

# Master Thesis

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*The influence of dark tourism activities on the visitor perception of Edinburgh*

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## ABSTRACT

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During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dark tourism received increasing attention as rising numbers of dark tourism sites are realised worldwide. It is the fascination with death and disaster that drives tourists to such destinations. Although participating in dark tourism practices is becoming more popular it is seldomly the main focus of destination management organisations to further market this type of tourism in their products. To gain a better understanding of the impact dark tourism has on the destination image, this research paper focuses on the way participating in dark tourism practices influences the visitor perception of Edinburgh. As Edinburgh's character is largely shaped by mystic tales and numerous ghost tours focus on telling those stories, the city provides a good basis for this research.

To gain a better insight into the phenomenon, secondary research evaluating existing themes focusing on dark tourism practices and destination image formations has been conducted. The literature review forms the basis for the conceptual model which is combining dark tourism aspects with the cognitive-affective-conative destination image formation model. Since the destination image is largely based on individual experiences, a qualitative research approach in the form of interviews was applied. The results of this show that increasing usage of social media is one of the most influential aspects forming the cognitive image. Further, individuals' interest in experiencing the paranormal is one of the main motivations to join a ghost tour in Edinburgh. Lastly, although emotions experienced during the tours often had negative connotations, the overall affective image after participating in ghost tours was seen to be shaped by positive experiences. This shows that, overall, the visitors' perception of Edinburgh was positively influenced by dark tourism practices as the stories provided more meaning to the city and different sites located within. To gain more insights into this phenomenon, further research should focus on tours with a higher number of fright factors. Additionally, also the role of gender in dark tourism experiences should be researched in more depth.

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*Keywords: Dark Tourism; Ghost Tours; Destination Image; Edinburgh*

*Word count: 8917*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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Nowadays, tourism is a worldwide phenomenon with ever-increasing numbers, making it one of the most important industries. To exploit the benefits of tourism, many countries have direct policies focusing on further tourism development (Statista Research Department, 2023). Although the tourism industry was largely affected by the covid-19 pandemic, tourism numbers in Europe have mostly recovered, reaching approximately 585 million international arrivals in 2022 (Statista, 2023a). Correspondingly, Europe was the region that experienced the largest number of international arrivals worldwide. Taking a closer look at the most visited destinations in Europe, the UK is among the top 10 visited places (Schengen Visa, n.d.), attracting nearly 30 million visitors in 2022 (Statista, 2023b). In the UK itself, Edinburgh is the second most visited destination by inbound visitors (VisitBritain, 2023). Most recent data shows that Edinburgh received a tourism expenditure of £1.87 billion in 2019, showing the large influence tourism has on the economy of the city (City of Edinburgh Council, 2021). A large pull factor for Edinburgh is its historical and cultural attractions (ETAG, 2016). However, many of those attractions also have underlying dark tourism components as Edinburgh has experienced numerous mass murders and bloody battles in its past (Garcia, 2012). As a result, the tourism product is shaped by sites related to those battles as well as ghost stories and mysterious tales which are linked to many sites within the city (Ironsides, 2018). Especially ghost stories are embedded in Edinburgh's tourism products as numerous tours provide visitors with the opportunity to explore the darker side of the city and its past (Garcia, 2012). The niche market revolving around dark tourism received increased attention in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the concepts were first introduced (Light, 2017). Generally speaking, dark tourism indicates an interest in the visitation of sites associated with suffering and death (Garcia, 2012).

Due to the importance of tourism and increasing niche markets which are evolving, destinations are actively working on promoting the uniqueness of their tourism attractions. To do so, one of the most used marketing tools is the formation of destination images held by visitors. Destination images can be understood to be the sum of beliefs, knowledge, and emotions attached to a destination (Ferreira Lopes, 2011). As a result, a positive destination image can be crucial for the tourism success of a destination (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Although the concept of destination image has been researched greatly, its combination with dark tourism practices is seldom explored. This is mainly based on the fact that dark tourism often has negative connotations and underlying ethical concerns (Kunwar & Karki, 2019). However, as dark tourism receives increased attention and more visitors chose to partake in those activities, it can become a valuable part of the tourism product of destinations. Therefore, it is important to have a

better understanding of dark tourism's influence on destination images. To provide more insights into this theoretical gap, this paper focuses on examining the way dark tourism practices influence the visitor perception of Edinburgh, a city which has a high number of dark tourism-related attractions. Additionally, having a greater understanding of the influence of dark tourism practices also brings useful insights for destination management organisations, as those insights can help them to further differentiate their tourism product and attract a wider variety of visitors.

## 1.1 RESEARCH AIM

The overall aim of this study is to gain a greater insight into the way dark tourism activities influence the destination image held by visitors. Hereby, the focus will be on Edinburgh as the city already has numerous dark tourism activities implemented in its tourism product. Therefore, the underlying research question of this research is:

*“How does participating in dark tourism activities influence the visitor perception of Edinburgh as a tourism destination?”*

To further guide this research, the following objectives are created:

- To identify information resources used by visitors
- To identify visitor motivations to participate in dark tourism activities
- To identify visitor expectations
- To identify the feelings and emotions attached to ghost tours and overall Edinburgh

To help answer the research question, the following sub-questions are created, focusing on different components of the destination image.

1. How is the cognitive image created before visiting Edinburgh?

This sub-question focuses on the created destination image before the actual visit to the destination. Here, used information sources are identified. Whether those are commercially produced or created based on informal sources can bring insights into the way the destination image was created. The cognitive image is one of the most influential aspects of the destination image formation process in general and, thus, plays a crucial role in understanding how dark tourism practices influence the initially created destination image.

2. What are the underlying motivations and expectations to participate in dark tourism activities in Edinburgh?

This question focuses on identifying individual travel motivation and its impacts on actual participation in dark tourism activities. Hereby, one can consider related dark tourism concepts such as the shades of dark tourists introduced by Sharpley (2005) and the dark tourism spectrum introduced by Stone (2006). Those concepts help to directly link the type of attraction to possible motivations. Additionally, understanding the motivation and expectations, and in which regard those expectations were fulfilled, can be used to recognise an interest in re-visiting the destination or sharing positive feedback about it.

### 3. What emotions do visitors experience during and after participation in those activities?

The last sub-question can be linked to the affective components of destination image formation. Here, the underlying emotions play a substantial role. Those also indicate the actual visitor perception and possible influence of dark tourism practices on those. Additionally, those first-hand experiences are also an important aspect of the destination image, as they are generally used to adjust the initial destination image after the visit.

All those aspects are crucial elements to identifying the overall destination image of Edinburgh. By focusing the research specifically on dark tourism aspects one can gain an insight into the way those affect the different components of the destination image formation.

## 2 MAIN THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

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The following chapter outlines relevant theoretical concepts which form the base for this research. Hereby, relevant dark tourism concepts are introduced, followed by a specific focus on ghost tourism practices. Further, the destination image formation process is described and relevant components are unravelled.

### 2.1 DARK TOURISM

With an increasing amount of dark tourism sites and, correspondingly, visitor numbers, dark tourism has received much attention during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Generally speaking, dark tourism refers to travel to sites associated with disaster, tragedy, and death (Light, 2017). The phenomenon was first introduced in the year 1996 when two originating components of dark tourism were shaped. To begin with, Lennon and Foley introduced the concept of dark tourism (Foley & Lennon, 1996). Hereby, they identified an increase in the number of dark tourism sites. As a result, their concept focuses on a demand and supply-driven approach (Stone, 2006). Overall, they defined their concept as being a newly emerging, westernised tourism practice

(Hartmann, 2014). Seaton, on the other hand, introduced the concept of thanatourism. Although similar in nature, Seaton’s concept results from one’s individual desire to encounter the concept of death (Seaton, 1996). As a result, the concept of thanatourism can be traced back to prehistoric times, where public beheadings, gladiator fights, or witch hunts, can all be classified as thanatological practices (Lennon, 2017). Nowadays, also the commodification of death and increased media attention shape this emerging type of tourism (Light, 2017). As a result, dark tourism sites are often turned into places of tourism consumption.

One of the first to conceptualise personal motivations and visitors’ intentions to visit dark tourism sites was Seaton (1996), who identified the following dark travel categories:

1. Travel to sites to watch death
2. Travel to sites after disaster has occurred
3. Travel to internment sites or memorials
4. Travel to synthetic sites where one can find evidence of death
5. Travel to re-enactments

Nonetheless, with those categories Seaton mainly focuses on individuals’ personal motivation, so to say the demand side, disregarding actual dark tourism supply. To fill this gap by further distinguishing underlying travel motivations while also considering dark tourism supply, Sharpley (2005) introduced the “four shades of dark tourism” framework seen below.

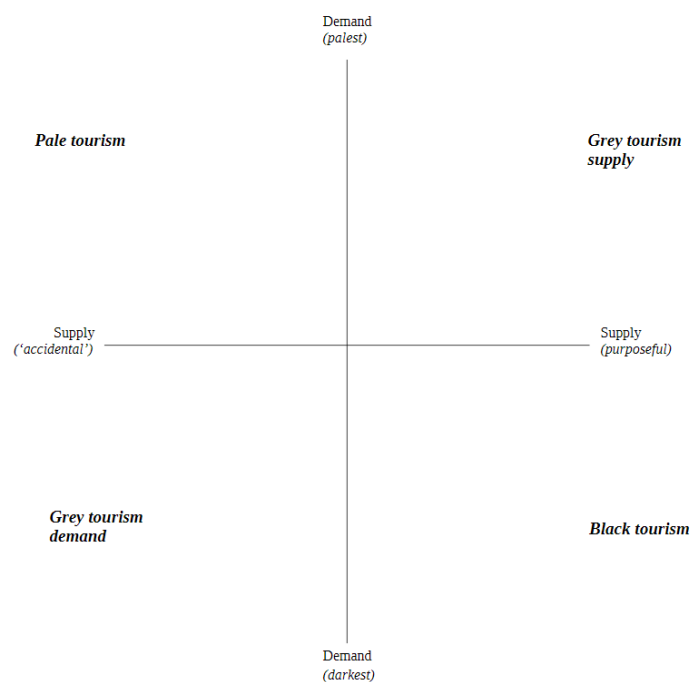


Figure 1: Shades of dark tourism (taken from Sharpley, 2005)



The concept is based on a typology of consumption identified by Holt in 1995. Applying this typology to dark tourism, Sharpley (2005) identified dark tourism as experience, play, integration, and classification to be the driving forces of the framework. To begin with, the underlying motivations are considered to be on a continuum of “paler” and “darker” attributes. Those are then crossed with the supply side, which is ranging from purest dark sites to unintentional dark sites. Considering those, the resulting shades of dark tourism are pale tourism, grey tourism demand, grey tourism supply, and black tourism (Sharpley, 2005). Hereby, the palest type refers to a visitation at an unintended dark tourism site with a limited interest in encountering death. Next, grey tourism demand refers to a visitation with the intention to encounter death but at an unintentional dark tourism site. On the other hand, grey tourism supply refers to the visitation of an intentionally created dark tourism site but with a limited interest in death. Lastly, black tourism, also seen to be the purest form of dark tourism, involved a high fascination with death at a purposefully created dark tourism site (Sharpley, 2005).

To distinguish the supply side of dark tourism further, Stone (2006) introduced the dark tourism supply spectrum. On the one hand of the spectrum are dark tourism sites *of* death. Here, one can find some of the darkest tourist sites, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau which is a site resulting from genocide. On the lighter spectrum one finds dark tourism sites only *associated with* death. Those are, for instance, museums or entertainment factories such as the London Dungeon (Stone, 2006). The spectrum does not only take the darkness of sites into account but also proposes underlying visitor intentions, political involvement, tourism infrastructures, and the authenticity of a site.

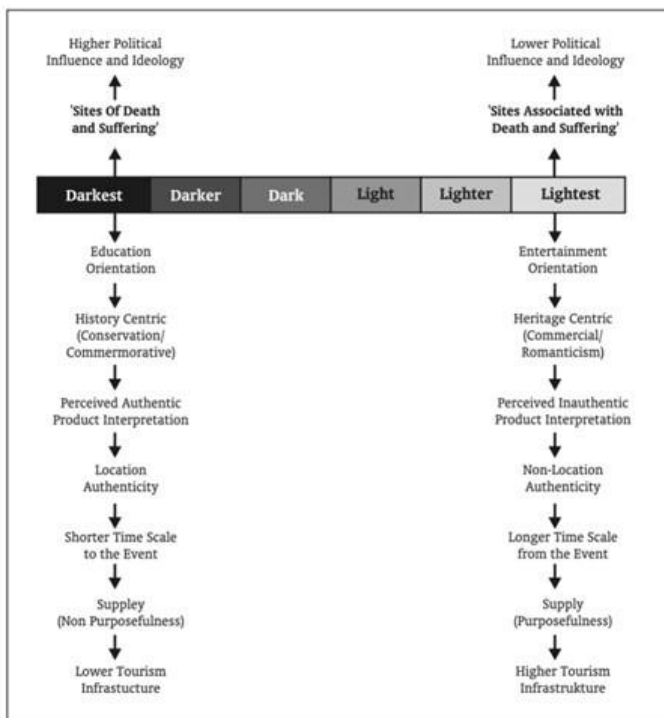


Figure 2: A dark tourism spectrum (taken from Stone, 2005)

As a result of the typology, seven dark tourism suppliers, which differ in terms of origin, purpose, and visitor intention, can be identified. Ranging from lightest to darkest, those are dark fun factories, dark exhibitions, dark dungeons, dark shrines, dark resting places, dark conflict sites, and dark camps of genocide (Stone, 2006).

Based on the different natures of dark tourism sites, identifying visitor motivations has been a focus point of dark tourism studies. Early scholars recognised education, commemoration, and entertainment as the main motives (Light, 2017). Nonetheless, new perspectives also highlight curiosity, an interest in horror and the unknown, a desire to visit sacred places, and a reflection on one's own mortality as common motivations (Light, 2017). Additionally, pilgrimages and religious aspects can also be identified to be part of those motivations (Lewis, Schrier, & Xu, 2022). Iliev (2020) further argues that socio-demographic aspects, national identities, and historical and cultural motivations play a secondary role in visitor motivation. Those individual factors also influence how visitors interact with a dark tourism site, ultimately having an impact on the underlying emotions. Identifying the emotions experienced at dark tourism sites has become the focus of current dark tourism studies. According to Ashworth & Isaac (2015), the most commonly experienced emotions in relation to dark tourism practices include shame, curiosity, fear, anger, disturbance, and grief. Although those emotions are seen to be negative, the intensity to which those are felt is also highly linked to the darkness of the site itself. In addition, Sigala & Steriopoulos (2021) highlight that negative emotions do not necessarily lead to negative visitor satisfaction but rather provide grounds for self-reflection. As a result, emotional engagement at dark tourism sites is an important aspect of those.

### 2.1.1 Ghost tourism

One niche market of dark tourism is ghost tourism. Ghost tourism generally refers to the visitation of sites where one can possibly encounter the paranormal, so to say places that experience ghost sightings (Dancausa, Hernandez, & Perez, 2020). Hereby, it is not only an interest in encountering ghosts which drives people to visit such places, but also an interest in the history and culture of places which become motivational factors. Tales evolving around ghosts often form a basis for bringing past actions into the present day (Sobaih & Naguib, 2022). Common activities regarding this tourism type include ghost hunting, visiting places with paranormal activities, or ghost tours and walks. Especially ghost tours have received increasing interest during the twentieth century as they can become valuable marketing and tourism practices for a destination (Sobaih & Naguib, 2022). According to Ironside (2018), ghost tours provide visitors with an opportunity to receive in-depth knowledge of the history of a place whilst also helping them explore the greater meaning of life and one's own mortality. Nowadays, ghost tours are also often shaped by entertainment aspects by using actors and,

sometimes, fright factors to tell the stories and folklore of the past (Dancausa, Hernandez, & Perez, 2020).

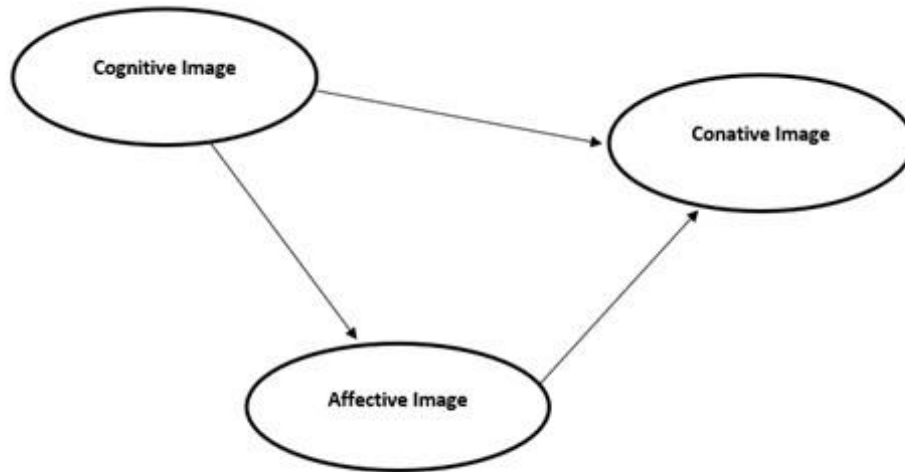
It was the interest in keeping the folklore of Scotland alive that led to an increase of mystic tales and ghostly encounters described in the narratives of Sir Walter Scott, a Scottish historian during the Romanticism Era (Inglis & Holmes, 2003). With stories revolving around ghost encounters, a newly profound interest was created. Although the origins were largely based on the countryside and highlands, ghost tours have found their way into most of Scotland's urban tourism products (Inglis & Holmes, 2003). As mentioned by Sigala & Steriopoulos (2021) storytelling practices used during tours provides visitors with an emotionally engaging experience as they can explore underlying dark tourism aspects in real-life places.

## 2.2 DESTINATION IMAGE

Destination images are one of the most researched concepts nowadays. Generally speaking, the destination image refers to the sum of beliefs, knowledge, and emotions an individual has of a destination (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Therefore, destination images are a useful tool for destination marketers to promote their destination while also differentiating their product from others (Ferreira Lopes, 2011). Additionally, destination images can also have a substantial influence on the satisfaction of visitors (Iordanova & Styliadis, 2019).

Destination images are created based on pre-, during-, and after-trip variables. First, an initial image is created based on information resources of a destination. This image is then later on adjusted based on first-hand experiences at the destination (Kim & Chen, 2016). Hereby, Tasci & Gartner (2007) mention that the actual image created during the visit is expected to be more accurate than the one created priorly.

One of the most influential models regarding the destination image formation process evolves around cognitive, affective, and conative aspects (Kim & Chen, 2016).



*Figure 3: Destination Image (adapted from Agapito, Oom do Valle, & Costa Mendes, 2013)*

Starting with the cognitive image, this part refers to the knowledge a visitor has of the destination before the actual visit (Agapito, Oom do Valle, & da Costa Mendes, 2013). This image is also commonly referred to as a secondary image, as it is based on secondary information resources (Ferreira Lopes, 2011). To get a better understanding of the different components influencing the cognitive image, a distinction between organic and induced images is made. Hereby, the organic image is based on non-commercial sources such as TV shows or books, whereas the induced image is created by commercial, touristic information sources such as those provided by destination management organisations (Kim & Chen, 2016). In recent years also the rising role of online communication resources such as social media platforms became an influential information source (Kislali, Kavartzis, & Saren, 2016). Specifically social media platforms provide quicker interactions, not only between destination management organisations and consumers, but also among visitors themselves. This trend has largely influenced the way destinations market themselves as traditional marketing campaigns become less efficient (Kislali, Kavartzis, & Saren, 2016).

Next, affective components refer to experienced feelings and emotions on site. Therefore, they can be classified as primary images as they are formed based on lived experiences (Kislali, Kavartzis, & Saren, 2020). Here, also visitors' motivations and used activities and attractions play an influential role as they are part of those experiences. Ultimately, this can also influence the satisfaction of the destination itself (Kim & Chen, 2016). Based on lived experiences, the initial destination image can be evaluated and adapted (Kim & Chen, 2016). Finally, the cognitive and affective images influence the conative image. The conative image refers to the intention to recommend or revisit the destination (Agapito, Oom do Valle, & da Costa Mendes, 2013). In other words, it describes the way one acts upon the gathered information and emotions experienced at a destination.

Overall, destination images are a useful tool for destination management organisations as they create a greater understanding of the destination. Therefore, it is important for destination management organisations to create a positive destination image as this can directly influence visitors' perception of the destination. Creating a positive perception can be vital for the success of a destination as word of mouth can influence future visitors.

### 3 RESEARCH AREA

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Since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Edinburgh has been the capital of Scotland. Due to its rich history, architecture, and cultural importance, the city received a UNESCO world heritage title in 1995 (UNESCO, 2023). Hereby, especially the contrast between the Old Town, with its medieval character, and New Town, shaped by neo-classical influences, is identified to be one of the most defining characteristics of the city (UNESCO, 2023). As a result, the history and culture of the city are one of the biggest motivational factors for its visitors (ETAG, 2016). Nonetheless, the architecture and history of the city also create a mystical character of the place as they offer space for many tales regarding ghostly presences in the city (Forever Edinburgh, 2022). Garcia (2012) and Ironside (2018) further highlight that mass murders, witch hunts and other gruesome aspects of Edinburgh's past shape the atmosphere of the city. As a result, Edinburgh is also referred to as one of the most haunted places in Europe (Forever Edinburgh, 2022). Taking the dark side of history into consideration, several bus and walking tours are established to tell the story of the city and its underlying supernatural implications. As a result, Edinburgh can be identified to be an established place for ghost tourism practices (Garcia, 2012). Since those practices can be linked to dark tourism aspects, Edinburgh poses a good basis to study the way dark tourism practices influence visitors' perceptions. Hereby, especially the Old Town of the city is a relevant research area. Specifically the Royal Mile is of interest, as many ghost tour providers are located in this particular area (McEvoy, 2016). Apart from ghost tours, Edinburgh is also home to the Edinburgh Dungeon, which explains the darkest aspects of the city in interactive and entertaining ways (The Edinburgh Dungeon, 2023). Additionally, the city also houses several haunted hotels and bars, which have many underlying tales and stories to be told (Forever Edinburgh, 2022). All those attractions are within walking distance of the Royal Mile and are anticipated to be a good place to recruit possible participants.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

Based on the analysed theories, the following chapter provides an overview of the conceptual model which provides a combination of dark tourism practices with destination image concepts. Further, the chosen research methods and data collection is described. Lastly, the ethical considerations important for this research are explained.

### 4.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

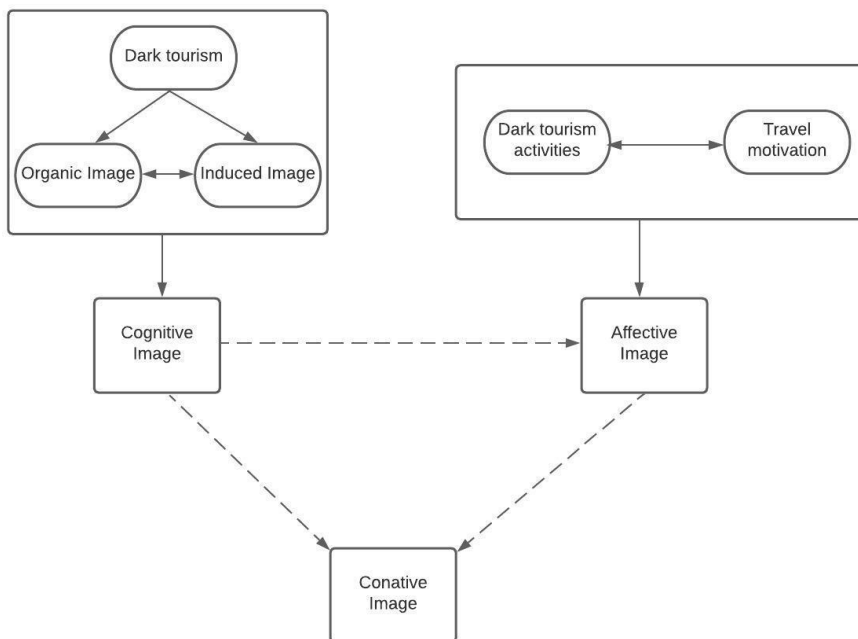


Figure 4: Conceptual framework - a dark tourism destination image

The conceptual framework created to guide the research process is based on the cognitive-affective-conative destination image model. To gain a better insight into the way dark tourism practices affect the destination image, their influence on the cognitive and affective image is considered. As mentioned by Kim & Chen (2016), destination images are mainly formed before the actual visit and then later on adjusted based on first-hand experiences in the destination. Taking this into account, the first step is to identify used information sources before the visit. Here, whether sources related to dark tourism were used and in what way those influenced the pre-departure destination image bring relevant insights into the cognitive image. Nonetheless, due to the nature of dark tourism, it is not sufficient to solely look at cognitive components, as many visitors unintentionally take part in dark tourism activities during the visit. As a result, the type of dark tourism activity and underlying motivation are important aspects to be considered, as they can have an impact on the affective image.

To identify the type of tourism activity, Stone's dark tourism supply spectrum is valuable. Determining the darkness of the activity brings first insights into possible visitor motivations. Additionally, the visitor motivation itself is a crucial factor as it can bring relevant insights into the type of activity chosen and possible emotional responses to it. Thus, it is proposed to consider both of those concepts when looking at the affective image held by visitors. Having identified the influences of dark tourism activities on the cognitive and affective components, one can gain a better understanding of the actual intention to revisit a destination or share positive feedback about it.

## 4.2 RESEARCH METHODS

To gain a better understanding of the influences dark tourism practices have on the perception of visitors, a qualitative research approach was used. Qualitative research methods generally aim to gain a better understanding of personal beliefs, emotions, and opinions about a certain phenomenon (Veal, 2006). As destination images and visitor perceptions are largely based on individuals' experiences and their personal interpretation of those, using a qualitative approach was identified to be the most suitable method. According to Dunn (2021), interviews are a valuable approach to gaining an insight into lived experiences and personal opinions. Thus, interviews were conducted in Edinburgh in order to identify the perception of visitors. To guide the interviews while also ensuring that participants have room to freely express their opinions, a semi-structured interview approach was used. Semi-structured interviews follow a certain structure while also remaining flexible in the way information can be addressed (Dunn, 2021). The conducted interviews mainly focused on first-hand experiences at the destination itself, while also taking into account pre-trip variables. Therefore, the underlying importance is on understanding how the destination was initially seen and how participating in dark tourism activities has potentially changed this initial perception. To ensure that all relevant aspects were covered, an interview schedule (Appendix 1) was created to guide the interviews. The underlying components covered in the interview identify the cognitive image and information sources used, visitors' motivation and expectations, affective components, so their emotions and feelings, how those influenced their perception, and lastly whether they would recommend the destination and activities. To ensure that all relevant aspects mentioned during the interview were included, audio recordings were used and further transcribed after.

In order to analyse the interviews, the software Atlas.ti was used. Here, the interviews were coded and sorted into related groups. Additionally, this way noteworthy quotes could be identified and highlighted. In order to identify relevant codes and connect them to emerging themes, open, axial, and selective coding practices were applied. Based on the generated codes, a coding matrix was created (Appendix 2). Open coding is the initial phase of the coding process where emerging topics

are first recognised and highlighted accordingly (Williams & Moser, 2019). This process was guided by Atlas.ti which provides a simplified way of creating those initial codes. Having all those preliminary codes, the next step involved colour coding those to create a better overview of correlating concepts. Hereby, interrelated codes, such as described feelings, received the same colour which provided a better overview and helped identify emerging categories and themes. The next step involved categorising the codes based on similarities. This process is also commonly referred to as axial coding. Hereby, emerging concepts became evident. The last step of the coding process revolved around selective coding. This means that the categories are sorted into overarching themes which are relevant for the further analyses of the gathered data (Williams & Moser, 2019). Hereby the original colour coding also proved helpful as it further showed which codes and categories can be the results of similar thematic topics. Emergent overarching themes in this study were cognitive image formation, ghost tour experiences, affective image, outstanding facts, and visitor perception.

### 4.3 DATA COLLECTION

The primary research took place in Edinburgh between April 5, 2023, and April 12, 2023. Additional interviews took place in the weeks after the initial research period in order to accommodate the available times of participants. The interviews lasted between 10 and 30 minutes depending on the number of participants and time available.

To determine the sample size, the concept of saturation was applied. Saturation is commonly used in qualitative research processes to identify the right sample size. Hereby, it has to be noted that there is not one right sample size for all qualitative research practices, but rather the complexity of the collected data becomes important. Further, saturation generally describes the point where no new information or emerging themes are provided by newly collected data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Based on this, the point of saturation was determined after nine interviews including 15 participants in total. This shows that a mix of individual and group interviews was conducted. According to Bender (2004), group interviews can be a useful tool to unravel underlying relationships and gather more in-depth information as a more dynamic environment is created.

In order to recruit participants a mix of convenience and snowball sampling was used. To begin with, convenience sampling identifies participants based on their accessibility (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2021). Due to the lack of accessibility at the Edinburgh Dungeon, it proved difficult to find participants there. As a result, participants were mainly recruited after participating in ghost tours. At the end of the ghost tour, an announcement describing the research and its aim was made. Hereby, also the tour guides encouraged respondents to participate in the interviews. The interviews mainly took place at Greyfriars Kirkyard as this is the last stop of the ghost tours. Additionally, recruiting participants after



the ghost tours ensured that they had previously participated in dark tourism activities. In total nine participants were recruited during the ghost tours. Further, social media, especially Facebook groups for travellers to Edinburgh, and the accommodation site, a medium-sized hostel in Edinburgh, were places where further two participants were recruited with this sampling method. After this initial period, snowball sampling was the second method used to identify more participants. With this method, participants were asked whether they know anyone who has participated in similar activities in Edinburgh before and whether they are available for an interview (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2021). Using this method gave access to four more participants who did not necessarily have to be in Edinburgh at the time of the initial primary research.

#### 4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since this research is based on interviews, it is important to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. First, the anonymity of participants was ensured by not asking personal questions which could be used to identify participants. Since the name, gender and age are not influential aspects of this study, they were not addressed during the interview. If the name was known to the researcher, it was not written down or referred to at any given point. Solely the country of origin was personal information asked for. However, due to the size of countries, it is unlikely that one can identify an individual person based on this fact. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality can be ensured during the research.

Additionally, participants were given an informed consent form (Appendix 3) which highlights their rights of participation. Here, it is noteworthy that participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any given point. Participants were further informed of the aim of the study and how their provided insights are used. Moreover, the contact information of the researcher was provided, allowing participants to contact the researcher at any point after the initial interview. The interviews were audio-recorded and stored in a separate file which was locked by a specific code only the researcher knows. This way, it is ensured that the information cannot be accessed by third parties. Audio recordings were deleted after the finalisation of this research, ensuring that they cannot be traced back in the future.

## 5 ANALYSIS

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This chapter outlines the insights and opinions which were expressed during the interviews. Hereby, emerging themes are covered and correlating findings are presented. Additionally, a discussion focusing on the wider context of the findings within existing academia is provided.

To begin with, the table below provides an overview of the different interviews regarding their number of participants, nationality, and type of tour that they joined.

	<b>Nr. Of People</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Nr. Of Tours</b>	<b>Type of Ghost Tours</b>	<b>Operator</b>
<b>Interview 1</b>	2	-	1	Free Walking Tour	Tour operator
<b>Interview 2</b>	4	Spain (x2), Chile, England	1	Free Walking Tour	Tour operator
<b>Interview 3</b>	2	Canada	1	Vault Tours	Tour operator
<b>Interview 4</b>	1	Estonia	4	Free Walking Tour x2, Bus Tour Vaults Tour	Accommodation provider, tour operator
<b>Interview 5</b>	1	Netherlands	2	Free Walking Tour, Vaults Tour	Tour operator
<b>Interview 6</b>	1	Ireland/ France	1	Vault Tours	Tour operator
<b>Interview 7</b>	1	England	1	Underground Tour	Part of the fringe festival
<b>Interview 8</b>	2	Netherlands	2	Historic Tour, Walking Tour	Accommodation provider, tour operator
<b>Interview 9</b>	1	Germany	1	Free Walking Tour	Tour operator

*Table 1: Overview of participants*

## 5.1 FINDINGS

### 5.1.1 Cognitive image formation

To begin with, the cognitive image revolves around the existing knowledge visitors have of a destination before visiting. This knowledge is largely created based on used information sources. When asked for those, a variety of sources became evident. Those can generally be distinguished in organic and induced images. First, several non-commercial sources, which create the organic image, were used by respondents. Hereby, sources such as travel blogs and online reviews found on the first page of Google, as well as social media platforms were among the highly used. Specifically, the

platform Instagram and thereon created reels were amongst the most commonly used social media platforms and also largely influenced the cognitive image of respondents. The information found on this platform often focused on “*the top 10 things to do in Edinburgh*” or “*must-see places*”. However, neither of those actively promoted the darker side of Edinburgh but rather showed its medieval streets, landscapes, and other activities to partake in the city. Similarly, also the role of TV shows, especially *Outlander* which is set in Scotland, played a role in the initial destination image creation. Nonetheless, those shows generally created an image of Scotland as a whole rather than focusing on specific cities such as Edinburgh.

On the other hand, the induced image, which is usually created by the official marketing efforts of a destination, played a less influential role in the cognitive image formation. Only a minority of respondents actively used the official website of the destination management organisation. Additionally, travel agencies were also seldom used. Here, it became apparent that those were mainly consulted to plan and book specific tours. Two respondents directly booked their ghost tour through one of the agencies, showing that dark tourism plays a minor role in the usage of those information sources. Looking at the role of dark tourism practices, also dark academia played a small role in the cognitive image formation of Edinburgh. This was mainly experienced by students who came into contact with this academia during their programme. Nonetheless, it was commonly expressed that commercial information sources were mainly only used to gather more detailed information on a specific topic or sight in Edinburgh which was previously encountered through organic information sources. Therefore, a tendency shows that the cognitive image of visitors was largely created based on organic information sources rather than official marketing and tourism organisations.

Taking this initial knowledge into account, respondents were asked to describe the image they had of Edinburgh before travelling there. Hereby, the city was commonly described as being *cosy* with all the pubs and cafes one can visit during rainy days. Further, due to the medieval streets and architecture of the buildings, respondents also thought of a *unique and historical character* when describing their initial image of Edinburgh. Lastly, also the surrounding nature was embedded in the image. However, all those aspects also highlight that dark tourism practices were not apparent in the visitors’ destination image held before the visit.

Apart from creating the cognitive image, some information sources also proved to be influential travel motivations for respondents. Hereby, especially recommendations of friends or family, but also university programmes were among the most influential. Those factors became specifically evident during group interviews. Often, one or two members of the group were responsible for the planning, which is also reflected in the used information sources of those, whereas the rest of the group simply

followed without having much knowledge of Edinburgh before visiting. A similar approach is also seen when the trip was part of a university programme as participants showed a tendency to merely follow the pre-planned programme without doing their own research of the city beforehand. Those who chose not to actively inform themselves about the city also expressed their lack of expectations for their visit and Edinburgh itself.

### 5.1.2 Ghost tour experience

When looking at the individual travel motivation a distinction between the travel motivation to Edinburgh and motivation to participate in a ghost tour is evident. Frequently mentioned motivations to visit Edinburgh included visiting a beautiful and historical city, never having been before, or simply getting away from their everyday life and enjoying a nice holiday. On the contrary, motivations to join a ghost tour varied largely. To begin with, personal interests in the paranormal, ghosts, and legacies of places are mentioned to be the main motivation by a few respondents. Those who have expressed an interest in this aspect also tended to have previously joined similar tours either in the city itself or in other countries. Respondents who did not directly have an interest in the paranormal rather mentioned educational purposes, historical interests, and getting outside one's comfort zone as their main motives.

Nonetheless, one of the most influential factors, which became evident during the interviews, is the recommendation by friends and family. The majority of respondents heard about ghost tours in Edinburgh through their social circles. Additionally, those who were not too keen on the paranormal itself but also on joining the ghost tours, in general, were directly influenced by their friends. It was often expressed that the sole reason for joining a ghost tour was their friends' interest in it.

*“Actually, my, a friend said like, “Oh, this is city here, that, has a lot of ghost stories.” And he said like oh, “let's do it” and I think [refers to another respondent] was very hesitant at first.” – Interview 8*

*“And I'm not sure in general that I would have ended up on a ghost tour because also in the reels and things that I saw that never really popped up, I guess that just didn't really, like I wasn't really aware of that if she would not have told me.” – Interview 5*

The individual motivation was also largely reflected in the different expectations respondents had of the ghost tour itself. Those who expressed a higher interest in the paranormal also commonly associated the tours with going into haunted places, going ghost hunting, or simply experiencing the paranormal. Hereby, changing temperatures, ghost encounters, or the sensation of feeling someone's breath or touch were expected. Additionally, jump scares were expected by the majority of respondents; some of whom later on mentioned that they were relieved when those expectations

turned out to be unreal. Although jump scares were not part of the ghost tours, respondents who joined tours going into the vaults did express some scary elements either as a result of the storytelling in connection to minor aspects such as turning off the lights or having dolls laying around in small confined spaces. Lastly, all respondents expected some type of ghost stories and legends of the different places to be covered during the tours, as they were all aware of the witch hunts and bloody battles which took place in and around Edinburgh. Although not all expectations were fulfilled during the tours, all respondents indicated their satisfaction with the tours and highly valued the information they received during those. Further, they also mentioned that they are actively going to encourage others to join those tours in the future and even used the gathered information in social conversations outside of Edinburgh.

### 5.1.3 Affective image

The affective image is largely influenced by the emotions encountered during the visit. In this instance, the emotions during and after the tour are valuable insights. Hereby, a distinction between positive and negative feelings experienced became evident. First, all respondents unanimously agreed that the ghost tours were less scary than originally anticipated. This can be directly linked back to the type of ghost tour, as tours that the respondents participated in focused on providing historical knowledge rather than scaring its participants. In some instances, families with small children were also recognised participants of the tours, which shows that the tours were available for all ages. Taking a closer look at the expressed emotions it became evident that emotions with more negative annotations were commonly felt *during* the participation in those tours. Commonly mentioned feelings include *scary*, *spooky*, *creepy*, and *shock*. Additionally, specific stories told during the tours also left respondents feeling *anxious*, *in distress*, or even *traumatised*. Those feelings were often evoked due to the personal life experiences of respondents which resulted in them relating to the stories on a personal level. As a result, the emotions were experienced more strongly. One of the most common facts which led to those engaging emotions revolved around witch trials which took place in Edinburgh. Here, the influence of gender on the different emotions and associations with individual stories became evident. It was the majority of female respondents who put more thought into the witch trials and frequently imagined their lives during those times.

*" [...] like all the things that they did to the witches, and then you stand there and you can just not imagine how that was in that time. Also, being a woman on top of that. [...] like big chances that I would have been prosecuted as a witch. So hearing about stories you do notice quite like, okay, it's such a nice city to be in now. But probably I wouldn't have liked it so many years ago, so many years.*

*Yeah. So, yeah. And then I think it's quite interesting."* – Interview 5

Another influential factor on the affective image was the place setting itself. During the interviews, it became evident that tours going into the vaults resulted in stronger felt emotions than those who simply joined a walking tour. As a result, one can anticipate that a place can have a large influence on the affective image as stories can become more emotionally engaging when told in real-life places where the fundamental events from the past took place.

Although respondents commonly expressed having experienced negative emotions during the tours, they also showed that those feelings can become positive after the tour. Here, the majority of the respondents described the tours to be *informative* and *interesting* as they provided them with a range of historical facts and personal life stories of the people from the past. Others further described the tours as *exciting* and *fun* as they channelled their adrenaline throughout. Taking those feelings into account, respondents described the tours as offering a nice mix of feelings. This shows that the negative emotions are not predominantly felt but rather turned into a positive experience. Further, respondents also revealed their satisfaction with the tours and their influence on the whole experience of Edinburgh as the stories did not only appeal to their emotions but also provided visitors with further insights into the meaning of places. As a result, the positive outcome of the tours and, thus, affective image, also influence the overall visitor perception.

#### 5.1.4 Visitor perception

At last, respondents were asked whether the ghost tours influenced their visitor perception of Edinburgh. Here, the focus was on identifying how the newly gained knowledge has shaped the initially held destination image of respondents. Hereby, a change in perception was generally expressed ranging from smaller scales, such as the perception limited to specific sites, to larger scale changes which affect the image held of the whole city. First, respondents explained that joining a ghost tour has provided them with more meaning associated with specific areas or individual buildings. For instance, the reason for certain names of pubs or larger areas of the city was claimed to be one of the factors that provided more meaning to the city. Additionally, a minority also mentioned that the ghost tours introduced them to new places such as hidden corridors spread throughout the city. This newly gained insight has continued to influence the way the respondents experience the city. Lastly, respondents expressed that having this knowledge makes them think about places more in-depth on a daily basis, imagining past events and what their life would have been like during those times.

*"[...] it brings like histories from the past to what you are doing in nowadays on the actual time, you know, like so, having a bit of history like makes you understand like, I don't know some old streets and why like some Pups are all in the same area and things like that. So it definitely enrich my my visit of Edinburgh" – Interview 6*

*“Plus like now every time when I cross the bridge like south bridge for example, or sorry north bridge, ehm you cross the bridge and you know oh this used to be the place where people jumped down and they had to put nets underneath so the bodies won’t fall, like so they can’t commit suicide, that used to be the spot where people just jumped. Every time I cross that bridge I know and it’s like ok, I know it from my very first tour actually” – Interview 4*

Overall the ghost tours resulted in a positive change of perception as they gave new perspectives and more in-depth knowledge of the places found in Edinburgh. As a result, respondents all agreed that joining a ghost tour offers a unique way of learning more about the city which is worth recommending to others. One even described it as being one of Edinburgh’s *unique selling points*.

## 5.2 DISCUSSION

Taking the findings into account, this study brings new theoretical implications. The following subchapter outlines the most influential insights by connecting them to the wider field of academia.

First, when looking at the influences of different information sources on destination image formation the findings confirm a study by Alcocer et al. (2019) who researched this phenomenon. Hereby, especially the influence of the Internet, recommendations of friends and family and word of mouth were the most used information sources. Those results also became evident in this study. Additionally, increased usage of social media resources and a higher influence of those on the cognitive image is a valuable insight of this research. One of the first authors to look into this emerging trend were Kim et al. (2017), who identified the increasing role of social media on the destination image formation. Hereby, especially marketing efforts focusing on must-see places and best attractions were amongst the most valuable aspects of the study. Those findings are also confirmed by the increasing social media usage and its influence evident in this research, which proved to influence the expectations of visitors.

When looking at the influences of participation in dark tourism activities itself, ghost tours can be classified as one of the lightest forms of dark tourism based on Stone’s (2006) typology. This brings many implications which are also commonly seen in this research. First, the lightest shade is often focused on the entertainment of visitors. This entertainment is confirmed by the attributed emotions of respondents as many described the activity as being fun and exciting. Similar to the dark fun factories described by Stone (2006), the analysed ghost tours in Edinburgh also offer a socially accepted, family-friendly environment which provides visitors with the opportunity to learn more about the myths and legends of places. Those educational perspectives, entertainment purposes, unique ways of learning about past events, and emotional engagement are also identified by Dancausa

et al. (2020) to be one of the main motivations to join a ghost tour. Those findings are realised by the individual motivations of visitors who have a direct interest in joining a ghost tour. Yet, the high influence of recommendations by friends and family is a noteworthy emergent theme during this study. This aspect was seldom explored before but proved to be one of the most influential motivations for those who are more hesitant to join ghost tours.

Taking a look at the broader visitor motivation to Edinburgh, Garcia (2012) identified that participating in a ghost tour is often not part of the main motivations to visit the city. This aspect is also evident in this study as the main motivations to visit the city focused on the character and nature of Edinburgh rather than on the tales and folklore. Although not being the main motivation, participating in dark tourism activities can have significant influences on the affective image, ultimately influencing the overall destination image of visitors. The nature of those emotions is further addressed by Garcia (2012) showing that although ghost tours mainly serve entertainment purposes, negative feelings cannot be outruled as the origin of the told stories is directly linked to death and suffering. Hereby, it is important for organisers to engage with those negative emotions to ultimately create a positive experience for visitors. Similarly, a study by Ashworth & Isaac (2015) focuses on the emotional components of dark tourism experiences. Here, they also describe that negative emotions can ultimately stimulate positive experiences. Both those theories can be further confirmed by this study as the lasting feelings associated with the ghost tours were positive. This confirms that the efforts of ghost tour operators in Edinburgh are appreciated by visitors as the overall experience is highly valued.

Furthermore, this research brings first insights into the role of gender on the experienced emotions. This phenomenon was seldom explore before by researchers. Although not directly focusing on the influence of gender, a study by Sigala & Steriopoulos (2021) suggests that personal experiences can result in a deeper engagement with one's emotions during certain aspects of tours. Here, one can argue that gender can also have such influences on the individual's felt emotions and one's understanding of past events. Therefore, this result further confirms that personal reflections can be a valuable outcome of dark tourism practices, as previously analysed by Sigala & Steriopoulos (2021).

Lastly, Sigala & Steriopoulos (2021), also highlight that most studies disregard negative emotions and their influence on visitors' satisfaction. However, the outcome of this study shows that engaging with one's negative emotions can ultimately stimulate positive responses. Thus, this study brings new insights into the influence of negative emotions, showing that building up on those can become a valuable marketing tool for a destination.



## 6 CONCLUSION

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This study focuses on the influence of dark tourism practices on visitor perception in Edinburgh. To better understand the influence, several themes directly related to destination image formation processes are explored. To begin with, pre-trip variables that form visitors' cognitive image were analysed. The study reveals that especially components of the organic image, so non-commercially created information sources, are amongst the most influential sources. Especially content created on Instagram has received increasing attention from visitors and largely forms the initially created destination image based on this information. Focusing more marketing efforts on those platforms can, therefore, become a useful tool for destination management organisations to attract a wider range of visitors while stimulating a positive destination image.

Next, also the different motivations and expectations for joining dark tourism activities become evident. Motivational factors are largely based on individuals' interest in the paranormal but also on exploring the history of a place. A noteworthy result of this study also shows that recommendations from friends and family play a crucial motivational role, especially to those who do not have an initial interest in experiencing or learning about supernatural tales. Taking the different expectations into account, it can be seen that those are largely shaped by fright factors such as jump scares or ghost encounters. In reality, the analysed tours showed a higher focus on explaining the history of the place. Although the expectations were not always fulfilled, visitors commonly left with an intention to further recommend participating in ghost tours showing that the overall experience was satisfactory.

Lastly, another important component ultimately influencing visitor perception is the affective image. Here, feelings during and after participating in dark tourism practices are of relevance. A clear distinction between emotions felt during and after the tours is evident. Commonly felt emotions during the tours had negative connotations. Those emotions are often in direct connection to the stories told, especially when one can identify with them on a personal level. Specifically, gender plays a role in the identification with past events such as witch hunts which were commonly referred to by female participants. Nonetheless, after participating in the tour, emotions generally turned into a positive outcome. Looking back at the tour, also the exciting and fun aspects became evident. Those also stayed in the mind of visitors longer as they showed a tendency to positively talk about participation in the tour, some even describing it as one of the highlights of the trip. This shows that, although negative feelings are experienced during participation in dark tourism practices, the overall outcome is generally perceived to be positive.

Taking those outcomes into account, the influence of dark tourism practices on visitor perception can be established. Overall, the visitor perception has been positively influenced by the information received during the participation in dark tourism activities. Nonetheless, the extent to which the perception was altered varied. Some only had a changed view of specific places whereas others experience it on a larger scale in the city. Even so, the new knowledge gained during the ghost tours has brought added value to visitors' experiences as they received greater and more detailed insights into past events that shaped the city. As a result, certain sites of Edinburgh gain more meaning and a better understanding of their original purposes. This shows that building on the darker aspects of a destination's history can become a unique selling point for the destination and create positive experiences for visitors while also attracting new and more niche tourism types.

## **6.1 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

This study provides new insights into the relationship between destination images and dark tourism practices. Those are seldom explored, especially at sites which are not directly sites of death and disaster but rather associated with it. Analysing the visitor perception at a well-established ghost tourism destination provides first insights into the way dark tourism practices can positively influence the overall destination image of a place. Additionally, new motivational aspects could be explored. Especially, social contacts become an important motivational source for dark tourism practices on a lighter spectrum. Further, also first insights into the influence of gender on the affective components of the destination image were noted in this study.

Taking those new insights into account, further differentiating the tourism product by including the darker past of destinations can become a useful tool for destination management organisations. Those can provide a more detailed insight into the history of a place which results in a unique learning experience for visitors. To do so, social media marketing can be of essence as visitors frequently receive influential information on those.

## **6.2 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

The main limitation of this research is that the analysed tours are mainly based on storytelling with a high focus on retelling the historical aspects of Edinburgh. This can have a direct influence on the emotions and experiences during those tours as fright factors are limited. Nonetheless, numerous tours in Edinburgh also offer special fright nights which can possibly lead to different emotions experienced during the tours. Therefore, focusing on tours which have a higher fright factor by having jump scares or real-life actors can shine new light on the affective components which have a large

influence on the overall experience of visitors. As a result, also visitors' perception can be affected as the focus does not lie on knowledge acquisition but rather on entertainment purposes.

Another emerging theme was the difference in emotions experienced based on the gender of participants. Since this was not the main aim of the study this phenomenon received limited attention. However, having a better understanding of those differences can provide vital insights into the lived experiences of visitors. Therefore, focusing further research on the influence of gender, or even further looking into other socio-demographic impacts on dark tourism experiences can bring clearer insights into the resulting visitor perception. Having this insight can also be valuable for destination management organisations as they can further distinguish their tourism products by focusing their marketing efforts on newly emerging factors.

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## 8 APPENDIX

### 8.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE

The first set of questions relate to cognitive components of the destination image.

**1. How did you learn about Edinburgh?**

- a. Where did you get your information from? (e.g. DMO, movies, friends?)
- b. What expectations did you have for Edinburgh before visiting?

**2. Why did you ultimately decide to visit Edinburgh instead of another place?**

- a. First time visiting?

**3. How did you find out about the tour?**

- a. Did you inform yourself about the different stops of the tour beforehand?

**4. Why did you choose to go on this tour/ dungeon?**

- a. Have you done anything similar before?
- b. Or only specific in Edinburgh? Other tours/ activities planned?

The second set of questions relate to the affective components and motivations of visitors. Hereby, the focus lies on expectations, prior experiences, and felt emotions.

**5. What were your expectations of the tour beforehand?**

- a. Has the tour fulfilled your expectations?

**6. Have you seen any of the visited places prior to joining the tour?**

- a. How has the tour changed the way you experience this place now?
- b. Have you joined another tour similar to this?
  - i. In Edinburgh itself?
  - ii. In another country?
- c. Would you join a similar tour again in the future?
  - i. Why/ Why not?

**7. How did the tour make you feel?**

- a. Example of three emotions felt?
- b. Did you like those feelings?

**8. What were the most interesting facts for you?**

- a. What makes this particular fact so special?

The last questions focus on the visitor perception and intention to recommend dark tourism experiences.

**9. How has the tour influenced your perception of Edinburgh?**

- a. What has changed?
  - b. How has it changed?
- 10. Would you recommend this experience to others?**
- a. Why/ Why not?

**8.2 CODING MATRIX**

Selective Coding	Axial Coding	Open Coding
<b><i>Cognitive Image</i></b>	Organic image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel Blogs</li> <li>• Online Reviews</li> <li>• TV Shows – Outlander</li> <li>• Family &amp; Friends</li> <li>• Social Media</li> <li>• University</li> <li>• Google</li> </ul>
	Induced image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Google</li> <li>• Dark Academia</li> <li>• DMO</li> <li>• Tourism Office</li> <li>• (Online) travel agency</li> </ul>
	Travel motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holiday</li> <li>• Never been before</li> <li>• Beautiful city</li> <li>• Student/ University trip</li> <li>• Revisit</li> <li>• Friends &amp; Family</li> </ul>
<b><i>Ghost Tour Experience</i></b>	Information Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion on street</li> <li>• Online travel agency</li> <li>• Tourism office</li> <li>• Recommendations from friends</li> <li>• Fringe Festival</li> </ul>
	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal interest</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest in supernatural/ ghosts/ legacies</li> <li>• Follow friends &amp; family</li> <li>• Based on recommendation</li> <li>• Step outside comfort zone</li> <li>• History</li> </ul>
Expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haunted places</li> <li>• Ghost hunting</li> <li>• Experience something supernatural</li> <li>• Witchy stuff</li> <li>• Bloody stuff</li> <li>• Jump scares</li> <li>• Ghost stories</li> <li>• Magic/ Occult</li> <li>• Legends</li> <li>• Superstition</li> </ul>
Impressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal stories of people</li> <li>• More creepy/ haunted places</li> <li>• Educational</li> <li>• Creepy side of stories</li> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Extra knowledge</li> <li>• Good experience</li> <li>• Theatrical focus</li> <li>• Unique selling point</li> <li>• Interactive</li> <li>• Lack of information plaques in city</li> <li>• History of Edinburgh</li> <li>• Reuse in social conversation</li> <li>• Emotionally engaging</li> <li>• Connecting stories</li> </ul>

<b>Outstanding Facts</b>	Stories encountered during ghost tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender (female) – Witch trials</li> <li>• Bloody Mackenzie</li> <li>• Cannibalism</li> <li>• King James beheading</li> <li>• Princess Street Garden – Lake</li> <li>• Witch Trials</li> <li>• Burke &amp; Hair</li> <li>• Vaults</li> <li>• Cages in graveyard</li> </ul>
<b>Affective Image</b>	positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curiosity</li> <li>• Interesting</li> <li>• Informative</li> <li>• Excitement</li> <li>• Historical</li> <li>• Relief</li> </ul>
	Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxious</li> <li>• Creepy</li> <li>• Dark feeling</li> <li>• Scary</li> <li>• Shock</li> <li>• Spooky</li> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Traumatizing</li> </ul>
<b>Visitor Perception of Edinburgh</b>	Pre-trip variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous encounter of places</li> <li>• More character &amp; history than UK</li> <li>• Medieval streets/ old buildings</li> <li>• Bad weather</li> <li>• Cosy feelings</li> <li>• Nature</li> </ul>
	Post-tour variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rich history</li> </ul>

- Bloody history
- More context/ expanded horizon
- Hidden corridors
- Specific information to places that reoccurs when visiting the place
- Understanding of age of city
- Think about places more in depth
- More interesting place

### 8.3 CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN MASTER THESIS RESEARCH

Master Thesis | MSc Cultural Geography | University of Groningen, Campus Fryslân

Title: Understanding the influence of dark tourism practices on the visitor perception of Edinburgh

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Dear participant,

First, I would like to thank you for taking your time and participating in this research for my master thesis. The aim of this research is to get an understanding of how participating in dark tourism activities influence the visitor perception of Edinburgh. To get a better understanding of the topic, dark tourism refers to the visit to places associated with death and tragedy. Those activities can also be found in Edinburgh as the city offers a wide variety of ghost tours, has many mystic tales that want to be told, and is also home to the Edinburgh Dungeon. During the interview you are asked about your personal experiences with those activities. The interview will take approximately 15-30 minutes.

If you wish to not answer specific questions, you are allowed to indicate this at any point during the interview. You can also stop the interview at any point or fully withdraw your participation without having to provide any reason. If you wish to withdraw your participation in the future you can contact me using the details given below. In that case, none of the information you provided previously will be used in the thesis.

The interview will be audio-recording with the voice recording app on my phone. After, it will be transcribed and analysed. The audio file and your data will be treated confidentially and deleted after

the finalisation of the thesis. Any personal information which emerges during the interview will be left out in the report, making sure that your information stays anonymous.

If you have any questions or concerns about the interview, you can contact me at any point in the future. My contact details can be found at the bottom of the page. Here, you will also find details of my thesis supervisor and the Ethics Committee of Campus Fryslân.

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I hereby declare that:

- I understand what the research entails.
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that at any moment in time I can choose not to answer certain questions or to stop the interview early.
- I understand that participation in this research is confidential and that any further personal information that emerges during the interview will not appear in the report.
- I understand that the final report will only be read by the researcher, supervisor, and second grader. No information of the report will be shared with third parties.

#### CONTACT DETAILS

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