

Exploring the role of dark tourism in the creation of national identity of young Americans

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Co-creating National Identity: Exploring the Role of Dark Tourism in Marketing

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Bridget Roth is a specialist in Tourism Marketing with a particular interest in Dark Tourism.

Abstract:

Focusing on the voice of the tourist and their consumer experience this paper aims to develop our understanding of the behaviours and motivations of dark tourism and the social influences and responses in creating narratives and stories which co-create and reinforce national identity. Comprising an empirical study of visitors' narratives of their experiences based on 25 interviews with young American dark tourist site visitors our empirical findings suggest that some dark tourists use their experiences to collectively narrate stories of their nation and their own national identity. This paper contributes to the extant literature on consumer co-creation and national identity. A conceptual framework is proposed specifically designed for dark tourism sites. It provides a novel explanation of national identity co-creation and recognises the relationship between consumer/visitor motivation, experience and co-creation.

Summary Statement of Contribution

This research provides a theoretical contribution to our understanding of the ways in which national identity and dark tourism are linked. Taking a social construction perspective the empirical research design comprises twenty five interviews with dark site visitors in two stages, through which repeat interviews take account of the double hermeneutic. We conceptualise the intricate and sometimes inconsistent stances that visitors take when explaining their dark tourism motivations and reflections and propose a new conceptual framework.

Keywords:

Co-creation, National Identity, Dark Tourism, Narratives

Introduction

Interest in heritage can be located in the social and identity crisis experienced in contemporary society (Goulding, 1999). Similarly, the phenomenon of national identity has provided a backdrop for debates about the nature of social bonds, individual affiliations and expressions of nationhood in a globalised world. In this paper we present an alternative way of thinking about dark tourism which explores its contribution to the collaborative creation of national identity. Our intention is to make a theoretical contribution to our understanding of the ways in which national identity and dark tourism are linked. This involves a consideration of the complex and sometimes contradictory positions that participants take when accounting for their dark tourism motivations and reflections. Tourism and consumer researchers have not attempted to understand tourists' various dark tourism visitor behaviours and reactions in terms of national identity construction (McCabe, 2000; Uriely, 2005). Similarly, although the role and influence of tourism in national identity has been considered, the national identity literature has not explicitly looked at dark tourism as part of this phenomenon (Nairn, 1997; Spillman, 1997; Pretes, 2003).

Although dark tourism has become a prolific topic for academic research in recent years (e.g. Biran *et al.*, 2011; Cohen, 2011; Dunkley *et al.*, 2011; Hyde and Harman, 2011), much of the literature is 'supply-side' focused. That is, researchers have identified, categorised, and explained the supply and provision of dark tourism sites. There have been fewer studies, and therefore a more limited understanding, of the motivations and experiences of dark tourists themselves (Dann, 1998; Seaton and Lennon, 2004; Stone and Sharpley, 2008). While there have also been several studies regarding the role of tourism in the process of national identity formation (Edensor, 1998, 2000; Chronis *et al.*, 2012) such studies have focussed on tourism in general not explicitly at dark tourist sites and behaviour (e.g. Joyce *et al.*, 2013).

The research reported in this paper aims to develop our understanding of the behaviours and motivations of dark tourism and the social influences and responses in creating narratives and stories which co-create and reinforce national identity. This article has the following structure. Initially, we review key topics and research findings regarding tourism and national identity through an overview of the relevant literature. Secondly, we detail the methods employed to address our research objectives. Third, we present our findings and propose our conceptual framework, showing how dark tourism facilitates the co-construction of national identities in different contexts. Theoretical contributions and suggestions for future research provide a conclusion to the paper.

National identity and tourism

National identity has a long history which stretches beyond the advent of nation state in the 19th century and its nature and significance has changed with historical, political and other circumstances (Nairn, 1997). Nationalism is not a sociologically ‘natural’ phenomenon like tribalism or regionalism, but the result of the deliberate efforts of the dominant political power to form a single homogenous, ‘nation’ from a multicultural, diverse population (Mosse, 1975; Hechter, 2000). Issues of national identity have taken on new significance in the context of globalisation, consumer culture, social media and the fragmentation of social structures (Spillman, 1997; Mitchell, 2001). According to Smith (1996, p. 121) it is “myths of origins” frequently based on historical narratives that “form the groundwork of every nationalist mythology...telling us who we are, whence we came from and why we are unique”. Beyond historical, geographical and social bonds Anderson (1991) defines the nation itself as an ‘imagined community’, because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members. None of this literature however has examined the link between the perceptions of the national brand per se and the citizens’ experience of national identity.

In addition to research on the branding of nations (Olins, 2001; Kulkarni and Ganesh, 2002; Erdem *et al.*, 2006; Lee *et al.*, 2010), there have also been several studies on the process of forming or reaffirming self and national identity via tourism (Edensor, 1998, 2000; Goulding, 1999; Peñaloza, 2000; Pretes, 2003; Macdonald, 2006; Chronis *et al.*, 2012). Important findings include those of Palmer (2005) who examines how the national identity of ‘Englishness’ is constructed through tourists’ experiences at three heritage sites: Battle Abbey, Hever Castle and Chartwell. She finds that these sites signify core aspects of Englishness, presenting the nation variously “as a family, a group of relations with shared history, values and beliefs, and common characteristics” (2005, p. 7). This supports the view that tourism can facilitate a sense of belonging; although how these experiences are then conveyed in narratives co-creating identity remains unexplored.

Similarly, Korean nationhood is explored by Park (2010) through visitors’ experiences of Changdeok Palace, South Korea and shows how heritage tourism experience acts as a symbolic mechanism by which national belonging can be reconstructed and communicated. An important finding here is that heritage is not just a *tangible* manifestation of the past represented by artefacts and physical sites, but also encompasses *intangible elements* of symbolic meanings and spiritual embodiments. “It may be asserted that heritage tourism is inextricably bound up with experiencing both material (tangible) and socio-psychological (intangible) remnants of the nation’s past. Therefore, heritage can be better understood as both a material and socio-psychological testimony of identity” (Park, 2010, p. 133). Hede and Thyne (2010) report similar findings in their study of a literary museum.

This role of the intangible is also illustrated by one of the site guides in the study of the Gettysburg heritage site and its story by Chronis:

[Guide] *As far as what brings people to Gettysburg, great deeds, something stays, bodies disappear [but] spirits linger, they consecrate the ground. . .our country is formed here; by this battle; what happened here* (2005, p. 397).

This case further illustrates how professional staging and the guides' storytelling is not taken for granted by the visitors. While guides are "conscious of the need to remind visitors of the scene in which they are in" (Hede and Thyne, 2010, p.697) their interaction can produce conflict which mainly arises from the perceived gap between tourists' familiarity with pre-established narrative and their new encounters and stories heard during their visit. For example, Chronis (2005) finds disagreements that result from regionally based identification, "as when individuals from either northern or southern states become over-supportive of the Union or the Confederate side. Such contestation may be expressed through the employment of historical events in heated dialogues between tourists and guides" (Chronis, 2005, p. 393). He finally concludes that "it is the poetic performance of the Gettysburg story that is highly responsible for the transformation of a bloody fratricide into a national narrative of unity; it is because of its co-constructed nature that Gettysburg is established as the birthplace of the American nation and its narrative becomes a myth of origins" (2005, p. 402).

While tourism clearly influences the creation of national identity, the relationship between national culture and so-called 'World Culture' is also instrumental to our understanding of what constitutes a national identity. In his essay, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures", the philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1961) argues that national culture must also be a form of world culture, which depends on the capacity of the national culture to recreate a rooted tradition while appropriating foreign influences at the level of both culture and civilization through necessarily complex processes of cross-fertilization and reinterpretation. "There is the paradox: how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old,

dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization.” (1961, p. 276). The past has a pervasive appeal and can be used to enhance concepts of the self or can reinforce bonds through a common experience. Consumers seek experiences to confirm their social identities through a better understanding of their heritage (Goulding, 1999, p662).

One of the most important strands of consumer research attempts to understand “the co-constitutive, co-productive ways in which consumers, working with market-generated materials, forge a coherent, if diversified and often fragmented sense of self” (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 13). By exploring the self in relation to national identity this study will further contribute to an understanding of the concept of co-creation. The strategy and organisational literature on co-creation has tended to be overlooked in the marketing discipline (notably Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) where the value co-creation concept has been developed predominantly from Vargo and Lusch’s notion of Service-Dominant Logic. This might explain why most of the marketing research has focused on services in the context of interfirm relationships and some B2C contexts. While several marketing authors have investigated the antecedents and constituents of value co-creation, others attempt to evaluate its impact and implications for business success. Less is known or researched however about the social roles enacted by the during the interaction process and within which interaction is embedded (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Grönroos, 2011; Lusch et al., 2010). It is this aspect of the co-creation process where this study of tourism marketing and national identity may contribute some understanding. Hogg and Michell (1996) observe that consumers have a number of self-images and one might argue national identity is similarly partial because the individual’s identity as an American (or other nationality) does not make up the whole person; they also play other important roles as citizen, parent, professional, sister, neighbour etc. Indeed, that ‘part’ of the self which is an American is also necessarily in process because it changes according to life-stages, expenditure opportunities, outside influences, contexts,

visits, interaction, travelling, events etc. The child for example has a very different understanding of their self as an American' compared to their later adult consumer 'self' (e.g., meanings, fantasies, desires and more mundanely issues regarding financial implications, responsibilities, etc.).

Further, like the notion of the self, national identity may be compared to a bricolage, being constructed by mixing 'bits and pieces' from experiences, travels, commodities, fashions or appearance (Hebdige, 1979). It is these potential components in the construction of national identity that will be explored here in the context of dark tourism.

Dark tourism

Dark tourism, the act of visiting sites associated with death, suffering, disaster and the overall macabre is not a new phenomenon (Seaton, 1996; Dann, 1998; Lennon and Foley, 2000; Stone, 2006; Sharpley, 2009; Cohen, 2011). Gladiator games at the Roman Coliseum, the gathering of masses to watch public executions, visits to famous battle sites, and many other events connected to death and suffering are all representative of dark tourism (Seaton and Lennon, 2004). Tourism experiences "provide opportunities to explore oneself on an intrapersonal and, potentially, an interpersonal level" (Hede and Thyne, 2010, p.690). It should therefore be of no surprise that tourists assemble at one or more of the mass surplus dark tourism sites and that within the past fifteen years, dark tourism has become a prolific topic for academic research (for recent examples see: Biran *et al.*, 2011; Cohen, 2011; Dunkley *et al.*, 2011; Hyde and Harman, 2011).

Yet, despite the recent increase in academic studies, "much of the literature remains supply-side focused whilst the motivation(s) for dark tourism has yet to be revealed and systematically interrogated" (Stone and Sharpley, 2008, p. 576). Even one of the most recent studies on motivations, in battlefield tourism, calls for further empirical research - especially

qualitative in-depth studies of motivations and experiences (Dunkley *et al.*, 2011). Although previous research has identified, categorised, and explained dark site supply, there is limited insight about dark tourist motivation(s) (Dann, 1998; Seaton and Lennon, 2004).

While interest in death is a “taste all share to some extent” (Seaton, 1996, p. 240), fascination for dark tourism may not be recognised as such and this is important for our understanding of the motivation(s) of dark tourists. In other words, tourists who seek dark tourist sites may represent normal, rather than abnormal, behaviour (Seaton and Lennon, 2004). If this is the case, visitors may not identify their motivations as particularly dark, but rather as a means for fitting in with the crowd, exploring historical interest (education), indulging personal fascination (entertainment), making sense of the past, enhancing one’s status, and/or demonstrating national pride (Seaton, 1996; Goulding, 1999; Lennon and Foley, 2000; Seaton and Lennon, 2004; Stone, 2006; Biran *et al.*, 2011; Cohen, 2011).

Further, little is known about the role of dark tourism in the co-creation of national identity. This study considers the role of national identity and examines the inter-relationships between the intricate and occasionally inconsistent stances that participants take when explaining their dark tourism motivations and reflections. Consequently the objectives of this research are threefold:

- To examine dark tourist motivations and behaviours in terms of national identity (co)creation
- To investigate the interplay between self and national identity in the context of dark tourism
- To develop a conceptual framework to explain the inter-relationships between motivations for visiting and narratives of experience of dark site tourists

Research Design

A narrative analysis of visitors' stories around their experience of dark tourism sites is the principle methodology employed in this study. This qualitative approach aims to understand and explore key influences and relationships, which are later expressed in terms of a diagrammatic conceptual framework. The narrative turn in social sciences (e.g. Boje, 1991; Christie and Orton, 1998; Simmons, 2001; Bruner, 2002; Booker, 2005; Linde, 2009) suggests that human beings make sense of their lives by behaving as both storytellers and narrating themselves in their own stories. Boje defines a story as "an oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting past or anticipated experience" (Boje, 1991, p. 111) although arguably we also tell stories to ourselves even if we imagine the presence of another while we are doing so. Shankar, Elliot and Goulding (2001) emphasise the potential of a narrative perspective for theory and method in consumer research. Narratives are considered to be a fundamental way by which we structure and therefore make sense of our lives. Shankar et al argue that the detailed study of narratives can contribute to our understanding of how consumers structure and make sense of their consumption experiences.

Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott (2001) note that there is widespread debate about the nature of story which is intertwined with broader epistemological and ontological debate regarding the nature of reality and knowledge. (Riessman 1991). Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott identify three 'key understandings' of the nature of story in marketing and more widely in social research. Firstly, story is a factual report of events which tells what happened with some contextualising information such as where it happened or who was involved. It provides a chronological listing of events without the complex linking of events through attribution of intention and effect or extended commentary (Riessman 1991). The emphasis is upon 'facts',

thus excluding the teller's account of why the events took place, or why the events are worth reporting (Polanyi 1982). Secondly, story is myth; i.e. a myth which describes the storyteller's already construed and fabricated version of events. Finally, story as narrative, where the authors define narrative as a means of coming to understand events and constructing the storyteller's reality.

In order to capture visitors own accounts of their experiences of their dark tourism site visits and to explore the way in which these visits featured in future narratives, a two stage interview approach was employed. This empirical data-gathering phase of the research comprised a total of twenty five interviews with the first set of interviews conducted as soon as reasonably practicable after dark tourist site visits; allowing the participants to contemplate their recent experiences and to avoid 'noise' effects associated with conducting an interview in situ. The second set of interviews was specifically designed to discuss with the respondents (a) how the narratives they had presented in their original interviews had been interpreted by the researchers and (b) if and how the respondents' dark tourism experiences had subsequently been weaved into their stories of the self to co-create a national identity.

The sampling approach was purposive with only respondents who had visited dark tourism sites selected so that they would be able to fully contemplate the motivations and account for their visits (Dann, 1981, p. 200). Furthermore, limiting the sample to prior visitors decreased the variation of responses and presented a more cohesive set of narrative accounts than a comparative sample of visitors and non-visitors. A sample of respondents between the ages of 18-26 was recruited because of the significance of the young tourist to the future prospects of the tourism industry (Carr, 1999) as well as the paucity of research on the youth tourism market (Reisinger and Mavondo, 2002). Using the social network of one of the authors, students as well as part-time and full-time employed respondents were encouraged to take

part in the research to ensure diversity of experience within the sample frame. As dark tourism sites relevant to Americans were chosen for exploration, the respondents were also American to allow a focus on US visitors. Other nationalities would perhaps know less (or care less) about events that took place at these dark tourism sites and may view the sites from other national perspectives. Analysis of such varied responses would potentially be overly complex.

This study is based on 11 different dark tourism sites as detailed by the respondents. Sites were categorized in accordance with Stone's (2006) seven classifications of dark suppliers along the dark tourism spectrum. All site visits were day visits. Prior to the start of all interviews, participants were provided with a code of practice, which outlined the use of recording devices, confidentiality of responses, treatment of identity, and verification processes. Respondents were asked to sign this code of practice, confirming their willingness to participate in the study. Participants also completed a form outlining pertinent demographic and life-course information such as age, nationality, education level, job, income and marital status (see **Table 1**). Goulding (1999, p.658) suggests that tourists are drawn to "mediums that reflect their own age culture". The dark sites visited by the respondents typically reflect this assertion. Interviews lasted on average 45-60 minutes. Both stages of interview data collection were sufficient to ensure saturation (Guest *et al.*, 2006).

Following McCracken (1988), "grand tour" questions were used to prompt informants to discuss their own experiences in their own way. A checklist was used by the interviewer to ensure certain topic areas were discussed. Employing techniques suggested by McCabe (2000) the organisation, wording and flow of questions became more or less open-ended and were adapted by the researcher as conversations progressed to allow for a mixture of responses and in order to permit respondents to give their accounts in their own words (Veal,

1997). Interviewees were encouraged to express their experiences in a sufficiently flexible manner to ensure themes were covered in the order most suited to them (Legard *et al.*, 2003).

Table 1 Sample Demographics

Pseudonym	US-based dark site visit/s	Age*	Education	Gender	Occupation	Marital status
Dane	Holocaust museum, DC	23/24	College	M	HR assistant	Single
Bruce	***Holocaust museum, DC JFK museum, Dallas Titanic museum, Halifax	26/27	Masters	M	Teacher	Married
Charlie	Pearl Harbour	25/26	College	M	Special effects artist	Single
Max	Freedom Towers	21/22	College	M	Student/Server	Single
Peter	Holocaust museum, DC Vietnam memorial ***Arlington cemetery	18/19	High school	M	Student/Cook	Single
Karl	Freedom Towers Flight 93 memorial	24/25	College	M	Music teacher	Single
Tim	Holocaust museum, DC	23/25	Diploma	M	Electrician	Single
Brynn	Gettysburg ***Flight 93 memorial	23/24	College	F	Client services	Single
Lynn	Salem Boston	26/28	Masters	F	Instructor/ Student	Single
Melrose	Alamo Freedom Towers Pearl Harbour	22/23	College	F	Customer associate	Single
Maura	Freedom Towers	21/23	College	F	Student/ Waitress	Single
Tessa**	Pearl Harbour	19	College	F	Student/Sales	Single
Karlie**	JFK museum, Dallas	26	College	F	Sales	Single
Joanne**	JFK museum, Dallas	26	Masters	F	Substitute teacher	Single

*Age at first and second interview

**Respondents interviewed only once – all others re-interviewed a second time approximately 12 months after the first interview

***Most recently visited dark tourism site explored in interview (where relevant)

Topics included reflections on: reasons for visiting dark tourism sites, short/longer-term responses and reactions to dark tourism site visits, activities undertaken while at dark tourism sites as well as contextualising dark tourism site visits by exploring ‘typical’ holiday-making.

The first set of interviews was analysed and the respondents’ explanations of their motivations for visiting dark tourism sites were categorised and mapped. Subsequently approximately 12 months after the initial research interviews all of the original participants were approached and invited for a second interview; eleven of whom agreed. The second set of interviews was specifically designed to capture the respondents’ relative interpretations as building on those expressed in their original interviews. The aim of this second process was to take into account the ‘double hermeneutic’ (Giddens, 1987) which Gummesson (2003) also refers to as the ‘hermeneutic circle’. In this study, this required firstly establishing from respondents that their full accounts of their tourist behaviour and experience had been accurately captured by the researchers’ accounts of their initial narratives. Secondly it necessitated subsequent second interviews to explore additions, corrections, misinterpretations or reconsiderations of the respondents’ original accounts.

The double hermeneutic holds that, in order to understand the whole (e.g. beliefs, desires or practices); it is necessary first to understand the part (e.g., sentence, utterance or act). By re-visiting the interviewees and obtaining their views on the researchers’ interpretations, a more holistic and reliable account is provided here. This approach is also akin to a phenomenological research strategy, which employs an inductive process that acknowledges a “mutual simultaneous shaping of factors” and an emergent design that encourages the

identification of categories, concepts, and issues as they appear during the research (Hussey and Hussey, 1997, p. 48).

Our analysis of the two sets of interview accounts employed analytic induction (Bryman and Burgess, 1994) and the constant comparative method in order to explore the themes which were revealed in the respondents' narratives. Each interview was examined to gain a holistic understanding of the respondent, making notes of themes as they transpired (Thompson and Hirschman, 1995). All the themes were reviewed through iterations of comparison and re-reading. The interpretations developed were as a consequence of the relationship between emerging insights and prior assumptions (Spiggle, 1994).

Data analysis

The findings are categorised using three salient themes that emerged from the narratives of the respondents. These themes of Individual and Social Motivations for Dark Tourism Site Visits, the Tangible and Intangible of Dark Tourist Sites and Co-Creation of Self and National Identity are explored in the following section. Key inter-relationships between themes are then examined and expressed in terms of a conceptual framework.

Individual and social motivations for dark tourism site visits

Data illustrated that motivations for visiting dark tourism sites were individual (role reinforcing, educational, bearing witness and dissociative) as well as social (paying collective homage, belonging, being a good citizen and demonstrating pride). These findings build on and further develop suggestions from previous studies (Seaton, 1996; Lennon and Foley, 2000; Seaton and Lennon, 2004; Stone, 2006; Biran *et al.*, 2011; Cohen, 2011) that indicate motivations for dark tourism site visits include exploring historical interest, complying with social norms and demonstrating national pride.

Individual motivations

Interestingly a number of respondents reflected that their motivations for visiting a dark tourist site was not necessarily as a result of fascination with the macabre (Stone, 2006); rather that the experience of the visit offered an opportunity to enhance an individual self-identity or ‘role’ which had been adopted or ascribed. In the following excerpt, Lynn who identifies as a ‘Goth’ narrates her visit to Salem. Her reason for visiting Salem was because “[Salem] is so full of history and I really am personally interested in the history of witch hunts”; in part to enhance her role as a Goth as well as assuage her interest:

And there are so many literary things tied up with [Salem] as well like Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Crucible and things like that. So I wanted to go and see where it had happened.

Similarly, Karl’s motivation for attending the Flight 93 memorial site was to support and enhance his role as a teacher. He observes that as his students had already attended this dark tourism site he was obliged to have the same experience to be able to ‘share’ the visit. This also supports the notion of dark tourism sites having educational properties Seaton and Lennon (2004):

I visited [Flight 93 memorial] because when they opened up that exhibit this past year a lot of my students said it was really cool so I went down and visited that. I didn’t know it had opened [the exhibition] but my students went down and they said it was awesome. After hearing it from my students they said that the president was there and a lot of my students got to see the president and his wife. I thought that was really cool and really educational for them – me being the cheesy teacher inside of me I was really excited that they were kind of expanding their historical knowledge. So I thought I’d have to go to.

Individual motivations for dark tourism site visits were also evident in bearing witness to a tragic event. Brynn notes here that her visit to the Freedom Towers (the 9/11 memorial) is partly to remember those who lost their lives and partly to observe the dark tourist site where the event took place. She illustrates what Goulding (1999) describes as “a strong feeling of ‘loss’, not of others but of an ideal” (p.661). Importantly Brynn recalls ‘signing a book’ to make sure there was an individual and personal record of her trip:

I think people go to these places to remember those people who died or lived or survived or became heroes – I think that’s why people really go to these places. I wanted to go because I was alive during that time [9/11] and I knew all about that situation and I just felt like – you know like people who go and visit Pearl Harbour who were alive during that time – it’s something they want to see even though it was so tragic – they just want to see it. I did sign a book to say I was there.

Respondents also suggested that visiting sites, museums or exhibitions associated with death and suffering afforded an opportunity to reaffirm their own values. Although disassociating with the behaviours recorded and illustrated at dark tourism sites, Tim makes repeat visits to the Holocaust Museum in Washington. This may reflect the observation of Hede and Thyne (2010) who suggest that experiences pave the way for future behaviours. While describing what motivates his day trips, an educational element is evident in his visit e.g. recalling details of the Holocaust. However Tim also notes in a dissociative manner that he find the museum “*disgusting*”:

It’s something that happened in history that you need to pay homage, well not homage exactly but you need to, I feel I need to keep it [the distasteful feeling/s] fresh. You forget details, sometimes you just need a refresher and it’s a very interesting

[Holocaust] museum. *Just things you wouldn't even think were possible are there obviously. I find it interesting, I find it disgusting but it draws you in.*

Personal or individual motivations can and do co-exist with social motivations and respondents generally provided more than one reason for visiting a dark tourism site (although with each interviewee there was an emphasis on an individual or social motivation). There appeared to be no patterns between individual and social motivation in relation to particular dark tourism sites e.g. more recent dark tourism sites relative to those that were more historical or amongst respondents (male or female). However, social motivations for dark tourism site visits were characterised by reference to an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) and/or what it was to be an American citizen and the implications thereof. Though Goulding (1999) notes, there is the possibility that heritage sites "use the past to maintain values that never existed" (p.649).

Social motivations

Respondents when reflecting on their motivations for visiting dark tourism sites, often began sentences with "*as an American...*" reinforcing that certain responsibilities and behaviours were thought to be expected of a US citizen. Karl here exemplifies the notion of paying collective homage to those in the imagined community who are part of American culture:

"[9/11] plays such an important role in history. Um, because it's like an important site in history and like, it's one of those things I feel like everyone needs to see. I mean, I don't want to play the card, like, 'If you're an American . . .', but I mean, really that's a big part of our culture."

Melrose, who lives in New York, furthers this notion of engaging others in paying homage by indicating that her social motivation for repeat visits to the Freedom Towers is to take her visitors there:

“Every time I’ve gone to the World Trade Centre site it’s because someone has come to visit and I’ve taken them up. I mean we’re all connected because we’re all American.”

This connection or ‘belonging’ (see Palmer, 2005) is also evident in the social motivations of other respondents in the sample for visiting dark tourism sites. The values associated with what it is to be an American citizen is epitomised here by Maura who co-constructs American national identity as one which is typified by both resilience and pride:

I guess the Freedom Tower is about national pride. Especially now – even though it’s still Ground Zero and it still has all that stuff there [associated negative memories], the sense of pride you have being there and looking at the Freedom Tower it’s just like you are really proud that we [the Americans] came back from something like that. It’s not just a sad feeling anymore. That’s why we go.

This pride can also be used to enhance citizenship. For example, Tim describes his social motivations for visiting Arlington Cemetery as inspiring all Americans to be similarly honoured:

Arlington Cemetery is one of the most respected cemeteries in the world. It’s an honour to be buried there – I would say. Everyone should go to pay their respects. Presidents are buried there – everyone who has been a US world figure is buried there.

Interestingly Maura notes that although deciding to visit a dark tourism site can elicit complex emotions, it is generally motivated by pride, citizenship and what it is to be an American:

It's like coming back [from 9/11], gaining momentum, coming back for America. Like I am sure that going through the whole memorial is still really hard for people but the fact that that tower is there it's really like a big thing of how we have come back from [9/11].

These respondents illustrate that their social motivations for visiting dark tourism sites (and sometimes repeat visits) are underpinned with national pride, the responsibilities associated with their citizenship and belonging to an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991). Fascination for the macabre (Stone, 2006) is limited here. In the section that follows, the respondents' experiences of dark tourism site visits are examined through both tangible and intangible elements (Park, 2010) and can be seen here to facilitate and enhance social motivations for (repeat) dark tourism site visits. However, expectations of dark tourism site visits are not always met and portrayal of American national identity through tangible elements does not always reflect the experience of the respondents.

The tangible and intangible of dark tourist sites

Respondents readily identified tangible elements at the dark tourism sites they visited as being illustrative of American national identity (e.g. flags, newspapers heralding war success). Intangible elements included the role of the tour guide in shaping an understanding of the physical site as well as the spiritual embodiment associated with the individual locations supporting the work of Chronis (2005). The accuracy of historical detail at the dark tourism sites enhanced the respondents' appreciation of the sacrifice made by those honoured at dark tourism sites while inaccurate details reduced the impact of articles.

Importantly the portrayal of tangible aspects of American national identity was not always passively accepted by the respondents. Charlie illustrates here that dark tourism site visitors are active as opposed to passive in appropriating and co-creating a national identity. The process of national identity formation through dark tourism visits is both complex and multifaceted. For example, the use of the word “*bragging*” here suggests that Charlie perceives the portrayal of American national identity to be arrogant and he is sceptical here of the way in which such (individual) sacrifice has been rewritten to promote the (collective) nation. His intonation reflects that the depiction of national identity at Pearl Harbour does not necessarily reflect his view of what it is to be an American:

When you walked into the site [Pearl Harbour], it was more like ‘We’re America, we’re great!’ – there are American flags everywhere – almost like a bragging type of thing. Like ‘We beat the Japanese’, ‘Here’s the newspaper, we won the war!’ ‘America’s great!’ Here are the things they used to use in the war, here’s an America flag – it was more about honour and respect America than the memory of it but I guess it was a mixture of it. Part memorial but mostly “America is great – we won”.

Similarly Bruce questions the tangible aspects of his dark tourist experience of the Holocaust Museum in Washington. While his interest in the site was piqued by its historical context and the opportunity to enhance his self-identity as a teacher, the use of the contemporary children’s toys in the display detracts from the visit. Although not directly related to national identity, this excerpt illustrates the significance of tangible elements of dark tourism site visits to the (potential) co-construction of (national) identity. Further it can be seen here that the inauthentic has become as much a part of the experience as the authentic (Hede and

Thyne, 2010, p. 687). However, if the tangible elements lack credibility, there could be a halo effect where other aspects of the dark tourism site could be questioned:

Probably the thing I hated about it [the Holocaust Museum] because I'm a teacher is that I went through the kids section and in accommodating and adapting it to the kids' level they modified it all. And I went through and there were things I was pointing out and going 'that's not historically accurate', 'that's not relevant' - just because it's for kids. I mean I understand that, but there is a difference between completely changing it and then adapting it to where kids can understand it. They need to learn history. They shouldn't be changing it.

Data also illustrated that the intangible can be made tangible by the tour guide as observed by Chronis (2005). Here Karl discusses a repeat visit to the Freedom Towers and notes that the guide is not only able to develop an understanding of this dark tourism site but that Karl is subsequently able to enhance his own role as a teacher through this experience:

I think it was more emotional [a repeat visit to Ground Zero] because taking a group of high school kids who have never left the country or never left the farm, because those kids were like third grade when [9/11] happened. For them, and to see how emotional they became. I mean these kids were sobbing — it made me feel emotional. Our tour guide did a really good job of putting it in perspective. Because we were in a building and they showed us pictures of what the building looked like right after the towers collapsed. It was so surreal for the kids that it just really opened their eyes to that. To me, it was like the cheesy teacher in me – it was cool for me to see them growing.

Brynn explains that making the transition from intangible to tangible is not always a straightforward process. Respondents are observed holding contradictory positions about their dark tourism site visits supporting the assertions of Hogg and Michell (2006) that individuals hold a number of self-images. As with Bruce, Brynn recognises that the dark tourism site visit produces conflicting emotions (i.e. pleasure, excitement and sadness) and that varying positions and perspectives can be evident in the same experience:

At first [when visiting the dark tourism site of Flight 93] I don't want to say I was excited – that's not the right word – I was expecting to see where people died but I was interested to see it but once I was there I almost felt uncomfortable that I was trespassing on these people's lives. I had to leave.

These conflicting positions would suggest the notion of fragmented self (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) in the context of dark tourism and that the co-creation of national identity through dark tourism site visits is not necessarily a fixed but a fluid concept. Co-creation can be influenced by the tangible e.g. the physical site (Park, 2010) but also by the way in which these sites portray national identity. The credibility of the articles or information at the dark tourism site and the extent to which respondents actively appropriate their national identity in relation to their own roles as well as in a social collective context also contributes to the co-creation of a self and national identity. The following section considers the way in which the respondents use their narratives to co-create a national identity in the aftermath of their dark tourism site visits and how these narratives can help co-create a self-identity as well as a collective national identity.

Co-creation of self and national identity

The co-creation of the self through dark tourism experiences and associated narratives relate to national identity but portrayals of the nation and what it represents are not submissively

acknowledged. Charlie here explores his individual co-creation of national identity following a dark tourism visit to Pearl Harbour. Here, the idea that national identity is not a 'fixed' but 'fluid' concept is further developed as Charlie suggests his perception of America differs from other US citizens. In this example, national identity can be compared to a bricolage (Hebdige, 1979):

I'm not political. I love America but I'm not going to be like Jay Leno [TV presenter] and wear a little American flag every day. That's pretty much what they sold [at Pearl Harbour] – and posters and stuff.

Charlie's dark tourism experience has facilitated the construction of his own national identity by mixing 'bits and pieces' of what he considers is representative of his self-identity. Similarly, Karl's narrative following his dark tourism visit to the Freedom Towers affords the opportunity to enhance the credibility of his own 'story' as he can demonstrate he was experience-near the disaster by engaging with the American owner of the delicatessen as well as being able to illustrate how the owner 'recovered' from the tragic event:

I remember when we were going to leave [Freedom Towers], we kind of walked down this other side street and we walked into this small delicatessen for like a sandwich or something, and we asked the owner, like, 'were you guys here during 9/11?' And he's like, 'oh yeah'. And he said, 'it took me about a year to get this place clean again, and renovated and back up and working.' So . . . it was just really cool to hear, well, I don't want to say it was cool, but it was interesting to hear his story because he really went through it. Like, he was a block away.

A social collective approach to the co-creation of national identity (Yngfalk 2013) is also revealed through the stories of the respondents. The following narratives illustrate that co-

creation of national identity can be both inclusionary and exclusionary. In this way, (perceptions of) national identity can be enhanced with 'out-groups' identified and rejected:

There was a girl there [at the Holocaust Museum, Washington]. She was wandering around with a sweatshirt that had 'Germany' written on it. Normally you would just think 'oh she must be German' but you wonder if she really thought about what she wearing that day. You're thinking is she a big fan of this stuff, is she – that was really awkward.

This illustrates evidence of nationalism (Smith, 1996) as well as patriotism. This also supports the work of Nigbur and Cinnirella (2007) who report that their respondents had a high identification with greater in-group bias and an overall more positive autostereotype when examining the effects of national identification in Germany and Britain. It would appear here that not only is felt state of social or national identity stronger when compared to other nations; national identity is fluid and can be considered as a continuum. That is, there are varying degrees of felt national identity that are situation and experience specific and that national identity, like self-identity, evolves over time.

Melrose has a similar experience at Pearl Harbour where national identity is set in the context of world culture. This also emphasises that a national identity is shaped by appropriating foreign influences (Ricoeur, 1961):

When I was at the Pearl Harbour memorial the Americans were furious because there are a lot of Japanese people – I mean it's so close – that's why they come. And they [the Japanese] have guided tours of the Pearl Harbour museum in Japanese. And it's like, I don't know, do we have tours over there of where Americans bombed them?

Co-creation of national identity for this youth sample is both individual and collective. It is not fixed but (continually) interpreted and appropriated by accepting, rejecting and reinforcing perceptions of national identity. These perceptions of national identity are illustrated here as relevant to dark tourism experiences. Co-creation of national identity and can be viewed as bricolage and can be both changeable and context specific.

These narratives, which build on the notion of self and collective identity through dark tourism experiences, have supported the development of a conceptual framework that helps to explain youth motivations for dark tourist site visits and the co-creation of national identity (see **Figure 1**).

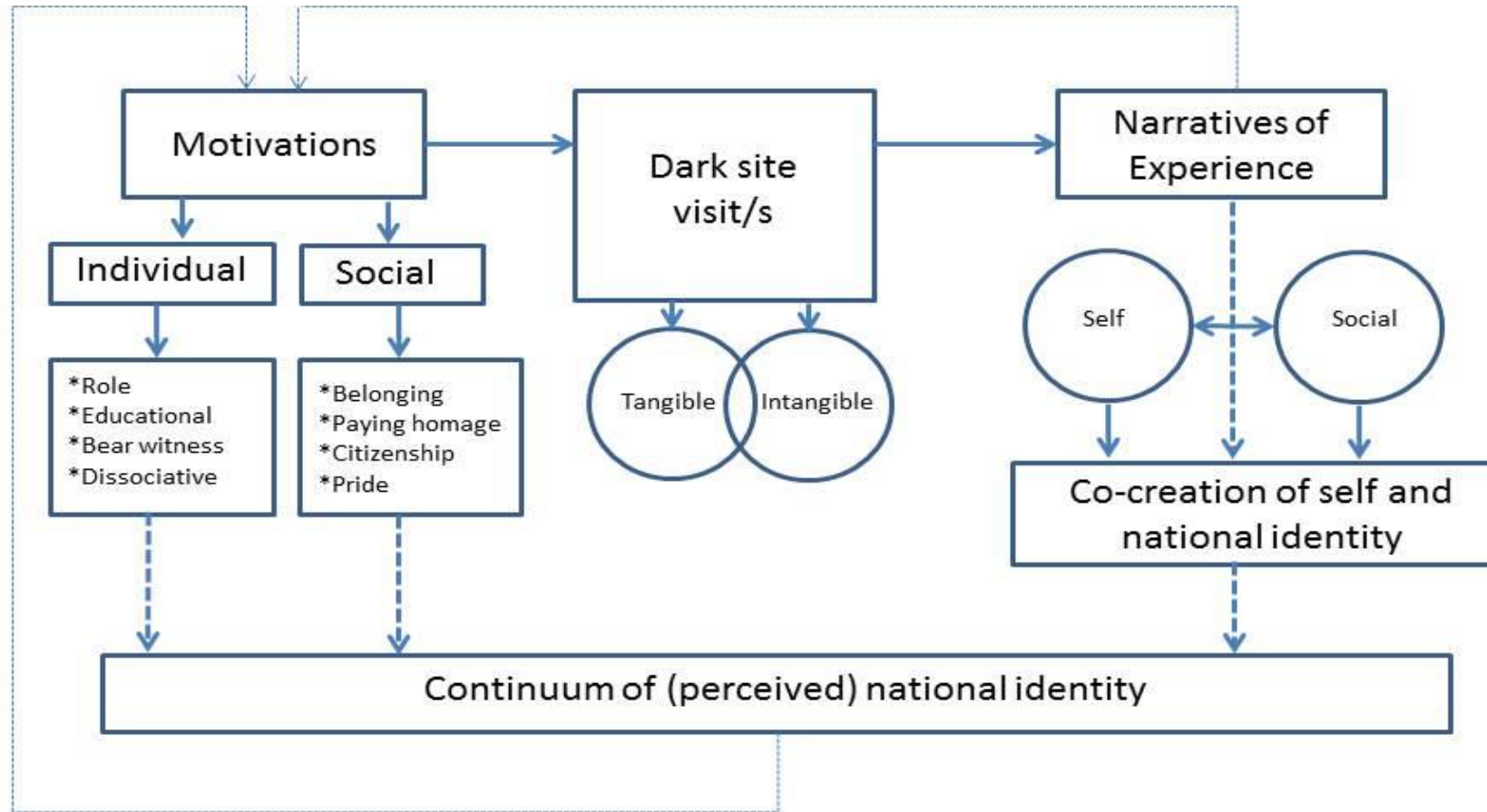


Figure 1: Youth motivations for dark tourist site visits and the co-creation of national identity.

This framework is composed of three constituent parts namely: motivation/s for dark tourism site visit/s, the experience of the visit/s and evolving narratives shaped as a consequence of the dark tourism site experience/s. Importantly while respondents report both individual and social motivations for their dark tourism site visit (as well as repeat visits), each visit is appropriated by the respondent to project a self and/or national identity. Felt or perceived state of national identity is depicted here as a continuum as data revealed respondents variously interpreted how America as a nation is portrayed and the meaning this had for their own and collective identity. This was context specific. Respondents with an increased number of dark tourist site visits did not always recount an enhanced felt state of national identity. However, in-group bias was heightened when out-group members were visible e.g. tourists from other nations. That is, the American respondents in this sample were more likely to report an enhanced sense of national identity when positioning themselves in relation to the Japanese or Germans in the context of their dark tourism visit.

The inter-relationships between the constituent parts were evident in the association between the self and the social identity and the tangible and intangible aspects of the dark tourism experience. For example, data showed that respondents made repeat visits to dark tourism sites to engage with others but also to promote a collective sense of belonging to their own nation. Respondents drew on different elements of their dark tourist site visits to illustrate their co-creation of inter-related roles that were appropriated or ascribed. Tangible elements of the dark site visit, including artefacts, were accepted or rejected to facilitate co-creation of a self and/or national identity. Similarly intangible elements, including the role of the guide, promoted a collective co-creation of the dark tourism experience through both narratives of the self and national identity.

Discussion

This research considers and reflects upon the role of dark tourism motivations, experiences and behaviour in the co-construction of national identity amongst a youth sample. Dark tourist behaviours and motivations have been captured from visitors' own narrative accounts with particular reference to co-creating a national identity. These accounts illustrate the way in which these respondents use their dark tourism experiences and narratives to co-create a national identity at both a social and individual level. This builds on and may contribute to the growing body of literature in the marketing discipline which examines consumers' interactive, co-creative experiences (eg Brodie et al., 2011), which was introduced in the introduction to this paper. The role of consumers in negotiating and contesting various market-based 'meanings' is more widely recognised (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Schembri, 2009; Schau, Muñoz and Arnould, 2009) and the active role of heritage site visitors in their co-creation of meanings appears to fit well with this conceptualisation. In marketing, Vargo and Lusch (2008) conceptualise service as a value creation process and value as an interactive construction between 'actors' - previously labelled as providers and consumers - who are now called 'resource integrators' (Akaka and Chandler, 2011). Similarly visitors and tour guides and other actors may similarly be regarded as resource integrators in the value co-creation process in this tourist marketing case.

Instead of simply belonging to the tourism experience, these findings illustrate that the respondents "belong to the narrative" (Cary, 2004). This study also explains the contradictory positions participants take when accounting for their dark tourism motivations and behaviour. Interestingly, and contrary to Stone's (2006) dark tourism spectrum, these dark tourists demonstrate less fascination for the macabre and instead use their experiences to narrate stories of nationhood.

Respondents as well as tour guides were able to transform tragedy into national unity. Out-group-members (non-US tourists) were identified and rejected where national identity was perceived as being challenged, whilst the US values of the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) were positively reinforced. Data, however, suggested a continuum of felt state of national identity with some respondents being more patriotic or nationalistic than others. That is, rather than passively 'experiencing' national identity through tourism (Palmer, 2005), these findings suggest that there are continually evolving degrees of (felt) national identity which vary for the self as well as the social collective.

Our findings support the work of those who recognise that dark tourists are not necessarily fascinated with the macabre but will visit these specific locales for educational purposes, entertainment and to enhance national pride (e.g., Seaton and Lennon, 2004; Biran *et al.*, 2011; Cohen, 2011). However, this research adds to an understanding of dark tourism behaviour by explicitly considering the role of national identity co-construction through these experiences. Furthermore, this study questions the assumption that the 'youth' may be blasé or desensitised when reflecting on their dark tourism site experiences (see Dann, 2005). This research considers the narratives of a youth sample of US citizens and there is clear evidence here of an understanding of sacrifice, loss and tragedy. Respect, pride, and humility are also apparent in these co-national construction processes. Given the paucity of research on youth tourism (Reisenger and Mavondo, 2002) understanding the significance of dark tourism in co-creating a self and national identity contributes to knowledge in this area. These findings may also contribute to an understanding of loyalty in the consumer travel industry (Richard and Zhang, 2012).

The conceptual framework (**Figure 1**) could be used in further research to explore youth narratives in relation to experiences that are co-created and facilitate a greater understanding of the way in which felt state of national identity can encourage consumption behaviours and/or changes in motivation and attitudes. It may also help explain word-of-mouth communication in the travel industry (Liang, Ekinici, Occhiocupo and Whyatt, 2013), where Hankinson (2009) finds that “to be successful, destination brands must go beyond the communication of an image and make the brand promise a reality” (p.111). One potential managerial implication of these findings is that tourist site managers and marketers could better support tourists post-visit consumption activities by constructing visitor experiences which afford consumers opportunities to recreate their experiences in future narratives and thereby influence their notions of national identity.

There are several suggestions for methodological developments in future research studies on this topic. A more limited number of dark tourism sites visited by respondents could be selected in order to better comprehend the influence of other visitors on their perception and interpretation of the place and their experience. The type of dark tourism site could be varied too. Behaviours and reactions to dark tourism site visits might be expected to be different for an older or much younger group of respondents. Also, since our study only considers US citizens, an international study incorporating European and Asian dark tourism sites would add a broader understanding of national identity co-creation in a wider cultural context.

There are three additional suggestions for further research. Firstly although they were asked about their typical holiday behaviour, the respondents here were all dark tourists. It would be interesting to compare these findings with the motivations and behaviours of those who did not visit dark tourism sites but who also use their tourism experiences to co-construct national identity. Secondly, the dark tourism sites in this study were a mixture of both purpose-built

and unintentional dark tourism sites. Purpose-built sites “interpret or recreate events or acts associated with death and the macabre”, whereas non-purposeful (or unintentional/accidental) sites have become tourist attractions simply by their association with death and disaster (Stone, 2006, p. 148). As Stone notes, not only does the site’s formation affect the type of visitors it attracts but the amount of tourism infrastructure. Further research could focus on one or other type to examine any differences in motivations and perceptions between the two and any subsequent influence on national identity co-construction. Finally the effects of branding a nation in the context of dark tourism development could build on the work of Skinner (2008) and would support a greater understanding of the role of marketing in building a national identity.

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