Dark London: Dimensions and Characteristics of Dark Tourism Supply in the UK Capital

Raymond Powell
Department of Marketing, Events and Tourism
The Business School
University of Greenwich
London, SE10 9LS
UK
Email: R.Powell @gre.ac.uk

and

Dr. Katia Iankova
Department of Marketing, Events and Tourism
The Business School
University of Greenwich
London, SE10 9LS
UK
Email: ik08@gre.ac.uk

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ABSTRACT

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This paper will investigate the characteristics of the supply of dark tourism in London, UK through an examination of the identified main dark sites in London, UK. Our methodology is based on web analysis of the presence of marketed and non-marketed dark tourist sites in London, their web visitation, the level of their commercialisation and the characteristics which place them in the various scales as categorised in current literature, notably Stone (2006). We identified that London offers a much more entertainment focussed tourism experience rather than accurate historical and authentic sites which utilised major aspects of dark tourism for purposes such as commemoration or remembrance. The authors found this surprising given London's long and often dark history.

Key Words

Dark Tourism, London, Internet search, Visitor Attractions, Tourism Supply

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Introduction

Dark tourism is a growing niche segment of tourism activities today. The academic study of the concept gathered momentum in the early twenty-first century, and is reflecting the growing interest of the citizens of postmodern societies in the sites of death and disasters – an interest that needs deeper research to be understood and placed in the social, cultural and

historical realities and context of the development of human society. It is also reflecting the increased sensitivity of the international community to the significance of such events for nations, national identities and the direction of their history. The potential of Dark Tourism sites is to preserve and commemorate significant occurrences and share the experience through domestic and international tourism. The public may then experience such historic dark events intimately by touching, feeling, reading and learning in a more engaged way.

It should be recognised that this paper is not seeking to establish or define new ground in the categorization of dark tourism. Rather, it is intended as a consideration of how dark tourism is a growing and important aspect of tourism in London. The main aim of the paper is to consider the characteristics of the dark tourism attractions commercially available and exploited in the tourism offer in London and to evaluate how they integrate with the larger tourism industry in that city.

The first step in that process was to investigate what London has to offer in the way of dark attractions. Our hypothesis was that London does indeed have a long and dark history, but we posited there would be not many attractions which offered an authentic "dark" experience. Therefore our objectives were to identify the touristic offering in term of dark tourism in order to further classify them on the continuum of "darkness" proposed by Stone (2006) and by considering their geographical location, try to assess the significance of these attractions within the larger touristic offer in London.

Secondly, we conducted purposeful directed Internet research using selected key words which would identify tourist attractions with dark themes within the boundaries of our study objectives and geographical context of our study – London. By geographically mapping them within the geographical boundaries of London, we tried to situate them in perspective of other tourism attractions and potentially speculate about tourism clustering including various attractions in established tourist poles.

Finally, based on data collection content analysis, placed in in the perspective of dark-light continuum, we identified London's most visited attractions with a dark theme or association, and later categorised them according to Stone's (2006) typology. Discussion emerged around the main concept of authenticity and the reason for the highly inauthentic nature of London's offer.

It would appear from our research that a significant number of attractions in particular see dark elements as a factor which will, presumably, attract more visitors. Given the very large numbers of attractions which include dark elements in their promotion, it certainly seems plausible that there is a large and consistent appetite for such tourism amongst the paying (and non-paying) public.

One of the most important aspect of our findings is that London, despite its long history with some dramatic episodes, and having a potential to offer authentic sites based on it, has, in fact developed inauthentic, dark attractions such as London Dungeon, ghost walks and the Tower Bridge Experience,

Literature Review

Dark tourism may be considered as the visitation of sites which have death, tragedy or suffering as their main purpose. Commonly such visits are conducted with commemoration, education and, frequently, entertainment in mind (Stone, 2005). London has several such sites, ranging from the real sites of death The Tower of London, the site of the Newgate execution scaffold at Marble Arch (shadyoldlady.com) to a fantastical representation of macabre history, such as the London Dungeon or the Tower Bridge experience, for example.

A much observed trend in modern tourism is that which shows tourists increasingly moving towards niche or specialist holidays. The days of the 3 s's (sun, sea, sand) mass tourism package holidays are not yet over, but there are an increasing number of viable options open to both the more adventurous tourist as well as those looking for a more homogenised and pre-packaged experience. Lennon and Foley (2000) have largely been credited with coining the phrase "dark tourism" in their book: "Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster" This ground-breaking book sought to signify what they identified as a "fundamental shift in the way in which death, disaster and atrocity are being handled by those who offer associated tourism 'products' " (p.3). In doing so, they identified that dark tourism as it is presented in a modern context is the product of the late modern world, and is intimately connected to the political, sociological, economic and technological landscape within which modern tourism products are made available. That is to say, whilst death and disaster have always had a universal appeal, the circumstances of modern media, accessibility and technology mean that interest in dark sites is at an unprecedented level, and the tourism industry is making every effort to provide a product which meets the demand for such dark

experiences. The increasing consumerism of post-modern western societies has a tendency towards making experiences entertainment. This matched with the historically decreasing violence, wars and horrors in our societies (Pinker, 2011) creates the desire to "conserve" and protect the horror and murder as a relic of the past stages of our civilisation's development.

The concept of dark tourism however is not a new one, but there is a growing trend to develop dark sites for commercial exploitation. Tourists have been drawn to battlefield sites, places of execution, tombs and other related sites for a very long time (Stone, 2005). Seaton (1996) has identified dark tourism as being the visitation of sites associated with death and disaster, something which dates from the Middle Ages at least. Dale and Robinson (2011) also identify dark tourism as being an established practice as far back as the Eleventh Century. It is possible to argue that dark tourism as an actuality was established in ancient times. A compelling thought if we consider the popularity of Roman Gladiatorial contests for example.

Historically it can be seen that tourism has always had aspects of dark tourism in its gaze. Several commentators (Lickorish and Jenkins, 1997; Vellas and Becherel, 1995, as cited in Lennon and Foley, 2000) have identified that pilgrimage is one of the earliest forms of tourism. Pilgrimage sites are often associated with death in one form or another, with religious pilgrims often visiting the site of the death, or the graves of individuals or groups. Such visits tend to have religious or spiritual associations relevant to the pilgrims visiting, and are seen as acts of remembrance, commemoration or veneration, and usually feature as part of a ritualistic or tokenistic ceremony, perhaps tied to a particular religious or even secular calendar. The annual Cenotaph parade in Whitehall each Remembrance Sunday could also be viewed in this way. It is clear that such ritualistic approaches to commemoration are not the stuff of sanitised tourism products within the remit of the modern tourism industry. It should be recognised that there is an increasing demand for dark tourism products which offer a connection with scenes of suffering and death. That is not to say that this is a completely modern phenomenon: visitation to scenes associated with death in particular; battlefields, graveyards and the former homes of dead celebrities for example, have proven to be a significant motivator in tourism in past-times as well. However, of particular significance to this study is the consideration of the commodification of such sites has transformed the tourism industry in such a way as to generate demand for, as well as access to, dark tourism experiences.

The attraction of death, disaster and the macabre has the potential to be a significant factor in the tourism sector worldwide and in the UK in particular. Dark tourism, or thanotourism as it is sometimes called, offers the interested participant the chance to look at death in a safe and recreated way, lending distance to the suffering necessary to be considered "dark" (Stone, 2005). The fascination with scenes of tragedy is not unique to any one set or group of tourists, but "dark tourism", as yet, remains on the fringes of respectability: a number of authors have given consideration to "shades" of dark tourism (Lennon and Foley, 2000; Stone, 2005; Strange and Kempa, 2003) which is to say that it is recognised that there is a continuum of "dark" touristic experiences, ranging from very mild excitation to the grim reality of the holocaust and terrorism, for example.

Stone (2005) considers dark tourism to be an old concept in a new world. That is to say that the fascination with scenes of death and disaster are old and quite possibly universal, but what is new is the way in which there is a commercialised and functional tourism industry able to make very much more available to very many more people than was the case in the past. The definition of "dark tourism" is wide and varied. Smith (1998) argues that sites associated with war probably attract more visitors than any other single type of attraction. Dark tourism is a widespread and growing reality and it is an important factor when considering the supply and demand of sites and attractions.

It is notable that dark tourism in London is largely inauthentic. This was surprising given its history. The motivations for visiting dark sites is an under-researched area (Sharpley and Stone, 2009), and somewhat beyond the remit of this paper. However, Stone (2005) identifies that the desire to create a mercantile advantage or manipulate a particular site for political reasons are usually the primary supply-side factors which will determine whether a dark site is developed or not. It should also be noted that a usual explanation for the establishment of dark sites is that they allow contemplation of one's own death – the *memento mori* effect (Walter, 2009). The inauthentic offerings in London allow this contemplation to be at several stages removed, unlike the horror of a death camp for example. There is also a marked reluctance to be seen to be making money from other people's suffering, and it may be that esoteric questions of taste cloud the development of more authentic dark sites. Whatever the case may turn out to be the authors note that, contrary to expectations, London does not fully exploit its dark history in an overtly commercial way.

London is very well placed as a tourist destination: it attracted 30 million tourists in 2011 (VisitLondon, 2012). It is safe to assume that such numbers would indicate that motivations to visit amongst the group will be varied and that not every visitor will have the same interests or inclinations. However, there have been a number of entrepreneurial activities in recent years which have sought to offer a dark tourism experiences. By its very nature dark tourism is place dependent to a large degree: a major part of the experience is to visit the actual site of the dark events, and London does indeed provide such an authentic, place determined experience with attractions such as the Tower of London, and the Jack the Ripper tours to name but two. London, however, does not have dark sites on a grand scale such as Ground Zero in New York, or concentration camps for example. Nevertheless, there are a growing number of sites in London which may be classified as "dark" using Stone's (2006) typology.

Stone argues that it is necessary to understand the structure and availability of the dark tourism product before it is possible to discern the motivations of those that visit. It is also noted by Marcel, (2004) (as cited in Stone, 2006) that death has a fascination for humanity, and further she asked the question "does death make a holiday?" She concluded that dark tourism is the "dirty secret" of the tourism industry, in that our fascination with death has for a long time provided sufficient motivation and places to visit.

It is clear that dark tourism has a continuum of "darkness (see fig 1 below). At the darkest end of that continuum attractions are categorised largely on the basis of real, recent and actual suffering and death. There is often an educational and commemorative rationale which underpins the attraction, very often being the authentic site of the suffering which is visited, such as at Auschwitz or the site of the Twin Towers in New York.

INSERT FIG. 1 HERE

Stone (2006) recognises that the connection with dark tourism at particular sites is fluid, and the relative darkness of each attraction lies along a continuum, ranging from the very dark (Auschwitz, for example) to a commodified, entertainment based attraction, such as the London Dungeon which represents gruesome torture as family entertainment. Stone's continuum is the basis on which attractions in London will be referenced for the purposes of this study.

In our study we used Stone's dark tourism spectrum in order to identify the degree of darkness of the major dark tourist sites in London. We categorised them with reference to Stone's typology of darkest to lightest, paying attention to such factors as their purpose (educational, commemorative, entertainment for example) and their authenticity with regard to such factors as location and association with real, dark events.

Crucial to this study is the assumption that dark tourists exist, and that a significant motivating factor in them choosing to visit a particular site is to engage, at some level, with the themes and issues which define dark tourism. It is recognised that these motivations may also lie on a continuum. It is the authors' contention that London provides a range of dark attractions, and that dark tourism generates significant tourist interest as shown by visitor numbers to key attractions drawn from the top 10 list of things to visit in London, according to visitor numbers (VisitLondon, 2013). It is our intention to consider the available attractions in London within this context.

The motivations of those visiting such sites has been considered elsewhere (Stone and Sharpley, 2008) and it is not the intention of the authors to consider *why* people visit such sites, but rather to map sites in London which may be considered as being somewhere on the dark tourism continuum and in the process to consider the nuances of dark tourism as they are applicable to London, within the agreed definition as evident in the relevant literature.

The authors are not seeking to redefine dark tourism, or to explicitly explore the motivations of those engaging in it. Rather we are seeking to identify the importance of dark tourism as a "selling point" for visitor Attractions in London. That is to say we conducted an internet search using the key words "dark tourism, dark attractions London" and using the results which appeared (over 16 million hits) as the basis of identifying those attractions which have a "dark" element as part of their appeal. The attractions identified were further categorised

using Stone's typology which ranges from light to dark. In doing so we also considered how each identified attraction marketed itself.

Methodology

We use qualitative research in our study based on the Internet content analysis of websites, because it was considered to be the most appropriate method to answer our identified research questions. This is akin to pragmatism (Saunders et al, 2007). In order to sift the existing information in the Internet space we used key-words related to the dark tourism. These key words were such terms as are frequently used in the dark tourism literature such as dark tourism, dark attraction, murders, history and horror combined with the geographical limitation of our investigation, which is London within the boundaries of the M25 motorway as that is commonly accepted as being the boundaries of Greater London.

The choice of Internet analysis is most appropriate for this study as it is the simplest and best way to meet the aims of the study – namely gain an overview of the dark tourism supply in London and also to gain an insight into the characteristics of this supply. The offer in the UK capital is large and varied and for this initial phase of the research conventional methods such as questionnaires, interviews or focus groups would not help answer the research questions. At first we needed to sift and categorise the existing supply and for these reasons documents and websites analysis was the most appropriate method. Semi-structured interviews via email or face-to-face are reserved for the second phase, in which we will investigate perceptions of the importance of dark attractions to the overall tourism appeal and offer in London. It is intended to question tourism professionals in academia and practitioners in the industry.

Methodological limitations

The employed methods have some limitations. First, as the Internet is an "ever flowing" virtual ecosystem, the accuracy of the results can be questionable. To negate this as much as we could we probed our results by launching the same search three times at different times over the course of four months, and thus we wanted to have confidence that the obtained

results were reliable. The second limitation is that when applying the content analysis of the websites, we could only partially obtain the results about the degree of educational or entertaining value of the attractions. That could be found out with 100% accuracy when the secondary research is matched with primary research based on semi structured interviews key informants such as the managers of the attractions, comedians (e.g. ghost tours, Jack the Ripper walks) or/and tourist visiting the sites. The exploratory nature of this research however and the high degree of accuracy of the content analysis that we could do, thanks to the detailed and well-illustrated websites, made us opt for the methods that we used.

Stage 1: searching using identified key words

The key words that we applied were the most frequently used in the dark tourism literature: dark tourism sites and dark attractions in London. We started with a much larger pool of key words such as horror, death, and murder. However, we noted that such key-words meant we were getting "blurry" results including police reports of murders, for example. That is to say, there were dark incidents recorded, but not in a touristically relevant way. Thousands of sites related to these key words were accessible. We then limited to the two above mentioned key-words.

Scanning the websites, we limited the search to those, which repetitively appeared under all the keywords selected by the authors and by these crossed-referenced criteria described here:

1. Sites that recall use of death, disaster tragedies as defined by Lennon and Foley (2000) whether they are real sites or recreated (imaginative) sites based on myths, legends, historical folklore and such like.
2. Sites limited to the boundaries of Greater London: within the M25 motorway.
3. Publicly available and marketed specifically as tourist attractions.

 Stage 2: using content analysis to differentiate attractions according to type

Thus, the selected websites have been analysed according to the criteria that we set up in order to situate them on Stone's (2006) dark-light scale and thus begin to categorise London's dark tourism supply, in order to meet the objectives of this research. Namely, we assessed through content analysis of the websites whether the attractions presented in these websites

were authentic or inauthentic and whether they were commercialised or not. We discarded all non-commercialised attractions.

In doing so we considered a number of aspects:

1. Authenticity

2. Commercialisation

Authentic/non-authentic
- Authentic: real historical dark event on the site.
- Not authentic: representation or recreation of imaginary events inspired from the history, literature, popular imagination and collective consciousness.

Commercial/ non commercial
- Commercial: developed as tourist product for profit.
- Non-commercial: murder sites, indicated with signs but not (yet) included in tourist attraction or itinerary or package.

According to Stone's (2006) categorisation, where do we place the attraction: dark or light? What is its primary function? In particular, does it educate or entertain?

Browsing various websites using the above mentioned key words, we investigated the existing websites and selected all appearing sites. We did this until the saturation of the information: we repeated the search three times in the course of four months in Winter/Spring 2012 and although there were some fluctuations of the numbers of web visits the major attractions that appeared in the order that we present it in this paper. We considered them by applying our criteria. Ultimately we ranked them according to the popularity of these sites by the hits. Initially, the authors intended to identify the ten dark attractions which appeared most often in the searches, but we found that the commercial sites available in London were fewer than anticipated. That is why we limited our ranking to the five most frequently appearing dark tourism attractions.

Stage 3: identifying the importance of dark attractions in London, relative to the top ten attractions in general

Since the authors are interested in the significance of dark tourism for the tourism industry in London, we pushed the analysis even further and tried to identify the ten most frequently occurring general tourist attraction in London according to the official sites using the key words: "top tourism attraction London" and searching into the officially listed attractions on the site visitlondon.com. In this way, the authors wanted to compare whether there are some dark attractions from the previous search appearing in the top ten general tourist attractions and their place and significance in this categorisation. Doing so, we wanted to see the importance of dark tourist attractions in the general tourist offer in London.

Stage 4: identifying clusters of attractions

We intended to locate the dark attractions on a map of London, using Googlemap.com, in order to identify eventual tourist clusters both between the dark attraction and between the general attractions and our top five dark attractions. The top five attractions based on internet traffic were incorporated in a Google generated map. The authors' intention was to observe the location in order to reflect of potential clusters of like attractions from other tourist types. We found out that they are all located in central London, very close to major cultural attractions such as London Eye, Southwark cathedral, South Bank Centre. They could be packaged together with other attractions. However at the moment the tourist industry does not do this.

INSERT FIG.2 HERE

Findings

There were 92,800,000 Internet hits combining the key words: "dark" "visitor attraction" and "London". We used the generally accepted definition of London as being within the M25 motorway. In identifying a number of attractions which we classified as dark we found that all the attractions had entertainment as the primary goal, regardless the fact that some of them had an authentic historical basis, but they had been commodified and packaged for the sole

purpose of tourism. The only exception of this is The Holocaust Exhibition in the Imperial War Museum, which is educative and commemorative and can reasonably be classified as being a part of cultural and heritage tourism.

There were sites that identified dark tourist attractions based on authentic historical events. However few of them were included into commercialised tourist package (shadyoldlady.com). Other sites identified murder sites that have no significance (at least for the moment) as dark tourism marketable events. It is possible to access details of where murders have occurred in London, but as yet there is no discernible attempt to attract visitation in a commercial or organised sense. Interested visitors could download maps and visit such sites without payment, should they wish. They are a significant resource, and are probably at the darkest end of the dark continuum. This, potentially, represents the most likely development of authentic dark tourism in London, but that is not without ethical and legal considerations which many may well regard with distaste. Indeed, it is a feature of dark tourism that geographical and chronological distances tend to dilute the full horror of the experience (Lennon and Foley, 2000).

The following are the attractions which appeared most often, in rank order:

1. London Dungeon. This is a non-authentic attraction which imagines and recreates historical events for the undiluted purposes of providing entertainment.

2: Ghost tours (non-authentic, based on imagination and geographically dispersed away from the main core). These tours are located in various parts of the city. Although fictitious and therefore non-authentic, they relate to some real stories associated with ghosts or other paranormal activity purportedly reported by people over time and reported as actual occurrences either relatively recently or in the past and thus establishing folk lore status almost. In many ways the ghost tours are very good examples of the way in which dark tourism can provide a vicarious thrill in a commercial and organised setting which work best when established with a veneer of truth or actuality somewhere in the mix.

3: Jack the Ripper tours: (authentic, geographically dispersed, following some of the actual murder sites).

This is the most commercialised attraction in London, The Jack the Ripper tours encompass some of the actual murder sites of the victims of the most famous serial killer in English

history. There are more than twelve companies operating on this trail interpreting the story of Jack the Ripper. Prices range from 6 to 12 GBP per tour).

4: London Bridge Experience. This is authentic, in that it is a physical site. However, it is presented as a dark tourism experience to maximise commercial interest. The London Bridge Experience is designed as an inauthentic experience which in actual fact has little to connect it to the actuality of the Bridge itself. It is, of necessity, geographically compact).

Located in immediate proximity to each other, these two sites offering a similar experience are in competition. They also appear as a cluster in the central London and are part of the very dense central tourist district as defined by Getz (1993). Further investigation about the links between this cluster and single attraction or clusters of other nature (e.g. cultural) would be a good path for a future investigation.

5: Madame Tussaud's and The Tower of London

Although equally popular as measured by internet hits, these two attractions are different in nature. While Madame Tussaud's is a non-authentic site based on authentic events and personages, the Tower of London is one of the rare authentic, historical and educational and commercial sites in the dark tourism offering in London. Although the Tower of London is perceived as predominantly a cultural attraction, it is associated with the dark tourism offering as well because of its very purpose and history. It is interesting to compare this site with another top ten London tourist attraction containing a dark element: The British Museum and especially the so called "mummies" in the Egyptian gallery, or even more pronounced dark attractions such as The Imperial War Museum, and notably the Holocaust exhibition, and the permanent slavery exhibition in the Docklands Museum, for example.

The nature of these exhibitions based on authentic events and showing authentic historical documents and artefacts, are seen as cultural rather than as dark attractions, according to the results of our Internet search. This is an interesting delineation which serves to illustrate the concept of the continuum of darkness mentioned previously.

Results of the search in November 2012 to February 2013 in websites: www.vacationideas.com, www.visitlondon.com, www.shady-old-lady.com show that the most popular dark attractions are commodified representation of dark attractions based mainly on fiction and imagination. Thus in terms of popularity, the rank order was: London Dungeon (1st place) followed by the ghost tours (2nd place). In third place is ranged an authentic attraction: Jack the Ripper walking tours (3rd place). It is followed by the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's (4th place) which is again a commercialised attraction, although ostensibly based on historical reality and actual murders and executions, it is clearly intended to thrill and entertain rather than having any educational or commemorative purpose. At the last position of the top five attractions, we identified that

13

there were two attractions equally important for the dark tourism offer. These last two are also part of the top ten most popular tourist attractions in London in general. These were Madame Tussaud's and The Tower of London. Thus our list extended to top six instead of five.

Another group based on real events does exist, identified mainly in non-sponsored amateur websites such as www.shadyoldlady.com, however, they are not yet recognised by the industry as marketable source for tourism and are only identified with commemorative plaques, such as Bethnal Green tube station where 173 people were crushed to death on the entrance stairway when trying to gain shelter from a bombing raid in 1943 (Londoneer.org, 2013) and Charles the First's execution site in Pall Mall; Marble Arch, the site of the original Tyburn Gallows and the plague pits at St Thomas's Hospital.

Stage 4: mapping the attractions

At that stage we mapped the six most popular dark attractions, identified their characteristics, and compared them with the most popular general tourist attractions in London as presented by the site "Visit London".

The reason to compare the dark attractions with the main touristic offerings in London is to respond to objective 3 of this study, to situate geographically and by popularity the dark offer within the larger tourist supply in the capital and to estimate whether there is a potential to match some of these attractions with other major cultural attractions. Without pushing the research at that stage until an extent of final analysis, which would require the use of additional research, we nevertheless, as a part of this exploratory study, succeeded to categorise and map them and thus provide a platform for further research.

After identifying the most popular five attractions in our "dark London attractions" list, we situated them on a map, created with the Google maps software. This helped us to illustrate and visualise the location of these sites. The first reading of this map showed that there is a clear cluster of five out of six of these sites. They are concentrated in the zone 1 (central London) which coincides with the Central Tourist District of London (Getz, 1993). There is the biggest concentration of tourist resources of other sorts as well. This cluster is overlapping, or would be more precise to say is integral part of the tourist attractions core of

London. This analysis needs further development. Especially interesting would be the functional links between the attractions and the distribution, directions of tourist flux, promotional and marketing networking and associations between these attractions in the same cluster, as well as the relationships and communications between central and peripheral "dark" clusters. This will be a subject of further investigation in phase two of this on-going project. The authors are keen to explore the clustering of attractions in general, and perceived dark attractions in particular**.**

INSERT FIG. 3 HERE

Figure 4 (below) is an overview of the authors' findings. It shows the key elements discussed in the findings in relation to geographical proximity to the central tourism district (CTD), authenticity and degree of commercialisation. These three categories are the criteria which were applied in establishing an attraction's status for the purposes of our research.

INSERT FIG.4 HERE

All of our sites are commercial as this was one of our selecting criteria. All of them are located in central London. Only two of our dark attractions are authentic: Jack the Ripper walks and the Tower of London, which are based on actual and historical events: the first a series of murders which occurred in 1888, and the history of the Tower of London being a

prison and place of execution. Jack the Ripper walk, because of the theatrical interpretation is also very popular for its entertainment aspect.

Results

Dark tourism is a surprisingly important part of the tourism offering in London. The Internet search about tourism in London gives us three dark attractions as part of the top 10 attractions to visit in London – London Dungeons and Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors and The Tower of London. They are included in the general tourism packages, and thus they attract a significant number of visitors in London. Therefore dark attractions feature as a significant part as a touristic offer in London.

This shows that whilst dark attractions are a niche market, in London it is a large and growing niche. There is some overlap with mainstream attractions. Indeed, it is the authors' contention that dark tourism in London is much more mainstream and commercialised than in many other comparable cities.

We identified that London offers a much more entertainment focussed tourism experience, utilising major aspects of dark tourism, including attraction authentic but largely underrepresented in the dark tourism supply. However, despite abundant opportunities to develop a genuine authentic experience, London instead is almost universally commoditising and packaging dark experiences which are situated very firmly at the lighter end of Stone's (2006) typology. This is deliberate, and the authors believe this represents a marketing approach which offers considerable advantages in terms of visitor numbers, access to and availability of sites, number of attractions and financial viability and attractiveness to the general visitor.

Brown (2013) cites Cole (2000), discussing three museums displaying dark history (Auschwitz in Poland, The International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, UK and The Imperial War Museum (North) in Salford, UK) and states that such authentic Dark Tourism sites display "difficult subject matter for public consumption" and this is [...] "facing accusations that they trade off the memory of death and disaster" (p.272) (Cole, 2000, as cited in Brown, 2013). Brown (2013) argues that those museum shops, as part of the dark tourism supply, need to be designed, located and present the items for sale very carefully in order to give due

respect to the tragic events commemorated. They must remain faithful to the initial purposes of these institutions and despite their lucrative nature be aligned to the educational and vocational nature of the sites which become the museums. The gradation of the "darkness" of these sites and the commercial nature of the shops provides a sharp contrast in that the darker the site the less appropriate commercial activities appear to be (most notably in Auschwitz). Nevertheless, one unchangeable condition remains for all of these authentic sites is that they have to keep their educational, vocational and historical faithfulness. London dark sites investigated in our paper, being mostly inauthentic, have much more scope and freedom of interpretation and can embrace commercialisation without overly worrying about such requirements. This is one of the main characteristics of the (mostly) non-authentic supply that London has to offer.

Conclusion and Implications

The authors of this study recognise that mapping every attraction is an incredibly difficult task, but more importantly not entirely necessary to illustrate the significance of dark tourism to the tourism industry in London. It was not the aim of our study to elaborate the details of what Dark Tourism is, but rather to use established criteria of what Dark Tourism is in order to provide a general overview of its importance to London as a destination.

However, it is noticeable that despite the ready availability of sites teeming in cultural and heritage significance, London does not trade on the authentic, but rather chooses a more commercially successful approach. That is to say, despite that rich heritage, it would appear tourists are much better provided for by a theatrical interpretation of historical events rather than the actuality.

It would be interesting to investigate the complex reasons for the many differing tourism actors and organisations in London choosing to display a largely inauthentic past, given the historical availability of sites which could provide enough dark factors to be considered genuine dark attractions. It appears to the authors that this deliberate inauthentic approach in London is in contrast to other European capitals, which also share a long and culturally rich tradition. We believe that London is distinct in this regard. There is a long tradition of, for example, ghost stories and other myths and legends forming part of the perceived appeal to foreign visitors to London in particular. It was noticeable that London does not always desire to develop these factors into commercially viable tourism products. There may well be scope

to investigate this possibility, given the obvious demand for the dark tourism products in the city.

Without exhausting all possibilities and sites in London, we identified and mapped the top 6 dark attractions. We compared them with the top 10 general attractions and identified those which appear in both lists (three of them). We mapped them and placed them in Stone's dark-light continuum. The methods used are web search by key words, website content analysis.

One of the discoveries is that dark tourism in London is in its majority in the light end of the attraction characterised by their entertaining nature. Some of the attractions are based on true stories and events (Jack the Ripper, for example and other are in the sphere of the imaginary, based on legends folk stories (ghost walks, London Dungeon and Madame Tussaud's). There are existing true and authentic sites and attractions which are mainly non-commercial and not advertised as dark attractions to visit. They stay in the periphery of the tourists seeking such attractions and they are neither marketed nor presented or promoted as dark attractions in the tourist websites, pamphlets or brochures. Rather, they are presented as part of cultural attractions (e.g. Holocaust exhibition in the Imperial War Museum, Highgate Cemetery, and Docklands Museum slavery exhibition). They are open for visits free of charge. They are authentic and non-commercial, used for mainly cultural, educational, commemorative and pilgrimage purposes. They are part of visitlondon.com free entrance attractions. Incorporated as part of the larger offer, they are "hidden" in larger cultural attractions. An interesting question of research would be why this huge potential and rich resource of such authentic, genuine attractions are not under the spotlight of the tourism industry of the UK capital? This is surprising given the rich and dark history of London. It would be perfectly feasible to establish genuine dark sites. This may be interpreted as the crystallisation of a postmodern society which, what better place than a global city (Sassenn, 2001) such as London can offer to various tourist segments, but all of them products of postmodernity, that are seeking the consumption of simulacra as detailed in Baudrillard (1994) or are reviving a history and human sensations that they have no longer access to in terms of Pinker's (2011) assertion of the decrease in cruelty nowadays.

The Egyptian Mummy gallery at the British Museum can also be perceived as being a dark attraction of sorts, placed in the educational end of the authentic dark attractions. However there is no evidence from our Internet search that is presented as such.

These available authentic sources not involved yet in the offer or and emergent sites, shows that this is a growing niche market, with huge potential. Still the authentic sites are weaker that the commercial entertainment sites. The fact that they are marketed by only official sites make them less present in the Internet space, but it would be interesting to compare the number of their visits with those listed in the top six. Also, another path of research would be to investigate their strategies of e-promotion and the use of social media as tool for evaluation, promotion and marketing as well as considering the importance of commercial versus non-commercial dark attractions and their purpose and function.

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Fig. 1. A Dark Tourism spectrum: perceived product features of Dark Tourism within a "darkest-lightest" framework of supply (Stone, 2006)
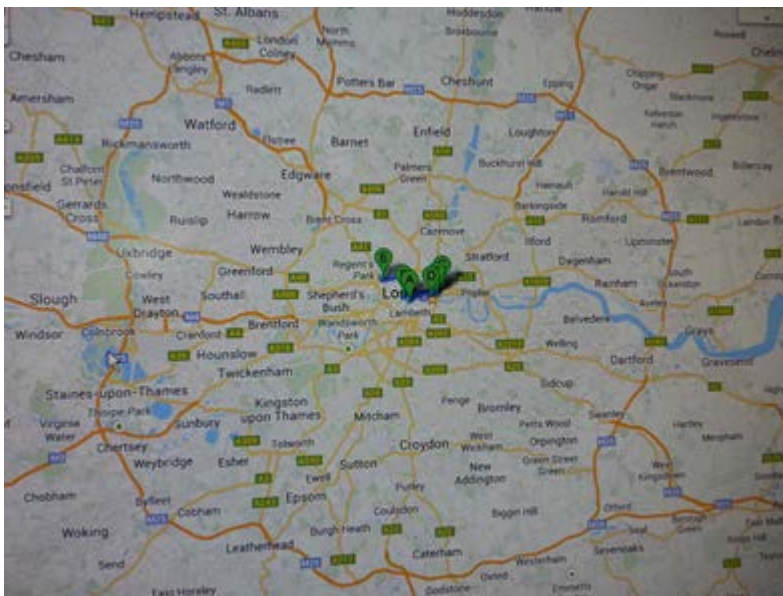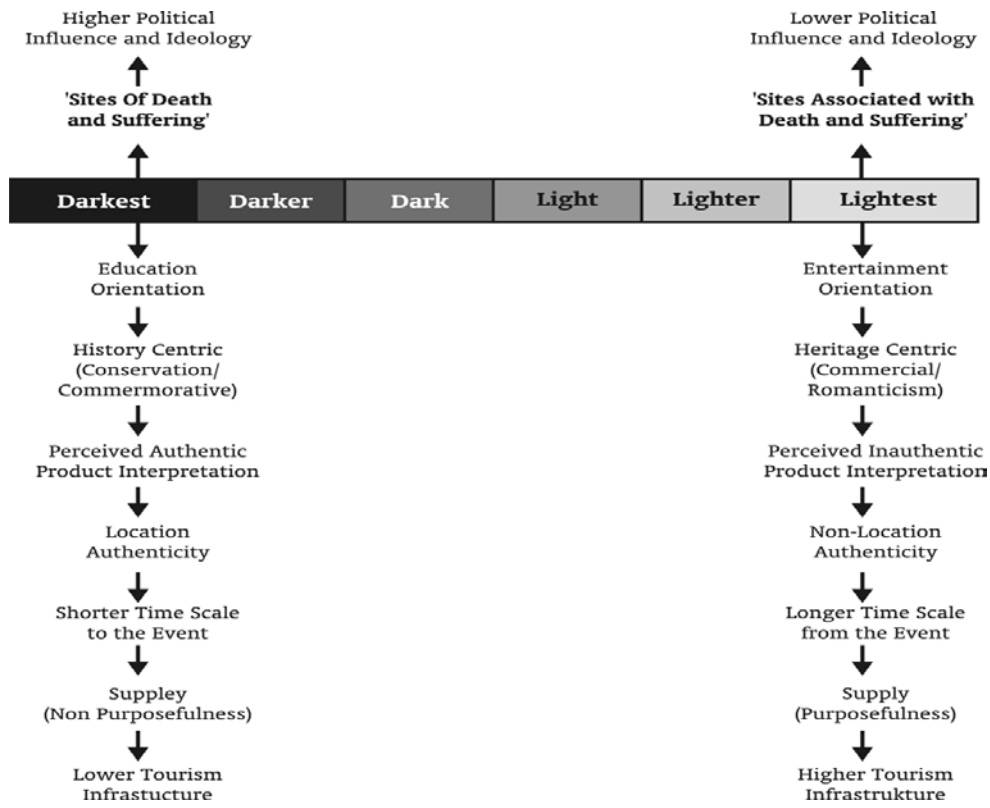
Fig. 2 Map of London showing M25 boundaries with the top 6 attractions marked. A) London Dungeon B) Ghost tours C) Jack the ripper tour D) Tower Bridge experience E) Madame Tussaud's F) Tower of London
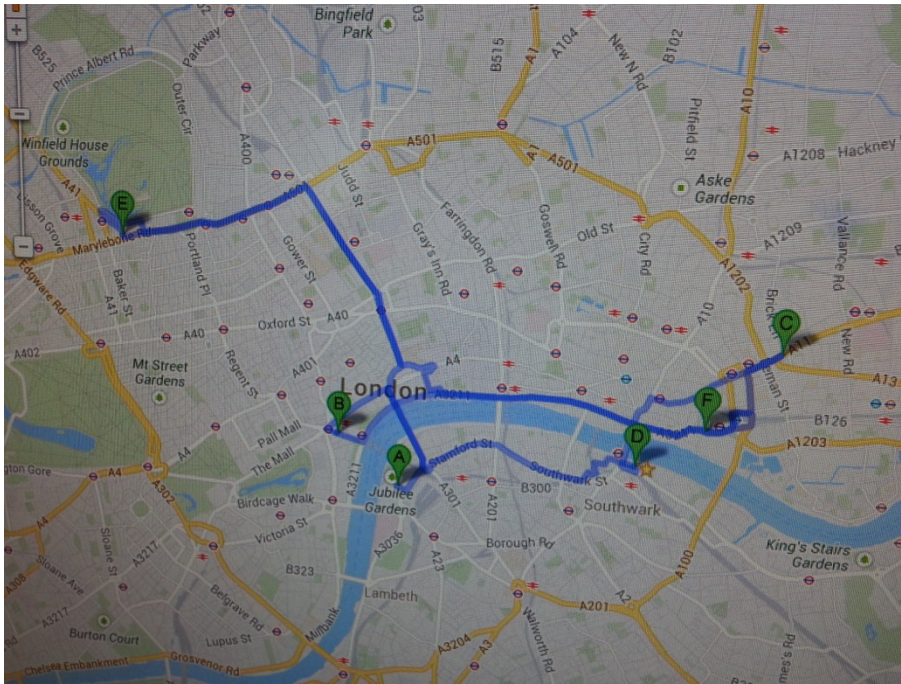

Fig. 3 Map of Top 6 Dark attractions: A) London Dungeon B) Ghost tours C) Jack the ripper tour D) Tower Bridge experience E) Madame Tussaud's F) Tower of London

Name	authentic	Non authentic	Part of the Top10 London tourist attractions	Location Central Tourist District (CTD)	Non central
London Dungeon		X		X	
Ghost tours		X		X	
Jack the Ripper	X			X	
London Bridge Experience		X		X	
Tower of London	X		X	X	
Madame Tussaud's		X	X	X	

Fig. 4 Outline mapping of attractions