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# DOES DARK TOURISM IN INDIA AND CROATIA UPHOLD A GREAT OPPORTUNITY? A TREND ANALYSIS APPROACH

## PRUŽA LI CRNI TURIZAM U INDIJI I HRVATSKOJ VELIKU PRILIKU? PRISTUP ANALIZI TRENDOVA

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**Abstract:** *Dark Tourism refers to the travelling and experiencing places in connection with death and tragedy. The paper provides a brief overview of the various themes of dark tourism across the globe and purposes to develop a conceptual framework on how dark tourism monuments are part of the collective identity of mankind. The researchers aim to establish that the increasing trend of tourist inflow to dark tourism places particularly in India and Croatia in the period 2015 to 2019 uphold a great opportunity in the future. The secondary data so collected was analysed using trend analysis by applying the time series model and the future trend was predicted for the next three consecutive years using the Auto Regressive Integrated Moving Average Method (ARIMA) and Holt Model. The paper explored the three broad benefits of dark tourism viz., collective identity through culture & history, national identity & educational benefits and emotional appeasement. The paper ends with the need to empirically ascertain the tourist perceptions and return on investment from promotion of such dark tourism destination.*

**Key words:** *dark tourism, collective identity, educational benefits, emotional appeasement*



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## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Tourism and Growing Potential of Dark Tourism Sites*

**Dark Tourism** refers to the travelling and experiencing places in connection with death and tragedy. Though dark tourism had a sinister tension in earlier centuries, visiting such places are escalating in contemporary society. The growing recognition to these areas suggests that tourists are drawn to the nature of dark tourism or thanatourism; which can be focused around present-day tourism. In global phenomenon, the dark tourism destination is frequently broad in nature. There appear to be a greater interest on the part of the tourist for dark tourism experience like- the dark resting places-cemetery, tomb, dark conflict sites – war zone/battle field, dark shrines, dark prisons, holocaust/extermination sites, unusual destination [1]; [2]. The dark destination tourism may raise disrespectful and morally disengaging sentiments over the status and nature of objects experienced but alternatively, the tourism industry has to deal with the idea of visitors' growing interest towards dark destinations with special interest and purpose. Though people consider visiting dark tourism destinations as unusual and these destinations are associated to moral disengagement; the connection to such places has a tourist morality as well. "This paradox is addressed in the paper and the researchers set to change the negative assumption of dark tourism to a positive prospect in present day tourism.

## 2. Dark Tourism in the Global Context

Globally dark tourism is a niche area with a soaring trend. The emergence of dark tourism should have an interconnection with tourism imaginaries and inflow of tourist. It appears that the demand is increasing with the attraction of news and media in enduring phenomenon of dark tourism. Normal curiosity of human being to experience the natural desire and to know the unknown increases of tourist inflow to such dark tourism destinations.

Image of destination, behaviour intention of visitors based on onsite experience, the selective perception of tourist and the context of people motivation to visit the places are some of the important factors highlighted by several researchers [3]; [4]; [5] which may enhance the capacity of dark tourist visitors in Vietnam and China. Practical modification that can assist in the decision making process to supplement the sense of escapism through relaxation and peace is suggested in the reflexion of cemetery visit in Argentina [6]. Relationship between tourism and death centres is studied in the nations from Western Europe, Unites States, and Australia. Additionally, studies have highlighted the concept of marking visitors by assessing the model of mortality mediation in death and life thanatopsis – in the context of “lightest” dark tourism [7]; [8]. Another study points out the importance of motivating visitors, providing better services and attraction to visit historical places for dark tourism in South Africa [9]. A dark tourism study in Brazil was based on historic lineage of their current social, political and ethical crisis [10]. The policy makers may frame their economic and marketing strategies in line with these soaring trends to

develop dark tourism. The Governments in Indonesia and Romania have recreated catastrophes as dark tourist attractions to promote dark tourism, by implementing tourism packages and promoting various similar products [11]; [12]. Operationalization of violence in dark conflict areas are closely intertwined with dark tourism in Vietnam. The negative impact of tourism in Kenya was enhanced by interfacing dark tourism and terrorism [13]; [14]. The civil war prone north east regions of Sri Lanka have officially been opened and stated to have a huge tourist inflow. The region has wreckage, tank and shipwrecks, empty buildings, as well as several new war memorials honouring the triumph of the Sri Lankan Army. North of Sri Lanka has been gradually changing from a cultural tourist destination to a potential "dark tourism" attraction with a foreign tourist occupancy of nearly 72% in the year 2015 (Annual Statistical report, 2015)

### **3. Indian Scenario**

In India, dark tourism areas are innumerable and unexpected [16]; [17]. The aspects of religion, politics, culture and society are associated with the dark tourism [18]. The domestic tourists and local community visitors adapted to dark tourism in their region as a symbolic of their self-identity and identity status. The domestic tourists and local community take pride in massacre sites and battle fields and link these to their self-identity[19]. But lack of publicity in dark tourism areas is mentioned as a reason for feeble inflow of tourists to these dark areas [20]. An increasing domestic and international tourist inflow can be expected with the structured socio-religious and political support [21].

### **4. Croatia Scenario**

The researchers state insufficient tourist inflow to dark tourism destinations with a few exceptions in EU member states; nevertheless, a recent interest in the area of dark tourism is evident in Croatia (Ovčara Memorial Home) and Poland [22]. Historical events of mass execution, wars and memorials are considered to be part of culture and national identity [23]. War remaining sites are to be educationally purposive in Croatian residents and also marked the national culture, and a worthwhile walk past the memory lane in addition to being economically beneficial [24]; [25]; [26]. Studies also quote the idea of dark tourism and the effectiveness of psycho-sociological aspects of visiting dark areas [27]. It is to be noted that decreasing inflow of visitors to dark tourism areas is the aftermath of recent destructive events, which are still persisting in local community. The dissemination of alleged information is stated as a reason for low tourist inflow and studies suggested receptive tourist programmes to strengthen the tourist visit to dark tourism sites [28]; [29]; [30].

## **5. Potential Benefits Emerging from Dark Tourism**

It can be noted that the dark tourism industry generates multiple economic benefits in tourism dependent countries. Some tourism-based countries at the national level are positioned as destinations which are distinguished by dark tourism [31]. In the developing countries, one of the main reasons to sustain and promote dark tourism is the unexpected economic growth that results from it.

The literature mentioned shows that there is an escalating academic interest across the globe, in the varied dark tourism experience, consumption and motivation factors. The study reflects dark tourism as a mixed tourism. Based on the review of literature there are three broad classifications of the benefits viz., collective identity through culture & history, national identity & educational benefits and emotional appeasement that are further discussed.

## **6. Collective Identity Through Culture & History**

Tourism industry thrives on the land's history and human nature. Natives from centuries have opted for different means to create and maintain their history and culture. The history and culture play an important role in the process of making sense of unfavourable events [32]. Dark tourism related to the heritage and culture of a place can be used as great benefit. These dark monuments can be classified into two sections in which the first part is the site itself and the latter is the section exploring the history. Such destinations may be helpful in understanding the myths and urban legends of a country and such monuments should be respected for their connection to culture and life itself [33]. The crucial part of a country's culture should have a bigger role in the development of dark tourism especially in neglected areas. Dark tourism provides an avenue to reflect on the history of the lost world. Employing thematic analysis of students reflected that the purpose of dark tourism was not just escapism or mere relaxation instead it served as a learning opportunity and a means for affirming collective identity, emotional engagement, and moral reflection along with moral judgements [34].

## **7. National Identity and Educational Outcomes:**

Tourism clearly influences the creation of national identity. The nature, significance and long history of national identity has been changed with historical, political and other unforeseen circumstances [35]. At times, it is difficult to commiserate the outright idea of culture and history; but the areas of dark tourism can be approached to get apposite information. It is agreeable that the historical images taught at young age cannot be apprehended, still the visualization of these images in real life enhance the perception of visitors. Various researches indicate that the pursuit of dark tourism areas exhibit the spirit of exploration, abiding to social norms and demonstrate national pride [29]; [36]. Battlefields, war zones, massacre sites recreate the scenes of 'an imagined community'; which have linkages with ones' knowledge of the origin and strengthen the sense of nationalism. The 'imagined community' anchors visitors to

the mythos and legends that portray mutual respect through tales of victory and destruction [37]. The dark tourism destinations can be visited for educational purposes, entertainment and to enhance national pride [38]; [39]. According to [40], in order to gain in-depth understanding and commemorate tragic historic events it may be mandatory for the tourists to visit dark areas. It can be stated that the destruction and tragedy of dark tourism can also be metamorphosed to national identity.

## **8. Emotional Appeasement:**

Although fascination towards dark tourism is driven by its subtle uniqueness, cultural richness, national identity and educational benefits but the dark areas also regulate an emotional connect with visitors [41]. Visiting dark areas associated with death and suffering reaffirm the visitors' personal values and emotions. Emotions are associated with personal experience and also mental association with these destination area [42]. Research states that in dark tourism there exist a direct and indirect influence of emotional values [43]. These dark destinations are deeply rooted in destruction and are perceived as psychological healing that combats loss and tragedy [44]; [45]. The connect with destruction provides a metacognitive linkage between the living and the dead; which can create an ontological meaning of mortality [46]. Dark tourism emotionally engages the visitors and has a positive impact on them by increasing the awareness of tragic events. Travel motivation to dark tourism sites has been found to evoke both negative and positive emotions; negative emotions when rightly appraised can have multiple positive outcomes [47]; [48]. Researches elicit positive life experience along with feelings of well-being and happiness as some of the benefits of dark tourism. The battlefield/war sites, cemetery and memorial sites encompass hope, gratitude, thankfulness, belongingness, social life and emotional significance in visitors [49]. Literature states a relationship between empathy, vicarious and first-hand emotional bonding with fellow visitors as well as the dark tourism destination.

## **9. Research Question**

The paper provides a brief overview of the various themes of dark tourism across the globe and purposes to develop a conceptual framework on how dark tourism monuments are part of the collective identity of mankind. The researchers aim to establish that the increasing trend of tourist inflow to dark tourism places particularly in India and Croatia in the period 2015 to 2019 uphold a great opportunity in the future. The paper closes with statistical contribution and scope for future empirical research in order to give conclusive opinions on the scope of dark tourism.

**Methodology:** The researchers conducted a secondary data assessment in order to understand the trend of homeland and foreign inflow of tourists to various dark tourism sites in both India and Croatia in the period 2015-2019. These dark tourism destinations were categorized into five main themes viz., war & battlefield, cemetery/tombs, prison, pilgrimage and ghost destinations. The time period that was

considered for the study spanned from 2015-2019. The researchers considered, dark tourism destinations from 14 States to collect information on the Indian scenario with reference to the broad themes. These themes were of War/battlefield (31 monuments), Cemetery/tombs (18 locations), Prison (1 site), Pilgrimage (2 monuments), Ghost destination (5 monuments).

Sources like India Tourism Statistics, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, were accessed to collect data on domestic & foreign visitors of various centrally protected and ticketed monuments protected by Archaeological Survey of India and similar data was collected from three locations in the European Union, viz., Memorial center of homeland war Vukovar, from various sites like occasional museums, exhibitions in other environments, visit by tourists to promotional events and localities in Jasenovac concentration centre, Croatia and the Memorial Centre of the Rocket Attacks on Zagreb 1991/1995 for the period 2015-2019. The data for the years 2020 and 2021 were avoided as there was a global lockdown owing to the COVID19 pandemic. The data considered for the Indian dark tourism industry was analysed separately for domestic and foreign tourists while a combined data was taken for Croatia. The secondary data so collected was analysed using trend analysis by applying the time series model and the future trend was predicted for the next three consecutive years.

## 10. Analysis & Discussion:

With fourteen different destinations with potential dark tourism inflow in India and another three such similar locations from Croatia, the researchers conducted trend analysis with an aim of predicting the prospective trend for the next three years. A detailed discussion of the findings is presented in this section.

Table:1 explains about the flow of domestic and international tourists to the dark tourism destinations in India from 2015 to 2019. The data shows that the rate of tourist inflow are steadily increasing indicating an almost linear increasing trend. Even though there are fluctuations reported, the percentage change every year was positive except for the year 2017 for the domestic tourists.

Year	Domestic (In Trillion)	Foreign (In Trillion)	% Change Domestic	% Change Foreign
2015	14990.00	430.00		
2016	28940.00	448.00	48.20056	4.279387
2017	28610.00	486.00	-1.15122	7.643952
2018	31568.00	522.00	9.36991	6.939689
2019	40816.00	571.00	22.65774	8.635516

Table:1 – Indian Domestic and Foreign tourist flow to Dark tourism destinations, Source: Data Analysis

An attempt was made to forecast the trend using a timeseries model up to the year 2023. The details are furnished in table 2 and 3 and the projection trends are furnished in Fig 1

	Model Type	R Squared
Model ID Foreign Tourists Model_1 (In trillion)	ARIMA (0,1,0)	0.877
Domestic Tourists Model_2 (in Trillion)	Holt	

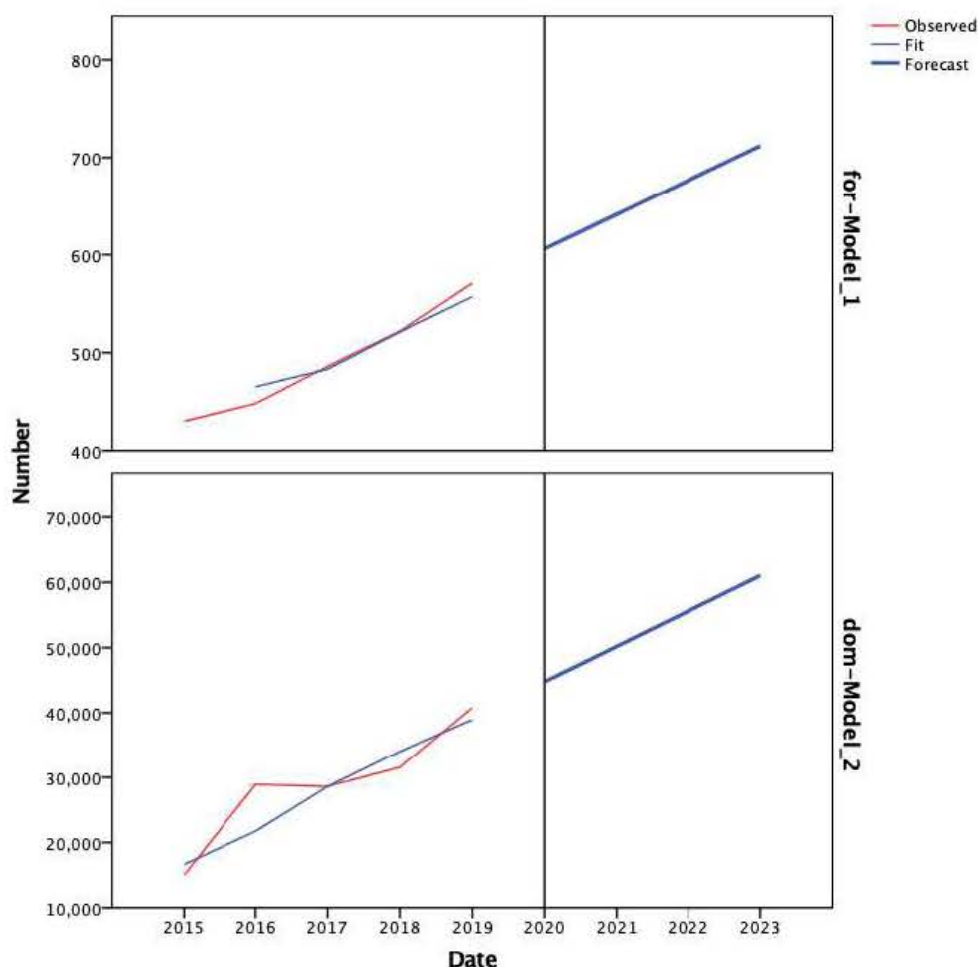
Table:2 Forecast Model Description - Indian Domestic and Foreign tourist flow to Dark tourism destinations, Source: Data Analysis

Table 2 explains that the trend for foreign tourists that was forecasted using Auto Regressive Integrated Moving Average Method and Holt Model which could conclude that in 2023 the figure may touch 630 trillion foreign tourists visiting dark tourism destinations in India. If accounted for any extreme deviations, it may reach the maximum of 712 trillion or can lower to 630 trillion. The trend was found to be increasing for the domestic tourists also touching an all-time high of 61054 trillion with an upper range of 76619 and a lower range of 45488 trillion.

Model		2020	2021	2022	2023
Foreign Tourists (In t trillion)- Model_1	Forecas	606.25	641.50	676.75	712.00
	UCL	647.12	699.30	747.54	793.74
	LCL	565.38	583.70	605.96	630.26
Domestic Tourists (in t Trillion)- Model_2	Forecas	44770.06	50198.05	55626.03	61054.02
	UCL	59475.17	65195.32	70909.89	76619.20
	LCL	30064.95	35200.77	40342.17	45488.84

Table 3 - Forecasted Indian Domestic and Foreign tourist flow to Dark tourism destinations, Source: Data Analysis





All these data and projections show that there is an ever-increasing demand for tourists to visit these dark tourism spots in India whether it is domestic or international tourists.

If we examine the case of tourist flow (domestic and foreign combined) in Croatia to the dark tourism destinations, the trend is not different from what we see in India. The trend is ever increasing and percentage change every year also shows a creeping pattern.

Year	Tourists	% change
2015	12,155	
2016	14,425	15.73656846
2017	15,437	6.555677917
2018	19,677	21.5480002
2019	21,500	8.479069767

Table:4 Croatian (Domestic and Foreign) tourist flow to Dark tourism destinations, Source: (Secondary data)

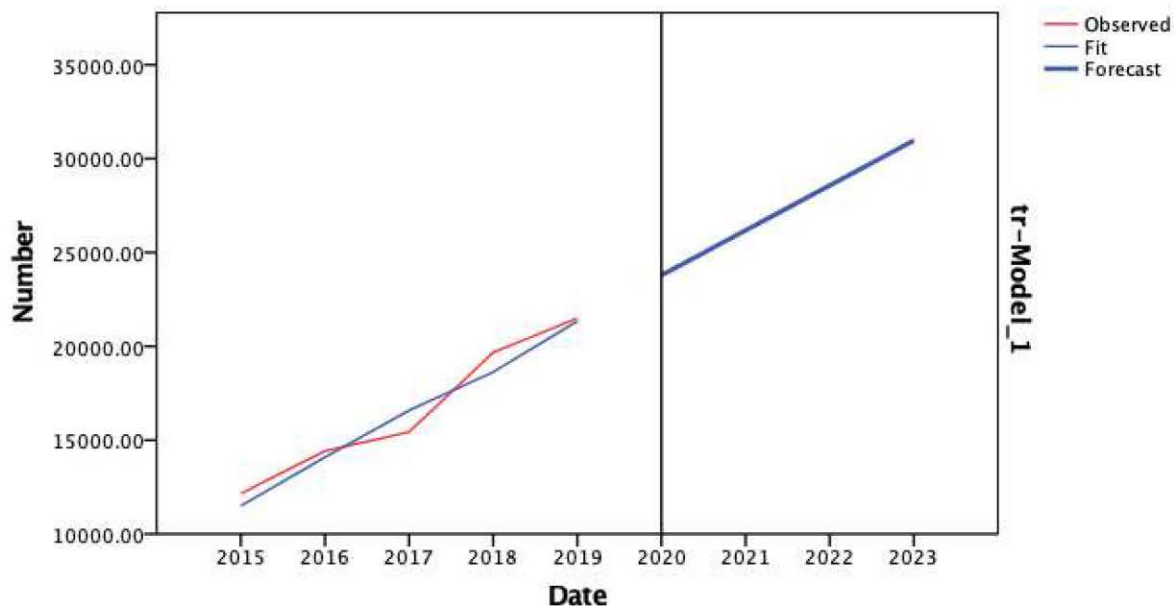
Table 5 explains that the trend was forecasted using Holt and could conclude that in 2023 the figure may touch 30968 foreign tourists visiting dark tourism destinations in Croatia. If accounted for any extreme deviations, it may reach the maximum of 34557 or can lower to 27379.

			Model Type	R Squared
Model ID	Tourists	Model_1	Holt	0.892

Table:5 Forecast Model Description - Croatian Domestic and Foreign tourist flow to Dark tourism destinations

Model		2020	2021	2022	2023
Tourists- Model_1	Forecast	23785.89	26180.09	28574.28	30968.48
	UCL	26959.84	29498.07	32030.30	34557.23
	LCL	20611.94	22862.10	25118.26	27379.72

Table: 6 Forecasted Croatian Domestic and Foreign tourist flow to Dark tourism destinations



All these data and projections show that there is an ever-increasing demand for tourists to visit these dark tourism spots in Croatia as well in consonance with India. The motivation to visit such dark tourism destinations may be promoted in the light of the several solicited benefits which the researchers have investigated through the review of literature. There is an imperative urge among the tourists to explore such destinations with a need to satiate their thirst for collective identity, empathetical understanding of the national and cultural heritage of the region and appease their own emotional [50]. Findings corroborated certain negative emotional experiences also have the potential to broaden-and-build; peoples' understanding. Positive emotional experiences (i.e. appreciation) have a direct positive effect on spiritual meaning. Since there is an active and increased engagement in dark tourism as seen

in the analysis section, better promotional schemes and receptive tourist programmes will have multifaceted benefits. The experiences of visitors make an interesting research problem particularly since the recent conceptualisations of dark tourism which suggest that tourist experience may be classified into cognitive, emotional and relational [51]. Continued research is needed into these issues but at a broader range of sites. Many researchers have identified empathy as an important part of visitors' experiences and here future research could usefully engaged. There are many specific issues relating to management, interpretation and marketing of such dark tourism sites which can also serve as an area of potential future research.

**Conclusion:** The lack of awareness among the masses regarding the availability of such destinations and the potential benefits of dark tourism may be few of the plausible reasons of why this type of tourism is not being awarded due attention. As the human civilization advances towards newer political, social and economic changes, the legacy of the past generations may slacken off its connect with the newer generations. There could be a possible disengagement with one's own historical antecedence which could be revived by such form of dark tourism as discussed in the paper. The opportunity to exchange ideas and improve understanding of these broader historic monuments, not only benefits the domestic tourists but at the same time the foreign tourists. Such dark tourism opportunities, would help the latter to be enlightened by these mutual exchanges thereby developing greater empathy as well as respect for a regions' ethos. There is a need to extensively promote such dark tourism destinations firstly in the light of huge economic benefits which may accrue from an increased inflow of visitors and secondly, for the sake of enhancing the self-esteem of the domestic tourists and imbibe greater empathy among the foreign visitors.

## 11. Limitations and Scope for Future Research

This paper is an attempt to bring about the importance of promoting dark tourism destinations among the tourists and brings together various literature evidence that highlight the benefits thereof. Although theoretically, dark tourism appears to be beneficial and lucrative for the tourism industry, there is a need to empirically quantify these benefits so as to draw closer to the better management and interpretation of dark tourism sites. Based on such a realistic understanding alone could receptive tourist programmes for such sites be developed. In addition to this, there also is a need to measure the actual tourists' perception and motivation to traverse to such destinations. The study was limited to a an exploration of secondary literature and statistics in the period 2015 to 2019. As the COVID19 pandemic hit the globe and adversely affected the travel and tourism industry as well, the study results may be affected by the imperative bias underpinned in the said time frame.

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