

DARK TOURISM: PUSH–PULL MOTIVATIONS, SATISFACTION EXPERIENCE AND POST BEHAVIORAL INTENTION – SITES OF DEATH RAILWAY TRAGEDY KANCHANABURI PROVINCE, THAILAND

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Abstract - The study investigated the “push and pull” motivations of visitors at the war memorial sites of the WWII Death Railway museums and cemeteries in Kanchanaburi Province. Also, the study identified how “push and pull” motivations influenced the satisfaction experience and post behavioral intention. Additionally, the study also attempted to explore the relationship between satisfaction of the experience and post behavioral intention. The research utilized self-completion surveys (handed-out) as the quantitative research instrument. The research revealed that there were six motivational factors but only four factors were used in the analysis to explore and reveal their influence on the experience satisfaction and post behavioral intention. 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 and marketing.

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

1. Introduction

Tourism is regarded as one of the most important industries worldwide. Thailand is one of the prominent tourist destination in South East Asian countries. The latest statistics from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, reported a total tourism revenue of 65 billion USD (2.3 trillion Baht), and Thailand welcomed 29.88 million international visitors contributing 42 billion USD (1.44 trillion Baht) (Tourism Authority of Thailand Newsroom, 2016). Most tourists enjoy leisure activities in Thailand.

However, some tourists have an interest in visiting places where there were tragic deaths, destruction, and suffering, such as sites originating either from manmade historical events such as war battlefields, genocide or from natural disasters.

Then, these sites are built on for burial and/ or memorial purposes. This phenomenon contributes to the new tourism theme called dark tourism. Dark tourism, also known as Thanatourism, is a travel pattern to sites of death and suffering, these sites can be where a death has occurred, whether it is recent or historical. They attract people to visit the sites to understand and see what happened such as accidents and disasters.

There are many places, which are related to death, atrocity, tragedy and the macabre all over the world. Dark tourism provokes the point of death becoming “real” for a person (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). People worldwide visit many places with memorials or historical remains in order to satisfy their needs of looking into the past as well as visits to places that artificially animate death. Many places are known not only as famous sites of human tragedies but also places for travelers to be immersed in the appalling experiences. Such places, for example, are the Jack the Ripper tour in London, Chernobyl, the extension zone of the ex-nuclear power plant, Ukriane,

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