

I Am The Dark Tourist: Messenger of Remembrance

by H. E. Sawyer

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H.E. Sawyer's *I Am the Dark Tourist: Messenger of Remembrance* seeks to extend knowledge on dark tourist extrinsic motivations as explored through the lens of a dark tourist; an area of research that notably remains relatively underexplored in existing literature. This book propels an argument that dark tourism can be transformative, highlighting the ability for participation in dark tourism to be a transformative experience for dark tourism consumers (dark tourists) and the ability for dark tourism (supply) to have wider transformational impact.

Messenger of Remembrance consists of 11 calculatedly placed chapters whereby the author incorporates a broad range of dark tourist attractions as case studies. Subsequently, the piece adequately documents the various ways in which a number of historic tragedies and cultural incidents have become the subject of commodities. These locations in focus range from the darkest of the dark, dark tourist attractions such as sites and tours associated with the Holocaust to attractions which are appropriately dubbed as “dark tourism lite” (pg. 13), such as the Loch Ness, a notable location where the “dark” aspect is not entirely apparent or the first association with the location. The purposeful spreading of chapters pertaining to relatively lighter subject matter interwoven with chapters which focus on darker subject matter effectively allows for a manageable read.

Moreover, the case studies are diverse in ranging from the inclusion of structured tours to less structured dark tourism. In regards to geographic location of attractions, *I Am the Dark Tourist: Messenger of Remembrance* predominantly focuses on dark tourist attractions in Europe (attractions which have naturally spawned as a result of tragedies which occurred in Europe) extends globally via inclusion of Mexico's Day of the Dead festivities. The book considers contemporary dark tourist representations of historic tragedies linking as far back as late 17th century to contemporary engagement with recent tragedies which have occurred within the last decade. *Messenger of Remembrance* thus introvertedly encapsulates the broad classification of "dark tourism" as well as the true global and long-standing nature of this phenomenon.

The first person narrative epitomised by the suitable book title encompasses a personal approach. This style effectively places the reader in the position of the dark tourist and allows for efficacious interrogating at the underlying ethical issues surrounding dark tourism consumption. Questions are notably raised surrounding morally ambiguous engagement with contemporary tragedies to the remembrance of key historical events (and historical figures). Henceforth, accurately capturing the moral quandary that faces dark tourists and dark tourism scholars. Drawing largely from an auto-ethnographic approach, this book provides a comprehensive and riveting account of a dark tourist (the author) who has acquired unique extensive engagement with the activity in focus; dark tourism. This ultimately strengthens the identified themes and the book's overarching argument.

H.E. Sawyer presents a compelling and convincing argument concerning dark tourism's ability to not only transform dark tourists but also the image of certain institutions and even the image of countries on a global stage. This argument is made in a cohesive manner formed with reference to various illustrative examples across multiple contexts. *I Am the Dark Tourist: Messenger of Remembrance* is innovative in strongly introducing personal

betterment as a dark tourist incentive; an extrinsic motivation that has (generally) failed to be directly highlighted in pre-existing dark tourist motivation models. The argument being best exemplified through highlighting that dark tourism visitation can serve to transform individuals who garner problematic, prejudiced views through re-education, enhancing empathy and promoting tolerance; particularly apparent with visitation to Holocaust memorials as means to counteract anti-Semitism.

Beyond dark tourist transformation, the power for dark tourism to transform institutions' public reputation is considered in the form of exploration into the ramifications of a fake news story concerning dark tourism consumption as means to counteract a football club's association with racism and anti-Semitism. The potential positive functions of dark tourism are further asserted with consideration of dark tourism's capability to transform a country's image on the global stage as is articulately exemplified with reference to Mexico and the Day of the Dead festivities. This book subsequently highlights the general public's complex (and at times bizarre) relationship with the activity.

I Am the Dark Tourist: Messenger of Remembrance is a thoroughly researched and quality written piece which signifies the important function of dark tourism in contemporary society; with the notable formation of ideas that can be channelled to promote a more positive perception of the activity. This book is a suitable read for readers seeking an introduction to the concept of dark tourism and also for specialists who seek to acquire a fresh perspective on the phenomenon. *I Am the Dark Tourist: Messenger of Remembrance* probes at the core research questions which dark tourism scholars seek to answer; with acknowledgement of (other) key questions which are not the direct point of focus in this specific work. With dark touristic experiences and pre-set dark tourist motivations typically being explored in isolation, Sawyer pioneers the introduction of transformation into this sphere; a conjunction whereby extrinsic motivation and experience effectively interconnect. It is anticipated that

this work will yield further consideration into the transformative impact of dark tourism on consumers (dark tourists) as well as the wider, general transformational function of dark tourism supply. Notably, the need for quantitative, empirical data to support and measure the theorised transformative impact of dark tourism remains outstanding.