyline of the film may explain vicarious experience in terms of novelty-seeking. Novelty and discovery in this context are also linked to the entertainment aspect of the experience. The emotion of discovery seems a profound feeling because visitors' aims – to be there and to see it – are fulfilled during visits.

From a general perspective of tourism, tourist experiences are associated with moving from mundane routine to exploring extraordinary activities. The findings demonstrate the aesthetic moment of the visitors, namely, restorative experience. Visitors are relaxed and peaceful when they walk around the battlefields. They are immersed in and moved by the beauty of nature – that is, physical experience. This finding is in line with Kaplan et al.'s (1993) argument that educational

sites also play a restorative role. Such sites create a sense of peace and calm, which allows visitors to recover their cognitive and emotional effectiveness. This aspect is also suggested in the 'Esthetic' dimension of the experience economy framework (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998).

In a hedonic tourism context, tourist experience is typically based on the consumption of pleasant diversions, and visitors are drawn to destinations because of the positive emotions such places elicit (Hosany et al., 2015; Mannell and Iso-ahola, 1987; Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Prayag et al., 2015). Furthermore, the evaluation is on positive experience and experience failure (e.g. Hosany el al., 2015; Nawijn, 2011). On the other hand, in the dark tourism context, the expected negative emotional experience could provide the motivation to visit and may have different meanings for different visitors (Nawijn et al., 2016); negative emotions are not necessarily interpreted as negative experiences. This feeling supports the viewpoint of Nawijn and Fricke (2015) that negative emotions can have positive outcomes in dark tourism settings. The following example portrays a positive evaluation from negative emotional experiences.

> *"Spent an afternoon visiting this historic site. Apart from rainy weather, the atmosphere was completely as I expected it to be:* ***sombre and sad! There is so much to see and do here: and an excellent area for children to explore and learn about the past as well as a great play area under the trees with lots of activities to keep them amused.*** *Even in the rain, there were plenty of kids enjoying this play area. We explored the grounds and ruins, and it really did bring it all to life. Well worth an afternoon of anyone's time!"* (Hastings210).

Furthermore, studies on emotions have traditionally distinguished between negative and positive emotions (e.g. Lin et al., 2014). The findings in this study also represent the combination of positive and negative emotions, such as haunted and beautiful, amazing but sad, scary but enjoyable, and sad but proud. These mixed feelings lead to positive emotional experiences. Additionally, this study further contributes to the consumption of negative impression, as proposed by Andrade and Cohen (2007). The authors suggest that the co-activation of positive and negative emotions exists when people choose to consume activities that offer negative feelings. Beyond positive and negative emotions, mixed feelings exist in dark tourism settings.

Although the paranormal experience is not very notable at the five sites in this study, it is a personal experience that does exist at sites of death. This unexplainable experience sometimes

occurs during a ghost tour or ritual. The findings suggest that visitors do not intentionally visit battlefields to experience paranormal activities; they accidentally encounter the experience and later recall it through storytelling. Paranormal activities are linked with a belief in ghosts, which dates from the early settlers to modern days (Thompson, 2010). Such activity is another form of alternative tourism (Gentry, 2007; Keller, 2010; Pharino et al., 2018). However, battlefield sites focus on history, not selling paranormal activities.

The findings portray individual experiences as multi-dimensional and interrelating. It is of paramount importance to understand visitor experience. In the following example, visitors to Gettysburg National Military Park report their onsite family experience:

> *"**Heart-Stopping***
>
> *We visited on the Fourth of July, an accident in terms of timing, but we had hoped to get to this spot during some point during **our family vacation**, and it was just marvellous. **Both our seventh and ninth graders have studied World War II history, but this is just an altogether different experience... very personal, very meaningful** ...Leave at least a half-hour for the memorial before you head out to the cemetery. **It gives you a wonderful perspective**. And if it all possible, take an English speaking tour (which is free) of the cemetery itself. **Our tour guide was warm and approachable and very knowledgeable, and it made for a wonderful overview of the battles and the memorial and the cemetery. When they played our national anthem and taps, I definitely had a good cry, so prepare yourself for a [rightfully] emotional journey**"* (Gettsburg213).

This review illustrates the relational experience since this trip was a family vacation. The parents took their children to learn the history of the battle. As such, cognitive experience occurred during their guided tour and learning from the exhibitions. The visitors emphasise that classroom learning is very different from seeing the actual site with their own eyes. This visit was an extraordinary experience for them. This memorable visit was a meaningful and lifetime experience. Introspective experience in terms of a sense of belonging and connectedness happened while listening to the national anthem. National pride, an emotional experience, was aroused. The content and intensity of such experiences vary, but they all have individual and collective experiences. Visitor experiences are inherently personal, subjective and multifarious.

A consumption experience includes a series of activities – preconsumption, purchasing experience, core consumption and remembered consumption experience, which influences individuals' decisions and actions (Carù and Cova, 2007). Visitors review experiences by reading TripAdvisor to obtain information and instructions from other visitors (pre-purchasing experience), choosing options at destination (purchasing experience), attending onsite activities and exhibitions (core experience), and evaluating their visit and offering advice to prospective visitors (remembered experience). For example:

> *"**First want to thank so many TripAdvisor reviewers who suggested starting at the Visitor's Center and paying the $12.50 adult admission fee** for the 20-30 minute Morgan Freedman orated short video about the battle and the breathe-taking 360 degree almost life side Cinerama painting of the battle scene brought to life with more narration and the small museum with rifles and artifacts from the battle. **As for viewing the actual battlefield sight so many had suggested the Parks ranger-led 2 ($65) or 3 ($90) hour your car driven guided tour that was our 1st choice...A third choice is a ranger-led bus tour**…**We chose the $29.99 3 CD The Gettysburg Story Battlefield Auto Tour** since this package offered three audio options - 3 hour, 2.5 hour and 2 hour narrated audio. **We were on a tight timeframe, so the 2-hour option was best for us**…I highly recommend **out of the car picture and viewing stops.** However, your Gettysburg visit will easily move from 2 hours to 4 hours or more hours with this addition.*
>
> ***Hope I have the opportunity to return since a full day at the sight with the audio CD's would provide far more appreciation for all** that is available at the many miles that the battlefield locations and monuments covered. Visited in April and the countryside is just breath-taking. Driving was a very easy highway hour and 20 minutes from Silver Spring, MD, just north of Washington D.C"* (Gettysburg214).

Instead of emphasising the experience staging, the emphasis in this section is on how the visitors experienced dark sites. The integration of experience offerings and visitor experiences spreads over time. Experiential processes manifest multisensory, imaginary and emotive aspects. Visitors do not consume the products or services at the destination, but they interpret and consume the images and meanings from those products and services. Typically, visitors are relatively passive; they engage in experiences staged by the destination providers. In other cases, visitors are relatively active; they can immerse themselves in their experiences. This suggests a shift in the

visitor position from observer to actor in dark experiences, and staging appears to enact them in this process.

Every dark tourism destination is thematically predetermined by a historical event, and visitor experiences vary. What is evident from this study is that battlefield tourism is distinctive from other types of dark tourism. Introspective experiences occur, especially when visitors have a personal or national connection to the site. Particular examples of the spiritual connection, the search for the meaning and remembrance are influential in this context. A sense of secular pilgrimage, curiosity about which stems from the media and films, is recognised in this study. Of particular importance of the finding is that dark experiences do not only come from the representation of death; the experiences are also derived from the site settings, the engagement among visitors and self-reflection. Consumption of experience includes the outcomes that consumers evaluate and relive by writing online reviews. The next section explores the experience outcomes.

5.3 Experience Outcomes

Crafting the experience outcome is the ultimate aim for destination providers to differentiate their experience (Nieters and Gabriel-Petit, 2015). After the core consumption process, the value created is both enabled and judged by visitors throughout the consumption experience. In this section, the experience outcomes deductively derive from the service and tourism literature, forming three forms of outcomes, namely *evaluation*, *recollection* and *consequentiality*. Each sub-category of outcomes is also represented.

5.3.1 Evaluation

Visitors make a judgement by determining the worth and effectiveness of their visits, utilising personal cognitive and emotional impressions (Dong and Siu, 2013). The evaluation is based on their previous visits or earlier experiences at other sites. Visitors evaluate the site quality regarding both functional (e.g. exhibits and displays, guided tours) quality and site settings (e.g. the atmosphere of the site).

Visitors judge by determining the worth and effectiveness of their visits. In their reviews, evaluation relates to the comparisons with previous experiences (e.g. from other battlefield sites

or heritage museums), satisfaction levels, the recommendation to other visitors, advising other visitors and sites. For example,

> ***"Excellent Battlefield Site***
>
> *We really enjoyed the visit to the Culloden Battlefield Site to learn about the history of the Jacobite uprising. Much money has been invested in the site to make* ***history come to life with lots of informative exhibits, models and interactive displays. The facilities provided are first class. We then took one of the guided tours of the Battlefield sites, and this really brought the experience home. A great site to visit and strongly recommend****"* (Culloden31).
>
> ***"Well worth the entrance fee***
>
> *We visited this museum following a visit to the beach itself. We were very* ***impressed with the number of exhibits*** *they had. The short film presentation was well worth sitting through.* ***An enjoyable visit which was a much better value, I feel, than another museum we visited later the same day****"* (Normandy31).
>
> *"History all around you*
>
> ***The center had all the information you could want*** *on the battle and what led up to it, during it and after. Walking the grounds was awe-inspiring.* ***I have not felt like that since walking through Gettysburg battlefield****. You felt like history was brushing past you in every direction"* (Culloden32).

The findings guide the relevant aspects that affect visitors' evaluation processes. First, 'ease of use' refers to how visitors engage with the destinations – actively or passively. The phrase suggests identifying the ease of understanding of the activities and exhibits, the navigation at the site, the reliability and responsiveness of interactive displays and other technological embedded facilities. Second, evaluation comprises '*presentation performance*'. Visitors want visual appeal in terms of the aesthetics of the design. Emotional appeal affects the intensity of engagement that goes beyond the functional aspect. Finally, the *'assurance and communication'* dimension concerns the knowledge and courtesy of staff with the willingness to help visitors in time and with confidence.

Evaluation implies the experience economy in which consumers readily exchange their resources (such as time, money and psychological safety) for experiences that yield cherished memories (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998). In this sense, the destination offers the experience to charge admission. Hence, *evaluation* can be defined as an appraisal of the experience value of the trip reflected from individual's expectation and earlier experiences (Aho, 2001). Evaluation can consist

of comparison, satisfaction, recommendation and advice. Its essence lies in both emotional reactions and utilitarian functions in three forms – ease of use, presentation performance, and assurance and communication.

5.3.2 Recollection

The formation of experiences is complex, and the on-the-spot evaluations may change over time (Aho, 2001). Visitors try to recollect their experiences and find ways to make their experiences concrete and memorable. Recollection refers to the efforts and actions made by individuals to remember the tourism experiences and reflect on their trips (Tung and Ritchie, 2011).

Visitors mention that they collect objects, take photos, record videos and buy souvenirs from the sites. Physical objects are the most common form of '*experience storing'*. Visitors try to make their experiences more tangible and bring those experiences into their real lives. The first example, below, tells of how the visitor recollects the experience by collecting sand from the beach where the D-Day Landings occurred. It is a vivid way of remembering because dark tourism destinations can remind visitors of their mortality. Collecting the sand acts as a 'memento mori' – remembering that we all will die (Walter, 2009).

> *"**Touch the Sand!** Knowing What Happened Here Will Change You Forever*
>
> *We arrived in the morning at low tide. There were fluffy white clouds over the Channel…At low tide you could see the enormous distance the American troops had to navigate just to get to the grassy area in front of the beach…These troops were sitting ducks. Of all the beaches in the invasion on D-Day, Omaha was the bloodiest. A great loss of lives and equipment…Tremendous loss of life and casualties just to get off the beach and then heavily covered hills with few areas through before they could get to anything that resembled cover. And, yet they did break through and ultimately begin to chase the Germans out of France.* ***This is one of those places that will remain with you long after your visit. I brought some sand home as a fitting memento - far better than something from one of the tourist shops****"* (Normandy32).

In the second example, visitors intensify their experiences by buying souvenirs from Gettysburg. During the American Civil War, 'Yankee' was a term used by Southerners to describe their rivals from the Union (Evers, 2012). Visitors render this experience through onsite purchasing.

"This was a trip planned for 2016 but made it in 2017. The center was cool we really enjoyed the museum & film. ***The store had some nice items for sale & my 12 yr old son bought a hat worn by the Yankees.*** *They say this should be your first stop & we agree. The ladies were so nice & friendly and very knowledgeable and helpful. Glad we stopped here first"* (Gettysburg31).

Another example of physical storing is photography. Interpretation and the visual record hold pivotal places in dark tourism as evidence of activity and visitation (Lennon, 2018). In this technological world, photography or other visual options incorporate self-identity and individuals' interests, which are uploaded to social media or other internet platforms. The photograph captures the experience, and the camera is the tool for constructing collective memory.

"The excellent facilities at the centre and the information around the park about the Battle help bring this pivotal moment in British history to life. The site is dog, child and adult friendly and ***there is plenty of opportunity for interactive learning - this 60 (going on 6) year-old tried on all the helmets and armour which was brilliant and made some great photos for Facebook.*** *We went as a couple and took a guided walk which for the slightly more serious history buff is a great way to put the site and the significance into context. All the staff were extremely friendly... A perfect day out" (Bosworth31).*

The storing process can be personal in one's mind and is triggered by social interaction, such as attending a guided tour or physical objects and ambience. The impression or affections of a visit are stored more abstractly, resulting from cognitive and emotional experiences.

"We had a private guide who took the time to research some Texas soldiers for us (since we're from Texas). It was a great touch (Jeff Wolf - guide). ***He explained the battle from both sides, and it really created a great visual that I will remember for a long time****"* (Gettysburg32).

*"This museum looked small from the outside, but inside it was packed to the brim with very interesting items and stories that added to our building knowledge of this important historical area...****I bought a container from the onsite shop, which I filled with sand from Omaha Beach to keep as a reminder of one of the most important areas of modern world history****"* (Normandy33).

Following the experience intensification, the storing process leads to '*experience sharing'*. Reflecting on a trip includes storytelling, both online and offline. In the following example, the

visitors store their experiences by capturing photos and recording a video, and then share these with their family and friends. This is the process of experience extension.

> *"A lovely place to spend a day with the family. I really enjoyed the history here; if you love history you will love this place…**I made a little video on my YouTube channel of our day**"* (Hastings31).

> *"We had two WWII veterans along with us who related their first-hand experiences on that day. In all my years of study, there was no comparison to actually being there and seeing it first-hand. **I took many still pictures and videos of our trip and actually put together a travelog video (about 84 minutes long) which I shared with family and friends when we returned**. They enjoyed the video so much that they convinced me to list it on eBay for sale--which I have done"* (Normandy34).

Visitors also share their experiences by writing online reviews and attaching personal photos. The following example is a screenshot from TripAdvisor (also see Appendix A: TripAdvisor Review Examplesto illustrate that recollection of experience embeds both intensification (via photos) and extension (via online review).

Great activity venue...not to mention the history

Review of **Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park**

●●●●● Reviewed 23 July 2017 *(Bosworth32)*

My 9 year old daughter visited on a Sunday when they were holding a "fight like a knight" children's activity day.

Tickets for the two of us came to just under 20 pounds altogether including the activity.

First a visit to the small but well appointed display and museum - which has been updated to show the results of the recent studies to better locate the actual battlefield and the position of the three armies; it's been located some 3km further to the south west of the visitor centre and it's possible to take a guided walk to the new location.

There's a decent cafe on the site which looked like it served up a decent reasonably priced breakfast and their coffee was good and strong.

My daughter loved the knight activities, she got to shoot a bow, crossbow, ballista and dress up in period costume and try on armour.

There was also a short demonstration and display by Hawkwise Falconry where we saw a Buzzard and a Harris Hawk.

Great value day out!

Date of experience: July 2017

Visitors draw conclusions about *future actions* after they have evaluated their visit. The re-experience intention reflects the recollection of the experience (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Visitors mention their revisit experience plans, which relate to the experience of similar sites under the same destination providers. Simply put, re-experience plan implies the value embedded in the experience that results in visitor loyalty. For instance:

> *"Quick unplanned trip*
>
> *What an incredible experience on a 45-50 degree overcast December day.* ***We can't wait to take our kids back in the warmer months.*** *We stopped at the beautiful official visitor center/museum. Because we only had 3-4 hours, we bought the $21.99 self-guided audio tour in the gift shop which was perfect, and the trip would have been as good without it. It takes you to all the stops and gives a telling history of literally everything you see…* ***Will definitely be back and do what***

I saw others recommend *- spend 2 Days to explore, at least. A 1/2 day in the museum and a day and a half at the battlefields.* ***We are bringing our bikes next time and packing a picnic****"* (Gettysburg33).

"Amazing place with lots of history and well set out to keep adults and kids happy

Amazing place with lots of history and well set out to keep adults and kids happy, i love historic places and wasn't disappointed at all. ***I bought an English Heritage pass after I finished visiting as I had enjoyed it so much and the staff were really helpful and gave me my money back not just for that day entry but the car park too****"* (Hastings32).

Recollection, therefore, is defined as 'the efforts and actions made by individuals to remember the tourism experiences and reflect on their trips' (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Recollection is the mean of experience intensification and extension. The characteristics of recollection include storing, sharing and future intention.

5.3.3 Consequentiality

Visitors also consider their tourism experiences as an inner journey of self-development, self-renewal and meaningfulness rather than the mere consuming of physical, cognitive and emotional aspects. A visit to a site is a revelatory life experience, suggesting personally perceived importance regarding the outcomes of the trip. The consequentiality of the journey represents the acquisition of new knowledge and self-discovery, which may permanently change one's thinking about the war and battle. For instance:

"Totally awesome

This tour is totally awesome. I would recommend this to anyone who visits the area. It was so informative and ***really changed my perspective on the war****"* (Gettysburg34).

"Atmosphere and History in One Place

Having visited before the new visitor centre was built and again recently I can vouch for the excellent quality of this new centre… For adults and older children, there is so much to learn and understand here about the history of the nations of the world and ***it is a place to reflect on motives, the value of life and the need for understanding different viewpoints, especially***

different religious viewpoints. This is very relevant to our lives today. *An outstanding monument and* ***a place for thought****"* (Culloden33).

"Do the tour

We booked for a guided tour, with Eddie as our guide. Absolutely brilliant. I learned so much about barber-surgeons, weapons and local history, to mention but a few. It's a lovely walk around the site, with informative stopping points along the route, but our guide was funny and clearly loves his job and the period. It was great to be able to examine replicas of the weapons and armour of the time. ***I also came away with a wealth of ideas for future visits and reading.*** *Thank you"* (Bosworth33).

The consequentiality process may not arise immediately following a visit; visitors contemplate and realise the noteworthiness after some time. Consequentiality implies the crystallisation of thought. The meaningfulness of experience combines with the sharing on social media to clarify thoughts. Thus, it provides structure and presents the world in tangible and/or intangible ways. In this context, deeply personal experiences mark the integration of individual and social concerns with moral instruction and the future of humankind. The significance of others' deaths in the past mediates the modern morality of individuals. For example:

"Pivotal Time in Scottish History

I am not Scottish but I love the Highlands. ***I did not appreciate the significance of this historic site until I returned to the United States.*** *So, yes, I binged watched Outlander. I am very sad that the Clans lost.* ***Throughout my travels in Scotland I didn't understand the mocking of the English, now I know. Like Gettysburg, historic battlefields preserve our human history. Thank you****"* (Culloden34).

"Lest we forget

Seems like a long time ago. ***Hope the world will never see another world war ever again. Be at peace and enjoy life.*** *Only get to live once"* (Normandy35).

"Something to be Remembered

I am definitely not someone who is interested in man's inhumanity to man historical sites, but this one did touch my heart to see so few men trying to support what they truly believed in but

knowing they had little or no chance of accomplishing their goals. ***If only people would look at the past before trying to fight in the future****"* (Culloden35).

Consequentiality can be defined as 'the perceived importance from the trip, representing the individual mean-making and self-discovery, which may not disappear and permanently change the view of thinking about the topic' (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Consequentiality suggests critical or higher-order thinking that goes beyond cognitive understanding. It is self-knowledge crystallised from the acquisition of knowledge. Self-renewal is the rediscovery of some sense of meaningful control over life. Outcomes have the potential to improve core experiences, as presented in the previous section, and thereby generate meaningful views in the visitors' minds and, thus, are a vital determinant of the experience quality of destination providers.

5.3.4 Discussion

Consumers desire to consume emotional experiences that produce negative emotional feelings (Andrade & Cohen, 2007); however, little is known about the consequences of these experiences (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015; Bigné et al., 2005). This study responds to this gap by identifying three dimensions of dark experience outcomes informed by visitor experiences.

Since individuals exchange their resources for their experiences, they appraise the value of their visits. Value stems from the evaluation and re-evaluation of experience (Akaka et al., 2015). The findings indicate that the evaluation process includes comparison, satisfaction and recommendation. Visitors compare their preconceptions and expectations by utilising cognitive and emotional impressions. Satisfaction is based whether one perceives receiving value for personal resources, such as time and effort. Tourism is one of the most time-intensive activities; time is an influential factor regarding an individual's satisfaction with an experience (Ateca-Amestoy et al., 2008). Ease of use, presentation performance, and assurance and communication are, therefore, the criteria for evaluating experiences.

Ease of use is the degree of an individual's belief that using a product and/or service would be free from any difficulty (Ahmad and Khan, 2017). This concept is generally used to measure a website's quality regarding online travel and hospitality services (e.g. travel agent, hotel booking). In the dark tourism context, ease of use starts with finding information from a destination website,

access to the site, navigation throughout the site, and the ease of understanding of the exhibits and activities. The reliability and responsiveness of the interactive display lead to information quality.

Presentation performance reflects the edutainment aspect of the evaluation and visitor satisfaction. It is the innovativeness and creativity of the experience offerings that extend beyond the utilitarian aspect of the destination. This concept includes emotional and visual appeal. Assurance and communication, on the other hand, relate to the customer service of site staff – responsiveness, assurance and empathy – and correspond to the dimension of the SERQUAL model (Berry et al., 1988) that captures consumer expectations and perceptions.

Since experience is subjective and multi-dimensional, outcomes change. The findings indicate that positive satisfaction results in revisits to a destination. Revisits imply that the same destination offers abundant experiences that are the subject of personal interests. Thus, the possibility of revisiting increases.

> *"**Been there numerous times, learn something new each trip!***
>
> *I have visited Gettysburg probably at least 20 times in my life. We've been going every 2 or 3 years (only a 2-hour drive from home), and **we try to do different things each trip. I believe that every time we go, we learn something new about the Civil War and the Battle at Gettysburg in particular**. Take advantage of the free Ranger talks and hikes! "* (Gettysburg35).

Experience outcomes are based on the theme, rather than the characteristic, of dark sites. The experience creates a decision about future intentions to visit the same or similar sites connecting to the current visit. The visitor review, below, mentions that visiting sites related to the Battle of Bosworth Field can complement the battlefield visit.

> *"We had a super day out at Bosworth Battlefield…The Visitors Centre was excellent. While being fun and child friendly, it was not dumped down. It was very informative for adults and made sense of a very complicated period of British history. The Battlefield walk was very enjoyable and would be a good run round for children. Dry underfoot on wet days. **Good idea to visit Bosworth before the Richard III museum and cathedral in Leicester. It all fits into place better**"* (Bosworth34).

Experiences and their meanings change over time. Hence, individuals recollect and reflect on their trips through the storing process. Storing can be tangible or intangible. How dark tourism appeals to us affects how we perceive it. Collecting objects, purchasing souvenirs, taking photos or recording videos are the most common forms of intensifying experience, which is a mean of bringing the experience into real life.

The findings indicate the three roles of souvenirs: as gifts for others, as memory aids and as evidence of a trip. Supporting Gordon's (1986) view, souvenirs bring the extraordinary experience back into the ordinary experience. Photography and videography reflect the self-identity and individual's interest and are the means of constructing collective memory. Lennon (2018) claims that photography in dark tourism is an infinite extension of possible meanings. The importance of visual storing is to intensify the experience of the photographer and to transmit this to the viewers. Photography is a visual authentication of the trip, as suggested by Hillman (2007). All these views are in line with the proposition that intensifying experience is an essential post-experience behaviour in the hedonic context (e.g. Dong and Siu, 2013; Pan et al., 2014).

Experience can be recollected through experience sharing, either online via social media or through face-to-face storytelling. This extension of experience may influence the expectations of those who may be in the planning stage (Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Wang et al., 2012). This is what online reviews are used for: experience sharing. Tourists are not passive consumers but information creators and distributors. The experience extension combines with experience intensification through capturing photos or videos. The findings indicate that visitors generally capture the landscape of the battlefield, the exhibits or the activities they attend. Social networking sites and online travel communities represent a new medium of communication, leading to the creation of meaningful tourist experiences (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017).

This study provides empirical support for a greater understanding of visitor outcomes. Visitors realise the immensity of war, the bravery of people and the consequences of war. Thus, visiting battlefields may transform people's thoughts and attitudes, as well as inspiring a new way of life. The process of transformation may take time. The study of Australian visitors at Gallipoli by Cheal and Griffin (2013) found that transformation is a more profound form of experience outcome that encompasses a sense of importance, meaningfulness and fulfilment. Aho (2001) suggests that one of the core contents of touristic experiences is transformation. Visitors may

permanently change their state of mind or way of life. This study found that visitors have a greater respect for and appreciation of life following an experience, supporting the concept model of memorable experience by Tung and Ritchie (2011), which claims that consequentiality emotionally affects people's way of life and acts as a catalyst for change and a transformation in beliefs. In other words, consequentiality is a sense of great significance or value.

Another point to highlight that contrasts with hedonic tourism is the extent of meaningfulness. In the dark tourism context, the meaningfulness of the experience may not arise from the enjoyment of escaping mundane life through a leisure day out. In this respect, meaningfulness is drawn from the consumption of negative feelings, although it leaves the visitor feeling renewed rather than morose. This factor emphasises that positive experience outcomes can be developed from negative emotional experiences.

Although self-renewal is generally discussed in volunteer, backpacking, culinary or religious tourism (e.g. Kirillova et al., 2017; Noy, 2004), holiday experiences possess similar power (e.g. Sthapit and Coudounaris, 2018). In this study, physical evidence combined with retrospection is important for self-renewal and life experience. Consistent with the study by Arnould and Price (1993), personal growth and new skills are derived from the engagement with the guides and the activities individuals perform. The consequentiality is the extent of the feeling of enjoyment developed from escaping daily life together with the benefits of sharing such moments with companions. However, in this study, consequentiality highlights the self-moment of individuals contemplating others' deaths. Reflection on the value of life is triggered by the landscape and the interpretation of history. For instance:

> *"Compelling*
>
> ***Only standing looking at this windswept beach could I even begin to appreciate what those young heroes*** *had to face on June 6, 1944. They landed at low tide, so the distance they had to try to cover was incredible and they had to carry an 80 lb pack. Many drowned because of the weight of that pack.* ***There is a Monument for the Army and one for the 101st Airborne who parachuted in 30 km inland****. The Germans were securely settled in waiting to defend "their" territory, and so very many of the Greatest Generation faced those guns, willing to make the ultimate sacrifice so that others could live free.* ***The residents of the area have not forgotten, and we should not either. I brought back a renewed feeling of respect and gratitude for the courage and sacrifices made so that I could live free. Thank you for your service and your sacrifice****"* (Normandy36).

Meaningfulness and self-renewal experience outcomes suggest higher-order visitor effects. Consequentiality is similar to Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives: higher-order thinking requires understanding and applying that knowledge (Bloom and Krathwohl, 1956). Bloom's taxonomy is applicable in this study because it is the basis for determining specific meaning in a particular topic. The approach facilitates a mean for determining the congruence of the objectives to assess the outcomes of the visitor experience.

This introspective process of articulating criteria constitutes a large part of meaning-making for individuals in a dark tourism context. In this sense, the outcome of the experience is not only the remembering and understanding of the history of the event, but also constructing the meaning differently by combining elements in a profound pattern. Visiting a dark site can transform people's thoughts, attitudes and state of mind, or it can inspire a new way of life because it reflects a sense of importance, meaningfulness and fulfilment. These experiences are memorable and portray most of the unique characteristics of dark tourism.

While the experiences from the five sites are performed differently, both in the ways they are staged and how visitors experience them, this next section returns to the question of the outcomes of dark tourism consumption and asks whether and how outcomes of dark tourism are relevant for the analysis of dark tourism. Visitors evaluate the value of a trip via the consumption experience; they store the experiences, reflect on their trip and relive their experiences. The significance of memorable experience comprises meaningfulness and self-renewal.

5.4 Factors Influencing Dark Experiences

According to Stone's (2006) dark tourism spectrum, dark tourism destinations may offer experiences ranging from 'darkest' to 'lightest', depending upon the site features. This section outlines the criteria that moderate dark tourism consumption and delivery according to the voices of the visitors. Based upon the temporal dimension and spatial dimension, the findings provide two parameters, namely, *location authenticity* and *temporality*.

5.4.1 Location Authenticity

The five chosen sites in this study link to location authenticity. The findings indicate that visiting these sites impacts visitor experiences differently. The site is the real location where the

battle happened, supported by the excavation of battle objects. Visitors feel a sense of being at the place and see authentic objects, which strengthen their experiences. In the following review, the visitor questions the authenticity of the location because the battle occurred hundreds of years ago and the visitor wants to see physical evidence.

> *"It's a bit odd thinking all your doing is walking around a field, but* ***there is no evidence to suggest either for sure so I can't say with 100% accuracy it didn't happen here!!*** *"* (Hastings41).

Similarly, the findings indicate that the actual location of the battle intensifies visitor experiences. Visitor reviews mention emotional and introspective experiences while visiting Culloden Battlefield, even though the battle took place in the 18th century. In another example, location authenticity implies the uniqueness of a particular sight at the destinations, with each offering their history and the reasons behind the battle tactics employed.

> *"We visited on a bleak, wintry day akin to that on which the battle took place, which made the experience all the* ***more moving as you could really put yourself in the shoes of the thousands of men drawn up on the moor in 1746****…We were there not long before the centre was closing so the* ***battlefield was almost empty and this made it very atmospheric****.....although the pathways are a boon,* ***there is enough of the original boggy moor left for you to understand the doomed efforts of the clansmen*** *as they charged the lines of government troops.* ***The low humps of the burial mounds around the Victorian monument are very sobering****"* (Culloden41).

> *"This crucial battlefield of the Civil War challenges one to see and feel the flow of the many distinct encounters.* ***The Round Tops, Devil's Den, and the field of Pickett's Charge are each unique and offer perspectives of the types of fighting and desperation of same****. An audio tour for your car as well as the location markers make this high stakes battle more understandable. The park also has hundreds of unit markers and tablets which enable one to survey the states involved. There is no "quick tour" of this field. And the lessons learned here are important in this day"* (Gettysburg41).

Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre & Country Park states that the visitor centre is built where it was initially thought the Battle of Bosworth was fought. However, the recent study of original documents and an archaeological survey of the area found the real battle location to be more than a mile to the south-west. The following review illustrates that visitors want to be at the

real site where the battle occurred; the discovery of the new battle location weakens visitor experiences.

> *"I usually dread visiting places like this - I feel like I'm on a school trip and might have to write about it afterwards, and I really don't like standing about reading loads of boring history stuff. Having said that I really enjoyed my day at Bosworth…* ***The only disappointing thing is the fact that recent research has shown the battlefield to be a few miles away!*** *"* (Bosworth41).

Location authenticity is one of the key features of dark tourism destinations. The spatial location, rather than the reconstructive content, has been a matter of ambivalence at some dark conflict sites. Visitors search for the authenticity of the site that they consider to be preserved rather than reconstructed.

5.4.2 Dark Tourism and Temporality

The five study sites were chosen to explore the aspect of temporality (Battle of Hastings – 1066, Battle of Bosworth – 1485, Battle of Culloden – 1746, Battle of Gettysburg – 1863, and Battle of Normandy – 1944) on dark experience consumption. The recent nature of an event makes people refer to their own memories; but other visitors mention in their reviews that distant history affects their experiences. The following examples imply that visitors do not completely understand the battles since they happened hundreds of years ago, and the landscapes of the battlefields are now empty fields.

> *"Had a walk around the whole of the battle site using the audio. It was a leisurely stroll took about 40 mins* ***a bit hard to imagine now as 900+years of growth.*** *New visitor centre had lots of information and the café served a nice cup of tea. Good place to take children when they start studying history"* (Hastings42).

> *"****There is not much to see as the battlefield is now 500+years old and beneath fields.*** *However, the visitor centre is with visiting to see where history was made"* (Bosworth42).

The findings suggest that the older the event, the less authentic the experience. However, visitors mention that visitor centre exhibitions make their experience come alive through the staging of experience. The sites connect the past with the present and choreograph the history into understandable stories. The role of the destination provider as an interpretative centre can

strengthen visitor experiences by creating multiple experience platforms to facilitate experience creation.

Chronological distance in terms of changes to a site also influences visitor experiences. The following example illustrates that the development of a site diminishes experiences, which leads to a disappointing outcome, despite the site being the actual location of the battle.

> *"I've basically been waiting to see Omaha Beach since I took an interest in WWII history.* ***The vast majority of it is now a resort town.*** *It's no doubt an eerie place to be. It was surreal seeing my daughter run and play on the same beaches that so many gave their lives.* ***That being said, the resort town feels really took away some of the weight of the moment for me****.* ***Maybe my expectations were too high, but I walked away disappointed, especially compared to Pointe du hoc, the American Cemetery and Utah Beach****.* ***There's nothing wrong per se but I really wanted to be transported to what the beach was like in 1944, and I just couldn't get that****"* (Normandy41).

However, this is not a case in another review from the same location (Omaha Beach, Battle of Normandy). The visitor was moved by the beauty of the beach (physical experience) where the D-Day Landing occurred. The distant past did not affect this visitor's experience because he could imagine (introspective experience) what the Allied forces encountered at this beach, which made his moment even more profound and emotional (emotional experience). That the beach has changed was not important; the experience of simply being at Omaha Beach was much more critical. This individual experience reinforces the meaningful outcomes for him (recollection and consequentiality).

> *"The beach is surprisingly beautiful, it's quiet there, and* ***you can almost imagine the gunfire, the screams.*** *I became* ***quite emotional just imagining all the dead and dying*** *brave men on the beach, the water streaked with blood.* ***It is an experience rather than just a place to visit. Never forget****"* (Normandy42).

Temporality influences visitor experience. The distant past, with the aid of site offerings, results in the change of the site and the creation of interpretative centres as an experience platform development.

5.4.3 Discussion

Based upon the temporal and spatial dimensions, timescale to the event and location authenticity influence dark experience consumption. The findings indicate that location authenticity affects visitor experiences. For Bosworth, visitors wrote that they would have more intense experiences if the site had been the actual location where the battle occurred. People tend to perceive as authentic that which retains some original features (Gilmore and Pine II, 2007). In the tourism context, artefacts and settings are the tangible focus. Tourists quest for uniqueness and cultural and historical integrity, as well as aesthetics and function (Halewood and Hannam, 2001). There is a consensus that the search for object authenticity in tourism is mainly museum orientated or involves heritage destinations (e.g. Andriotis, 2011; Halewood and Hannam, 2001; Reisinger and Steiner, 2006). According to this school of thought, the actual location of the site can be recognised like a label, which is often placed on goods to make them seem more authentic and to differentiate them from competitors, helping to make explicit the assurance that the tourism product is authentic. This finding coincides with the study of Miles (2002), which claims that the site of death evokes more emotions through location.

Commodification is said to destroy the originality or authenticity of the destination (Cohen, 1988). It alienates and disassociates a site from its original meaning. Wang (1999) argues that tourism involves existential authenticity rather than object authenticity. In this study, visitors mention that the location of the actual site does not impact their visit experiences; rather, the activities and exhibitions at the site offer intense experiences. The destination appears to be authentic not because it is inherently authentic, but because it is constructed personally and subjectively (ibid). Visitors feel authentic, not because they are at the actual location but because they are engaging in non-ordinary activities offered by the destination. Authenticity is activity-related instead of object-related in tourism.

The findings also indicate that timescale from the events affects dark experience consumption. The results help us to understand that the distant past deteriorates the intensity of the experience. This finding broadly follows previous studies. Lennon and Foley (2000) suggest that the recency of the event makes people's memories feel more alive. Miles (2002) also underscores the significance of the distinction between dark and darker tourism being subject to chronological distance. The author suggests that dark tourism sites 'must convert the memorial thing into a live

memory' (Miles, 2002 p.1176). Thus, the time that has passed since the event took place is one of the challenges for dark sites when the event is in the distant past. Furthermore, in Stone's (2006) conceptual framework entitled 'a dark tourism spectrum', in which the author suggests that the timescale to the event can explain the extent of darkness, sites with shorter timescales to the event are conceivably darker than those with longer timescales. However, the findings of this study do not support previous empirical research by Bittner (2011), who points out that visitors pay more attention to the more distant past destinations, providing them with more intense experiences. The explanation for this result is that individuals have more details and know more about recent events than long-distant events not of their time. As such, more attention is paid to the longer timescale of the event.

The findings reveal that the experience staging elements, forms of visitor experience and the outcomes with influential factors can reinforce or diminish dark experience consumption. According to the dark experience provision and consumption in this study, dark tourism is characterised by visitor experience, which is influenced by experience staging. The next section is the development of dark experience model.

5.5 Conceptual Model of Dark Experience

The final section of this chapter identifies the relationships between provision (staging) and consumption (experiences and outcomes), which has not been extensively explored (Biran & Hyde, 2013). Further investigation of the conceptual model of dark experience is conducted. The relationships between experience staging, experiences and outcomes are examined using the matrix coding query by NVivo12. Matrix coding query enables the researcher to 'find the coding intersections or co-occurrence of themes in your project and display this in a matrix' (QSRInternational.com, 2018). The approach offers a view of output with textual data supporting that frequency, allowing the presentation of the frequency supporting the strength of the theme (Sorensen, 2008). The approach is useful for the conceptual and theoretical development of qualitative data (Hutchison et al., 2010).

This method has been used in different research fields (e.g. Service – Azer and Alexander, 2018; Nursing – Casey et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2017; Education – Ishak and Bakar, 2012). Azer and Alexander (2018), for example, conceptualise the relationship between triggers and

forms of negatively valenced influencing behaviour in an online context. To explore the experiences and perceptions of healthcare staff, Houghton et al. (2017) deployed matrices to identify patterns in the data, such as cross-referencing the quality of paper determined by the critical appraisal process against the framework developed during synthesis. Furthermore, in education research by Ishak and Bakar (2012), matrix coding query was used to examine patterns of leadership among young student leaders (gender and emotional quotient) in local universities.

To answer the research question regarding how staging influences visitor experiences, the association between staging and experience was analysed. The six dimensions of experience staging were chosen as rows, while seven types of visitor experience were selected as columns. The analysis considered the total number of coded words on each row, and this resulted in a percentage of data in terms of proportion compared with other cells in the same row. The relationship is displayed in the following table.

Table 5.2: Matrix coding query – row percentage (Staging – Experiences)

	Physical	Cognitive	Flow	Relational	Introspective	Emotional	Paranormal
Theme	29%	29%	4%	12%	10%	15%	0%
Staff	25%	25%	4%	**22%**	9%	15%	0%
Design & Landscape	30%	26%	3%	10%	12%	18%	0%
Activities & Events	30%	29%	3%	13%	10%	15%	0%
Visitor Guidance	29%	30%	4%	12%	10%	16%	0%
Facilities	30%	30%	2%	13%	10%	16%	0%

Table 5.2 suggests the relationship between experience staging and visitor experiences. The table displays dominant (circled) and less-common relationships (i.e. not lower than 20%, bold

only). It is the justification from the data guided by Azer and Alexander's (2018) study. The results of the coding indicate that design and landscape (30%), facilities (30%), activities and events (30%), visitor guidance (29%), theme (29%) and staff (25%) influence physical experiences. Moreover, all six typologies of experience staging affect cognitive experiences.

Design and landscape, with the aid of facilities at the destination, also enrich physical and cognitive experiences, as reviewed for Battle Abbey and Battlefield. The visitor narrates the physical experience, seeing the abbey ruins and battlefield ground along the accessible route. Cognitive experience in this sense is the acquisition of knowledge from the activities and signposts during the visit.

> *"I'm surprised I haven't been here before as it's not a million miles from my home.* ***I always thought there was some dispute about where King Harold died, but a plaque states that he died there on a specific spot and an altar was erected by William to commemorate the fact****. So I guess it's true. Most of the buildings are semi ruins, some are a private school, and the gate house which is intact holds interesting facts, but at the cost of climbing steep stairs. The view from the top is worth it if you are able.* ***There is a disabled route which cuts out the odd slope and steps so weather permitting you can enjoy the grounds and access to some of the ruins. There is a tea room, and picnics can be had in the extensive grounds. We also noted that dogs were allowed.*** *Battle is a typical pretty village with an abundance of tea rooms, so have a mooch before you make your choice. Worth a visit for its historical significance"* (Hastings51).

Visitors report that facilities influence their experiences, primarily physical but also cognitive. Facilities not only help a positive evaluation of experience, but also allow visitors with difficulties to explore the destination's activities and exhibits in the same way as other visitors. A site needs an accessible visitor centre that welcomes visitors in terms of hearing and visual, and has accessibility equipment at the car park and main entrance, and for moving around inside and outside.

> *"A visit to this site and museum* ***brings it very clearly home that the Battle of Culloden is definitely fact and an important part of Scottish history and not a piece of fiction often portrayed in literature and films.*** *The museum is very* ***informative and easy to follow****. The Battle Immersion Film is a must and very emotional and brings home the true horrific experience and meaning of the battle.* ***I am a full-time wheelchair user, and the visitor and the interactive exhibition are fully accessible. The paths around and through the battlefield are also easy to negotiate to be flat but might be muddy in parts at times****"* (Culloden51).

Another example reveals the theme, activities and events, with visitor guidance and facilities influencing the physical and cognitive experiences. A set of cues that creates an imaginary journey to the tragic American Civil War in 1863 influences tourists to visit the Gettysburg National Military Park. At the museum and visitor centre, park rangers provide information about the exhibits in the museum, with options for touring the battlefield. The narrated film and cyclorama painting prepare the visitors before heading to the battlefield. Given the circumstances, the theme influences the visitors' decisions to visit, and the multisensory exhibits help visitors to immerse in the physical and cognitive experiences through visitor guidance.

> *"As soon as we arrived at the parking lot,* ***we were impressed by the exterior of the new visitor's center and friendly staff. We first viewed a short movie narrated by Morgan Freeman, which offered a short introduction to the Battle of Gettysburg, and were then treated to the Cyclorama, which has just been restored****. The museum was very well done. We spent at least 1 1/2 hours touring it.* ***We had hired a tour guide who drove our car on the battlefield tour*** *(be sure to book at least three days in advance). This was the best thing we could have done. He gave us so much information and answered all of our individual questions. The $55. fee was less than it would have cost our family of four to ride the tour bus. His knowledge of the events at Gettysburg was amazing.* ***Our ten and thirteen year old both enjoyed the three hours that we spent on the tour and learned so much!*** *We went back the next day and re-visited some of the sights, but the insight that* ***we gained on the individual tour made all the difference in our understanding and appreciation of the Battle of Gettysburg.*** *Plan to spend the whole day at this site - there is a nice restaurant that offers kid friendly meals, salads, burgers etc. as well as a coffee bar for a quick snack" (Gettysburg51).*

Given the lower percentage of flow, relational, introspective, emotional and paranormal experiences, a column percentage matrix was used to evaluate all the coded words in each column and the cross cells. The column percentage of these five forms of experience occur via three staging elements. Thus, flow experience results from activities and events and visitor guidance. On the other hand, relational experience is related to site staff. Introspective, emotional and paranormal experiences are influenced by activities and events and the design and landscape of the site (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The table displays dominant (circled) and less-common relationships (i.e. not lower than 20%, bold only).

Table 5.3: Matrix coding query – column percentage (Staging – Experiences)

	Flow	Relational	Introspective	Emotional	Paranormal
Theme	14%	12%	13%	12%	9%
Staff	15%	19%	9%	10%	0%
Design & Landscape	20%	19%	29%	27%	51%
Activities & Events	30%	30%	29%	29%	40%
Visitor Guidance	29%	14%	15%	15%	0%
Facilities	2%	5%	5%	5%	0%

The following example illustrates how activities at the site enhance the flow, relational, introspective and emotional experiences. Visitors report the attention focus and enjoyment during the guided tour. This enjoyment of flow experience leads to the introspective experience; visitors imagine what the battle was like thanks to the interesting and inspiring story narrated by the guide.

> *"As a family, we visited the Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park whilst we were on a Stay Play Explore break in Leicestershire. Great place to visit -* ***enjoyed the displays, the commentary and the self-guided walk. But best of all was visiting the display of materials and weaponry that was put on by the Hospitaliers*** *(whom I understand do battle re-enactments amongst other things).* ***We were educated/entertained by "Brother Felix the Chaplain" who made the whole place come alive*** *with his (rather gory) descriptions of what each weapon was for, how it was designed and how it was used.* ***Really inspirational ...and great hands-on education****...****really made interesting & alive what might otherwise be a rather mundane academic subject****"* (Bosworth51).

This study further explores the relationship between experiences and outcomes (see Table 5.4). The matrix coding reveals six forms of experience affect evaluation and recollection.

Table 5.4: Matrix coding query – row percentage (Experiences – Outcomes)

	Evaluation	Recollection	Consequentiality
Physical	66%	27%	8%
Cognitive	66%	27%	7%
Flow	77%	17%	6%
Relational	66%	29%	5%
Introspective	55%	29%	16%
Emotional	59%	29%	12%
Paranormal	0%	0%	0%

Six forms of visitor experience are linked to evaluation: flow (77%), relational (66%), cognitive (66%), physical (66%), emotional (59%) and introspective (55%). Post-visit experience online-review websites generally encapsulate the evaluations of quality and value for money (Li et al., 2013). Thus, the density of coding of evaluation is relatively high compared with the recollection and consequentiality dimensions. Paranormal experience is less evident in the findings and does not reflect the experience outcomes.

The following example illustrates that flow experience is related to activities, interaction with onsite staff (relational experience), new knowledge (cognitive experience), activities during the re-enactment (physical experience) and surprising the visitor (emotional experience), all of which result in a positive evaluation of the experience.

> ***"I went with friends to see the re-enactment of the battle*** *between Henry Tudor and Richard the Third.* ***What a FANTASTIC day. So much to see you and the children are occupied every minute with so much to do for adults and children alike***. *Hundreds of authentic dressed people all* ***very friendly and knowledgeable of the way of life in 1500's facts which surprise you***. ***Defiantly a must-do for all the family****"* (Bosworth52).

Flow is a deep sense of enjoyment that people cherish for a long time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). Flow occurs when people are actively involved in doing something; in this case, the re-enactment event keeps the attention of both adults and children. Evaluation is drawn from a sense of satisfaction – expectation has been met. However, in the previous example, the visitors had an additional unexpected experience in a dimension they are not generally drawn to; they encountered a 'flip' experience that led to a positive rating of the overall experience in a dark tourism setting.

Similarly, physical, cognitive, relational, introspective and emotional experience influence the recollection of the experience. The visitors 'recollect' their experiences through storing, sharing and purchasing, perhaps with the intention to revisit. Introspective, relational and emotional experience influence 29% of recollection, while physical and cognitive experience account for 27%. The following review portrays the introspective, emotional and physical experiences from the self-auto tour; seeing several monuments and understanding the magnitude of war and feeling a sense of sacrifice of the fallen made this trip memorable.

> *"**It's difficult to express the feelings of reverance and profound grief that can be felt while peering over the once-bloody fields of the battlefield**, trying to wrap the mind around 7,000 deaths and 33,000 wounded in the course of three days. **The peaceful rolling hills, dotted with monuments and the random farm or stone house, are at odds with the carnage of over 150 years ago. Regardless of how you traverse the Park, you may find yourself considering this as a place of great contradictions** -- the celebrated victory of the Union, the bitter loss for the Confederates; the locale of one of Lincoln's greatest operations (a mere 278 words), the inconceivable death and destruction that inspired it.*
>
> ***The 24 mile auto tour** presents the battle in chronological fighting order, highlighting the Ridges, Little Roundtop, the Wheatfield, the Highwater Mark, the Cemeteries, and so forth…**Touring on your own allows the most flexibility for stopping, lingering, photographing, contemplating, or moving on**. There are pullouts and hiking trails, plus picnic areas and even restroom availability to permit a long day if desired.*
>
> *The Park / battlefield is open from sun-up to sun-down, with evening perhaps the most haunting and personal time. **The more than 1,300 monuments, markers, and memorials (many stunning in their complexity) indicate fighting units' locations and lines, and commemorate those who fought and those who sacrificed their lives, on both sides -- Americans all.** Whether you have one hour, one day, or one week, this is worthy" (Gettysburg52).*

Relational and emotional experience can lead to the evaluation and recollection of the experience. Onsite physical activities and friendly and helpful staff made the visitors want to leave a review on TripAdvisor to share with other or potential visitors. Furthermore, the experience is recollected through photos.

> *"**Great day out!**...**Beautiful area with gorgeous grounds**. What made it even better is that dogs are allowed and so we were able to **walk them around the battlefield while posing with various carved statues.** Well worth the visit and the money. **Staff were very friendly and helpful**, there were various walks you could go on, the grounds were well kept, and the site was interesting and **provided great photo opportunities. Don't miss out on visiting this little piece of history**"* (Hastings52).

Again, the low percentage of consequentiality from visitor experience is further evaluated by using column percentage. The findings (see Table 5.5) indicate that consequentiality results from introspective (27%) and emotional (26%). The dominant relationships are circled (over 25%).

Table 5.5: Matrix coding query – column percentage (Experiences – Outcomes)

	Consequentiality
Physical	22%
Cognitive	18%
Flow	1%
Relational	5%
Introspective	27%
Emotional	26%
Paranormal	0%

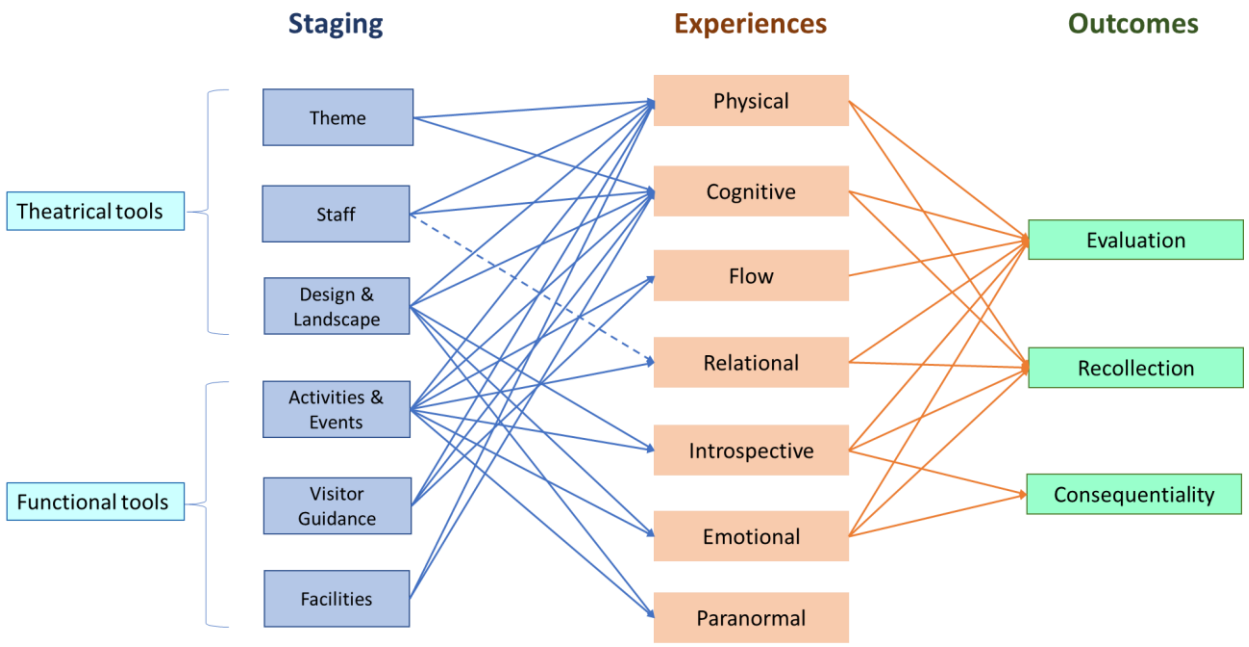
The following review indicates that consequentiality was derived from introspective, and emotional experiences during a visit to Omaha Beach. The trip provided an opportunity to contemplate death through a powerful landscape and emotional experience. The visitor mentions 'a life-changing experience'; sacrifice and the cruelty of war represent the narratives of life.

*"**A Sobering Experience***

D Day took place before I was born, not by much, but still before my lifetime and no matter how much one might read or research the history of that day only a visit to this beautiful and, on the day we were there, very peaceful part of Normandy can ***bring home the immensity of the task, the bravery of these young people and the tremendous sacrifice made by them****.* ***This sobering pilgrimage****, for that is what it is, is* ***a life-changing experience****.* ***We were there at low tide on a glorious May morning so now fully understand the difficulty of the landing with the tide coming in and the enemy on the cliffs.*** *Humanity will always* ***owe those who paid the ultimate price an unpayable debt of gratitude****. This is a must-do as is the nearby American Military Cemetery"* (Normandy51).

The relationship among the constructs from the coding query phase suggests a conceptual model, visualised in Figure 5.3. This model is an integration of Pine II and Gilmore's (1998) framework of experience economy by identifying staging elements (theatrical and technical) and their relationships with seven forms of experiences. These visitor experiences lead to outcomes in which visitors consider the evaluation, recollection and consequentiality. Solid arrows represent outstanding relationships, whereas dotted arrows portray less-common ones.

Figure 5.3: Dark experience model



The findings and the conceptual model represent the provision and consumption of dark tourism, which are complicated and interrelated. Although visitor experiences are individual and subjective, they can be designed by the dark destination providers and, consequently, benefit both visitor and provider. Additionally, this study suggests two influential factors that impact dark experience consumption and delivery, namely, recency and location authenticity.

The findings verify that dark experiences are staged by the destination and, ultimately, consumed by visitors. Experience staging structures visitor experiences, but allows those visitors to navigate them as they please. The onsite experience is an essential phase in the process of visitor experience formation, which influences the outcomes. The availability of experience staging enables a visitor to wander, learn, discover, interpret and reinterpret the experience at their own pace. The next chapter summarises the study by discussing the theoretical contributions and managerial implications.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

The overall aim of this study was to explore the relationship between staging, experiences and outcomes in the dark tourism context. This final chapter summarises the findings and highlights the theoretical contributions to dark tourism research, together with the managerial contributions to destination providers. The limitations and directions for future research are provided, in addition to a concluding remark.

The contributions were explored in line with the research questions that guided the study:

1. How are dark experiences staged from visitor perspectives?
2. What are the core visitor experiences at dark tourism sites?
3. What are the dark experience outcomes that are different from other hedonic sites?
4. How does experience staging enrich visitor experiences at dark tourism sites?
5. How do experiences influence outcomes at dark tourism sites?

6.1 Summary of the Key Findings

Research Question 1: How are dark experiences staged from visitor perspectives?

The provision of experience has been well studied in tourism literature. However, little is known about experience staging (Åstrøm, 2017; Pikkemaat et al., 2009). Previous research on experience staging in tourism studies generally focuses on the hedonic context (e.g. Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Oh et al., 2007; Pikkemaat et al., 2009). In dark tourism studies, the attempts to categorise dark tourism sites raise questions regarding whether it is helpful for tourism research and whether it is justifiable to categorise tourist experiences at dark fun factories alongside the experience at dark camps of genocide (Biran and Hyde, 2013). To help with this understanding,

this study considered experience provision by exploring the role of such sites using the dramaturgical metaphor in which visitors interact with the props and cues in dark tourism settings.

The findings add to Pine II and Gilmore's (1998) study by exploring experience staging at five dark conflict sites. Experience staging emphasises the importance of experience as the core offering of dark tourism destinations, as proposed in the experience economy framework. Within the study, dark tourism providers developed experience staging to influence individual visitor's memorable experiences. As such, this study contributes to the emerging literature on dark tourism and the experience economy by identifying six typologies of experience staging and classifying them into theatrical and functional elements.

Theatrical elements comprise theme, staff, and design and landscape. These artistic performances require the appropriateness and illumination of tangible, intangible and interpersonal cues to immerse guests within the central theme. Functional elements include activities, events and exhibitions, visitor guidance and facilities. These elements are technical sets of tangible characteristics concerning guest expectations and best practices. They also support a structured process that involves safety, convenience and visitor wellbeing.

Using a netnographic approach from a user-generated website was a useful and effective tool for understanding the experience offering in dark tourism settings based on the ways visitors use them in their reviews. The locus of these elements is how the tourism destinations define, design and develop platforms for the offerings to engage the interest of visitors more than with simply products and services. Visitors use experience staging in dark tourism settings as a tool for experience engagement and meaning-making.

Research Question 2: What are the core visitor experiences at dark tourism sites?

Research on dark tourism has not fully engaged with the experiences of tourists (Biran & Hyde, 2013; Biran, Poria, Oren, 2011; Miles, 2014; Sharpley, 2012). The findings of this study indicate seven forms of experiences in the non-hedonic context. Although the findings portray tourist experience as multi-dimensional and interrelating, for the purpose of this study, visitor experience was explained individually. Physical, cognitive and emotional experiences were dominant this study, as evidenced by the NVivo coding references.

Physical experience is multisensory. It manifests not only the visual presentation, but also via integrated touch, sound and smell. The ubiquity of technology drives the physical experience today. Finally, physical activities at the destinations assist the cognitive and flow experiences.

The primary purpose of a historical attraction is often defined as education experience (Kaplan et al., 1993; Korn, 1992). In the same way, battlefields and visitor centres bring history and culture to visitors. Visitors actively participate in the activities and the exhibits to obtain new knowledge and to enrich their understanding. The cognitive experience enhances people's intellectual ability and creativity when they perceive and interpret the incoming information. The physical experience occurs at the phenomenological level, then visitors perceive and interpret the incoming information, and the novelty of the perceptions drives the individual cognitive experience.

These findings support Miles' (2002) argument that emotional experience is one of the most remarkable dark experiences. Visitors desire emotional experiences, as well as educational experiences, at dark tourism destinations (Biran et al., 2011). Including positive, negative and mixed feelings adheres to the nature of dark tourism. Negative valences, such as grief, fear and anger, were dominant in this context. However, positive emotions, such as enjoyment, excitement and surprise, were triggered by involvement in activities and events, and novelty and discovery emerged from media influence. Battlefield walks introduced the aesthetic moment / restorative experience. Dark conflict sites create a sense of peace and calm, as suggested in the 'esthetic' dimension of the experience economy framework (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998).

In the hedonic tourism context, the evaluation of tourist experience focuses on positive experience and experience failure (e.g. Hosany el al., 2015; Nawijn, 2011). In the dark tourism context, negative valences are not necessarily interpreted as negative experiences. This finding is in line with Nawijn and Fricke (2015), who state that negative emotions can have positive outcomes in dark tourism settings. Furthermore, the findings represent the combination of positive and negative valences, such as sad but proud, scary but enjoyable, haunted and beautiful. These mixed feelings lead to a positive experience. The emergence of mixed feelings in this research contributes to Andrade and Cohen's (2007) study, which claims that the consumption of negative feelings co-activates positive and negative emotions.

Flow experience, first developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), is considerably used in leisure and sports. Flow was recognised in a dark tourism context as being strongly linked to physical, cognitive and positive emotional experiences. The distinct components of flow in this context are concentration and transformation of time. Flow experience was situationally evoked and attempts to ascertain the quality of the overall experiences. The implication is that visitors consider flow an enjoyable experience.

Relational experience was evident in this study. Visitors interacted with their friends and family, the staff at sites and other visitors. The aspect of communitas, or sense of togetherness, was apparent through engaging in collective ceremonies of remembrance, battle re-enactment, commemorative practice such as placing flowers in the act of remembrance, or secular pilgrimage, producing social relations among participants. Crowd interaction contributes to relational experience.

Introspective experience mediates the contemplation of visitor thoughts and self-examination, including imagining other times or places, recalling past experiences, reflecting on meaning, feeling a spiritual connection and feeling a sense of connectedness. Visitors imagined the moment of the historic battle, reminding them of past experiences. They looked inward and examined their thoughts, resulting in the underlying meaning of what they were looking at. Personal experience is related to nationalism, and pride and was another form of introspective experience. Previous studies (e.g. Best, 2007; Clarke and McAuley, 2016) have demonstrated that visitors feel connected with history and heritage. Spiritual experience is one of the core elements of dark tourism. It is the sense of transcendence and reverence to people who sacrificed their lives in wars, and for the survivors also. Dark conflict sites, therefore, represent a characteristic of secular pilgrimage that guides deeply held values and meaningful experience.

Paranormal experience is a personal experience that can occur at a site of death. However, the findings indicate that paranormal experience is not the central theme or intention of visitors coming to battlefield sites. The findings emphasise that battlefield sites main theme is history, not selling paranormal activities.

Research Question 3: What are the dark experience outcomes which are different from other hedonic sites?

In addition to the growth of dark tourism studies, there is increasing concern over the outcomes of dark tourism visits (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015; Bigné et al., 2005). This study identified three dimensions of dark experience outcomes informed by visitor experiences: evaluation, recollection and consequentiality.

The evaluation process involves comparison, satisfaction and recommendation. Visitors compare their preconceptions and expectations with their cognitive and emotional impressions. Ease of use, presentation performance, and assurance and communication are the criteria used to evaluate experiences. A positive evaluation of a visit results in a return to the destination or a recommendation. Positive dark experiences encourage an intention to visit the same or similar sites to connect to the current visit. Therefore, intentions are based on the theme rather than the characteristics of the dark site.

Recollection represents the intensification of experience; it is a mean of bringing the experience into real life. Recollection adds richness and details to memories of experiences. This aspect is particularly important in tourism since producing strong memories in the minds of visitors can transform one-time visitors into repeat visitors. Recollection processes include storing and sharing. Tangible storing occurs through collecting objects, purchasing souvenirs and taking photos or videos. Souvenirs are gifts for others, memory aids and evidence of a trip, whereas photography and videography reflect self-identity and an individual's interests. Visual imagery plays a central role in recollection. Memories of visitors' previous experiences can motivate them to revisit and to provide reviews. Experience sharing, both online and offline, implies that visitors are information creators and distributors, not passive consumers.

Consequentiality is a profound form of experience outcome; it contrasts with hedonic tourism regarding the meaningful aspect and higher-order thinking. The meaningfulness of dark experience does not arise from the enjoyment of escaping mundane life but is drawn from the consumption of negative feelings, though it leaves visitors feeling renewed rather than morose. This consequentiality emphasises that positive experience outcomes can be reflexively developed from negative emotional experiences. Moreover, consequentiality, in this context, emphasises the self-moment of individuals contemplating others' deaths. In other words, it is a reflection on the value of life.

Research Question 4: How does experience staging enrich visitor experiences at dark tourism sites?

All six typologies of experience staging affect physical and cognitive experiences. Design and landscape, activities and events aided by facilities influence physical and cognitive experiences. In a dark conflict context, the battlefield is transformed from an empty space into an encoded landscape by experience staging. In this sense, the museum and the visitor centre provide historical significance and profound meaning for visitors in the form of exhibits, activities and special events. Visitors can see the actual location of the historical event and the artefacts, which are well preserved. Visitors explore certain sights and textures at the destination and acquire new knowledge from the visits. Theme is a set of cues that creates an imaginary journey, influences visitors to visit and differentiates particular sites. Guide maps, viewing platforms and suggested routes guide visitors through the site. Guided tours and the staff help visitors to enjoy their journeys smoothly. Activities and events also influence flow, relational, introspective, emotional and paranormal experiences. Visitor guidance impacts the flow experience. On the other hand, design and landscape suggest introspective, emotional and paranormal experiences.

Research Question 5: How do experiences influence outcomes at dark tourism sites?

Six forms of visitor experience influence experience outcomes. The paranormal experience is less evident in the findings and does not reflect the outcomes. Evaluation draws from a sense of satisfaction; tourist's expectations of those experiences have been met (or not). Similarly, physical, cognitive, relational, introspective and emotional experiences influence the recollection of the experience. Visitors recollect their experiences through storing, sharing and purchasing. Consequentiality is influenced by introspective, emotional and physical experiences. It is a sense of meaningfulness and fulfilment that can transform people's thoughts and inspire new ways of life. This profound form of experience is triggered by the consumption of negative feelings. In this sense, dark tourism destinations provide an opportunity to contemplate death (introspective) through the landscape (physical) and emotional experience.

The following sections of the chapter summarise the core contributions in terms of theoretical and managerial implications. Future research priorities are also discussed.

6.2 Contribution 1: Conceptual Model of Dark Experience

The first contribution is an understanding of experience provision and consumption in dark tourism settings. This study conceptualised the model of dark experiences by identifying the relationship between staging, experiences and outcomes.

As presented in the dark tourism literature, Biran and Hyde (2013) argue that the relationships between the consumption and provision of dark tourism and the consequences of dark experiences are underexplored. Unlike previous studies of dark tourism, this study provides insights into visitor interactions with dark tourism destinations when they were engaged in the consumption of experience. This model indicates the dimensions of the site offerings and the extent to which dark tourism sites prepare to enable visitors to engage. These experience staging elements influence various forms of experience and outcomes, given that dark tourism consumption depends on the destination's offerings for developing visitor experiences and outcomes. Berry et al. (2002) argue that many companies fail to understand that experience dimensions face business challenges, and this applies to dark tourism destinations also. Crafting dark experience outcomes should be crystallised into memorable visitor experiences that are staged using the destination's core capabilities.

Visitor experiences are subjective and multi-dimensional; one visit can offer various forms of experiences. The importance of providing forms of experience individually is the association between the staging and the experiences. Experience staging builds relationships by targeting multiple levels of visitor engagement, from a historian, battlefield enthusiast or student, to a general tourist. Destinations should seek to maximise the potential experiences for visitors when the destinations know the right elements. This understanding makes it possible to consider the staging element, and thus, experiences are created.

Generally, activities and events are the main offerings at museums and visitor centres, which result in physical and cognitive experiences, as suggested in museum studies (e.g. Doering, 1999; Pekarik et al., 2014). In dark tourism, the battlefield and the artefacts are categorised as the main products that provide historical significance through the meaning of design and landscape. Design and landscape imply three crucial roles in dark tourism settings: attention-creating media, message-creating media and emotional-creating media. Supporting facilities not only relate to visitor wellbeing, but also enhance the physical and cognitive experiences. For instance,

accessibility allows visitors with difficulties to explore activities and exhibits in the same detail as other visitors. Visitors are guided by suggested routes or guide maps, which are tools for managing visitor flows, taking them through the site and letting them know where they can pause or continue, either in an exhibition or on the battlefield.

Theme is a set of cues that creates an imaginary journey, influences visitors to visit and differentiates particular sites. The site can design and build a themed environment, but it takes people to make that imaginary journey a reality. The prompt assistance of staff helps visitors to move smoothly around the destination. Staff also act as storytellers, delivering the history with scripts that can be dynamic for visitors. These roles reflect the importance of staff. Activities and events, and design and landscape, suggest introspective, emotional and paranormal experiences in this study, whereas activities and visitor guidance induce the deep engagement of flow experience.

Despite different experience typologies, the model reports the relationship between experiences and outcomes. Experience outcomes include not only the evaluation of the visit and the recollection of the experience, but also the higher-order thinking effect. Consequentiality is derived from physical, introspective and emotional experiences. It constitutes a large part of meaning-making for individuals in the dark tourism context. Visiting a dark site can transform people's thoughts, attitudes and state of mind, and can inspire new ways of life because it reflects a sense of importance, meaningfulness and fulfilment. A visitor comes away with a greater appreciation of life and respect for others' deaths. In other words, consequentiality is derived from the consumption of negative feelings and reverence for the fallen. Experiences are memorable and transformative and portray most of the unique characteristics of dark tourism. This study provides empirical evidence that physical, introspective and emotional experiences influence consequentiality. The sensory activities, reflection and emotional engagement act as catalysts for change and a transformation in beliefs.

Applying a visitor-based approach is an effective tool for understanding experience provision and consumption in dark tourism settings. This study emphasises that dark tourism destinations are staged environments, and six elements contribute to visitor experiences. Experience staging, theatrical and functional elements are interpreted and communicated as a platform for the visitors to choose from and navigate according to their preferences. Experiences are not produced but performed by adding value for visitors. The onsite experience is an essential

phase in the process of visitor experience formation, which influences the outcomes. Dark experience consumption is complex and personal. It manifests multisensory, imaginary and emotive aspects, not only of representations of death, but is also derived from the site settings and the engagement among visitors and their self-reflection.

6.3 Contribution 2: Experience Staging in Dark Tourism Settings

The second contribution is that this is one of the first studies to identify experience staging dimensions in the dark tourism context. Staging experience implies that a dark tourism destination 'intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props…to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event' (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998 p.98). In essence, selling an experience is becoming established in dark tourism settings.

This study confirms that the experience economy framework is applicable for ascertaining whether destination objectives are explicitly targeted regarding the provision of experience in the dark tourism context. Several studies on tourism have explored experience provision; however there remains insufficient information on experience staging (Åstrøm, 2017). Similarly, in dark tourism research, the marketing and management of sites are research priorities (Light, 2017). Tourism is an experience-intense industry; it is critical to understand theatrical metaphors to guide the direction of performances, the management of sites and the choreographing of experience staging elements to improve visitor experiences and, ultimately, to benefit the destination provider.

By exploring staging experiences carefully, the researcher obtained insights into how dark experiences can be shaped by the offerings and, in turn, how destinations can be reproduced through visitor experience. Without tourists, there would be no tourism. They are at the very heart of the tourism industry. It benefits dark tourism destinations to design their offerings to enhance visitor experiences by influencing and involving visitors, urging them to engage in experience creation processes. Each staging element helps the destination to develop the core competencies to become a solid attraction that offers an excellent experience as its core product.

The findings contribute to the emerging literature on dark tourism and the experience economy by identifying six typologies of experience staging and classifies them into theatrical and functional elements. Theatrical elements highlight the importance of theme, staff, and design and landscape. They involve artistic performance, which requires the consistency and appropriateness

of tangible, intangible and interpersonal cues to influence and immerse guests in the central theme. On the other hand, the functional tools entail activities, events and exhibitions, visitor guidance and facilities. Functional tools are fundamental regarding the extent to which the experience platforms are staged and executed correctly in terms of guest expectations and best practices. Moreover, these tools include the technical performance set of tangible characteristics that involve safety, convenience and wellbeing. In other words, the reliability of the offerings.

The provision of experience at dark tourism destinations, especially dark conflict sites, relates to the 'real' and 'play'. The 'real' refers to the actual battlefield, artefacts and testimonies of the survivors. The 'play' involves the activities and events, such as the re-enactment of past battles, the stage show, or the immersive cinema or diorama. This study supports Daugbjerg's (2011) argument that a battlefield can embrace experience and living history, in contrast to a conventional museum exhibition. Moreover, staging elements are, to some extent, similar to the experience quality dimension of Chang and Horng (2010), which is a measurement for researchers interested in evaluating customer perspectives of experience quality in service settings. Chang and Horng's (2010) study focuses on physical surroundings, roles of service employers, other customers, customer companions and customers themselves as the dimensions that influence a customer's entire experience. The staging elements identified in this study respond to Chang and Horng's (2010) calls that very few studies have investigated customer perceptions of experience quality.

An underlying goal of experience staging is to attract a visitor to the core content and close-up engagement. Different levels of visitor engagement (active or passive) can be mapped throughout the visitor's journey. Providing this clarity platform along this path is critical to the success of an experience offering. However, it is common to become lost in the experience and miss the underlying message due to external content and interactions. To stage a cohesive and navigable experience, every element and layer of experience must reinforce the core message.

6.4 Contribution 3: Multi-Dimensional Experience in a Non-Hedonic Context

The third contribution of this study is that the multi-dimensional visitor experience encapsulates both positive and negative valences and can be applied in both hedonic and non-

hedonic tourism contexts. Understanding visitor experiences is an important issue in tourism research since it investigates those dimensions important to visitors.

The multifaceted tourist experience model by Packer and Ballantyne (2016), drawing on literature in tourism and leisure research in terms of positive or pleasant experiences, is a useful application for developing an understanding of visitor experiences in dark tourism settings. The findings indicate that the multi-dimensional nature of visitor experience expands upon what has been reported in dark tourism literature. Seven forms of experience, namely, physical, cognitive, flow, relational, introspective, emotional and paranormal, are addressed in different contexts in hedonic tourism literature.

Every dark tourism destination is thematically predetermined by an event from history, and visitor experiences vary. Physical, cognitive and emotional experiences are dominant in the dark conflict context. The notions of cognitive and emotional experiences, which have received the most attention in dark tourism research (Light, 2017), were the features of the empirical findings (quantity of coding). However, this study also demonstrated that physical experience is important in the non-hedonic context. Physical experience is multisensory, and technology advances visitor experiences. More important, physical activities assist cognitive and flow experience.

The intrinsic enjoyable state when people act with total involvement is called flow experience in the dark tourism context. The concept of flow is typically used in leisure or sports activities. Two conditions of flow are reported at the battlefields and visitor centres: visitors immerse themselves in the activities and exhibitions. This continuous focus on the presented activities produces a distortion of time. Flow is considered an enjoyable experience. The flow state, a positive experiential state in the non-hedonic tourism, is warranted.

Introspective experience, first introduced regarding satisfying experiences in museums (Pekarik et al., 1999), occurs in the dark tourism context also. A sense of spiritual connection and a sense of connectedness are dominant at dark conflict sites, which are distinct from other types of dark tourism. People travel to sites associated with their family history, personal memory or heritage. The characteristics of the sacred, transcendent and reverent are triggered by activities or events such as Remembrance Day and other memorial services. The sense of connectedness or belonging is generally linked to nationalism; however, it is possible to activate this sense via deep engagement with activities and events. Reflection on and the recalling of past experiences

represent a unique form of experience that occurs mostly privately, and typically during quiet moments. The introspective experience is significant in the dark tourism context and is related to the self-examination of feelings and thoughts.

The findings reveal not only negative valences (e.g. anger, fear, grief), but also positive ones (e.g. restoration, positive surprise) and mixed feelings (e.g. bittersweet, overwhelming). These positive experiences and the co-activation of positive and negative emotional experiences contribute to our understanding of the consumption of negative feelings. These results confirm the notion by Best (2007) and Nawijn and Fricke (2015) that negative emotional experiences do not offer negative experience outcomes.

This research found that a hedonic-based approach is applicable in dark tourism settings. Dark experiences are broadly consistent with research in hedonic contexts. The findings prove that experiences encapsulate both positive and negative valences. Furthermore, these experiences are context-specific; the identification of these experiences is used to characterise the content and intensity of experiences at different sites. This study also identified the experiential dimensions that are important and specific to visitors in the dark tourism context.

6.5 Managerial Implications

The notion of experience has been centred in the field of consumption and marketing for over two decades. The notion has become a key element for understanding consumer behaviour and a foundation of firms' economies (Carù and Cova, 2003). Selling memorable experiences is the solution to survive in the ever-more-competitive future. Managers need to frame the site story and transmit the meaning for tourism purposes. They do so by orchestrating and imagineering the experience staging in terms of theatrical and functional tools in dark tourism settings. This process involves providing the right staging platform for visitors to engage with and immerse in the offerings, but experience management cannot be built overnight. Capturing the experience from the visitor's perspective is incredibly important and valuable. Managers have to understand the visitors' journeys through their eyes across all the touchpoints they interact with at the destination, as well as other relevant stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, residents).

Online reviews are a rich source of data to investigate consumption experiences and visitor-centric views. This source illustrates the creation of meanings based on tourist interactions with

site offerings (Banyai and Glover, 2012). Dark tourism destinations, like other tourism attractions, are high-involvement purchases that cannot be evaluated prior to consumption. Sharing opinions about travel experiences provides prospective visitors more information about a destination. Therefore, consumers heavily rely on comments posted by other travellers on social media (Okazaki et al., 2017). This study provides managers with knowledge of how to analyse the content of travel reviews for marketing purposes. The unobtrusive nature of netnography provides destination managers access to visitor experiences of their destination. Analysing visitor experiences and gathering feedback is an important step toward remaining competitive as a destination attraction. Destination managers should emphasise strategies that stimulate visitor interactions through these online channels.

Experientialising both the tangible and intangible begins from setting the 'theme', which stems from the core identity of a particular site. Then, there is a need to identify appropriate theatrical tools by focusing on the design and landscape and ensuring that all staff stay in character consistent with the central theme and theatrical form. Staff can play the roles of orientation (explaining the options), resolution (service support and troubleshooting) and storyteller (guided tour and workshop). In terms of functional tools, the destination provides the platforms that can customise the encounter to the individual through activities, special events or exhibitions. Since the heart of the experience is the freedom to choose from abundant offerings; one size does not fit all. Exhibits, activities and events should support visitor interests. The representation of these substantive elements needs to be novel where visitors instinctively stop and pay attention – either authentic artefacts or hyper-real experiences. Furthermore, visitors may stop at a certain exhibit space, not only because it is a particular type of exhibit, but also because of the experience it seems to be at first glance. As such, visitor guidance is important for gaining visitor attention. Clear signage, visual displays and viewing platforms should be available for visitors to extract information from and to move around the site seamlessly. Appropriate supporting facilities also influence a positive experience. Only guests who feel comfortable will perceive positive experiences and experience psychological wellbeing. Every tool needs to link with the core competency of the destination.

In the digitalised communication era, managers need to employ emerging technology, such as augmented reality and mobile devices. These new ways and forms of interpretative information will provide new levels of experience. In addition, optimising the coherence of battlefield routes

and linking them with surrounding areas (e.g. town) through optimal guidance and signage under a unified theme can be an effective strategy. As visitors are now becoming content creators, managers need to play an active role in social media information exchanges, such as posting content or re-posting visitor experiences. Managers can uncover many insights simply through the journey document as the visitor describes it on social media or in online communities.

To create the opportunities for an experience to engage the visitor in multiple ways, experience staging needs to engage any or all human senses; the more senses engaged, the more memorable an experience. Moreover, the experience can change over time, and the engagement requires movement and space. The opportunities are limitless to stage the experience in a visceral manner that builds an influential and impactful experience for visitors. The visceral level of experience, which is the initial impression of a destination's product, is something visitors experience at a behavioural level. That is, they think about the function and performance of what the site offers. The outcome of visitor experience is the full impact of thought and reflection, including the meaning and emotions manifested in that experience.

Visitors construct their own choices of experiences while visiting sites based on their personal preferences and preconceptions. These experiences are triggered by the onsite staged environment. Identifying the theatrical and functional dimensions poses significant challenges for sustaining visitor experience while preserving the history. The findings indicate that the majority of visitors mentioned their physical, cognitive and emotional experiences. In this sense, experiential process manifests the multisensory, imaginary and emotive aspects. As such, it is necessary for employees to acknowledge the variety of experiences that may occur in dark tourism settings. Then, managers should consider how to intensify the recurring dimension of experience and recheck whether these are the key experiences that match the site's goals. Managers should not only be concerned about the creation of the experience platform, but also develop within the context offerings that lead to authentic experiences. Lesser-mentioned experiences are not necessarily insignificant. Management should be aware of these experiences since visitors may seek out new experiences. Orientating experience offerings to a visitor provides some measure of predictability regarding what that visitor's experiences will be like. Thus, the multi-dimensional visitor experience allows us to understand better the nature of the dark experience and, potentially, to improve it.

Special events such as annual re-enactments directly influence visitor experience. Another factor is seasonality, since it affects the fluctuation in visitor numbers to a destination attraction. Seasonality causes several issues that require special attention and strategies. Regarding visitors, it is difficult to receive quality of experience if the site is crowded. Therefore, critical capacity levels in personnel, facilities and infrastructure need to be prepared to avoid negative experiences.

Furthermore, dark destination managers need to continue staging and re-developing the experience offerings for new and returning visitors throughout the experience. Visitors can expect, if they return, new memories to take home through the development of new memory points throughout the experience. It is essential to recognise that a destination cannot solely orchestrate visitor experiences; at best, destinations are in charge of management, and marketing can be influenced by choreographing the settings and the circumstances in which guests can have experiences. Ultimately, every dark tourism destination needs to define its strategies by packaging its inherited resources into an experience that produces meaningful experience and induces a long-lasting effect on visitors. Understanding the essence of staging, experiences and outcomes could affect future destination marketing. Dark tourism is becoming a significant part of the tourist market. This study's contribution could generate an exceptional possibility to develop a new dark tourism strategy.

6.6 Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations that offer opportunities for future research. First, the study sites concentrate only on historic Western battlefields. It would be useful to see whether the results of comparable studies from Eastern contexts are the same or similar to those of this research. An interesting approach for marketing discipline would be a cultural approach that could prove useful for understanding destinations in their contextual completeness (Saraniemi and Kylänen, 2011). Like other destination attractions, dark tourism sites are globalised and attract visitors from different cultures who can form different meanings. To develop the right marketing techniques, destination managers should understand cultural differences.

Second, the study context is dark conflict sites, and the findings cannot be assumed to be generalisable to other types of dark tourism destinations. The findings offer insights rather than

generalisations. Since experience varies from one context to another, future research may want to explore other dark suppliers, for instance, dark fun factories, dark dungeons or dark exhibitions.

Third, continued research in the form of a quantitative study on similar site settings is recommended. A mixed-method approach with structural equation modelling could validate the relationships between staging, experiences and outcomes. The findings also suggest factors influencing dark experiences. To complement this study, further work is required to establish these factors within a quantitative model as moderators.

Fourth, the multi-dimensionality of dark experiences at particular sites implies different content and intensity of experiences. In the current study, the reviews were not restricted to specific types of traveller; experiences may vary among visitor types. However, the findings suggest two types of visitor: observers engaged in staged offerings, and actors immersed in the experiences. Visitors participate in the experience and connect with the site offerings both passively and actively. From a different perspective, a person who is more of a variety-seeker may be more likely to choose different staging options, whereas familiarity-seekers may be more inclined to choose intense types of experience. These effects are also worth exploring in future research.

Fifth, battlefields and visitor centres bring history and culture to visitors. Their primary purpose is often considered to be educational experience. In future investigations, it might be possible to focus on younger visitors on compulsory fieldtrips to dark tourism destinations. This cohort of visitors may provide interesting experiences that differ from adult visitors.

Sixth, there is considerable potential for new research involving multiple stakeholders who may directly or indirectly impact tourism development and planning. For example, national governments, local governments, local people, tourism enterprises and destination professionals play a variety of roles and may, sometimes, have different objectives and concerns. Understanding the perspective of the wider stakeholders would broaden our knowledge of the effectiveness of destination marketing. Within this context, a further study of destination providers' perspectives on visitor experience is suggested to obtain a deeper understanding of whether destination providers' expectations and visitor experiences are consistent with the visitor-based approach.

6.7 Reflections and Concluding Remarks

Life and death are universal phenomena. We, humankind, experience and acknowledge both these phenomena. Visiting sites of death and disaster has been an element of tourism longer than any other form of tourism. Dark tourism has long existed. The omnipresence of technology advancement and media catalyses the popularity of dark tourism as the main attraction or as part of a recreational trip. Dark tourism contributes to economic growth and creates an avenue for the tourist experience.

Conflict sites of historical and cultural importance may be prone to political influence or social misunderstanding. Such sites came into existence and were marked as historical places through the loss of lives and the destruction of the landscape. Tourist experiences are impossible without the presence of the destination's offering. Dark tourism destinations are designed to deliver a message to society. This message suggests an effort to preserve the past by developing new policies and action plans with multiple stakeholders. In other words, dark sites create a context for likeminded people to consume, interact and share experiences. These experiences result from the subjective meaning and interpretations that visitors make. Dark tourism makes us better informed about the past and the heritage we have lost or are losing, despite us all wanting to eliminate conflicts and wars.

In the effective management of dark tourism attractions, destination managers face numerous challenges with the commodification of death. Continuous development in site offerings remains essential to build an understanding of visitor experiences in dark tourism settings. This study attempted to contribute to this challenge by developing a model of dark tourism consumption that embeds staging offerings, visitor experiences and outcomes with relationships between them. This model suggests an important dark tourism research stream regarding how visitors consume the influential conditions that structure how these experiential aspects form different meanings. This study refines the understanding of visitors at dark tourism destinations, which are considered a non-hedonic form of tourism. Indeed, in many ways, the emphasis of these sites appears to be different from hedonic tourism only in terms of intensity.

> *"Life and death are inevitably entwined. From the moment we are born, we are slowly dying. While the place we left in this earth is used for new-born others, no less true is that sometimes, death of others help us to interpret the proper life* (Korstanje, 2016 p.11)*."*

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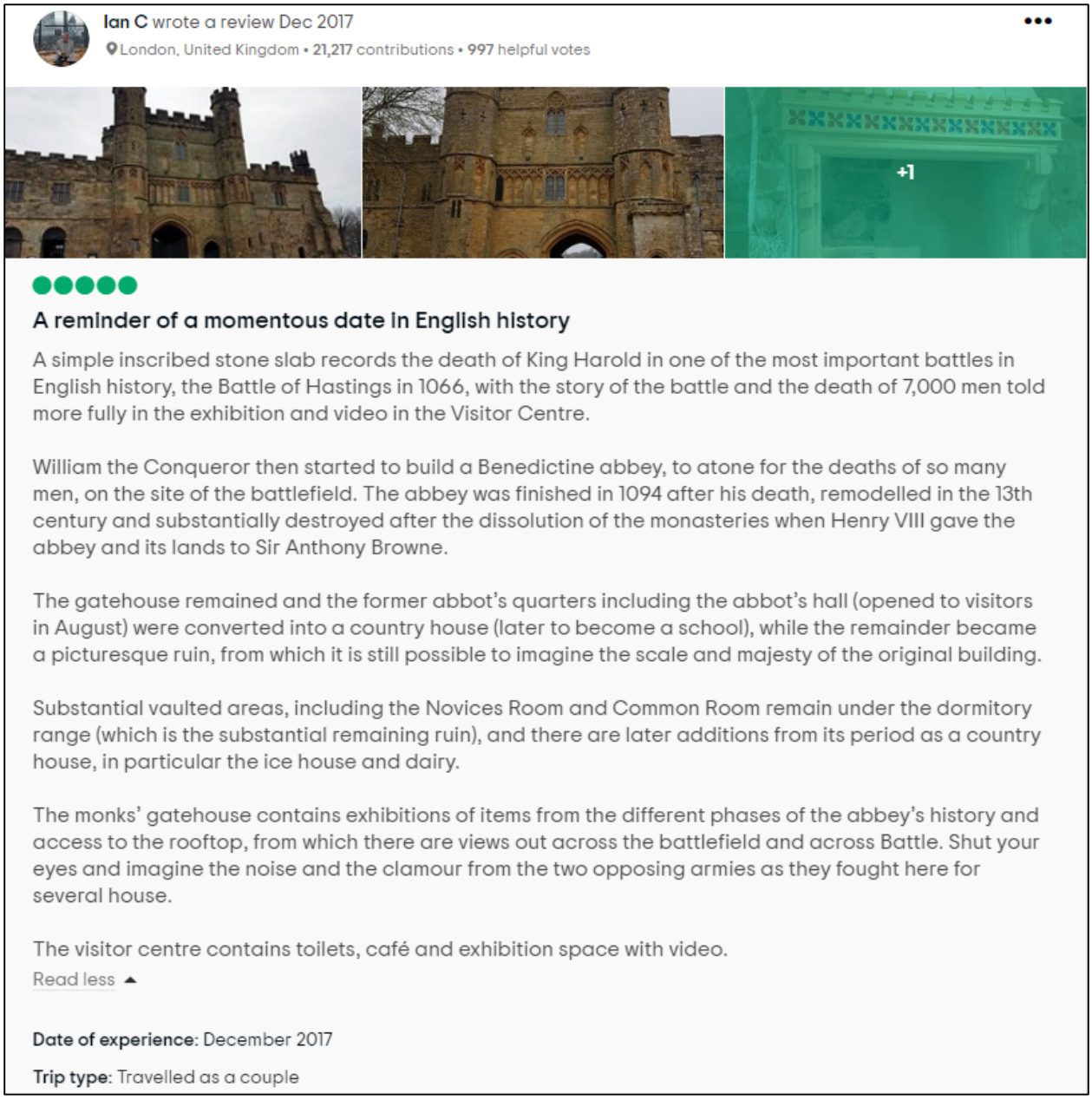
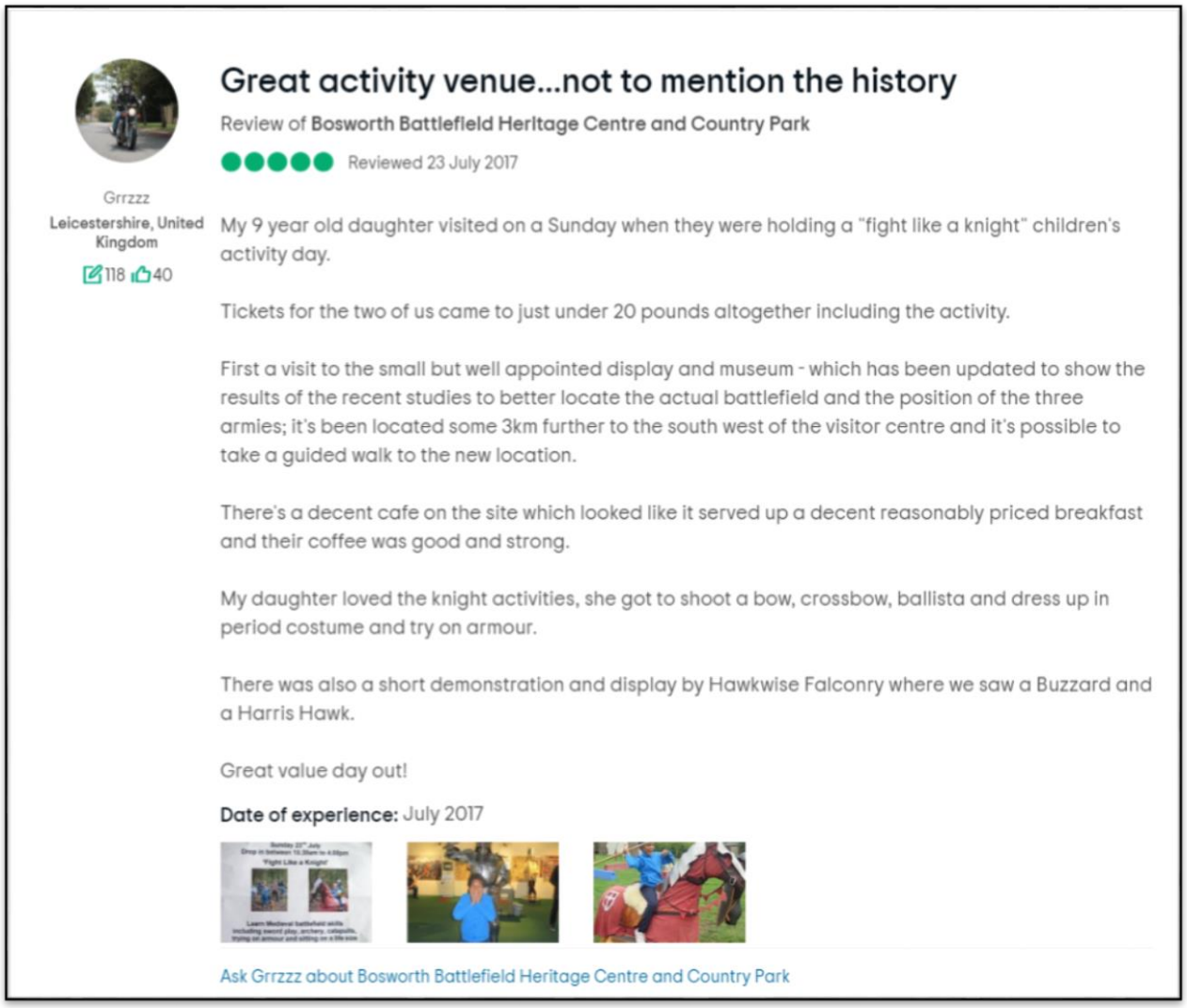
Appendix A: TripAdvisor Review Examples

Site1: Battle Abbey and Battlefield



Site2: Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park



Great activity venue...not to mention the history

Review of **Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park**

●●●●● Reviewed 23 July 2017

Grrzzz
Leicestershire, United Kingdom
118 40

My 9 year old daughter visited on a Sunday when they were holding a "fight like a knight" children's activity day.

Tickets for the two of us came to just under 20 pounds altogether including the activity.

First a visit to the small but well appointed display and museum - which has been updated to show the results of the recent studies to better locate the actual battlefield and the position of the three armies; it's been located some 3km further to the south west of the visitor centre and it's possible to take a guided walk to the new location.

There's a decent cafe on the site which looked like it served up a decent reasonably priced breakfast and their coffee was good and strong.

My daughter loved the knight activities, she got to shoot a bow, crossbow, ballista and dress up in period costume and try on armour.

There was also a short demonstration and display by Hawkwise Falconry where we saw a Buzzard and a Harris Hawk.

Great value day out!

Date of experience: July 2017

Ask Grrzzz about Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park

Site3: Culloden Battlefield

Auldbuff wrote a review Apr 2013

Dundee, Scotland • 14 contributions • 6 helpful votes

●●●●●

Culloden..... an emotional place

Culloden, or Drumossie Moor as it is sometime called, lies to the north east of Inverness. It is the site of the last full-scale battle to take place on British soil, and the last stand of an ancient royal dynasty, the Stewarts (Stuarts) which traced its ancestry back to the Dark Age Gaelic Kingdom of Dal Riata. It is also the place where the Highland clan culture of Scotland was decimated.

The Battle of Culloden in 1746 meant, quite simply, the end of an era for Scotland.
The Battle was fought on April 16, 1746. It was the last of the great Jacobite risings - popular attempts to reinstate a Stuart monarch on the throne of Britain - and was led by Charles Edward Stuart, also known as Bonnie Prince Charlie or the Young Pretender. Charles was the son of the Old Pretender, James Francis Edward Stuart, and grandson of the deposed James II of England. He landed on the shores of Scotland in July 1745 in an attempt to oust King George II and his Hanoverian line from the throne, which had become the birthright of his family in 1603 when King James VI of Scotland had travelled south to become King James I of England and Ireland.
All the information regarding the battle is available in the National Trust for Scotland Visitor Centre. The Centre houses a shop and café along with a museum which shows an audio visual. There is a charge for the museum part.
There is no charge to visit the actual battlefield. Some visitors including myself vary their times i.e.in the morning or just before dusk as the mist or eerie silence is quite thought provoking as you wander round thinking of all these brave ordinary men who gave the supreme sacrifice.
Every year on the nearest Saturday to the date of 16th April the Gaelic Society of Inverness hold a short memorial service which starts at 11am.Attending the service are members of various Clan and Scottish Societies with a sprinkling of overseas visitors from Alliance groups. Most of the attendees wear traditional clothing. Members of the public are encouraged to attend

Read less ▲

Date of experience: September 2012

Trip type: Travelled with friends

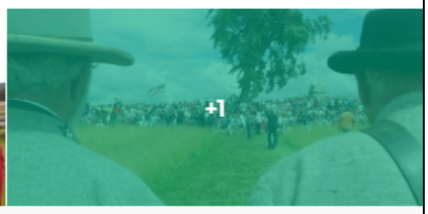
Site4: Gettysburg National Military Park

4.1 Gettysburg National Military Park

EximiousTraveller wrote a review Jun 2014

Leicester, United Kingdom • **2,425** contributions • **388** helpful votes





●●●●●

Powerful reminder of the horror of war in the American Civil War...

Being in Gettysburg for the sesquicentennial commemoration was one of life's most moving experiences and this review is rather late, I'm afraid. The walk up Pickett's Charge at 3 o'clock with thousands of Confederate supporters to be greeted in friendship by the Union officers and many more thousands of spectators is something that will remain with me for the rest of my life. This was my third visit to the Gettysburg National Park. The "new' visitors' centre is bigger and more impressive than the old one but conversely there seems to be less to see with fewer artefacts. I may be wrong but perhaps the new building just swallows them up in the larger space. It is nevertheless an absolute must for anyone interested in the American Civil War. Impressive films and the highest quality displays are everywhere one looks and the whole three days are dealt with chronologically. If anything, we found the display of the famous cyclorama to be still rather muddled with people moving haphazardly to try and capture the story with lights and laser pointers trying to explain the history as clearly as possible. I have mentioned it twice before to staff at the Park but I do wish they'd learned from the quite brilliant way that the Atlanta Cyclorama is displayed in Georgia. Admittedly they don't have the visitor numbers of Gettysburg especially on July 3rd 2013 but it could have been so much better.

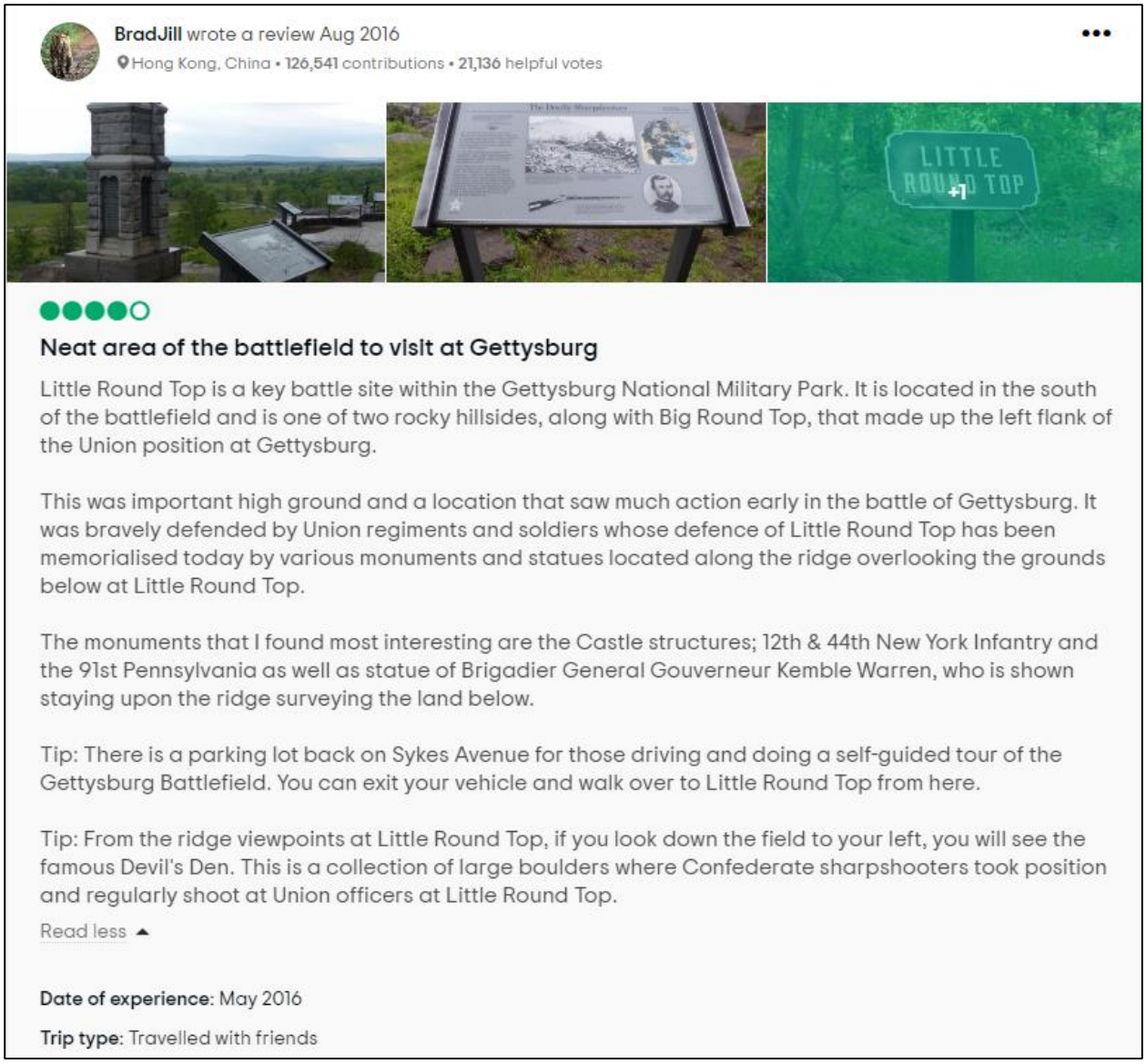
The whole site is full of some imposing and some modest memorials all of which are labelled very clearly. The magnificent statue of Robert E Lee at the bottom of Pickett's Charge is one of the best but it has normally taken us many hours to do a motor tour of the battlefield although that proved impossible on the sesquicentennial... The feeling of universal sorrow from the thousands in the crowds engendered by evoking the tragedy of the battle was summed up in the playing of 'Taps' along the High Water Mark at all the points the Confederate soldiers reached the famous wall. Sincerity and respect marked the whole occasion. It'll never be forgotten by all who were there exactly 150 years later to the minute.

Read less ▲

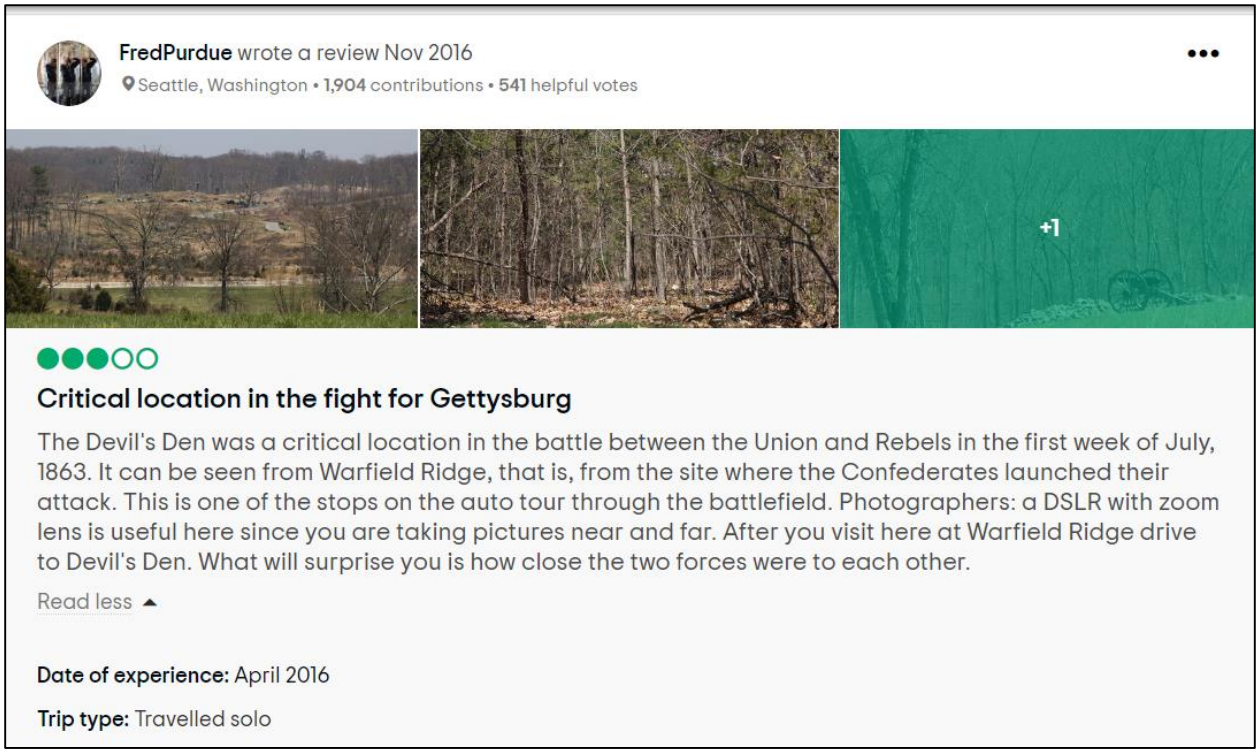
Date of experience: July 2013

Trip type: Travelled with family

4.2 Little Round Top



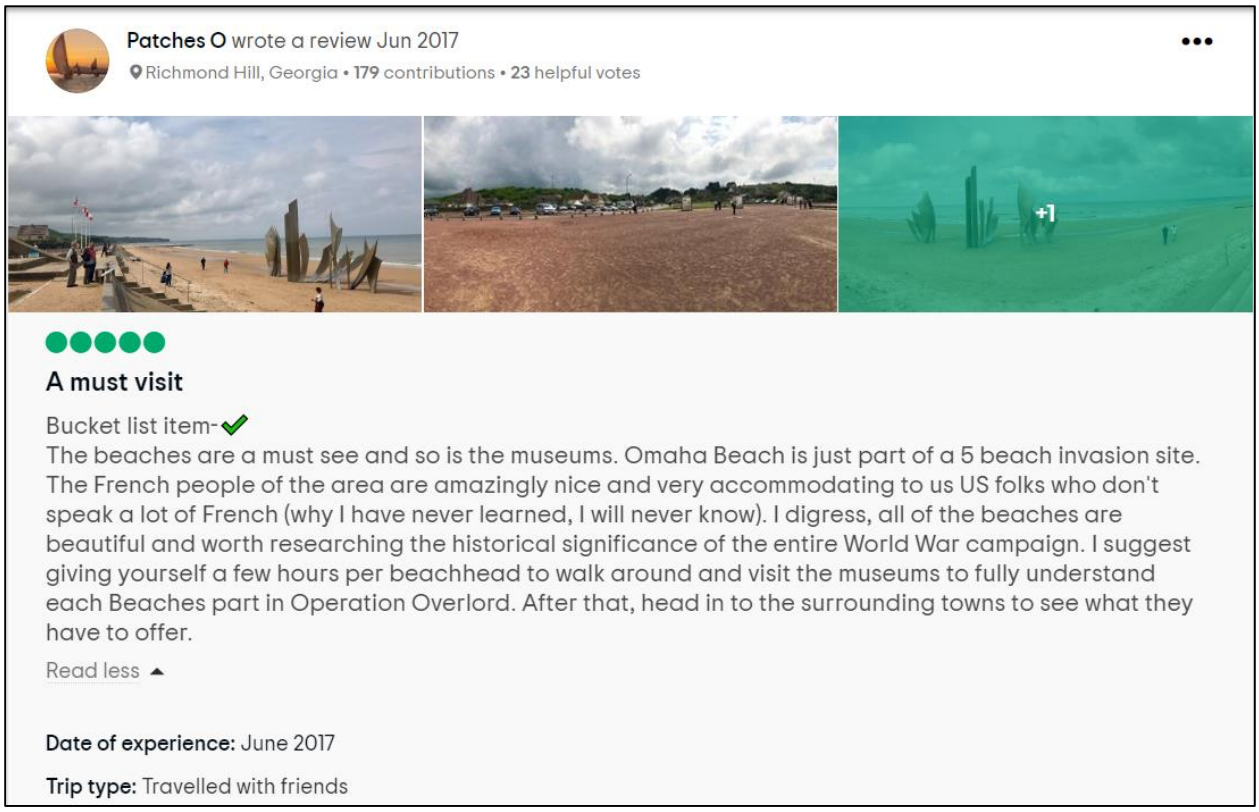
4.3 Devils Den



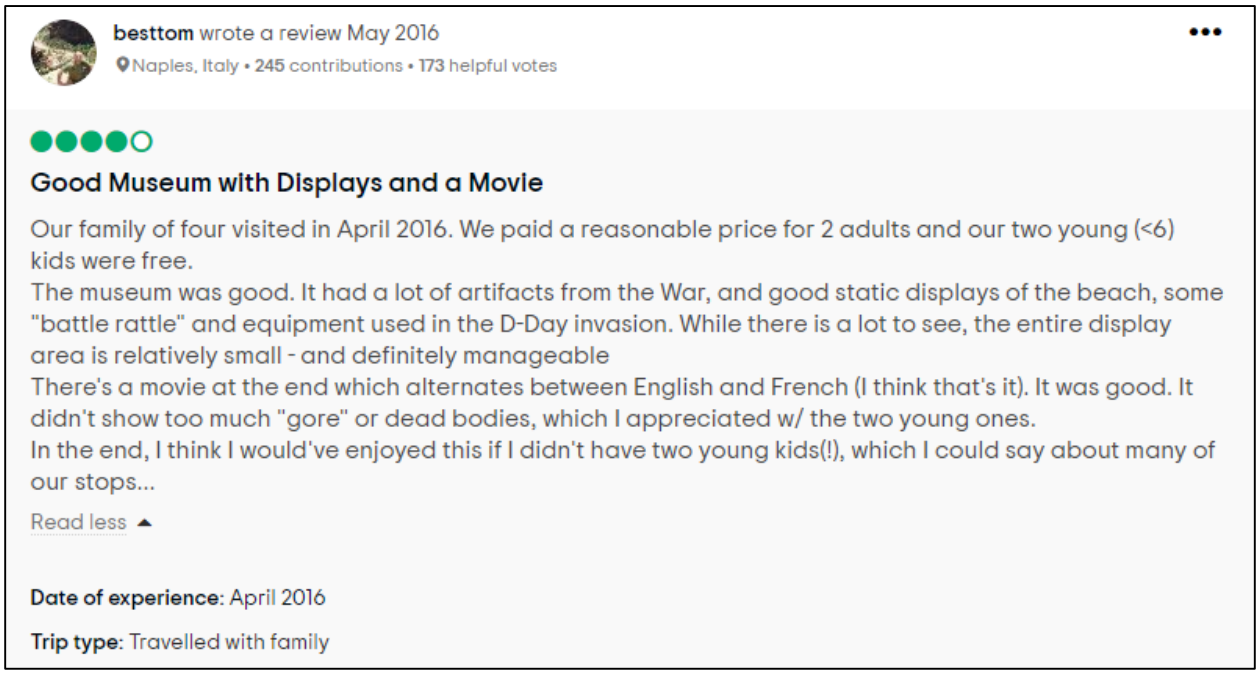
4.4 Gettysburg National Military Park Museum & Visitor Center

Site5: Omaha Beach

5.1 Omaha Beach



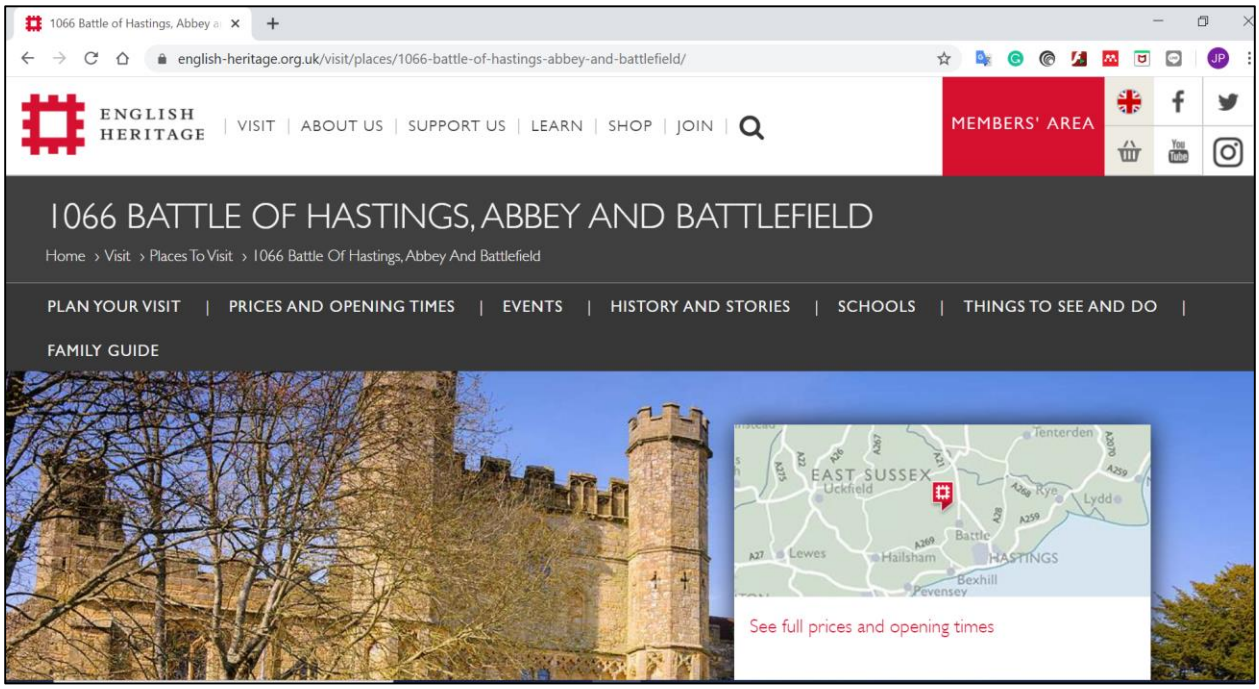
5.2 Omaha Beach Memorial Museum

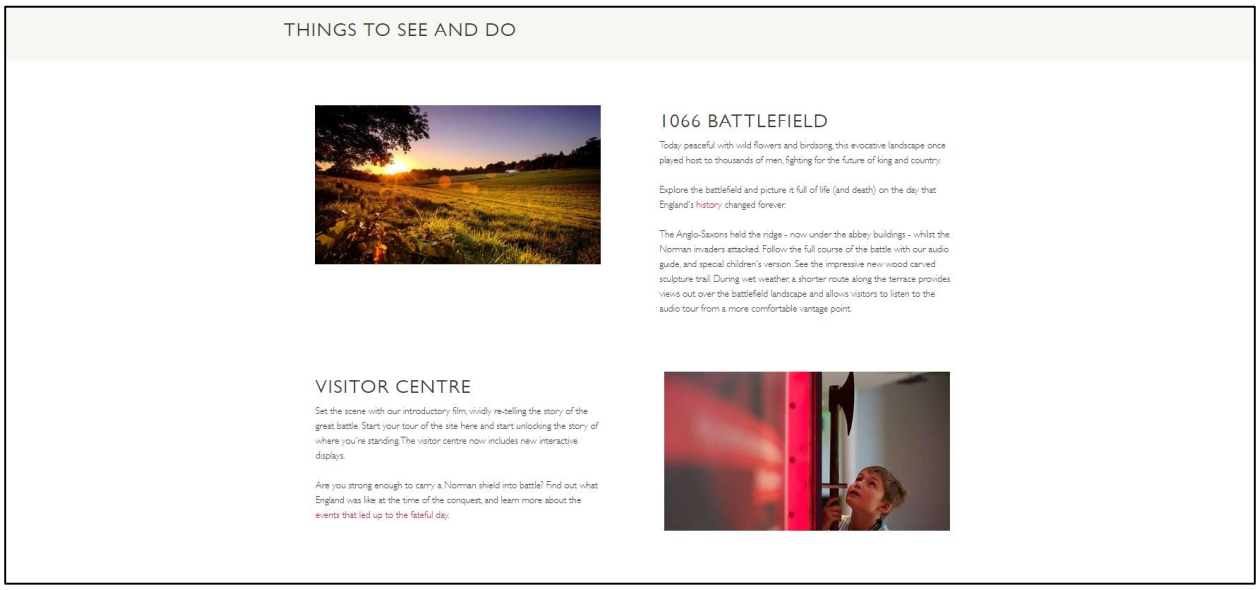


Appendix B: Official Website of Battlefield Sites

Site1: Battle Abbey and Battlefield

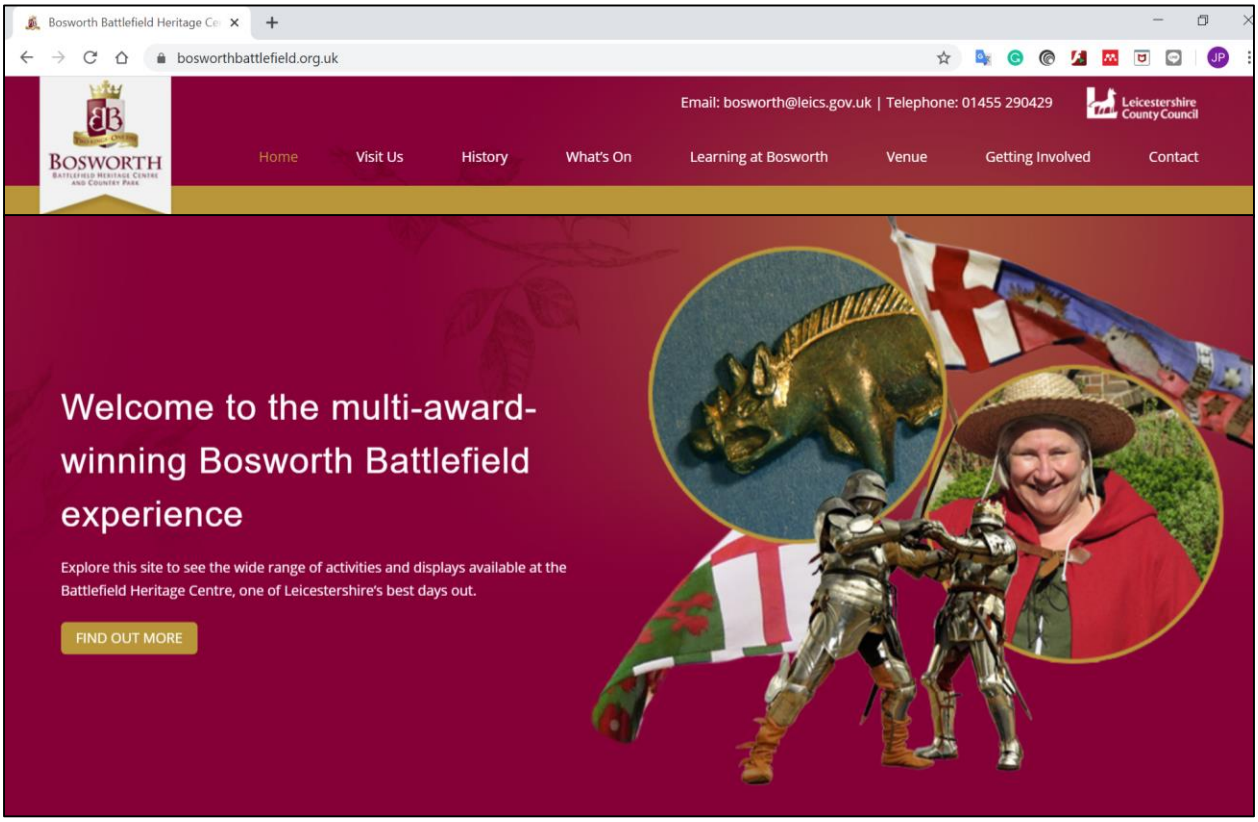
https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/1066-battle-of-hastings-abbey-and-battlefield/

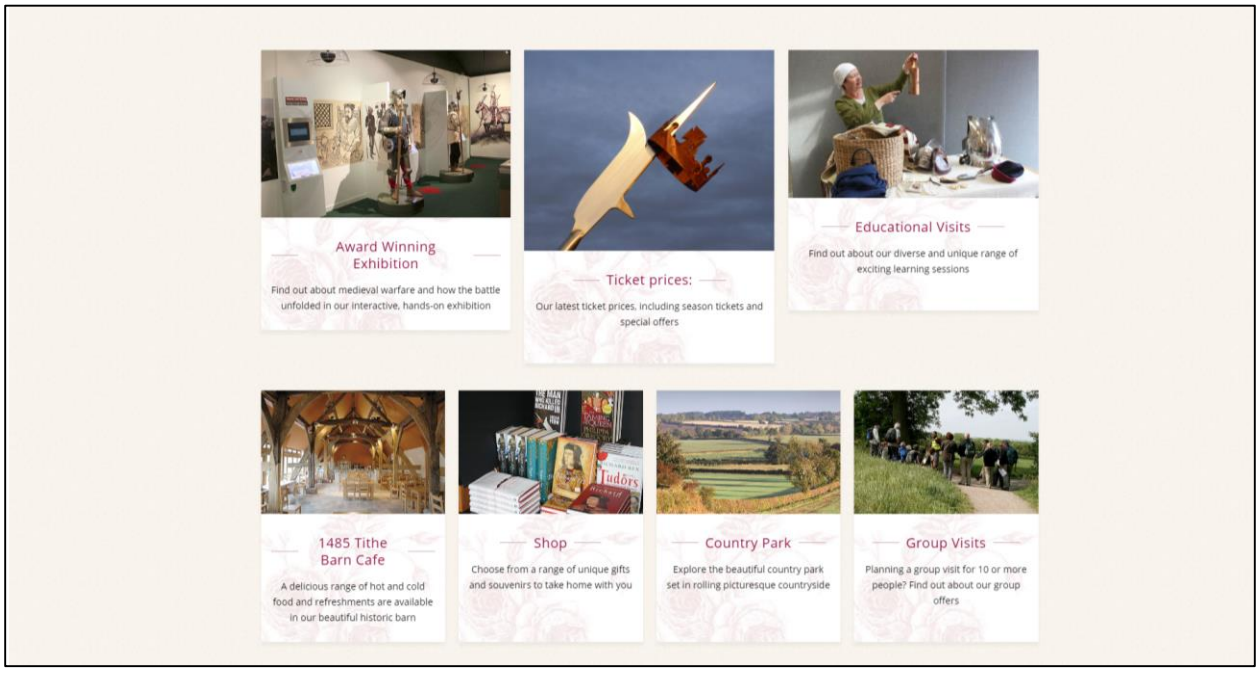




Site2: Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and Country Park

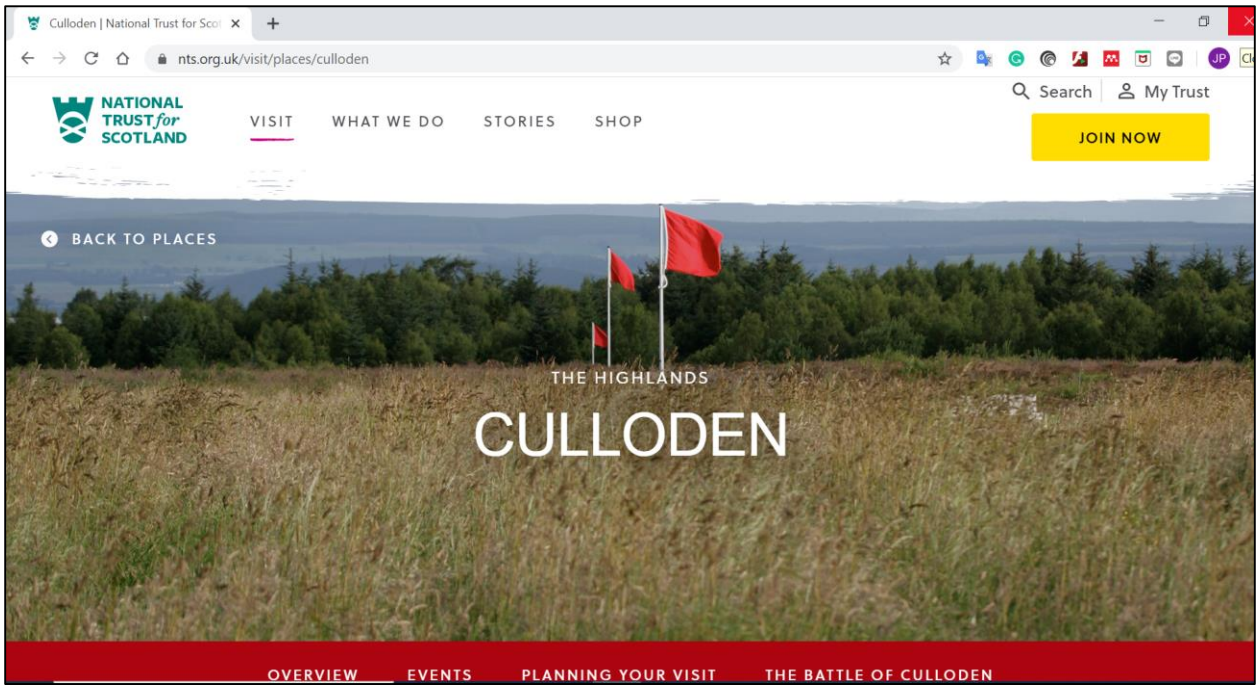
https://www.bosworthbattlefield.org.uk/

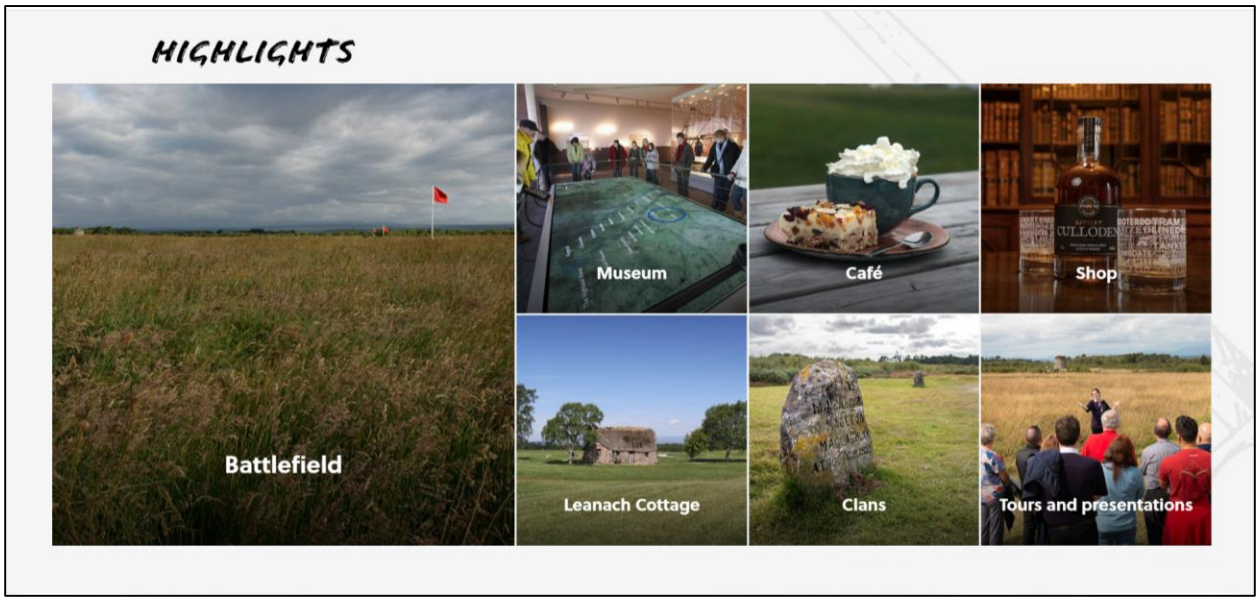




Site3: Culloden Battlefield

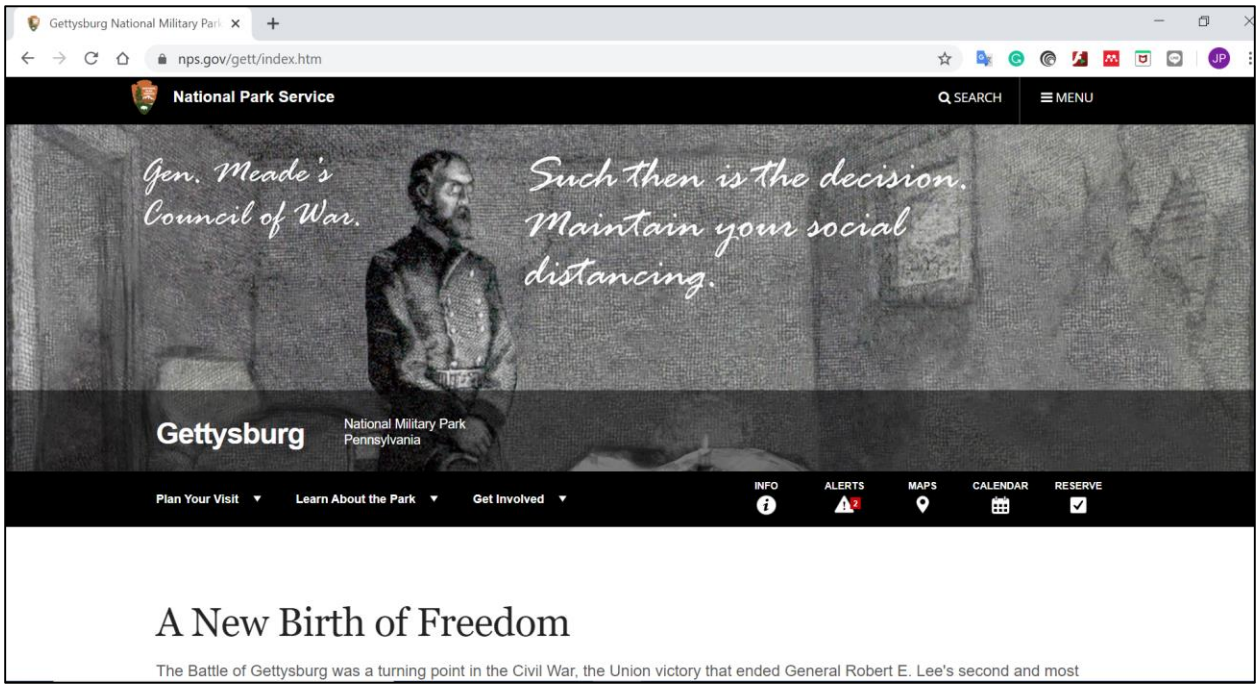
https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/culloden

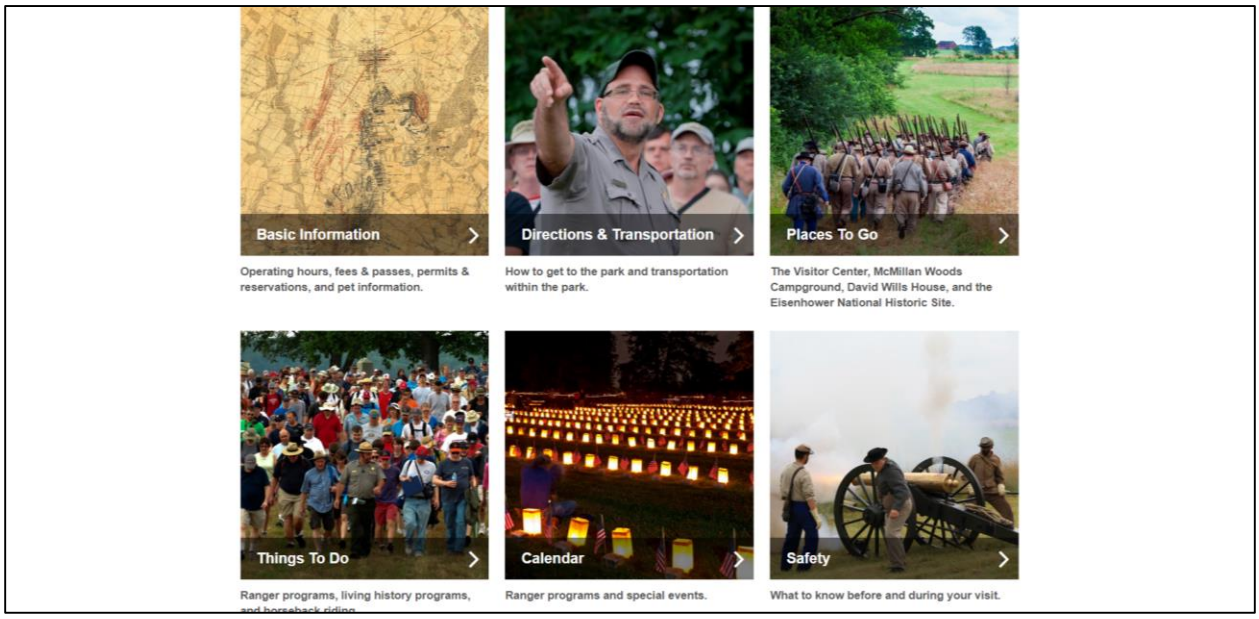




Site4: Gettysburg National Military Park

https://www.nps.gov/gett/index.htm





Site5: Omaha Beach Museum

http://www.musee-memorial-omaha.com/en/