


## Chapter 10

# Serial Killer Tourism: Education and Entertainment!?

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### ABSTRACT

*Dark tourism consists of a wide range of subsections, and this chapter focuses on a less explored part of it, serial killer tourism. The demand side's fascination with death and murderers from led to diverse tourism offer types, such as museums and walking tours. This research gives an overview of these attractions and an answer to why people are visiting them. To understand the topic, three research questions were formed: What is the reason behind serial killer tourism? What type of attractions are the most attractive? and What is the attitude of the consumers. Based on the research, visitors want to be educated, to prepare to face the dark reality, but also want to be entertained. By exploring this topic, tourism professionals will get insight into the visitors' motivations, how and who to promote these attractions, and how to develop new tourism products.*

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## **INTRODUCTION: THE FASCINATION WITH DEATH**

The duality between life and death always fascinated humans. The history of mankind always been bloody: seeing public executions and cheering on gladiator games were one of the first reasons to travel (Lennon, 2018), and our civilization cannot escape from the memories of wars, genocides, and terrorism. To be curious about this side of the past can be considered as a normal, emotionally engaging behavior, rather than pathological one (Carrabine, 2011).

This curiosity and fascination come from the need to understand the one thing nobody can be sure about: death. Visiting sites associated with atrocities, murders and wars have been considered as part of heritage tourism in a broader sense, but it is also associated with ‘thanatourism’ or ‘dark tourism’, as the motivation to see these places involve a desire to have a contact with death (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Seaton, 1996; Hartmann, 2014; Light, 2017). Carvalho (2023) identified five dark tourist categories: ‘dark contemplative tourist’, ‘dark history tourist’, ‘dark passive tourist’, ‘dark enthusiast tourist’, and ‘dark occasion tourist’.

Since dark tourism consists of an enormous number of types, such as genocide tourism, holocaust tourism and graveyard tourism, this research focuses primarily on a smaller, more easily identifiable subsection of dark tourism: serial killer tourism. The psychology behind the actions of serial killers is appealing, the fear of their existence, and how other people view their acts. People find them frightening and attractive at the same time, which is one of the main reasons to visit places, museums and other attractions connected to serial killers. The morbid curiosity that induces people to seek out macabre entertainment and things related to serial killers is not gender-based, as it is a topic that interests both men and women equally as a method to learn to avoid being a victim (Harrison & Frederick, 2020).

By exploring why people are fascinated with serial killers, tourism professionals will have a better sense of the motivation behind visiting dark tourism attractions. It would help local destination management organizations, websites and travel blogs to know what to offer and how to promote them for the interested tourists. The findings of this research can be helpful for destinations on how to influence destination marketing strategies on how to develop tourism products. It also may help to develop an understanding of how the tourism industry preserves the memory of the victims.

To understand better the topic, three research questions were formed that could be answered based on observations when searching for attractions connected to serial killers, on the available literature about serial killers and dark tourism, and the empirical research.

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