The Dark Side of Tourism's Implications: A Structural Equation Modeling Study of the 2016 Earthquake in Central Italy

Authors : B. Kulaga, A. Cinti, F. J. Mazzocchini

Abstract : Despite the fact that growing academic attention on dark tourism is a fairly recent phenomenon, among the various reasons for travelling death-related ones, are very ancient. Furthermore, the darker side of human nature has always been fascinated and curious regarding death, or at least, man has always tried to learn lessons from death. This study proposes to describe the phenomenon of dark tourism related to the 2016 earthquake in Central Italy, deadly for 302 people and highly destructive for the rural areas of Lazio, Marche, and Umbria Regions. The primary objective is to examine the motivation-experience relationship in a dark tourism site, using the structural equation model, applied for the first time to a dark tourism research in 2016, in a study conducted after the Beichuan earthquake. The findings of the current study are derived from the calculations conducted on primary data compiled from 350 tourists in the areas mostly affected by the 2016 earthquake, including the town of Amatrice, near the epicenter, Castelluccio, Norcia, Ussita and Visso, through conducting a Likert scale survey. Furthermore, we use the structural equation model to examine the motivation behind dark travel and how this experience can influence the motivation and emotional reaction of tourists. Expected findings are in line with the previous study mentioned above, indicating that: not all tourists visit the thanatourism sites for dark tourism purpose, tourists' emotional reactions influence more heavily the emotional tourist experience than cognitive experiences do, and curious visitors are likely to engage cognitively by learning about the incident or related issues.
Keywords : dark tourism, emotional reaction, experience, motivation, structural equation model
Conference Title : ICDTTD 2019 : International Conference on Dark Tourism and Tourism Development
Conference Location : Venice, Italy
Conference Dates : November 12-13, 2019