ABSTRACT

Dark tourism has become one of the major growth areas in contemporary tourism and has a growing interest. It is a new travel pattern to the sites which are related to death, atrocity, tragedy and suffering in the past. The research of dark tourism has been conducted in many countries but there are very few studies based in Thailand. To support the educational assistance of dark tourism research, and to encourage tourism development of travel types in Thailand, this study brought the case of dark tourism in the event of battlefield tourism from the visitor in war memorial sites related to Death Railway tragedy from WWII in Kanchanaburi province.

The study attempted to investigate the motivations of tourists and how they were influenced based on related variables. Also, the study focused on “push” motivations and “pull” motivations and their influence on the satisfaction of experience and post behavioral intention. Additionally, the study also explored the relationship between satisfaction of experience and post behavioral intention of dark tourism. The research was conducted at the sites of Death Railway museums and cemeteries in Kanchanaburi province.

A quantitative approach was employed in the form of self-completion surveys (handed-out) distributed to 400 international and domestic visitors. The statistical techniques was used to analyze the data were descriptive analysis, factor analysis, and multiple linear regression. Factor analysis led to the categorization of the push and pull motivations from the tourists visiting the museums and cemeteries of Death Railway tragedy. There were three factors fallen in push motivations namely emotional fulfillment, truth seeking and destination knowledge while other three elements of tourists’ information, heritages, and convenient location constitute pull motivations.

The research revealed that there were 6 motivational factors but there were only 4 factors were accepted in analysis to explore influence on satisfaction of experience as well as on post behavioral intention. Among 4 motivational factors, 2 of them were grouped under push motivational factors and the other 2 were grouped under pull motivational factors. After hypotheses testing, the findings showed that push and pull motivational factors have a significant influence on the satisfaction of experience. Both motivational factors also revealed the significant influence on post behavioral intention in dark tourism attractions. Moreover, satisfaction of experience had the positive relationship with post behavioral intention.
Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that tourism-related providers related to sites of Death Railway tragedy should understand the importance of the motivational factors of the visitors and combine these into travel programs to increase the satisfaction of experience and post behavioral intention in dark tourism. Apart from the development of convenient access of war memorial sites, adoption of new tourism themes to market and promote especially in war memorial sites is the need to study. Furthermore, in order to increase the post behavioral intention in dark tourism, it is important to add satisfaction of experience by combing the innovative add-ons and knowledge activities in the places. Finally, tour operators should act as a specialist in a special type of war or dark tourism to fulfill the desire of contemporary tourists.

**Key words:** dark tourism, travel motivations, push motivation, pull motivation, satisfaction of experience, post behavioral intention