

# Holocaust tourism: education or exploitation?

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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this research study is to investigate the ethics of holocaust tourism as a niche market which is becoming very commercialised due to the growing demand for such activities at certain locations and to examine the motivating factors for tourists visiting these destinations. Holocaust sites, a number of which were commissioned for memorial after the liberation during World War II to memorialise those lost and act as an educational resource. The main aim of this research is to explore whether holocaust tourism can be seen as education or exploitation. This will be investigated through a site visit to a holocaust tourism destination in Germany (Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin) and a survey to identify those who engage in holocaust tourism, their motivations for doing so, and the outcome of their visits. Finally, this research study will provide results on the ethics of holocaust tourism and its educational value through a review of the academic research as well as the opinions of those who have or will engage in holocaust tourism. One of the main conclusions is that both primary participants and secondary authors spoke of how when visiting these sites, you create a connection to the destination and the sense of what occurred at the location is undeniable.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The word holocaust is a phrase used to define the “Final Solution”, proposed by Hitler to terminate the Jewish race in 1945, but genocides are still occurring globally as of 2022, though never at such a large scale as the Holocaust during World War II (Lipstadt, 2016). Today’s tourists visit destinations associated with the Holocaust for several reasons: to grieve, commemorate, educate themselves and remember the victims. This is a form of dark tourism known as holocaust tourism (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2022). With this in mind, it is worth noting that the purpose of this research study is to investigate the ethics of holocaust tourism as a niche market which is becoming very commercialised due to the growing demand for such activities at specific locations and also to examine the motivating factors for tourists visiting these destinations.

Holocaust tourism is referred to by Heřmanová and Abrhám (2015) and Reynolds (2018) who briefly call into question the ethics of these destinations. A gap was noted in the data

available with regard to answering this question of ethics and whether it outweighed the educational benefits provided by these destinations. This study aims to identify the educational benefits of holocaust tourism and calls into question the ethics of the holocaust tourism industry. Holocaust tourism is an industry that has stemmed from the “holocaust” a horrific period that saw the murder and persecution of including but not limited to Jews, political prisoners, blacks, and homosexuals (Longerich, 2010). These relatively new tourist destinations were the location of mass murder, categorising this form of tourism as “dark tourism” – travel to any destination associated with mass death, murder, or the macabre (Cohen, 2011; Lennon & Foley, 2000; Seaton, 1996).

Tourist motivations vary when travelling to these sites; however, tourism for educational purposes is increasingly popular, with two million visitors attending Auschwitz (Poland) annually pre-covid (Longerich, 2010). This trend, in turn, has led to the commercialisation of these destinations, and research has shown the positive effect commercialisation has on business, but this may have a negative impact on the integrity of a dark tourism destination (Mezias & Schloderer, 2021). This raises the question of how educationally beneficial is a visitation to these sites? Are the destinations portraying the actual tragedy that occurred here? How ethically acceptable is the commercialisation of these destinations?

The aims of this research study are as follows:

1. To identify the benefits of major holocaust destinations such as Auschwitz (Poland), Anne Frank Museum (The Netherlands), and Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Germany) as an educational resource and consumer motivations when visiting these destinations.
2. To critically analyse the portrayal of the information at these major destinations and tourism providers' management of these destinations.
3. To examine? the ethics of commercialisation in such destinations and of marketing such “tourism” spots.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The concept of dark tourism has recently been incorporated into the field of tourism studies, an idea that received significant interest from those in academia. Researchers strive to understand the meaning of dark tourism as a leisure activity, what drives those who engage in it to do so, and the ethics of dark tourism as a niche market (Isaac, 2021; Light, 2017). Dark tourism can be defined as tourism to destinations associated with death, disaster, or the macabre (Cohen, 2011; Lennon & Foley, 2000; Seaton, 1996). Dark tourism has been a source of education for many years with visitation to sites such as the Colosseum (Italy) and concentration camps being integrated into school curriculums for educational purposes. The purpose of this literary critique is to assess the literature available on the topic of holocaust tourism and to identify whether the matter of education and ethics are discussed in the literature to the extent that provides answers to the question: do the educational benefits of this form of tourism outweigh the question of ethicality?

## 2.1 Tourism for education

Education tourism is a subtype that involves a tourist visiting a location that provides educational value, often known as field trips, these ventures can be to any destination associated with learning. The sector has, in recent years, begun to grow in market size, with experiential learning being promoted worldwide as essential for those in education (Insights, 2022). Coinciding with the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011), which also indicated that tourism for education would pave the way for students in order gain insight into the matter of human rights, with the Holocaust being commissioned as an appropriate topic to display the importance of human rights and the effects of people being deprived of their rights). Tourist motivation for visitation to these sites is an under-researched topic (Schneider, Anghel-Vlad, Negrut, Gheorghe & Para, 2021; Sharpley & Stone, 2009), it is apparent however that holocaust tourism and education tourism are two niche areas that are linked in a manner. Holocaust tourism serves several purposes for those who visit the sites; they are a place of memorial, heritage, and education and offer insight into a period of history that had a significant effect on the world.

## 2.2 Holocaust tourism destinations – variation around the world

Death camps, concentration camps, prisons, war bunkers, victims' homes, schools, and the streets of many cities in Europe can be seen as holocaust destinations as the reality is that the victims suffered everywhere during the Holocaust, having very few safe places for those who were Jewish. Today some of the most important destinations include Yad Vashem (Israel), Auschwitz (Poland), the Anne Frank House (The Netherlands), and the Holocaust Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Germany) (Sherrin, 2021).

The emergence of holocaust destinations such as memorial sites and museums began in 1945 following liberation after World War II. A number of these sites included former death camps, prisons, and concentration camps which were commissioned for the memorial by local Governments. As indicated in the report conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011), sites have emerged worldwide to offer insight into the tragic events of the Holocaust. Their overriding aim is to educate visitors on human rights and how those who suffered during the Holocaust were deprived of them (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2011).

Cohen (2011) found some destinations associated with the Holocaust, particularly the murder and isolation of Jewish people, which the author refers to as the Shoah. Also, Cohen (2011) maintains that sites must be “in pupulo” (spiritual connection) in order to have a relevant impact on those visiting for educational benefits. Similarly, Reynolds (2018) declares that geographical location as well as the presence of authentic displays, namely testimonies from victims, increases the educational benefits of such destinations (Reynolds, 2018). Cohen (2018) and Reynolds (2018) present compelling arguments as to how the location and connection to the Holocaust are vital for the site to be educational. Simultaneously they suggest that some sites are not connected to the Holocaust in a manner that sufficiently represents these events, for example museums that have emerged linked to the Holocaust but are not located where these events occurred, nor do not display enough testimonies or genuine artefacts.

Contradictory, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011) explored the connection between the Holocaust and human rights education. The European Union members must have their citizens' needs at the forefront of all their plans, including promoting human rights through education (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2011). Through visitation to memorial sites throughout Europe, students can gain an understanding of how the Holocaust was a mass violation of human rights; however, the agency did report that it is the responsibility of teachers as well as those providing the site visit/tour to ensure there is an understanding of what the location represents and why humans need to learn from this. This refers back to the theory proposed by Cohen (2011): there must be a spiritual connection or genuine understanding of what the site represents.

There was also a study referenced in the work of Cohen (2011) on Yad Vashem, a Holocaust memorial site in Jerusalem (Israel). Participants engaged in the learning activities within Yad Vashem and outside the site, where they experienced ongoing Jewish life (Cohen, 2011). Considering six million Jewish people reside in Jerusalem, there was an opportunity for this experience (World Jewish Congress, 2019). The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011) recorded that an increasing number of visitors wanted to experience the homes of those who suffered during the Holocaust. The opportunity to see that "Hitler didn't win" is an element of the Yad Vashem experience which gives a sense of relief when visiting the homes of the local people (Cohen, 2011).

### **2.3 Educational benefits of Holocaust sites**

The educational benefits of holocaust tourism are the reason why sites, such as Auschwitz, the Anne Frank House, and Yad Vashem, have been commissioned and erected, with millions of tourists visiting them annually. The Anne Frank House alone hosted over 1.6 million visitors in 2018 (Anne Frank House, 2019). Human rights education is a prominent topic at all exhibitions (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2011). Survivor testimonies are available at these locations and how those who were prisoners suffered (Lennon & Foley, 2000). The absence of recognition for other parties involved in the Holocaust can affect the reciprocation of information from visitors, and the perspectives of bystanders and perpetrators should also be discussed to provide a comprehensive view of the events. There is optimism that raising awareness of the Holocaust will prevent further genocides from occurring (BBC Bitesize, 2021). As of 2017, there were a record of 5+ genocides occurring globally (Kranz, 2017) and it is maintained that holocaust tourism will be a major deterrent to genocide (Reynolds, 2018).

Weaver (2005) refers to tourism as a trivial activity as it is an important topic to be recognised within academia, and further research could destroy the identity and grief of what the Holocaust entailed (Reynolds, 2008). Dark tourism is an industry, particularly holocaust tourism, which runs from educational to unethical. A significant aim of this study is to identify the grey area of ethics as a discussion in dark tourism due to its origin.

### **2.4 Holocaust tourism – Education or exploitation**

For a business to operate ethically, both the organisation and its employees must acknowledge others when conducting any business activity (Business Ethics, 2021). In

tourism, the host community must be considered with regard to their feelings towards the destination and the behaviour of visitors when attending, so as for the service provider to operate ethically (Arjona, 2018; Business Ethics, 2021). This issue is prevalent in the work of Arjona (2018), who discussed the need for respecting local communities where dark tourism is being provided. Many dark tourism locations have little connection to the Holocaust and the sufferings of those who endured it (Arjona, 2018; Dawson, 2021). It is worth noting that one of the world's most recognisable holocaust destinations is also Poland's most important tourism attraction. Auschwitz is based in a country where as few as 10 – 20 thousand Jewish people remain compared to the 6.6 million Jewish people residing in Jerusalem as of 2018 (World Jewish Congress, 2019). These figures indicate that although some commissioned sites are still operating as Holocaust memorials in Poland, the number of people involved in these sites with a solid connection to the Shoah may be few. Sawyer (2018) transcribed his visits to the darkest tourist sites on earth, one of which being Auschwitz, and how the ethical question of visitation to such sites was always in the back of his mind, particularly when he witnessed the commercialisation of destinations associated with such macabre events (Sawyer, 2018). Commercialisation is a matter called into question in the Holocaust tourism industry, as mentioned in the *Journal of Heritage Tourism* (2021) special issue on 'Dark Tourism'; honouring the dead should be the number one priority in such locations, and over-commercialising of these sites indicates the failure to do so (Isaac, 2021). In a similar testament, by Tal and Morag (2013), field trips to museums can create false images for students as the exhibits tend to be exaggerated.

Foley and Lennon (1996) shared many predictions for the future of holocaust tourism regarding educating visitors. The commercial and industrial development of these sites was indicated as a potential threat to the authenticity of the topic and to the information being retained by visitors (Foley & Lennon, 2000). The rejuvenation of these sites with buildings and constructions surrounding them is something that, in the authors' opinion, jeopardises the history most (Foley & Lennon, 2000) which is supported by Reynolds (2018), as the author states that commercial aspects of the holocaust tourism eclipses' the social demise that attributed to the commission of these destinations. There are a few contradictions about the ethics of holocaust tourism, which do not meet the expectations of those academically involved in the area. The issue of ethics is something that the educational deliverance and recipience of information at these destinations. Reynolds (2018) advocates the true extent of the events and sufficient information is not provided at these sites, as the visitor does not have the experience that would be expected at a dark tourism location. These sites may be seen as opportunities by entrepreneurs, who were aware that anniversaries and memorial ceremonies could take place at these destinations annually, a major investment opportunity with large visitor numbers attending (Lennon & Foley, 2000). This, if true is a valid example of exploitation in the use of resources for personal gain (Mirriam Webster, 2021).

## **2.5 Site visits – Displays and tourists' response**

The purpose of these destinations is to attract visitors who have an interest in learning about the Holocaust to come and obtain further information. There are a number of sites globally, known for their displays, however, some are said to be more gruesome in their deliverance than others. In one of Netflix's 2018 documentaries "Dark Tourist", the

presenter visits some of the world's darkest sites, one of which is a former prison in England, where a collection of holocaust "memorial" items are displayed namely a lampshade made from human skin, a particularly dark item to display in a museum. Exploitation is apparent at some sites displaying items such as that mentioned above, as they are not recognised as having educational value. The displays such as survivor testimonies and diaries play a stronger role in achieving a connection between visitors and the history of the site (Cohen, 2011; Reynolds, 2018; Sawyer, 2018;).

The Anne Frank House is one of the most famous holocaust destinations. This destination was once the home to Miss Anne Frank a young Jewish girl, and her family and was also a refuge for another Jewish family when they had to go into hiding. The Frank Family story gripped the world and is symbolised in many exhibits associated with the Holocaust. The question raised is this, why amongst six billion other victims of the Holocaust, is Anne Frank's story so important in comparison to others who went into hiding, or those who equally suffered in a similar manner? (United States Holocaust Museum, 2021). According to the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011), a biographical approach allows visitors to connect with the victims in a way that teaches about human solidarity and sacrifice during these times which enables the development of a connection with the event itself and in turn develop a better understanding of the Holocaust. This may be why the emphasis of Anne Frank's story as Anne remained optimistic despite the struggles which are evident in her diary which was discovered in later years, Anne was also a teenager which makes her story accessible to many generations of readers.

A contrast to the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2011) research which was documented by Reynolds (2018) argues that upon entrance to a holocaust death camp, the visitor is greeted by an absence, absence of what happened there, absence of the grief that should be felt and commercialisation of a place that is supposed to symbolise tragedy (Reynolds, 2018). Sawyer (2018) suggests that there was over-commercialisation in Auschwitz during his visit in 2011 with the sale of souvenirs and display of posters. Despite his first impression, Sawyer (2018) developed an understanding throughout his visit that so as to make this destination accessible to students, younger kids and anyone who is sensitive to the information, this was a necessary measure.

## **2.6 Educational Benefits of Holocaust Tourism Demonstrated**

In 1999, a movement was generated by a teacher in the United States of America with a high school class of students from opposing gangs in the area. This teacher used the example of the Holocaust to bring these students together. The teacher explained to the class what the Holocaust was and how their rivalry because of race and religion is similar to what started the Holocaust in the first place. This saw the emergence of peace among the group. This is an example of the impact holocaust education can have. It also portrays how having a museum on sites that Cohen (2011) refers to as not being popular can still enable visitors to create their spiritual connection with the Holocaust.

Another resourceful method was highlighted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Agency (2011) in the "Free2choose" project, which was implemented in over 15 countries. The Free2choose project meant sites displayed several stories at their

location through stories of victims, bystanders, and soldiers. The students were then encouraged to give their own answers on how they felt about the events and what they learned they could give yes or no answers on their options as to how events were conveyed (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2011). The response from the project displayed increasing figures of interaction from students while visiting these holocaust sites.

A number of authors who have written about the Holocaust have conducted primary research within these areas. Sawyer (2018) could not have completed his book without the assistance of visitation to these locations. Similarly, Foley and Lennon (2000) could not have provided their opinion on the site's construction, contents, and infrastructure without attending Auschwitz (Lennon & Foley, 2000). Dr. Mary Honan, the author of *The Literary Representation of World War II Childhood* (2017) could not have written her novel without primary research which the author completed through interviews and literary reviews. The existence of Holocaust sites provided authors such as Honan (2017), Reynolds (2011), and Sawyer (2018) with opportunities.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the ethics of holocaust tourism as a niche market that is becoming very commercialised due to the growing demand for such activities at specific locations and to examine the motivating factors for tourists visiting these destinations. The following research methodological instruments will investigate this and provide the basis for the forthcoming discussion. In order to obtain optimum information for this research study, both primary and secondary research was conducted. Primary research is used by researchers to collect new data and involves methods such as focus groups, surveys, interviews, and field research (Lowe & Zemliansky, 2011). This research used the following methods.

#### *Site Visit*

A site visit is a common occurrence in primary research; it involves a visit to a destination associated with the research topic. In the case of this research study, a holocaust destination was chosen to be visited: the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, a Holocaust memorial site in Berlin dedicated to "protecting the memory of the Holocaust". This site is appropriate as its motto aligns with the investigative aims of this study, which are to identify the educational value of holocaust sites and the ethicality of holocaust tourism and how victims of the Holocaust are represented. This destination was created to protect the holocaust victims' identities and memories, which when investigated provided insight into the integrity of such destinations. To assess whether the site honours the memory of the Holocaust, a site visit was conducted in the month of February. To obtain optimum benefit from the field research, the list of research aims for the visit was documented before attending as follows:

- To identify any commercial aspects of the site.
- To detect fellow tourists' behaviours while attending and compare this with the statements of survey participants concerning those visiting these destinations for leisure and educational purposes.

- To observe the communication of information at this site and recognise the impact these sites have on Holocaust knowledge.

These aims remained under careful consideration when attending the memorial site, and it was also important to remember the significance of the destination and what it represented. Observing fellow attendees' behaviours and documenting whether they displayed this careful consideration offered an alternative perspective. Often, when unaware of being observed, human behaviour will display much more than their conscious participation in data collection, for example, in surveys, in which some participants may answer vaguely so as not to incriminate themselves (Hancock, 2016). It was vital to remain respectful of the site and others engaging in pilgrimage there.

### ***The interview***

For the purpose of this research paper, an interview was conducted with Dr Mary Honan, an academic scholar who authored a paper based on the Holocaust, particularly the childhood experiences of those living during these events. The interview featured several questions on the educational benefits of Holocaust tourism and questioned Dr Honan's experience of how the availability of these tourism destinations impacted her research.

The purpose of the interview with Dr Honan was to obtain an educated opinion due to her area of study being the Holocaust. The questions asked were about her research, the destinations she attended, and the opinions of the survivors and their relatives on Holocaust destinations.

Bampton and Cowton (2002) mentioned that poor interview practice is to ask more than one question at a time, particularly during a verbal interview. This was taken into consideration during preparation for and while conducting the interview with Dr Honan (Bampton & Cowton, 2002). It was important to have interview themes and a list of questions to facilitate the different directions the interview may take. The themes included: Dr Honan's education, Dr Honan's experience of Holocaust tourism, and the opinions of survivor's Dr Honan has met on Holocaust tourism. The interviewee provided insightful answers and educated opinions on Holocaust tourism and the history of the Holocaust and its victims, making the interview a robust source of data collection.

### ***The Survey***

The main aim of the survey was to identify those who engage in Holocaust tourism, their motivations for doing so, and the outcome of their visits. Sampling began with a low number of ten surveys sent to fellow students, which saw strong engagement from these parties. The survey was distributed on LinkedIn (a business social media platform). LinkedIn proved a successful distribution agent as it is a platform that connects working professional's, particularly in the tourism and hospitality industry. These connections were utilised successfully as there were educated opinions to be offered. A total of 84 participants engaged in the survey.



## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This data was collected to obtain further information on the research topic and will be analysed in comparison to literature review. This section discusses the finding of the survey of 84 participants and the interview conducted with Dr Honan.

### 4.1 Survey findings

Most respondents are 25+ years old. The survey consisted of open and closed questions; the closed questions ensured specific answers for particular matters, and the open questions allowed the participant to give their opinion on the study's research questions as the aim of the survey was to identify those who engage in holocaust tourism, their motivations for doing so and the outcome of their visits.

#### 4.1.1 Holocaust tourism

The second survey question asked the participant if they had engaged in holocaust tourism; 40% said yes. This is under half of the participants, which indicates that from the sample group, over 60% have not been to a location they deem Holocaust related. However, those who answered no were asked about their potential interest in a future visit. For those who answered no, a question followed: If not, would you like to do so? 62.7% of participants said yes, and 22.4% said maybe. This indicates that there is an interest in the niche market of holocaust tourism from those who participated in the survey, a large majority of participants have either been to a destination, would go, or would think about going, with very few ruling it out as a possibility.

#### 4.1.2 Those who have attended the holocaust site

The participants who answered yes were then asked what destination they attended. Table 1 shows their responses in order of popularity, with some participants having visited more than one.

DESTINATION	ATTENDEES
Auschwitz, Poland	24
Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe – Berlin, Germany	3
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Israel	2

Table 1. Survey respondents; Holocaust destinations. Source: Author (2022).

The participant who answered "I read the book in school, and I wanted to see where she lived," referred to Anne Frank, a symbol of the Holocaust. From the number of participants who have said they visited the Anne Frank house; it is clear that Anne Frank's story is one that people in modern society can associate and connect with. It is a story that generates both interest in and awareness of the harsh reality of what the Holocaust was, who the victims that did not survive were, and who they could have been. Representation can be vital in such serious matters and the earlier question of why Anne was such an emphasised victim of the Holocaust has been clarified through primary data collection.

## **4.2 Interview findings**

The series of questions as transcribed were asked in line with the aims of this study. The issues discussed are demonstrated below, some themes were prevalent in the discussion during the interview. Dr. Honan suggested that these holocaust sites are vital for the future memory of the holocaust events and she herself has not attended a holocaust site, this is due to the nature of these destinations, as a personal stance, Dr. Honan does not think she would enjoy the experience. The survivors the interviewee has met as well as their families return to particular sites for events such as “March for the Living” with Dr. Honan saying they expressed how important it is for these events to be remembered but the feelings expressed to Dr. Honan by survivors of Auschwitz that the camp has been “sterilised” since the events occurred.

The above information was essential to gather and to compare these facts to the secondary literature showing the data coincides with the opinions of authors such as Reynolds (2018) and Sawyer (2018), who discussed the alterations made to sites, particularly Auschwitz, which they felt has been commercialised and which demonstrates a potential need for change.

The matter of ethics at holocaust sites is present in Dr. Honan’s research, however, a discussion arose about how ethical Holocaust tourism is. The opinion of the interviewee is that it is the responsibility of the tourism provider, vendors in the area, and those working on the site to ensure ethics are maintained. The matter of people profiting from these sites could be viewed as unethical. One issue raised by Dr Honan was the sale of souvenirs at these destinations, which a large number of participants said was available at the site they visited. There is an apparent fine line between this form of tourism being unethical and educational, as mentioned the interviewee believed that despite visitor motivations, those who attend holocaust sites become witness to the events that occurred. The alterations of these sites for commercial purposes are necessary to maintain the number of visitors attending annually and cannot take away from the grotesque nature of the events that once occurred in the exact location.

## **4.3 Site visit to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Germany)**

Field research was the final part of the primary research conducted. The purpose of the field research in the case of this study is to gather first-hand, original data that can be compared to secondary data and primary data from alternative sources. There are a number of locations that were available to visit, below they are demonstrated in the rank of popularity with regard to visitor numbers. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is one of the lesser-visited attractions dedicated to the Holocaust and its victims. The site was erected to commemorate the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

### ***4.3.1 Observations made during the visit***

The visit was conducted in line with the aims of this study which is to observe the displays of the site and how they represented and recognised the events that. There were multiple locations in Berlin that paid tribute to those who suffered during the events as shown below, the sites visited included memorials to the Jewish, Roma, and Soviet Union victims during

the Holocaust. These sites displayed information about why they were erected, whom they represented, and what occurred. There was a representation of victims and survivors displayed at each point.

The issue of commercialisation was one of the leading research aims of this study, and it was noted during the site visit that there was no admission charge for any of the commemoration sites. “Memorial of the murdered Jews of Europe” was located in the centre of Berlin’s major tourism spot and was monitored by a security guard; however, admission was open to all, and there were no barriers to entry. The atmosphere was undeniable, and it was clear those visiting were aware of the sensitive nature of these locations. An informal discussion was conducted with the security guard, who said the site receives hundreds of visitors daily, and due to its location, it is crucial that it is guarded to ensure there is no improper behaviour conducted. The security guard also pointed out that visitors always tend to be mindful of the monuments. As displayed in the images taken during the site visit, there was an apparent educational purpose for these sites as well as memorialising the victims. Those attending the site photographed the memorials, but also stopped by and took the time to read the display information, educating themselves on the events during their visit. This study benefitted in multiple ways from the visit to the site. New information was obtained about multiple ethnic groups that suffered during the events of “Hitlers final solution,” the visit also contradicted the opinions of multiple authors, such as Reynolds (2018) and Sawyer (2018) who argued that holocaust destinations were over-commercialised and supported the opinion of those who participated in the survey, that holocaust tourism provides educational value. The interviewee Dr. Honan said, “You bear witness when you visit these locations” and the visit to these sites supported this opinion.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the ethics of holocaust tourism as a niche market that is becoming very commercialised due to the growing demand for such activities at certain locations and also to examine the motivating factors for tourists visiting these destinations. The following conclusions will bring together the key findings from this research study's primary and secondary findings and regarding the information gathered, this paper has successfully achieved its aims as follows:

**Aim 1:** To identify the benefits of major holocaust destinations such as Auschwitz, the Anne Frank Museum, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe as an educational resource and consumer motivations when visiting these destinations.

As mentioned above, survey participants, as well as previous literature and as observed during the site visit, these locations offer insight into the history of the Holocaust that one may not learn from the school curriculum. These destinations offer additional resources of information from numerous perspectives of the Holocaust and enable the stories of those who suffered to be displayed. As a result of this study, it was identified that stories of survivors such as Anne Frank, who have been questioned as an exploited resource, are necessary for connecting those alive today to a real person, a real story, and a representative of other lives lost during the Holocaust. It is recommended that those operating these tourism sites maintain a respectful standard and not engage in over-commercialisation

which could lead to a loss of authenticity. Those researching the topic of holocaust tourism would benefit from engaging in a site visit to obtain as much information as possible.

Aim 2: To critically analyse the portrayal of the information at these major destinations and the management of these destinations by tourism providers:

The information displayed at the site visited during field research was more than satisfactory, with many distinct aspects available. Over 50% of respondents felt knowledge about the Holocaust was gained during their visit to destinations such as Auschwitz, and Yad Vashem. It was also noted that the sites were well maintained and were observed by security to ensure visitors were respectful of the site. These standards when upheld help to ensure those who visit holocaust destinations remain mindful of the site's nature and importance. It is recommended that local vendors also uphold these standards. Sawyer (2018) wrote about "tacky" marketing in the local area during his visit to Auschwitz, it is advisable that these marketing techniques are avoided in order to ensure an appropriate image is upheld.

Aim 3: To call into question the ethics of commercialisation in such destinations and the ethics of marketing sites as "tourism" spots.

Commercialisation takes from the educational value of these sites (Reynolds, 2018). An issue raised by the author was the sale of souvenirs at these destinations. Many survey participants did not witness the sale of souvenirs during their visit to a holocaust site. These participants also felt that holocaust tourism was ethical and educational. It was also expressed that these souvenirs were minor and of a non-exploitive nature. Auschwitz is a non-profit holocaust tourism site that sells souvenirs but the money made is then invested in the site's maintenance and running costs. The reinvestment of funds into the site is not for financial gain, but to maintain the costs of the site, this does not coincide with the definition of exploitation. The nature of these destinations has developed from the events of World War II. These destinations were once a place of suffering and it is vital that tourists, tourism providers, and local people recognise this. From this research, it could be said that Holocaust tourism is viewed as an ethical activity, whether conducted for educational purposes or not, those who engage in the activity learn about the Holocaust and its victims.

Finally, holocaust tourism is a niche market of dark tourism that has been engaged in or is of interest to many people, the ethical issue surrounding holocaust tourism, seems to be outweighed by the reality that these destinations are an educational resource for many as this is what they have been commissioned for. It is important for those engaging in holocaust tourism to remain respectful throughout the visit, There is so much to be learned from holocaust tourism, the theory that this may prevent a holocaust from occurring again is said to be unrealistic with genocides still occurring worldwide (BBC Bitesize, 2017), as noted in the primary research, it is possible to learn from engaging in holocaust tourism about the importance of human rights and the detrimental effects large scale events namely the Holocaust can have on not just one race, one nation or one continent but the world.

Dark tourism was a concept that emerged decades ago, and tourists' motivations are also said to be under-researched (Sharpley & Stone, 2009; Schneider et al., 2021). The matter of

ethics in a similar manner was of major importance when conducting the survey, with the research aim one questioning the ethics of holocaust tourism with regard to consumer motivations. Dark tourism is a tourism niche that has been called into question for its ethicality for a number of years, holocaust tourism is a subtype which has also obtained the same criticism. Many authors, such as Willis (2014), write about engaging in dark tourism as an uneducated tourist and becoming more informed after. Willis (2014) concluded that the purpose of dark and holocaust tourism is to develop a connection to and understand the tragedy that occurred at the destinations. Similarly, Cohen (2011) noted the importance of creating a spiritual connection when visiting a Holocaust destination.

The information available at Holocaust sites contributes significantly to the site's educational benefits. Sawyer (2018) discussed his experience of Auschwitz with his initial impression that the site was commercialised and not run efficiently or ethically (Sawyer, 2018); however, his opinion changed upon entering the camp itself. The author thought that commercialisation of these destinations is for accessibility due to the gruesome and upsetting nature of the display information.

The purpose of the site visit was to assess the information available at a holocaust destination and the commercial aspects of these sites in comparison to the opinions of the authors. The site visited was located in the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The conclusion of the site visit was that sites such as the "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe" and those like it, play an important role in tribute to those who were victims of the Holocaust. It was recognised that those attending the destination were remorseful for the suffering of those being commemorated and how the information available plays an essential role in educating visitors on the events that occurred. The variety of information displayed enabled visitors to view different perspectives of the Holocaust.

Over 70 participants believed that holocaust tourism is an ethical activity; each participant gave their opinion as to why they felt it was ethical. Some people expressed that the education provided in these locations outweighs the ethical question as those who attend are experiencing history and are learning the stories of those who lost and suffered. This data is in accordance with the aims of the Fundamental agency for Human Rights report (2011). The report was written about the currently implemented plans for holocaust destinations to educate the importance of human rights and how the Holocaust was a clear example of how the deprivation of these can cause immense damage. The importance of how these sites are presented and how those who are working there are educated on the matter is also discussed. Finally, there was a high level of participation regarding visitor motivations to attend these holocaust sites, and many respondents stated they wanted to or have attended these sites to learn more about the Holocaust. Therefore, the purpose of these sites being commissioned is to benefit education.

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