

TRAVEL HURDLES AND DARK TOURISM DESTINATIONS: UNRAVELING MALAYSIAN TOURISTS' VISIT INTENTIONS¹

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ABSTRACT

Dark tourism is associated with death and tragedy, and these sites attract visitors for education, leisure and historical interest with motivations including media portrayals and amusement. The research explores visitor motivations and emotional experiences in Malaysia, aiming to understand travel constraints and enhance awareness and interest, addressing gaps in local literature and practical strategies. Dark tourism in Malaysia needs more marketing and higher awareness. Despite its potential, it fails to attract tourists due to inadequate promotion and the need for more attention from authorities, industry growth is hindered. A quantitative study using a self-administered survey targeting visitors and non-visitors to dark tourism sites in Malaysia, employed non-probability and purposive sampling. One hundred and fifty data sets were collected from Google Forms distributed through WhatsApp and Twitter for one month. Though the theory of reasoned action confirmed the structural model, the results show that all three hypotheses are rejected. This indicates that the underlying reasons based on the results need further investigation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dark tourism, associated with death, suffering, and tragedy, has been defined in various ways, including horror, hardship and warfare tourism (Sun & Lv, 2021).

Notable dark tourism sites include the Taj Mahal (India), the National Memorial 9/11 and Museum (Ground Zero) in New York, Kellie's Castle (Malaysia), Panmunjom's Peace Village (Korea), and the Guanajuato Mummies Museum (Mexico). In 1993, Rojek highlighted the



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significance of the term “black spot”. Introduced by Foley and Lennon (1996) and further developed by Seaton (1996) and Martini and Buda (2020), dark tourism involves experiencing the pain of others, akin to post-disaster tourism. Despite their grim associations, these sites attract visitors for education, leisure and historical interest (Min et al., 2021). Some tourists are motivated by media portrayals or connections to inhuman activities, while others, mainly young tourists, visit for amusement (Kerr et al., 2021; Sarkar et al., 2022; Shekhar & Valeri, 2022).

Further, other terms used to describe dark tourism are morbid tourism (Blom, 2000) and atrocity tourism (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015). Hartmann (2014) examined how heritage sites present controversial histories related to death, disaster and unsettling or grim events. Martini and Buda (2020) studied dark tourism, which involves experiencing the pain of others, akin to post-disaster tourism. This study indicates that several new concepts and research directions have emerged in dark tourism, thanatourism and dissonance in heritage site management.

In Malaysia, Saad et al. (2024) state that dark tourism is becoming a trend among tourists as there are various destinations and sites such as museums (Penang War Museum, Melaka Prison Museum), colonial history (Kellie's Castle, Sandakan Memorial Park), abandoned buildings (Agnes Keith House, Villa Nabila, Haunted Drive Thru Melaka), war artifacts (Kundasang War Memorial, Petagas War Memorial), prisons (Penjara Ayer Molek), sites of conflict (Bukit Tengkorak) and others. According to Mohd Zahari et al. (2016), Malaysia promotes dark tourism as a potential revenue source and a way to preserve national history and heritage. Its acceptance grows due to its historical and cultural significance, educational benefits and positive economic effects on local communities through job creation and increased tourism income. However, its influence on Malaysia's tourism sector remains undetermined and raises ethical considerations regarding the economic exploitation of tragedy and suffering (Othman & Mohd Rosli, 2023). Nevertheless, a site's context could provide a lesson for tourists to remember and reflect upon. In Malaysia, a descriptive analysis revealed visitors' motivations and emotional experiences, guiding authorities and tourism operators to address shortcomings based on tourists' experiences (Saad et al., 2024). Although various intentions might explain the inspiration for dark tourism visits, it is vital to stress that these motivations are impacted by the internal conflicts that the experience produces (Iliev, 2021). Researchers have observed that tourists vary widely in their perceptions of dark tourism sites, particularly in how they believe these places should portray historical events and personal or collective experiences. However, more needs to be understood

about tourists' experiences when visiting local dark tourism sites (Jordan & Prayag, 2022) and how they know these are disaster sites (Prayag et al., 2021). In addition, Cai et al. (2022) suggest that only some attempts have explained tourists' intentions in visiting dark tourism destinations.

Dark tourism has seen growth in its commercial potential and the scholarly attention it has attracted (Királová & Šperková, 2024). Globally, dark tourism has shown strong trends with the increasing popularity of dark destinations, new tour launches, and heightened traveler interest in sites associated with dark histories (Buhalis et al., 2023). Malaysia is not behind this trend of rising dark tourism and Tourism Malaysia has highlighted the need to revamp the country's tourism strategy to attract a segment of travelers seeking niche experiences such as dark tourism, a growing trend that appeals not only to more adventurous travelers but also significantly contributes to the preservation of Malaysia's history and heritage (after Hassandarvish, 2024).

Despite the ostensibly huge potential for developing dark tourism and promoting it as part of the tourism offerings in Malaysia, Jamin et al. (2020) has alerted that dark tourism sites have yet to receive global attention and recognition and, thus, cannot attract international visitors. This shortcoming can be attributed to several factors, including the over-emphasis on the negative aspects of dark tourism rather than its potential benefits (Jamin et al., 2020), the perception of dark tourism as taboo due to conflicts with local beliefs and values (Tan & Lim, 2018), and cultural differences that create barriers between various cultures (Nik Mohd Nor et al., 2020). Furthermore, a lack of awareness and knowledge about dark tourism contributes to the reluctance of tour operators to promote and market this niche tourism segment (Mohd Zahari et al., 2016).

From a practical perspective, this study highlights that researchers often ignore the varied personal motives behind visits to dark tourism sites, leading to a skewed view that generalizes all tourists. Therefore, this study investigates the travel constraints affecting Malaysian tourists' intentions to visit dark tourism sites and assesses their awareness and interest in such destinations. While dark tourism generates significant income globally, it still needs to be explored. In Malaysia, local literature on dark tourism has focused on the impact of the tourism experience (Tim et al., 2022) and promotional tools (Gani et al., 2021) on tourists' intention to visit. Hence, this study aims to identify key travel constraints and develop strategies to overcome them, enhancing awareness and interest in dark tourism among Malaysian tourists. Hence, the primary purpose is to explore key travel constraints preventing visits to dark tourism sites.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THEORY OF REASONED ACTION

Based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA), this study explores the prediction of behavior by asking if someone will engage in an activity. Introduced by Martin Fishbein in 1967 and further developed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975 TRA posits that psychological processes influence behavior, with intentions arising from attitudes, normative beliefs and perceived control. Subjective norms refer to social pressures to conform, while intention is the decision to act (Fishbein, 1979; Yzer, 2022).

In dark tourism, dark experience emerged as the most influential construct affecting attitudes and subjective norms, which shaped tourists' curiosity and desire to visit (Lewis et al., 2022). The study also examines barriers to leisure activities, categorized as intra-personal, interpersonal and structural constraints which inhibit the desire to engage in these activities (Nyaupane & Andereck, 2008).

2.2. DARK TOURISM MOVEMENT

The root of dark tourism is Western culture, and Hartmann (2014) and Light (2017) have concluded that Western tourists have a strong tendency to visit dark attractions. Although some aspects of heritage tourism may overlap with dark tourism, no clear boundary separates the two. Shekhar and Valeri (2022) emphasize the need to expand the definition of heritage attractions to include intangible elements like statehood, history and struggle, often linked to dark sites. Light (2017) added that dark tourism should not be equated with dark leisure, as the former involves visiting places tied to death, disaster and human suffering, while the latter refers to liminal, transgressive activities often considered deviant or taboo (Spracklen, 2017).

Several studies, including Korstanje (2020), link sadism to dark tourism. Researchers continue to debate whether dark tourism reflects repressed sadism – a form of sadistic spectacle and morbid curiosity – or represents an empathetic engagement with the pain and suffering of others. Some scholars have turned their attention to the early stages of destination recovery following conflict, introducing the idea of phoenix tourism (Reddy et al., 2020). In their study, Reddy and colleagues developed a framework that draws on chaos theory, adaptive systems, resilience and vulnerability to explain how destinations on the brink of collapse can reorganize and recover. Separately, Seraphin and Korstanje (2021) offer a fresh interpretation of dark tourism by emphasizing its educational value, suggesting that such sites have the potential to foster empathy by exposing visitors to the suffering of

others. Recently, Rasool et al. (2025) tried to uncover the commonalities among the concepts, themes and attributes of dark tourism, thanatourism and ghost tourism and found that these three main areas are interconnected, with future research considered promising.

2.3. TRAVEL INTENTION

Travel intention results from a mental process driving a person to commit to travel (Conner & Norman, 2022; Saad et al., 2022). Psychological and functional variables, including personality traits, significantly influence tourist behavior and destination choice (Genc & Gürlerken Genc, 2023; Rather, 2021). Past travel experiences can affect travel intentions, acting as a reference for future choices, while positive experiences enhance the likelihood of repeat visits and influence attitudes toward travel (Zainuddin et al., 2021). In China, positive experiential satisfaction has led to significant intentions towards dark tourism destinations (Ermagun et al., 2022).

A compelling destination image, formed by impressions, beliefs and feelings, positively impacts travel intentions (Huang et al., 2021; Saad et al., 2022). In Malaysia, dark tourism suffers from limited media portrayal, which is vital in promoting it and influencing behavioral intentions (Saad et al., 2024; Seccardini & Desmoulins, 2023). Studying travel intentions is crucial for understanding tourist motivations and improving marketing strategies.

2.4. INTRA-PERSONAL EMOTION

Travel constraints have significantly affected individuals' preferences and participation in tourism (Wong & Kuo, 2021). Intra-personal emotional constraints, which inhibit travel, are crucial in activating tourist motivations and influencing destination selection (Hosany et al., 2020; Jian et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2019). Emotions can vary daily during a trip, impacting post-travel evaluations like satisfaction and behavioral intentions and in dark tourism, emotional experiences blend positive and negative feelings, affecting the desire to visit (Hosseini et al., 2024). Emotional experiences at dark tourism sites are diverse and unpredictable (Wang et al., 2019). Jian et al. (2021) found that nostalgia can enhance revisiting intentions by strengthening emotional connections with a destination while most research focuses on positive emotions, negative emotions at war sites can decrease visit intentions (Hosany et al., 2020; Lacanienta et al., 2020). Wang et al. (2019) showed that positive emotions improve tourism experiences but do not increase revisit likelihood. Dancausa et al. (2023) found that intra-personal constraints significantly affect tourists' intentions.

2.5. INTRA-PERSONAL TRAUMATIC MEMORY

Traumatic memory refers to experiences that remain internally bound within a person who cannot meaningfully communicate them (Boyacıoğlu & Aktaş, 2018) which often involves difficulties in separating from the trauma, leading to avoidance of strenuous emotions (Rimé et al., 2020). Martini and Buda (2020) found that site visits can help integrate traumatic memories with current reality, aiding emotional healing, similarly Prayag et al. (2021) showed that visiting disaster sites can help residents process grief and trauma. Conversely, Qian et al. (2022) noted that fear-inducing sites negatively impact tourists' intentions to visit, and Machado Carvalho (2024) argued that negative memories deter repeat visits. Weaver et al. (2017) reported adverse solid reactions among Chinese visitors to the Lushun Prison Museum, leading to harmful intentions to visit Japan. Due to memory insecurity, Bhati et al. (2021) found that young female tourists avoided dark tourism.

2.6. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

Structural constraints can significantly demotivate dark tourism. These constraints encompass physical, organizational and systemic barriers that affect accessibility, experience and site management (Paker, 2023). Factors such as inadequate access to planning experts, weak community development, unsuitable policies, geographic location, transportation infrastructure and physical accessibility can limit visitor access and deter visits (Šerić et al., 2020). Regulatory and legal issues, limited funding, ineffective management and organizational capacity further hinder development (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2019), while additionally, social, cultural and environmental factors like weather and natural disasters impact the sustainability and appeal of dark tourism sites (Andlib & Salcedo-Castro, 2021; Shaheen et al., 2019). These constraints must be carefully managed to ensure sustainable development and meaningful visitor experiences while respecting the sites' sensitivities and significance. Based on the review literature, this study has proposed the following hypotheses:

H_1 : Intra-personal emotion significantly deters Malaysian tourists from visiting dark tourism sites.

H_2 : Intra-personal traumatic memory significantly deters Malaysian tourists from visiting dark tourism sites.

H_3 : Structural constraints significantly deter Malaysian tourists from visiting dark tourism sites.

Accordingly, Figure 1 illustrates the research framework based on the findings of past literature.

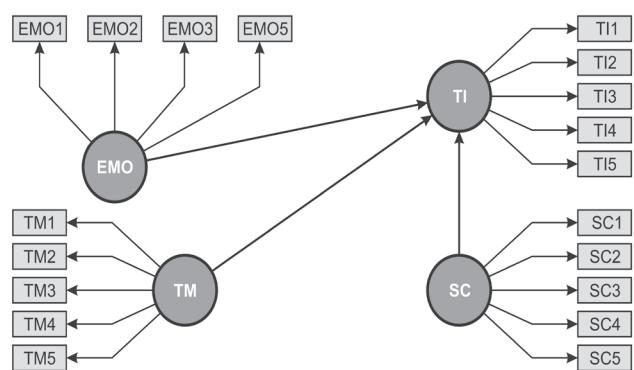


Figure 1. Research framework

Notes: EMO – intra-personal constraints (emotion), SC – structural constraints, TM – intra-personal constraints (traumatic memory), TI – travel intention

Source: authors

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative approach with a self-administered survey, collecting data from 384 respondents, following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) guidelines. The respondents included individuals who had visited dark tourism destinations, ranging from teenagers to adults, providing various perspectives. Travel barriers in dark tourism were explored among those who have visited and those who have not visited such sites in Malaysia. Non-probability and purposive sampling techniques were used, with the sample size selected to reflect the anticipated response rate. The target number of samples was 384, according to the number of populations stated by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

3.1. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The study used a questionnaire adapted from Allman (2017) and Zhang et al. (2016) (see Table 1), distributed via Google Forms on WhatsApp and Twitter for quick responses. Using purposive sampling, participants were selected based on their relevance to the study's aims (Etikan et al., 2016) with the survey being conducted from November 23 to December 23, 2022, with all questions in English, as English is the second language most commonly used in Malaysia. A pre-test was conducted before public distribution with target respondents including both domestic tourists who had visited and those who had not visited dark tourism destinations. The survey highlighted the need for parental or guardian consent for respondents under 18 years old to meet the ethical approval requirements for research. There

Table 1. Instruments of the questionnaire

Study variables	Code	Question items
Intra-personal constraints (emotion of fear and depression – EMO)	EMO1	I have some fears about visiting a place like this
	EMO2	I am afraid that I might encounter some horrible scenes when visiting the destination
	EMO3	I worry about the possibility of depression/psychological disturbance after a visit to a dark tourism destination
	EMO4	I heard that people feel very depressed after visiting
	EMO5	I am afraid of being uncomfortable after visiting
Intra-personal constraints (traumatic memory – TM)	TM1	Because of its history of humiliation, I do not want to visit the destination
	TM2	Having seen some relevant movies, which are quite tragic, I do not want to visit the destination
	TM3	Having seen some historical data that is quite tragic, I do not want to visit the destination
	TM4	I do not have enough courage to face the deep. The suffering of our compatriots
	TM5	The scene of the victims being killed left me in shock
Structural constraints (SC)	SC1	It wastes a lot of time to visit, and it isn't easy to find
	SC2	The destination is so far away that it is inconvenient for me to visit
	SC3	Having visited other similar places, I do not want to visit again
	SC4	There is not enough information for me to visit
	SC5	There are many better attractions in Malaysia

Source: authors.

was a focus on dark tourism destinations related to death and suffering at ten identified sites: Penang War Museum, Kellie's Castle, Abandoned Buildings, Kundasang War Memorial, Villa Nabila, Penjara Ayer Molek, Melaka Prison Museum, Bukit Tengkorak, Haunted Drive Thru Melaka and Pedu Lake Resort. Data was collected in person at locations near the researchers' base (Penjara Ayer Molek, Melaka Prison Museum, Penang War Museum and Haunted Drive Thru Melaka), with additional data gathered online for the other sites. The researchers also collected physical data to observe and experience the locations firsthand.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of 150 respondents, which yielded a 39.06% response rate. Male respondents are dominant (74%), and Gen X and baby boomers took 94%.

Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic variable	Questions item	Frequency	Valid percentage (%)
Gender	Male	111	74.0
	Female	39	26.0
Age	Born from 1946 to 1964 (baby boomers)	116	77.3
	Born from 1965 to 1980 (Generation X)	25	16.7
	Born from 1981 to 1996 (millennials – Generation Y)	8	5.3
	Born from 1997 to 2010 (Generation Z)	1	0.7
Have you ever visited dark tourism destinations before?	Yes	94	62.7
	No	56	37.3

Table 2 (cont.)

Demographic variable	Questions item	Frequency	Valid percentage (%)
If yes, which place have you ever visited?	Penang War Museum	33	33.7
	Kellie's Castle	33	33.7
	Abandoned buildings	19	19.4
	Kundasang War Memorial	6	6.1
	Villa Nabila	1	1.0
	Penjara Ayer Molek	1	1.0
	Melaka Prison Museum	1	1.0
	Bukit Tengkorak	1	1.0
	Haunted Drive Thru Melaka	1	1.0
	Pedu Lake Resort	1	1.0
If yes, how frequently have you visited dark tourism destinations before?	Only once	55	56.7
	Twice	24	24.7
	3 to 4 times	13	13.4
	More than 5 times	5	5.0

Source: authors.

4.2. DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed partial least squares (PLS) modeling using SmartPLS 4.10.4 to examine the measurement and structural model, as it does not require a normality assumption, which is suitable for survey research (Chin et al., 2003). Full collinearity was tested following Kock and Lynn (2012) and Kock (2015) to address common method bias due to data being collected from a single source. In this method, all variables are regressed against a common variable, and if the variance inflation factor (VIF) ≤ 3.3 , there is no bias. Our analysis showed a VIF of less than 3.3, indicating no significant single-source bias (see Table 3).

Table 3. Full collinearity testing

Intra-personal constraints (emotion – EMO)	Structural constraints (SC)	Intra-personal constraints (traumatic memory – TM)
1.531	1.400	1.813

Source: authors.

4.3. MEASUREMENT MODEL

This study followed Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach for model testing. First, we assessed the measurement model for instrument validity and reliability based on the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019). Next, this study evaluated the structural model to test the developed hypotheses. This study examined loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) for the measurement model. The criteria were loadings ≥ 0.5 , AVE ≥ 0.5 , and CR ≥ 0.7 . As shown in Table 2, all AVEs exceeded 0.5, and all CRs were above 0.7. The loadings were also acceptable, with only some loadings less than 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019). The four constructs, namely, intra-personal constraints (emotion), intra-personal constraints (traumatic memory), structural constraints and travel intention were assessed for validity and reliability, as shown in Table 4. The measurement was also valid and reliable. In step 2, the study evaluated discriminant validity using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlations criterion, following thresholds of ≤ 0.85 for a stricter standard and ≤ 0.90 for a more lenient one, as proposed by Henseler et al. (2015) and updated by Franke and Sarstedt (2019). As shown in Table 5, all HTMT values were below the stricter criterion of ≤ 0.85 , indicating that respondents recognized the constructs as distinct. These tests confirm that the measurement items are valid and reliable.

Table 4. Assessment of measurement model

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Composite reliability (CR)
Intra-personal constraints (emotion – EMO)	EMO1	0.905	0.753	0.933
	EMO2	0.887		
	EMO3	0.784		
	EMO5	0.889		
Intra-personal constraints (traumatic memory – TM)	TM1	0.848	0.680	0.915
	TM2	0.904		
	TM3	0.894		
	TM4	0.771		
	TM5	0.685		
Structural constraints (SC)	SC1	0.742	0.513	0.778
	SC2	0.775		
	SC3	0.760		
	SC4	0.606		
	SC5	0.685		

Travel intention (TI)	TI1	0.729	0.696	0.914
	TI2	0.856		
	TI3	0.900		
	TI4	0.863		
	TI5	0.813		

Note: EMO4 was deleted due to low loadings; AVE – average variance extracted, CR – composite reliability.

Source: authors.

Table 5. Discriminant validity (heterotrait-monotrait ratio – HTMT)

Constructs	1	2	3	4
1. Intra-personal constraints (emotion – EMO)	–	–	–	–
2. Structural constraints (SC)	0.456	–	–	–
3. Travel intention (TI)	0.296	0.281	–	–
4. Intra-personal constraints (traumatic memory – TM)	0.690	0.608	0.387	–

Source: authors.

4.4. STRUCTURAL MODEL

A re-sample of 10,000 was conducted to report the percentile bootstrap for testing the hypotheses of the structural model, as the data were not multivariate normally distributed (Becker et al., 2023). As shown in Table 6, the R^2 value of the travel intention was 0.148, indicating that the modeled variables can explain 14.8% of the variance in travel intentions. Intra-personal constraints (traumatic memory) ($\beta = -0.278$; $p < 0.01$) were negatively related to travel intentions, even though the t -value was significant. Therefore, H_2 needs to be rejected. At the same time, intra-personal constraints (emotion) (EMO) and structural constraints (SC) were insignificant. These findings do not support H_1 , H_2 or H_3 .

A holdout sample method was applied using PLS-predict with a 10-fold procedure to evaluate predictive relevance. Shmueli et al. (2019) stated that if all item-level prediction errors from the PLS model are lower than those from the linear model (LM), the model demonstrates strong predictive power. If all errors are higher, there is no predictive relevance; if most are lower, the model shows moderate power; and if only a few are lower, the power is low. As shown in Table 7, all errors from the PLS model were lower than those from the LM, confirming strong predictive power.

Table 7. Partial least square (PLS) – predict

Manifest variable	Predictive relevance (Q^2)	Root mean square error (RMSE)		
		PLS	LM	PLS-LM
TI1	-0.008	0.544	0.563	-0.019
TI2	0.088	0.533	0.559	-0.026
TI3	0.089	0.609	0.628	-0.019
TI4	0.066	0.597	0.625	-0.028
TI5	0.045	0.602	0.638	-0.036

Note: TI – travel intention, PLS – partial least square, LM – linear model.

Source: authors.

5. DISCUSSION

This study explores and connects TRA towards leisure constraints' (Jackson, 2000) that affect tourist visit intentions, revealing that emotional constraints, traumatic memories and structural barriers predict nearly 15% of Malaysians' intentions to visit dark tourism sites. Notably, traumatic memories negatively impact Malaysians' willingness to visit these sites, contradicting findings by Weaver et al. (2017) and Bhati et al. (2021) regarding other populations in their countries. Despite traumatic memories, Malaysian tourists are curious and want to learn from dark tourism experiences. The results are supported by

Table 6. Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	Standardized beta (β)	Standard deviation	t-value	p-value	BCI LL	BCI UL	f^2	Decision
H_1	EMO → TI	-0.103	0.099	1.035	0.150	-0.268	0.054	0.008	Not supported
H_2	TM → TI	-0.278	0.114	2.434	0.007	-0.469	-0.095	0.050	Not supported
H_3	SC → TI	-0.061	0.101	0.606	0.272	-0.180	0.218	0.003	Not supported

Note: EMO – intra-personal constraints (emotion), TM – intra-personal constraints (traumatic memory), SC – structural constraints, TI – travel intention, BCI LL – biased corrected interval upper limit, BCI UL – biased corrected interval lower limit, t-value – statistic value, p-value – statistically significant, f^2 – Cohen's f^2 -squared effect size.

Source: authors.

data indicating that 63% of respondents have visited such sites, with 43% being regular visitors.

The study suggests that the demand for dark tourism in Malaysia is strong, with emotional and structural constraints having no impact. Contrary to Karl et al. (2020), extended trip frequencies do not deter Malaysians from dark tourism. The findings propose their willingness to revisit reflects acceptance of the past and psychological resilience, however the lack of impactful storytelling or guides at these sites might diminish the emotional impact of visits. The case of the Prisoner Museum in Melaka, a former prison-turned-museum, highlights a genuine interest in dark tourism driven by user-generated content rather than formal marketing efforts. Despite offering enjoyable and educational activities, the museum lacks exposure and promotion from tour operators and the government. Recognizing these activities, listing them on official tourism websites, including them in national heritage programs, and funding promotional activities could significantly enhance the museum's visibility and visitor engagement.

6. CONCLUSION

In summary, the lack of support for the hypotheses may stem from the unique cultural, educational and emotional engagement that dark tourism in Malaysia offers. Compared to other countries, Malaysians may perceive these destinations as opportunities for historical reflection rather than traumatic or discomforting experiences, and logistical concerns may not be as significant as initially anticipated. Nevertheless, this study contributes to both theory and practice by highlighting that responses from Generation X and males were not significantly impacted by constraints in their intention to visit dark tourism sites. It suggests that tourism operators should improve promotional strategies, create educational programs and implement support systems, with a focus on perceived quality (Zainuddin et al., 2021). Furthermore, partnerships between tourism authorities and dark tourism sites could help develop attractive travel packages, supporting Tourism Malaysia in promoting these locations internationally.

The study encourages tourism authorities to endorse dark tourism in Malaysia, as many sites currently operate independently. While accessibility remains an issue, government intervention is needed to internationalize these destinations by improving infrastructure, such as transportation links, guided tours, signage and safety measures. Viewing dark tourism as an educational opportunity rather than a controversial niche can help gain broader public acceptance while

promoting these sites as spaces for historical exploration could attract diverse audiences, including history enthusiasts, educators and students.

This study, however, has only a small sample size focusing on domestic tourists in Malaysia and suggests that future research could provide deeper insights by expanding the survey and incorporating international traveler opinions. The findings are valuable for tour operators, local leaders, planners and site managers, offering insights to target the most interested demographics and cater to their specific needs.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The authors used Grammarly.com and Turnitin for the following purposes: to check grammar, eliminate plagiarism, and ensure grammatical accuracy and proper citation. Subsequently, they conducted a thorough and critical analysis of the text, paying particular attention to potentially false, incomplete, or biased information, possible plagiarism, and the lack of proper and accurate attribution of authorship, and revised the article accordingly.

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