HOW TO BE A DARK TOURIST: ANALYSIS OF THE TOURIST BEHAVIOR THROUGH A DOCUMENTARY SERIES

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, dark tourism has become increasingly popular. The level of participation of the dark tourist within a dark site underlies the variety of experiences that can be produced, depending on the type of audience engagement. This study attempts to design the discourse of a performance-based typology of dark tourism, built on the representations of tourists' participation within the Netflix documentary series Dark Tourist. As screen tourism can influence behavior patterns, a typology of spectator, spect-actor, and actor roles is presented.

Keywords: Dark tourism; tourism performance; documentary series; Netflix; spectator.

Como ser un turista oscuro: Análisis del comportamiento del turista a través de una serie documental

RESUMEN

En las últimas décadas, el turismo oscuro se ha vuelto cada vez más popular. El nivel de participación del turista dentro de un sitio oscuro subyace en la variedad de experiencias que se pueden producir, según el tipo de participación de la audiencia. Este estudio intenta diseñar el discurso de una tipología performativa del turismo oscuro, construida a partir de las representaciones de la participación de los turistas dentro de la serie documental de Netflix,

Dark Tourist. Dado que el turismo de pantalla puede influir en los patrones de comportamiento, se presenta una tipología de roles de espectador, actor-espectador y actor.

Palabras clave: Turismo oscuro; actuación turística; documental; Netflix; espectador.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Jacobsen's (2016) view, the death-defying mentality of western society during the 20th century was successfully reflected by French historian Philippe Ariès's final historical phase - the 'forbidden death' (Ariès, 1974). People, in order to understand the meaning of life, have attempted to cope with, avoid, or even live with death and the circumstances surrounding it. From a rather romanticised phase of taming death (Elias, 2001), societies have progressed from an undisguised familiarity with death and the dead to an individualised concern with the 'death of oneself' without identifying it as such, to a new intolerance with the 'death of the other', and, finally, the 'forbidden death' which tries to distance itself from death through medical advancement and philosophical questioning (Jacobsen, 2016). This distance created in time the attractive illusion of immortality and the belief that death is present but not close.

Moving on from Ariès's work, Jacobsen (2016) introduced the new phase of 'spectacular death', where within the new interpretational practice of the cosmopolitan age, death is experienced, constructed, and performed beyond the established social and cultural circumstances while mixed with the new social conditions of contemporary individualised/globalised modern society. Here death is transformed into a spectacle which we witness at a safe distance but not experience upfront. Yet, this is not the first time where death is a spectacle in human history. Human curiosity about death and torture, named and criticised as a post-modern phenomenon (due to its emphasis on spectacle and reproduction; Foley and Lennon, 1996), actually follows a 'thanatoptic tradition' of contemplating death (Seaton, 1996). In recent history, through the mediatization, commercialization and re-ritualization of death in various new formats, as well as the palliative care revolution and the request of the dying and the dead to take part in the decision-making process of a noble death (Jacobsen 2016) people have started showing clear and straightforward interest in what was until recently forbidden.

The growing demand to visit places related to death has given rise to the management and interpretation of the 'heritage of atrocity' (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996), or 'negative sightseeing' (MacCannell, 1989), which eventually led to the creation and wide academic acceptance of the term *dark tourism* (Foley and Lennon, 1996) or a narrower definition of *than tourism* (Seaton, 1996) exclusively related to death. Ever since, most researchers have embraced the term of dark tourism through case study analysis (Light, 2017). Dark tourism is defined as "… the act of travel and visitation to sites, attractions and exhibitions that have real of recreated death, suffering or the seemingly macabre as a main theme. Tourists visits to former battlefields, slavery-heritage attractions, prisons,

cemeteries, particular museum exhibitions, Holocaust sites, or to disaster locations all constitute the broad realm of 'Dark Tourism'" (Stone, 2014: 71).

Stone (2020) was the first to connect this tourism segment with the 'spectacular death' phase. There has been a significant amount of research conducted over the last few decades depicting death and disaster as an attraction, as well as the variety of reasons why tourists visit these sites. The complex and multifaceted nature of death allows for many interpretations (Stone, 2013) under the justified excuse of educational purposes.

Media influence has been considered paramount in the formulation of these motivations (Foley and Lennon, 2000), as its capability to report and repeat death-related events directly affects the interest and demand for such events (Stone, 2006). This is true especially through the communication of new more sensationalised moral meanings related to them and a sort of cinematic reconnaissance for future visits (Dunkley *et al*., 2007). Through films and series, media is vital in offering a taste of this sightseeing and how it's experienced.

Nonetheless, even though classifications and typologies regarding what is offered and why it is desired have been widely produced, little is known on what exactly means to be a dark tourist in terms of the role they perform on site. Deploying taboo subjects, dark tourism had always raised moral conflicts collectively and individually (Sharma, 2020). So, what does this conflicting tourism segment do on site? Furthermore, when behaviours are projected by the media as dark tourism, what specific roles do prospective markets realise they can perform? Previous efforts on classifying dark tourist patterns either focus on the level of liberty from professional guidance in decision-making processes (Edensor, 2000), or their motivations (Sharpley, 2005; Sharpley and Stone, 2029; Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010; Weaver *et al*., 2018), both useful in understanding performances. Yet, what is missing is a clear presentation of dark tourists' roles on site based on their level of participation in the dark story. This study aims to show the different roles that the dark tourist could adopt and the various ways s/he could experience this role, having under consideration the audience involvement effect caused by the media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Media narratives and behavioural patterns

Cultural industries provide the guidelines of experiencing destinations (like films may do for Paris) and influencing consumption by producing multiple meanings which the audience identifies and reproduces (Gkritzali *et al*., 2016). It has been widely accepted that television dramas and movies exert the power to influence tourism (Iwashita, 2008), even though their prime intent is not to induce this sort of mobility (Doyle, 2003; Bolan *et al*., 2011). Yet, though imagination and fantasy, films or series enhance awareness and appeal of destinations and subsequently raise the demand for what is known as film tourism (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006; Bolan *et al*., 2011), screen tourism (Connell and Meyer, 2009), media tourism (Reijnders *et al*., 2015), or pop-culture tourism (Lee and Bai, 2016). In all cases, the focus is upon a cultural product - whether a small or big production - that is transmitted through television, video, DVD or the cinema screen, and whose content, in the format of

sensemaking stories and artistic representations, influences people to visit locations and settings, and experience different cultures (Bolan *et al*. 2011; Du *et al*. 2020). Through the influential format of storytelling, cultural industries convey powerful meanings that inspire consumption expectations and shape new behavioural patterns (Gkritzali *et al*., 2016).

The influence of this cultural product on destination attachment is diversified in terms of how regular is the exposition of the audience to the projected story, highlighting the impact of TV shows, dramas, and series in comparison to films, due to their repetitive contact with the audience through a medium of easy access, as TV (Spears *et al*., 2013; Fu *et al*. 2016). However, movies are a more significant influential medium than TV regarding the promotion of image destination (Spears *et al*., 2013). Regardless of the media, the story guides action when it is transformed into a narrative (Somers, 1994), where different events in time and space are related in various ways through the causal emplotment and selective appropriation that each individual adopts from a limitless array of social experiences. That is, narrativity is such a personalised process that it can easily guide people to act in certain ways.

Destination image is a crucial component of tourists' decision-making process through the construction of place awareness (Tasci, 2009; Croy, 2010). Investigation has been oriented towards the relation between the pre-visit stage of tourism experiences as prescribed by films and TV series, and the on-site final visitation and actual experience (Riley *et al*. 1998; Kim, 2012). For Kim and Kim (2017), audience involvement is a major concept for understanding film tourism from the experiential perspective, considering that film tourists are similar to pilgrims who visit places shown in a film or TV programs and follow the roles that were projected there in their own personalised way (Buchanan *et al*. 2010). This process is explained by the modified model of cultural transformation of Burgess (see in Norton 1996), which describes the circuit of cultural forms that meanings follow as they are encoded within the product by specialised producers and later decoded in various ways by the different audiences. Within the tourism context, this model is adapted and separated between the period of anticipation and experience (Norton, 1996). Firstly, pre-consumption dreaming takes place and locations with their storylines, narratives, performers and human relationships, are transformed into memories of special places (Iwashita, 2008). This aesthetic pleasure of cultural products like films determines the initial interpretation of what is viewed, while the experiential re-interpretation of the visit itself allows for the validation and authentication of the product's projected meanings and the audience's expectations (Norton, 1996).

The level of success of this negotiation phase between anticipation and experience depends on their cognitive and emotional distance, as tourists have perceived it. It's not just the visual stimulus that must be similar, but also the experiencing of similar situations, like confronting wild animals in a safari experience (Norton, 1996). This concept of audience involvement goes back to what is known as parasocial interaction (Giles, 2002), meaning the "imagined connectedness between an individual audience member and a media character" (Kim and Kim, 2017). Audience involvement therefore can lead even to behavioural participation through the construction of on-site film tourist experiences (Kim and Assaker, 2014), and then to referential reflection when the audience relates the media program with their personal experiences (Fu *et al*., 2016).

This behavioural participation, even though less studied in comparison to the general motivation of the location visit, is of high importance because it indicates that the reinterpretation process validates meanings not only passively but also actively by forming personalised memories of something done. The audience can have feelings of parasocial interaction, empathy and identification with favourite TV and film characters (Kim, 2012; Spears *et al*., 2013; Fu *et al*., 2016), feeling as if they were participating in a real story, adapting words and phrases from the film (Du *et al*., 2020) and applying that character in their own lives (Connell and Meyer, 2009; Kim and Kim, 2017). For example, performing re-enactments of movie scenes as if the audience was the actor (Kim, 2012), like doing the "Rocky steps" at the Philadelphia Art Museum is a "must-do" for the tourists and fans of Sylvester Stallone in the film *Rocky* (CBS News, 2004), or doing the "Joker dance" from the movie *Joker* at the stairs of the Highbridge neighbourhood of Bronx (the New York Times, 2019), or purchasing and consuming in places that appeared on movies and TV programs (Spears *et al*., 2013). Therefore, in film tourism, behavioural intention goes beyond the motivation to visit a destination or setting, inviting tourists to experience an embodied interaction with the symbolic location (Connell and Meyer, 2009; Buchmann *et al*. 2010). Spears *et al*. (2013) note that the more positively a destination is portrayed in a movie/TV production, the more it is to be visited and re-enacted in the same way, playing the role of 'scenic/nostalgic tourist' (Kim, 2012; Bolan *et al*., 2011).

Putting aside tourists' personified reproductions of the hero (Rocky) or the villain (Joker), the desire to be part of a filmic context even if it is related to dark pages of human history, is significant for tourist suppliers. After the success of the HBO mini-series Chernobyl, local tour operators have noticed a dramatic surge in travel interest in the territory (The CEO Magazine, 2019), indicating that dark invites when it is projected by the media. Media can romanticise through story-telling techniques the narratives of the past, generating various interpretations of an historic space based on who is looking. The delicate task of producing an experience where local community and visitors are both comfortable with is a crucial point of investigation during the last decade (Kim and Butler 2015; Jordan and Prayag, 2022). Comfort in the positive reappraisal of visitors or a chance for local re-interpretation of inside stories convert dark tourism into a positive means of channelling, at least emotionally, parts of a dark past.

For the purposes of this investigation, the question that arises is, since media has a behavioural effect on tourists when they visit the projected destination, what diversity is communicated in dark tourism roles and experiences.

2.2. Being a dark tourist: from voyeur to performer

As a subset of cultural tourism (Joly, 2011), dark tourism represents broader concepts related to death, such as crime (Dalton, 2014) or violence (Robb, 2009) or socio-political danger (Buda and Shim, 2015). Dark tourism is gaining momentum in practice and has been under increasing investigation (Podoshen *et al*., 2015), lately under terms like conflict-heritage tourism (Mansfeld and Korman, 2015), disaster tourism (Sharpley and Wright, 2018), post-disaster tourism (Martini and Buda, 2018), or even paranormal tourism (Pharino *et al*., 2018), to name a few.

On a behavioural basis, Seaton (1996) suggests five *dark activities* tourists choose to experience, including being witnesses to public enactments or re-enactments of death or visitors to sites of past individual or mass deaths, to internment sites or memorials and to unconnected sites of symbolic representations like museums. In this classification, the fundamental role of the tourist is that of *voyeur* (Stone and Sharpley, 2008) and is based on the witnessed tragedy, for example, genocide tourism (Beech, 2009), slavery tourism (Dann and Seaton, 2001), or on the knowledge that what they witness is a tragedy-to-be, like last-chance tourism (Lemelin *et al.* 2010), or, even on the memory and reinterpretation of a past visit after the visited site was destroyed, like chance tourism (Zerva, 2017). The position of witness makes it possible to maintain a distance from the observed event and re-interpret the adjacent subjectivities of perpetrator and victim (Robb, 2009; Jacobsen, 2016; Stone, 2020).

Yet, it seems that in this era of rediscovering and reinventing death within the tourism spectrum, the role of the witness appears rather limiting especially if the offered product is staged or touristified (Cohen, 2011). Most literature on dark tourism has exhaustively focused on either a) *what* tourists witness in terms of typology of sites like prisons (Strange and Kempa, 2003), battlefields (Miles, 2014), or entire countries as North Korea (Buda and Shim, 2015), or b) *why* they choose to, passing from the pro-visit motivational spectrum (Biran *et al.*, 2011; Gillen 2018) to a more general basis (Stone, 2006; Light, 2017), or c) to a lesser degree, the affective result of the experience to the Self during and post-visit (Martini and Buda, 2018; Farkic, 2020). These typologies of sites and motivations have been structured through a 'continuum of intensity' (Seaton, 1996:240; Stone, 2006) from light to darker, based on temporal dimension or what Lennon and Foley (2000) mentioned as chronological distance from death, and site association with death (Miles, 2002). The most influential typology was introduced by Stone (2006) through the spectrum of dark tourism supply, where sites are evolved from dark to light based on seven categories (infrastructure, purposefulness, time at the event, location authenticity, perceived authenticity, heritage centric, and education vs. entertainment).

Passing from the supply side to the demand point of view and the reasons why tourists choose to visit dark spots, Seaton (1996, p. 240) mentioned the 'continuum of intensity' which reflects the extent of interest in death from general to being the dominant motive. The pro-visit motivational spectrum has been widely investigated whether in specific case studies (Biran *et al.*, 2011; Kidron, 2013; Gillen 2018) or on a general basis (Stone, 2006; Light, 2017), presenting motivations such as education (Thurnell-Read, 2009), curiosity (Biran *et al.*, 2011), remembrance (Farmaki, 2013), sense of duty (Thurnell-Read, 2009) or a 'must-see' site (Isaac and Çakmak, 2016). The affective result of the experience to the Self during and post-visit is still under study (Kidron, 2013; Martini and Buda, 2018; Farkic, 2020). Whether for educational, recreational, or affective motives, dark sites seem to mushroom within the tourism market and even though an important amount of literature demonstrates that relation, less has been investigated on the particular role that the tourists are asked to act upon in dark sites, that is, how they participate. Yet, recent research has scarcely investigated the need of tourists to become someone else besides the witness. This paper aims to present the various roles dark tourists can adopt during their visit based on the options projected by a documentary series.

In terms of the level of participation that dark tourists practice to fully experience a staged performance, two basic concepts rise; participation and performance. The first one refers to a type of behaviour that requires a person's active involvement with the service production and delivery process (Wu and Cheng, 2018), while site participation encompasses tourists to provide constructive suggestions or information sharing with the organisation in order to shape tourism experiences (Ranjan and Read, 2016) or a peripheral role of the experience (Auh *et al*., 2007). For example, Podoshen *et al*. (2018) describe the participation of black metal fans to music festivals that involve abjection, blood, violence and material traces of death and which they experience as rituals on the concert scene. These festivals provide a transitory space as a moment of dark tourism experience, where active participation is fundamental. Yet, even though the positive relation of participation in activities as well as site experiential satisfaction within dark tourism has been investigated (Straus *et al*., 2016; Wu and Cheng, 2018), it is important to analyse the role of media in shaping the perception of who is a dark tourist.

Moving on from participation to performance, the latter could be associated with relational experiences and rituals, like lighting a candle, leaving flowers or other objects, as an act of remembrance in collective ceremonies (Light, 2017). This engagement refers to mimesis (Robb, 2009), where the importance of performance is directed to the tourists' role as actors who replicate in some form the original violence. Tourists crawling through the narrow Cu Chi tunnels in Vietnam as the Vietcong once did, in U.S. G.I. uniforms and shooting period-appropriate AK-47s, is an example of this type of tourist experience.

For Edensor, a performance represents '*an interactive and contingent process which succeeds according to the skill of the actors, the context within which it is performed and the way in which it is interpreted by an audience*' (2001; 72), and it can never be exactly reproduced. This may refer to staging of either rituals and dramas, or scenography and stage design, mediatisation, or the role of keyworkers, while tourists as performers play a significant role in reconstructing tourism, by following the norms instantiated in particular places and tours, under the gaze of co-participants and onlookers (Edensor, 2001).

Some attempts to create a continuum for the consumption of dark tourism from pale to dark (Sharpley, 2005; Stone, 2006; Raine, 2013) or from dark to darker (Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010) have been reported. Sharpley (2005), based on Holt's (1995) typology of four metaphors of consumption practices, separates dark tourism into (a) experience, meaning tourists who undertaking the witness role, give some phenomenological meaning to their own social existence after visiting dark sites; (b) play, that is, communal and shared consumption of sites, like pilgrimage or the experience of *communitas* (Turner, 1973), where performance as acting takes place; (c) integration, meaning either performance as social interaction, or on the darkest version, tourist integration with death, whether by witnessing actual death or by '*travelling in the knowledge or expectation of death*' (Holts, 1995; 229); and (d) classification, that is, travelling to dark places so as to project a social status. This typology, albeit useful in showing a diversity in consumption patterns, seems to mix motivations (social classification and integration) and levels of participation (play and witnessing), while is rather limited in presenting types of consumption in comparison to the growing pool of dark activities.

On a similar basis, Bowman and Pezzullo (2010) tried to illustrate the multiplicity of tourist performances at sites associated with death, proposing five prompts based on the motivation of the performance and the affective bonding to the site. First, performing rituals related to death represents an effort to heal a wound caused by the decedents' passing, and allows people to subject themselves to a process of de-structuration. Second, performing play refers to the macabre – for some – relationship between playful tourist actions and rituals and risk of death. Third, the performing identity for tourists refers to acting out the role of being a tourist, based on reasons they may connect to a dark site, and trying out new aspects of identity. Fourth, performing everyday refers to the way tours represent counter-experiences of tourists' everyday life while at the same time offering an invitation to the everyday lives of others. Finally, performing embodiment refers to the delicate process of putting the body under the same dehumanising or perilous conditions people experienced in the visited dark sites.

Further on, Edensor (2000, 2001) aimed attention at the liberty and level of guidance tourists receive at the time of performance. On a first approach (2000), he made a three-fold separation among (a) disciplined rituals, that is, the participation in expected must-do collective and repetitive performances in which tourists have little room for improvising; (b) improvised performances, meaning the free choice of what to do between staged and commercialised options; and (c) unbounded performance, which refers to the search of spaces not regulated by the tourism industry imperatives, looking for unpredictable choices and sensual stimuli. Later, Edensor (2001) refined this categorisation among directed, identity-oriented and non-conformist performances. Edensor's typologies explained the level of compliance of the tourist's role with the market's offer, without specifying the level of engagement in these performances.

2.3. Performance as 'spect-actor'

Previous typologies on performance have indicated - without clearly stating it - that the experience of being a dark tourist is evolving from passive to active, asking from the visitor to be part of the story. The relationship between tourists as witnesses – that is, spectators of a performance that is staged or not – and as interactive co-performers and witnesses – that is, 'spect-actors' as Bowman and Pezzullo (2010; 193) name them – has entered the spectrum of analysis within tourism. The difference between the two cases is what the performativity approach understands as act (simple gestures) and as performance (social interaction; de Souza Bispo, 2016). This paper intends to detect for the first time the conditions under which a dark tourist can be among other roles, a spect-actor. This latter term was originally used by the Brazilian dramaturge Augusto Boal (1979) in *Theatre of the oppressed* to deconstruct the power structure between performer and spectator, by using theatre as a vehicle of participatory social change. By spect-actor Boal refers to an inversion of the role of the audience member into a participant in the action, who is invited onstage to demonstrate various ways of resolving problems through suggestions and improvisation. These ways are portrayed by the actors in the play, who are now also spectators as they watch and observe what the audience members do. In this case, Boal provided the audience with a solution to an 'uneasy sense of incompleteness' (1979; 142)

that the traditional passive role of watching plays provided, while waiting for the catharsis that others dictate, through real action for creating social change. It represents a rehearsal theatre "for people who want to learn ways of fighting against oppression in their daily lives" (Singhal, 2004: 146). Therefore, through the same benefits of escapism that conventional theatre offers, participatory theatre provides an active way of involvement for the audience. For Boal, the dynamics and changeable nature of each play was the start-point of social change where points of reference were connected to their actual experience (Sloman, 2012), even though it was a risky task since power is given to non-professionals. It's an entertaining process that can lead to awareness raising and behavioural change.

This structure of engagement has been applied in other forms of art, besides theatre, that affects cultural tourism, like festivals (Hollands, 2010), where one-person shows call for audience interaction and involvement by getting on the stage. The tourist experience is enriched through the role of the "festival participant". On the other hand, this tool for social change has been used in "dark" spaces like the Westville Prison in Durban, South Africa, where a group of black women inmates, convicted for murdering their partners, performed auto-biographical plays of their personal stories of physical and psychological abuse, as well as state indifference. In this case, the audience was composed of fellow prisoners, the prison staff, representatives of the Justice Department, the South African Centre Commission, and the media press (Singhal, 2004). As a result, sentences imposed on women inmates were revisited and awareness of the need for a more gender sensitive prison system was achieved.

Considering therefore that site participation has a significant positive effect on site experiential satisfaction, this paper studies the roles a dark tourist can perform through the various levels of participation s/he adopts, introducing active participation as part of the experience that may change its outcome. The objective is to use Boal's theoretical concept within dark tourism, so as to show on a practical level the diversity of experience products that are actually offered in such a fragile tourism market.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to identify media projected dark tourist roles and the level of participation implicated in them, the documentary series *Dark Tourist* was used, distributed by Netflix in 2018. Based on the influence series have as products of repetitive consumption (Spears *et al*., 2013), this series was chosen for its clear appeal to a particular and controversial segment of the tourism market. The series contains one season of eight episodes (40 minutes each), and it was presented by the New Zealander journalist David Farrier, who, interested in the phenomenon of dark tourism, decided to share the experience as a tourist at a total of 28 sites. These episodes are divided in geographical terms (Latin America, Japan, the United States, the Stans, Europe, Africa and the United States again); each episode presents two to four tourist sites related to dark tourism. For this study, from the 28 sites, 3 were excluded (the Huis Ten Bosch theme park's Henn-na Hotel [staffed by robots], the 2017 Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games and the Baikonur Cosmodrome of the Soviet space programme in Kazakhstan) because they do not qualify as dark attractions by any of the existing definitions. The objective here is to project the public narrative (Sommers, 1994) of being a dark tourist, meaning the narrative attached to a cultural formation, and

not a single individual. This narrative is interpreted through the lens of participation level to the experience, inspired by Boal's theoretical construction of acting as a spect-actor. This is where screen and dark tourism come together. The media projection of various ways of performing dark tourism could stimulate tourist behaviours beyond what is formally offered by the tourism sector. As such, it's a TV show that cannot represent all dark tourism, but only a part of it, the same way that films or series usually communicate a story under one or limited perspectives. Having under consideration that limitation, this series provides one of the few media demonstrations - to those unfamiliar with this polemic term - of what it means to be a dark tourist (The Hollywood Reporter, 2018)

The analysed data, therefore, refers to eight externally and professionally produced videos (Griffin, 2019) - one for each episode - that projected the visit to 25 dark sites. Within tourism and leisure studies, the use of video in data collection is scarce (Mura and Sharif, 2017), albeit fundamental since it provides a visceral form of experience and meaning communication in a more accurate way than other media (Pink, 2013; Griffin, 2019). It allows for multiple reviewing for data analysis and is particularly useful for cross-cultural interaction and explanation (Griffin, 2019), while it has also been criticised for the way the camera may affect behaviour (Echeverri, 2005), or projecting just one frame of an interaction (Pink, 2013).

In this study, each episode was critically viewed 2-3 times and textually transcribed, while pausing and going back to particular scenes was useful in making comments regarding the embodied reactions of David and/or the tourists before dark moments during the visit. Thematic analysis was used so as to draw themes and patterns (Braun *et al*., 2016) of tourist participation, while different levels of darkness are categorised within each theme. The use of thematic analysis in videos from Youtube or Netflix has been previously applied in order to comprehend behaviours in particular contexts (Cranwell *et al*., 2017; Harper, 2019). After systematic codification of the visits to each dark site, three core themes emerged describing the participative role of the tourist in the performance of a dark visit, being actor, spect-actor and spectator.

Figure 1
CONDITIONS OF DARK TOURIST ROLES
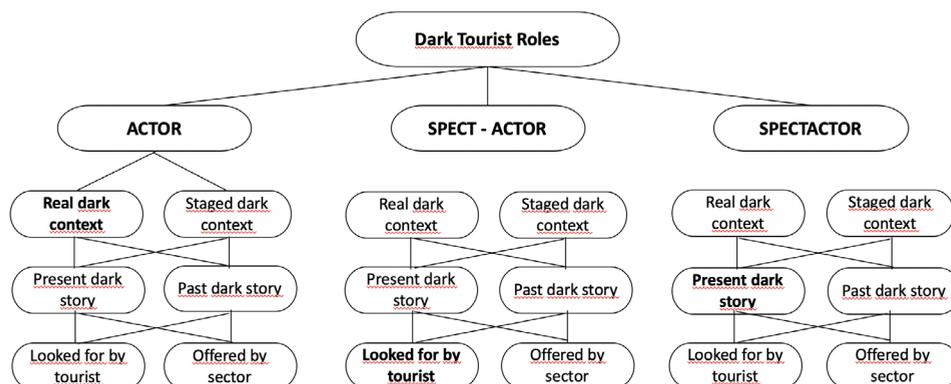
Based on the thematic analysis of the videos, Boal's (1979) theatrical roles of actor, spect-actor and spectator were used as themes to explain tourist's engagement in the performance of a dark visit. Within each theme, a double categorization emerged as an explanation of the conditions that transform each role into darker (Figure 1). Notes were made at later stages of coding and analysis regarding assumptions and connections among the data for reference (Braun *et al*., 2016).

4. RESULTS

4.1. The dark tourist as a spectator

Visiting dark sites in the passive role of the spectator requires the audio-visual attention of the tourist on stimulus that is prepared ex ante or in situ. The role of the spectator in this series was followed through guided group or individual tours, and through personal quests for a non-commercialised dark product. In the first case, the spectacle was organised before the visit and had a repeated basic format. This refers to group and private tours, like the bus tour in Fukushima, in Escobar's territory in Medellin, Colombia, the JFK assassination, or in the city of Ashgabat in Turkmenistan, or the new capital city of Myanmar, Naypyidaw. Despite the few questions that David asked as a tourist (and as a reporter) – as well as those from the other tourists present – the narratives of the guides in the various destinations had already been planned in structure and content.

When the dark story is ongoing during the visit, the experience of being a spectator, although generally passive, assumes a darker hue. For example, in the private tours in Ashgabat and Naypyidaw, two newly constructed and luxurious cities that are empty of people's presence, hiding in the eyes of the tourist their political history, the tourist enters for the first-time places where no questions are allowed about the past, no mobility is allowed outside the city and no pictures or videos are allowed inside the city. Here, the tourist is a spectator in its pure form because no interaction is possible apart from the one with the guide. In both cases, the scenery, albeit real, was interpreted as a non-authentic representation of the socio-economical reality that exists in these countries, since it was made present at any moment that misconduct would be severely punished. No performance, including simple acts, was allowed (de Souza Bispo, 2016), a fact that isn't true while participating in rituals. For example, in the case of the Ma'nene funeral rite, in Toraja, Indonesia, David was able to enter the ritual and observe a more joyful way of coping with death, where the only act he had to do was to bring some snacks for the ceremony, like paying a ticket.

In some destinations, the dark story may be part of the past as well as the present. This is related to one of the five dark tourist place modalities of Seaton (1999), related to places where individual of massive death has occurred either by war o natural disasters. In the case of Fukushima, tourists are the spectators of the destruction and abandonment caused by the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear plant explosion in the past, while a current danger is invisibly present, that is, the released radioactive material into the environment. Watching the destruction of the past event provoked awe, while realising that the Geiger counters indicated a radioactivity 50 times higher than it would be safe to be exposed to,

provoked fear as tourists decided to stop the tour, applying a non-conformist behaviour (Edensor, 2001). Thus, in a current dark scenery, performing embodiment (Bowman and Pezzulo, 2010) even as a spectator can result in a dark experience.

The more the story goes to the past, the more the risk is reduced and the higher the need to add elements of entertainment or tragedy for the experience to be dark, while no participation from the tourists' side is requested. In Colombia, for example, David visited Pablo Escobar's personal prison, the neighbourhood where he lived and developed his narco-activity following guides related to him, like Popeye, Escobar's most trusted hit man. The tourist only watches and listens to the guide who basically represents the dark element of the tour but creates an affective contradiction, as David says after listening to him, "*I felt conflicted about being charmed by a brutal hitman*".

Being a spectator in dark tourism implies a heterogeneity in lived experiences, which basically depends on the time distance kept from the narrated story, as Lennon and Foley (2000) and Robb (2009) have suggested, the connection of the intermediary to the dark story, as Cohen suggested (2011), and finally, the level of perceived safety that is connected to a particular performance or behavior.

4.2. The dark tourist as an actor

On an opposite level, it is also possible for the tourist to be offered or to pursue activities where an active role is fundamental to achieve the dark side of the visit. As seen in this series, these options could be divided into two clear categories: participating in real versus staged activities. In the latter case, simulation is either commercialised or accidental, offering an 'as close as you can get' experience. The objective is to create a context where the tourist is the primary actor. In the series, this staging was offered through a mock illegal border crossing tour into the United States from Mexico, role-playing in the world's biggest World War II (WWII) re-enactment just outside Maidstone, and interacting with the Suidlanders in Randfontein (Afrikaner extremists), as well as participating in a crisis training exercise for mass evacuation.

Role-playing in a staged environment basically means following the rules in an active mode and securing the safety of the participant. This would be what Edensor called disciplined rituals (2000) or directed performances (2001). In the simulated border crossing, under the guidance of an ex-migrant smuggler, tourists enter the role of an illegal migrant where, for six hours, without stopping or eating, they secretly try to reach the US border under the sound of gunshots, after being robbed, accused of smuggling drugs, witnessing the simulated death of a commander and being arrested by the police before reaching the border. Tourists felt tired and hungry and stopped for a break, realising that this does not happen in reality. The various encounters with the intermediaries that played these roles resulted in diversified tourists' reactions into either irony, laughter or fear. For David, it felt like being an extra in a B-grade movie, while commenting that there is nothing fun for immigrants. This indicates the affective distance that simulation does not manage to completely erase for the tourist experience. Here is where the real stage makes its entry.

Being an actor in real dark stories is different due to the type of consequences it may imply and the quality of inner fear it generates. In this series, this role was adopted for

example during a real border crossing in Cyprus, or by submitting to real physical and mental torture in McKamey Manor house in Tennessee. In contradiction to the previous case, David tried to illegally cross the borders to Famagusta, Cyprus, an abandoned and forbidden city by the Turkish army. Without the protection of a 'tour' and after gathering information from tour guides and ex-habitants of the city, David tried – regardless of the many signs and warnings of avoiding it - to enter Famagusta through sea, unsuccessfully, ending in his real arrest by the Turkish police. The understanding of the difficulty in crossing borders was clearer than in the Mexico tour, because the dangers were faced alone and failure in achieving the desired goal was a personal issue of the tourist. Here, darkness does not lie only beyond the frontier but during the whole process of crossing it and the tourist is the basic protagonist. David's identity as a journalist saved him from prison, a case probably not possible for a normal tourist, which would make the experience even darker.

To go a step further, the role assumption of the victim under real tortures was experienced in Russ McManney's horror house, where under the consent of the visitor, Russ tries to break mentally people through situations of real torture and creating perceptions of real fear, until the visitor can no longer continue. At this moment, the visitors realise that their own death is a possibility if they do not stop the activity. This is an unbounded and directed performance (Edensor 2000, 2001), where darkness exists within the inner limitations of each individual. This activity, along with the visit in Fukushima, is one of the few that David does not complete. It seems that performing embodiment in real contexts within dark tourism reaches more successfully the individual's limits. Therefore, reality plays a significant role for the experience to be authentically dark. Real possibilities of getting arrested, real fear of getting hurt are fundamental elements of the dark activity; that is, risk has to be possible.

4.3. The dark tourist as a spect-actor

The spect-actor experiences two sides of the same coin within the same dark visit, either because the product itself invites the tourist to become an actor – following Edensor's logic of improvised performance – or because the tourist himself/herself looks for that experience through Edensor's unbounded performances. In these cases, being a spectator is not dark enough and the rise of Boal's Forum Theatre is found necessary.

Commercialised active participation, that is ready made offer, is represented by products like the Creamy City Cannibal tour, which is related to the murders by Jeffrey Dahmer, a gay serial killer in Milwaukee. Tourists visit the places where he acted and spend some of this free time, while it finished with a ritual of spiritualism in which tour guides summoned Jeffrey's spirit and tourists were asked to cross and uncross nodes as a proof of its existence. The acting part was considered rather as not believable for David and another fan of the killer, but for some tourists it was believable. In this line, during public events like celebration of the Day of the Dead in Mexico (Santa Muerte), David assists a two-hour exorcism of a woman and is then being blessed by the same priest, and then walked around the streets to see the festive atmosphere, where no darkness was evident. David, as a dark tourist, is part of the spectacle but has a minor participatory role while the spectacle being open to all, is considered more as a show than as a dark story.

Here is where the spect-actor comes in. Taking the role of the co-performer (de Souza Bispo, 2016) and in order to reach the dark point of the visit, appropriate informants are looked for. Tourists' active participation here appears in the form of conducting non-formal interviews, after reaching people who are backstage. To find the non-romanticised version of Jeffrey Dahmer, David interviewed his defence lawyer, who explained how he really committed his crimes. Finally, to find a dark side in the celebrations of Santa Muerte, David went to the neighbourhood of the outcast, called Tepito, and talked to Doña Quieta who created the local shrine to the Lady of the Dead. Giving more importance to the informant than the information, David managed to speak with Charlie Manson's heir, after assisting two tours that presented Manson either as a criminal mind or as a misunderstood figure. Talking to Manson's heir was a great accomplishment for the dark tourist, where projecting the human side of a known criminal was the goal of the interviewee.

Visits like the ones in the ghost city of Kurchatov in Kazakhstan were presented as darker for its relation to an unbounded performance. In Kurchatov, one of the most nuclear-bombed places between 1949 and 1989, tourists were taken to see the desert where the bombs were dropped, to swim in the Atomic Lake and to eat fish that had just been fished from that lake. Here, active participation was mild and rather fun related. The tourist is asked to step on stage and capture the essence of the experience. The final result did not, however, seem dark enough and thus further information was sought, leading to the quest for more unbounded performances, which were focused on the search for darker informants. The rather fun nuclear lake experience in Kurchatov was overshadowed by the visit to the orphanage in Konstantin to show the results of the uncontrolled nuclear energy on young deformed and paralysed children. The tourist accompanying David in Kurchatov, the one that proposed swimming in the lake, felt upset seeing children suffering and cried after the visit, realising that swimming in the lake and seeing the effects are two different things. Interestingly enough, the embodiment performance of swimming in the lake was not the darker part of the visit, but witnessing the results of radioactivity and listening to the tragic stories of the doctor who guided them was. The basic reason for this difference could refer to the visual representation of the dark side of radioactivity.

The role of the spect-actor basically appears when the tourist is not satisfied with the existential authenticity that the market provides in a commercialised quest for a dark experience. Some spectacles are not or are no longer dark enough, even if they represent objective authenticity. This 'handicap' becomes a quest for the dark tourist. In this series, the times when David had to act as a spect-actor found an opposite version of the first story, being the real criminal face of Jeffrey Dahmer, a more victimised version of Charlie Manson, the idea of reconciling with death, or the visual side of radioactivity.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Dark tourism, albeit still a niche market, is no longer what Marcel (2004) called the dirty little secret of the tourism industry, but rather an acknowledged market segment, constantly raising its own sub-segments, like nuclear tourism, narco tourism, ruin tourism

or slum tourism. This paper sought to provide evidence about the projected narrativity and screen portrayal (Somers, 1994) of being a dark tourist and the various performing roles it may implicate, showing how human curiosity on spectacular death has evolved from watching to participating. At this point, what must be made clear is that a tourist site related to dark tourism may be experienced under various tourist roles. For example, visiting Medellin as a spectator through a commercial tour related to the life of Escobar or as a spect-actor through a solo experience of social interaction with locals willing to share information, are both possible roles one can adopt as a dark tourist. The adaptation of these roles is directly related to the motivations behind this visit and the attributes of the supply. This series projects the variety of participatory roles as well as the impulses that lead tourists in various sites related to dark tourism. This variety is commercially necessary since it may be of low interest to produce a program of various ways to visit one single destination. For the purposes of this study, this variation of tourist sites allows for the visualisation of the tourist roles' range.

Previous investigation has demonstrated that the aesthetic pleasure of cultural products, such as series, and this pre-consumption phase of virtually experiencing destinations and activities through 'parasocial' interaction (Giles, 2002), can lead to an initial interpretation (Norton, 1996), creation of memories (Iwashita, 2008) and finally behavioural participation (Kim and Assaker, 2014) when the audience becomes the tourist. Thus, when film and dark tourism are combined it is important to see what memories and behavioural intentions are being transmitted to the audience. This paper does not provide evidence of what dark tourists actually perform but what they may be compelled to perform, once they arrive at the site.

In any series chapter, in order for it to have a closure, a satisfying momentum within the experience is needed. Likewise, a certain dark level must be achieved in a visit so as to be actually considered as dark. Through a thematic analysis of the experiences presented in the Netflix series *Dark Tourist,* the tourist role represented different shades of darkness based on the search for the peak of this dark moment in each visit. In this series, it is made evident that dark tourism could go beyond the satisfaction of a spectator, where witnessing and listening is enough for the experience to be completed. When the offered product or event does not provide the expected comprehension of the death related issue, the individual can and will seek a deeper experience beyond the commercialization zone. Taking under consideration Boal's (1979) conceptualisation of theatre roles, this paper highlights three basic participation levels that the tourist embraces during dark activities: spectator, spect-actor and actor. In all three cases, Edensor's (2000) disciplined, improvised and unbounded performances are possible, while the last two are related to darker experiences due to the quest for non-commercialised channels and the higher responsibility that the tourist has to meet the dark side s/he is seeking. These performances do not yield the same level of darkness among the three tourist roles.

From a management and marketing's perspective, the results of this paper indicate that the expectations tourists may have regarding their future experience on the sites depends on more than the role of participation they may be asked to play. A dark attraction does not need to invite tourists as actors so as to experience an authentically dark time. Being a spectator in Fukushima results darker than being an actor in a simulated illegal border

crossing from Mexico to the US, while being a spect-actor and interviewing Manson's heir results darker than swimming in Kutchatov's atomic lake; that is, performing embodiment does not necessarily beat performing identity (Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010). What the analysis indicates is that within each role there are conditions that make some experiences darker than others, while the darker version of the actor beats the darker version of the spect-actor, and of the spectator.

According to Figure 1, the darkness of a tourist experience depends on the adopted role by the tourist and the prevalence of a precise condition within each role, that removes the safety net between spectacular and real death. These conditions, which refer to the reality of the dark context, whether it's looked for or offered by the sector, and its timing, are not mutually exclusive in each role, but rather apply to all of them. The difference is which condition makes each role darker. From the analysed roles of this documentary series, it was seen that as a spectator the experience can get darker when the dark event is a current reality, while as a spect-actor when active participation is looked for by the tourist, and finally as an actor when this active participation refers to a real dark event. So what Figure 1 shows to service practitioners is that according to existing resources or conditions and the level of darkness they want their product to be associated with, they have a range of tourist roles they can opt for and create differentiated experiences.

Being an actor is closer to Sharpley's consumption pattern of play or Robb's mimesis (2009), where a particular protagonist role is sought. In a real situation there is no safety net, and this basically means looking for improvised or even unbounded performances, directly challenging himself/herself to death-related activities. On the other hand, a staged scenery automatically creates a safety zone that eliminates that challenge, and improvisation is automatically not a choice. The darkness of the role depends on whether the context is real or staged, as Robb (2009) mentioned. Moving away from the commercialized dark products requires improvisation and active participation not only in the service production and delivery process (Wu and Cheng, 2018), like the real border crossing to Famagusta, but also in determining the limits of the experience since the tourist is the protagonist, like visiting McKamey Manor's torture house. Thus, reality does matter in transforming experiences to darker ones, since the fear of real consequences for one's actions, whether they target oneself or others, is present.

Through the role of Boal's spect-actor (1979), tourists may challenge the darkness of the offered product and start a quest through improvised or unbounded performances to meet the other side of the coin – the real backstage. Being closer to Sharpley's integration consumption pattern (2009), a spect-actor follows his/her desire to co-create the context of the performance either by suggesting what should be done or by improvising to gain a clearer idea of what the real dark of the story is about. Here tourists are looking for a more peripheral role of the experience (Auh *et al.*, 2007), where they do not need to be the protagonist but want to find one and learn more, like interviewing Manson's heir or Duhmer's lawyer. This is where Cohen's (2011) focus on information giver in dark tourism gains interest, and the acting work of the tourist lies in the search for key informants, outside the commercialised zone. This personal effort and quest represents the darker shade of this tourist role, since the outcome is not predefined by the offer.

Although it is clear that participating in a tour in Fukushima is a tourist activity, interviewing people unrelated to the tourist sector, like Duhmer's lawyer, seems distant from typical tourist activity. As a journalist, David had easier access to places and people that normal tourists would probably not be able to reach.

This is one of the possible outcomes of screen tourism. People who watch a documentary series called "Dark Tourist" do not necessarily know beforehand what this term stands for. Thus, any activity similar to that - following the premises of the influence of media narratives to behaviour patterns (Gkritzali *et al*. 2016), could be interpreted and practised as dark tourism. On the other hand, tourists are known for seeking contact with local communities to better comprehend them. In this particular segment, this quest would require more effort, and probably luck, but looking for insiders is not an unknown visitor behaviour. It would be unfair to say that a dark tourist – well informed and really interested in a story – would be unable to find a significant backstage informant during a personal unbounded performance. After all, the real backstage on many occasions avoids exposition to the camera. Acting like journalists to whomever they have access to, transforms them to spect-actors.

Finally, being a spectator refers to the typical role of Sharpley's (2009) consumption pattern as a witness of a narrated story that belongs to the present or the past, making the temporal distance a significant factor of the experience (Lennon and Foley, 2000). Confirming Robb (2009), old dark stories distance the tourist from the event, creating an invisible safety zone, whereas a current dark story places the tourist inside the story, not as an actor but as a part of the scenery that could be affected if acting otherwise than by the guide's rules. This was seen in the case of Fukushima or Ashgabat, where death is no longer someone else's reality, as Stone and Sharpley (2008) mentioned, but also the tourist's one, and curiosity is focused on how one wanders around a dangerous context. Tourists could be affected by the context if they misbehave through improvisation, and this is the darkest version of being a spectator. On the other hand, witnessing the dark past basically refers to a spectator protected by his/her inactive participation during the visit, and thus, makes this role less dark than the other two. Here, again, it is the identity of the informant (Cohen, 2011) that could give the experience a darker shade, if that informant is directly connected to the past story, as Escobar's ex-hitman, even though the tourist's role remains inactive.

This categorisation of the participative role of dark tourism indicates that active participation and integration in experiences play a fundamental role in the level of darkness an experience can provide to the tourist. In this particular tourism segment, Bowman and Pezzullo's (2010) embodiment, play and identity are key elements in offering risk-related and high emotional experiences, and this can be applied in all three roles. The demand for dark experiences that require active participation from the tourist's is increasing since the tourist's role as a spectator is becoming more and more limiting when distance from the past is inevitable, and the way information or knowledge regarding the dark story is obtained is becoming part of the total dark product. The role of the spect-actor indicates an increasing demand in participating in information gathering processes, while the role of actor shows that we are closer to Jaconsen's spectacular death more than ever (2016).

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