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'Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative
Study of Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism
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## Abstract

This dissertation examines the extent to which governments in Serbia and the Czech Republic choose to engage with dark tourism. It will comprise of a comparative study of government-produced marketing and tourism strategies, and a sample of articles from the British press. An overview of current literature relating to dark tourism will be provided, before progressing to an outline of the chosen research methods. A brief country profile for each case study country will provide the historical and political background to the data analysis. Through an examination of key emergent themes in the data set, this dissertation will conclude that there is a reluctance to engage in dark tourism in both Serbia and the Czech Republic.

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## Introduction

As society becomes increasingly globalised and country borders open, the study of tourism becomes progressively more important. Tourism has proven to be incredibly profitable for states that capitalise on their assets; as countries explore what makes them unique, several subgenres of tourism study have emerged, one of these being dark tourism. Study of dark tourism has been fairly minimal, and there is scope for further research as the concept becomes increasingly mainstreamed.

This dissertation intends to further explore the concept of dark tourism through the research question: 'Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Study of Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies, and the Portrayal of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British Press'. It will examine government-produced marketing and tourism strategies for the Czech Republic and Serbia, in conjunction with a sample of articles from the British press to produce an analysis of the case study countries' relationship with dark tourism. Discussion surrounding this topic is important as there is yet to be significant comparative case study analysis of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly using an example from former Yugoslavia. Additionally, there has been no analysis of the portrayal of dark tourism in these countries in the British press, making this dissertation a valuable contribution to the literature.

The structure of the dissertation will be as follows: chapter one will provide a literature review of key literature surrounding dark tourism. It will discuss various definitions of dark tourism, and the motivations of dark tourists. Subsequently, there is discussion of the role of dark tourism in memory politics and nation building, as well as use of the media. Finally, the dissertation examines literature on the branding and marketing of trauma for the consumption of tourists, and the importance of destination branding in the 21st century. Chapter one provides the literary basis for the research question.

Chapter two illustrates the methodology used to examine the data. It discusses which research methods were chosen and why, and provides more detail about Serbia's Tourism Development Strategy and the Czech Republic's Marketing Plan 2018. It also discusses further detail about the four newspapers selected for analysis: The Guardian,

The Telegraph, The Daily Mail, and The Independent. The chapter also discusses limitations of the research. The Methodology chapter is essential to the understanding of the analysis undertaken in chapter four.

Chapter three contains a short country profile for Serbia and the Czech Republic. This helps to put each of the case studies into their geographical and historical context, as well as providing essential background information to help understand the data analysis.

The fourth chapter is the main data analysis section, and highlights several themes present throughout the data. The chapter begins with a word frequency study, outlining the frequency of key words relating to tourism and dark tourism across all of the data sets. It then moves to the main qualitative thematic analysis. The key themes highlighted are government and tourism, branding and marketing, motivations of tourists, and perceptions of the British press. Within each of the key themes the essential subthemes are also discussed in turn, with reference to the Tourism Development Strategy, the Marketing Plan 2018, and articles from the media. Discussion of these themes illustrates the relationship between the governments of the case study countries and the British press, as well the extent of their engagement with dark tourism.

Finally, the dissertation will close with some concluding statements about the findings gained from the research. It will summarise the research conducted, illustrate why this dissertation is a valuable contribution to the field of dark tourism research, and will provide some insights into areas which may benefit from further exploration.

This research will enhance existing literature on the topic of dark tourism, will expand the knowledge of dark tourism in Central and Eastern Europe and former Yugoslavia, as well as provide an in-depth comparative assessment of government-produced tourism marketing strategies and articles in the British press. By taking a more specific approach than other authors researching similar topics, this dissertation hopes to make a valuable contribution to dark tourism literature by exploring the research topic: 'Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Study of Government-

Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies, and the Portrayal of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British Press'.

# Chapter One: Literature Review

## *Introduction*

The literature review will provide a detailed overview of literature relating to dark tourism and will explore key emerging themes.  Firstly, the review will explore traditional definitions of dark tourism, and what motivates tourists to visit sites considered to be 'dark'.  Secondly, the review discusses the importance of dark tourism in memory politics and nation building, as well as the role the media plays in constructing narratives.  Finally, section three assesses research relating to the branding and marketing of trauma for the consumption of tourists.  The review will then conclude by providing a summary of the topics covered.  Additionally, the literature review will highlight the gaps in the literature which would be valuable to explore through further research.

The themes discussed in this chapter are the ones which appeared most consistently throughout the literature.  They help to place the concept of dark tourism into context and provide an essential background to the research undertaken in this dissertation.

## *What is 'Dark Tourism' and What Motivates 'Dark Tourists'?*

Tourism in the modern age has to contend with an increasingly global market where the wants of different groups need to be met; this has resulted in many different sub-genres of traditional tourism, with 'dark tourism' being one of these (Simpson, 1999; Light, 2017).  This section will examine definitions of the term 'dark tourism' and how these definitions have developed, and further explore what motivates tourists to visit these sites.

There is a limited amount of consensus on the terminology surrounding dark tourism, and so it is difficult to assign the concept with a universally acknowledged definition (Collins-Kreiner, 2016).  The term 'dark tourism' was originally created by Foley and Lennon (1996), to understand and define the relationship between tourism and visitors' interest in death.  Light (2017: 277) defines dark tourism more broadly as '…an

umbrella term for any form of tourism that is somehow related to death, suffering, atrocity, tragedy or crime'.  The term has sometimes been used interchangeable with 'thanatourism' – from the ancient Greek *thánatos* or *death* – (Light, 2017).  However, thanatourism has a more specific meaning that relates to a visitor's desire to have an encounter with death or a 'near death experience', and so using the term interchangeably is illogical (Light, 2017). This dissertation will not focus on the idea of thanatourism or tourism relating to near death experiences, but it is important to acknowledge its presence in the literature.

Heřmanová and Abrhám (2015) provide a fairly succinct and comprehensive definition of dark tourism, they state:

> 'Dark tourism is a form of tourism, to which participants are motivated by the pursuit for getting to know the authentic spots of bleak human tragedies, spots associated with death, misery, suffering, torture, killings and imprisonment, places renowned as historic battlefields, but also spots of natural disasters or current conflicts.  Dark tourism areas of interest may also be cemeteries, places of the pass away and the rest of celebrities, historical military objects, gulags, concentration camps, dungeons, prisons, gallows, torture museums, monuments, memorial sites and pilgrimages etc' (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015: 18)

This definition illustrates the wide range of different sites and specialist interests that may be considered under the blanket of dark tourism, and attempts to provide a comprehensive definition where authors have struggled.  There are arguments, however, that the idea of dark tourism is socially constructed and so therefore applying any one definition to the term is invalid, as what determines whether or not a site is considered 'dark' is more complex and circumstantial (Jamal and Lelo, 2011; Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010).

When the term first became popular, a 'dark tourist' was deemed to be someone who had a morbid fascination and interest in incidents related to or including death (Lennon and Foley, 1996).   It was originally categorised as being 'taboo' and thought to be representative of a decline in the morals of society; however, as more research was

conducted on the subject it became clear that there was more variety in tourists' motivations than initially expected (Podoshen et al. 2015; Podoshen, 2013). The concept of dark tourism is more complicated than just an interest in death; for example, 'dystopian dark tourism' has been discussed as a distinct separate sub-genre (Podoshen et al. 2015). Visitors have a broad range of interests, come from a variety of backgrounds and are looking for different experiences from these sites (Collins-Kreiner, 2016).

Research has shown that the primary motivation for visiting 'dark' sites is further expansion of their knowledge and learning; making the only significant difference between traditional heritage tourism and dark tourism the link with death and trauma (Podoshen, 2013).

Whilst genuine historical interest is accepted as the most popular reason for travel to dark sites, other important motivations are highlighted by Heřmanová and Abrhám (2015). These include: curiosity, nostalgia, remembering those who died, seeking family connections, pilgrimage, and sometimes even the need for catharsis (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015; Collins-Kreiner, 2016). As the popularity of dark tourism increases, the lines become blurred between dark tourists, heritage enthusiasts, experiential tourists and pilgrims, to name but a few; the more sub-genres of tourism are created, the more the literature struggles to give a concrete definition to dark tourists (Light, 2017). As it stands, there are no real conclusions as to why the attractiveness of and interest in dark tourism sites has increased in recent years, an area which there is definite scope for further research (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015). However, one theory is that there has been a shift away from post-modernism towards post-materialism, into a tourism market where experiences – and the intensity and authenticity of these experiences– is integral (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015).

Authenticity seems to be a key theme in the literature about tourists' motivations in visiting 'dark' sites. Tourists are looking for an attraction where they get a fully rounded impression, understanding and experience of the site they are visiting (Podoshen et al, 2015). Without authenticity, dark tourism sites risk visitors misinterpreting past trauma and detracts from the empathy tourists are able to feel about these events, making an authentic experience central to their appeal (Podoshen, 2013).

Arguments about the 'commodification' of trauma for the consumption of visitors has called into question how authentic dark tourism sites can be (Light, 2017). Tourist attractions and governments now have to package and present trauma to an international audience. This can cause the message behind the trauma to be 'watered down' or trivialised as they seek to appeal to the wider public (Light, 2017). Critics of dark tourism suggest that commodifying a trauma does not provide more understanding of *how* and *why* events occurred, but only seeks to make profit and does not necessarily provide an accurate representation of the site (Volcic, Erjavec and Peak, 2014). Cohen argues that not all sites are as authentic as others, but rather a feeling of authenticity is constructed by the management of a site, therefore undermining a tourist's goal of achieving a truly authentic experience or trip (Cohen, 1984). The line between authenticity and being marketable can become blurred if not carefully monitored by those managing dark tourism sites.

### *Dark Tourism in Memory Politics and Nation Building*

Dark tourism can also be an important tool for nation states looking to construct narratives favourable to their political agenda, manipulate and control collective memory, and assist in nation building. States often look to promote or ignore certain aspects of their history in order to encourage political favour in the present day (Light, 2017). The role of collective memory is of particular importance here (Halbwachs, 1992). Collective memory can be constructed by governments through the promotion of aspects of the country's history; in cities like Sarajevo, choosing to focus tourists' attention on parts of the Yugoslav war where the Bosnians were victims is more appealing than acknowledging their role in the conflict (Light, 2017; Volcic, Erjavec and Peak, 2014).

Collective amnesia is also a key part of collective memory rhetoric, leading to a limited desire to promote dark tourism in certain states. There has been some examination of the lack of desire to focus on dark tourism in areas of post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe, although the focus has primarily been on Romania, Germany and Hungary, leaving space for further research into other states in the region (Light and

Andone, 1996; Light, 2000a; Light 2000b). Light (2017) argues that recognising that collective amnesia is integral to the nation state's construction of collective memory allows for a more accurate understanding of dark tourism, and when and where states choose to capitalise on it.

For countries like the Czech Republic, the opening of its borders in 1989 and the subsequent influx of international tourists has been important for its post-Communist urban restructuring, and for constructing its modern identity (Simpson, 1999). Maintaining a uniquely 'Czech' national identity in the face of internationalisation has been a struggle, with globalisation and European integration risking the erosion of sense of place, as well as important social, political, historical and cultural meaning (Simpson, 1999). By focusing on the 'golden age' of Czech history in the period before socialism, the Czech Republic sought to construct a version of history which skips over the Communist period and facilitates collective amnesia to hide both foreign and domestic tourists from past atrocities (Simpson, 1999; Light, 2017). Whilst there has been some analysis of dark tourism in post-Communist states, a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe are yet to have any kind of comprehensive comparative dark tourism study. Further analysis of countries in the region would provide valuable data for a comparative study of dark tourism in post-Communist countries. This would help facilitate a more in-depth understanding of how countries' different social, political and historical backgrounds produce different or similar outcomes for dark tourism.

*The Role of the Media*

The media – particularly print media – has also proven to be a useful tool for constructing narratives in memory politics, and for nation building. How events are interpreted by journalists helps to create a narrative which is then interpreted by both local and international audiences; this can then have a knock-on effect on the tourism sector, which plays an integral role in how sites of trauma are remembered and packaged to these same audiences (Volcic, Erjavec and Peak, 2014). Travel reviews in the international press act as guidelines to how tourists should interact with tourist attractions, and how they are supposed to interpret them (Volcic, Erjavec and Peak, 2014). The media also shapes visitors' perceptions of dark tourism, with the international media creating a different – often more sensationalist – narrative around

these sites than the one which states would choose in their building of collective memory (Podoshen, 2013; Light, 2017). The media's role in building narratives makes it an essential component to dark tourism in relation to politics of memory and nation building. Authors have used analysis of articles in the popular international press to determine the media's role in publicising and creating narratives surrounding dark tourism (Podoshen et al, 2015). Omitted from the literature were studies which focused exclusively on the portrayal of dark tourism in British media. Research focusing exclusively on the media of a single country would give a more in-depth analysis of perceptions of dark tourism in that country and could be used in future research to compare with other states.

### *Branding and Marketing of Trauma for Tourist Consumption*

As interests in dark tourism move towards becoming a more mainstream motivation for visitors, states increasingly need to think carefully about how they market and brand past trauma for the consumption of tourists (Podoshen et al, 2015; Light, 2017). Closely linked to this is the 'commodification' argument, with the crux of the debate being that by applying strategies to make a site of trauma a more attractive international tourist destination, there is a possibility that parts of history which should be respected may become trivialised and lead to historical detachment from visitors (Light, 2017; Volcic, Erjavec and Peak, 2014). To counter this argument, Bowman and Pezzullo (2010) posit that there need not be an either/or debate in dark tourism between authenticity and commodification, but that a site might be both authentic and competitive on the global market if correctly managed. This can be achieved through well-constructed branding and marketing strategies.

'Destination branding' has become a key component of 21st century tourism. A 'brand' in this respect is the ability to define what makes a destination unique and present these defining characteristics to a target market as a specific and bespoke image/strategy (Sevin, 2014). Zenker and Braun (2010) define destination branding as a:

> ''network of associations in the consumer's mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavio[u]ral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims,

communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design''. (Zenker and Braun, 2010:5).

A concrete brand is key to ensuring that consumers select a state as their final destination, and improves the likelihood of attracting visitors (Qu, Kim and Im, 2011).

There has been some discussion in the literature about marketing and branding dark attractions (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015). As dark tourism sites can often also be sites of historical importance, many dark tourism sites are an important part of the tourism sector of their countries (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015; Collins-Kreiner, 2016). Improving the competitiveness of countries compared to other states is an essential part of the literature; states need to carve out their niche and provide tourists with a unique experience in order to access the economic benefits associated with a strong tourism sector (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015; Volcic, Erjavec and Peak, 2014). Transforming dark sites into attractions which are easily consumed by foreign tourists helps to improve socio-economic development, as well as giving a country the chance to explain why the trauma occurred, connecting with the creation of narratives discussed in the previous section (Volcic, Erjavec and Peak, 2014).

Branding in the context of a post-war country is particularly important, as the state looks to shift their reputation from warzone to up-and-coming tourist destination (Volcic, Erjavec and Peak, 2014). In their article about branding post-war Sarajevo, Volcic, Erjavec and Peak (2014) highlight the key reason why branding is so important:

> 'Branding Sarajevo as a destination is not just about attracting tourists: it is about positioning Sarajevo within a global neoliberal branding culture, while remembering and interpreting sites of pain for both local and international audiences in specific ways.' (Volcic, Ejavec and Peak, 2014: 730).

Branding has now become an integral part of how we relate to and remember 'dark sites', and to how they are perceived by an international audience, making a strong brand identity increasingly important for states. Having a competitive brand in the free market is a struggle for many countries and is even more difficult for states like those in Central and Eastern Europe who have only relatively recently – compared with the

rest of Europe – been able to fully access pools of international tourists through open borders (Simpson, 1999). Place promotion is key to both city and state marketing strategies; it can involve the changing of people's perceptions, but also helps states become more competitive as they work to make their tourism sites' sense of 'place' more authentic than others, and therefore more competitive (Young and Kaczmarek, 1999).

To examine the Polish government's approach to place promotion and branding, Young and Kaczmarek (1999) explored promotional materials from the city of Lódź in central Poland. Examining government documents to determine the desired branding strategy is an interesting approach, however as the paper is from 1999 it is likely now out of date. It would also have been interesting to see a more comparative approach, either from another city in Poland, or a city with a similar background from another country. The literature is generally rather lacking in comparative studies focusing exclusively on Central and Eastern Europe and is particularly short on examples from former Yugoslavia. Where literature does exist, it is fairly dated. A more updated comparative study would be valuable contribution to the literature on dark tourism.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature covers a number of key themes relating to dark tourism and provides a comprehensive basis for further research. The literature discusses the lack of consensus on a concrete definition of dark tourism, the problems in finding accurate terminology, and the similarities and differences between dark tourism and thanatourism. It examines what might motivate dark tourists, and how interpretations of these motivations have changed over time as the literature becomes more sophisticated. The key motivators discussed are authenticity of experience and historical interest, and their importance as the tourism sector starts to embrace post-materialism; however, the literature also recognises a broad range of other motivations for tourists visiting dark sites. The review then goes on to examine the importance of dark tourism in terms of nation building and memory politics. There is particular focus on the construction of narratives, and how states may attempt to highlight/omit certain actions from the collective memory of their citizens. It also looks at aspects of dark

tourism and nation building through a Central and Eastern European lens, and explores the importance of the media in the construction of narratives. Finally, a key emerging theme was the branding or marketing of trauma for the consumption of tourists. This section outlines the commodification argument and some counter arguments, as well as defining destination branding, and why marketing and branding traumatic tourism sites is beneficial to states.

Whilst researching, several gaps in the literature emerged. The most significant of these being: the lack of dark tourism research focusing on the British Press and its portrayal of dark sites, and the lack of comparative studies focusing on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly using examples from former Yugoslavia. This dissertation intends to fill these gaps through careful analysis and comparison of government-produced tourism marketing/branding strategies and articles in the British press to determine the focus on dark tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic. The dissertation will explore the research question: 'Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Study of Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies, and the Portrayal of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British Press'.

# Chapter Two: Methodology

## *Introduction*

This chapter will outline the methodology used to explore the research question: 'Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Study of Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies, and the Portrayal of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British Press'. It will provide an outline of the data sets chosen and why, the research method selected and how the task of analysing the data was approached. Finally, the methodology will discuss any limitations to this kind of analysis, and any bias that may impact the study. For this dissertation a qualitative, thematic document and media analysis has been selected to best answer the research question, and this is supplemented by a word frequency analysis.

## *Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies*

This dissertation chose to analyse government-produced documents from both Serbia and the Czech Republic to discover the marketing and tourism strategies for the case study countries. For Serbia, the document selected was 'The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2016 – 2025' (2016). This document was produced by Serbia's Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications in 2016, and outlines the intended outcomes and strategies for the tourism sector in Serbia for the period 2016 – 2025 and is a total of 114 pages long (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). This document was chosen due to its status as the first real comprehensive tourism strategy for Serbia which takes into account modern tourism markets (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016).

To analyse the government's approach to the tourism sector in the Czech Republic the 'Marketing Plan 2018' was selected, this document was produced by CzechTourism – a branch of the Ministry of Regional Development – on behalf of the Czech government (CzechTourism, 2017). The document is a total of 46 pages long and outlines the marketing strategy for the Czech tourism sector (CzechTourism, 2017). The

organisation produces a new marketing strategy every year, so does not cover the same time period as its Serbian equivalent.

Serbia and the Czech Republic were chosen as case studies due to the fact they had dedicated government-produced tourism/marketing strategy documents available in English. They help to illustrate the priorities of the current governments, and their strategies for the development of tourism looking forwards (CzechTourism, 2017; Tourism Development Strategy, 2016).

*British Press*

To contrast the government documents, this dissertation chose to select articles from a number of different mainstream British newspapers. Newspapers were chosen based on the accessibility and scope of their online archives, as well as trying to choose a broad range of political opinions and varied readership. The final newspapers selected were: The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Daily Mail and The Independent. These four newspapers range from the most left-wing mainstream British newspaper (The Guardian), to the most right-wing (The Daily Mail) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: How left or right wing are the mainstream UK newspapers? (YouGov, 2017)
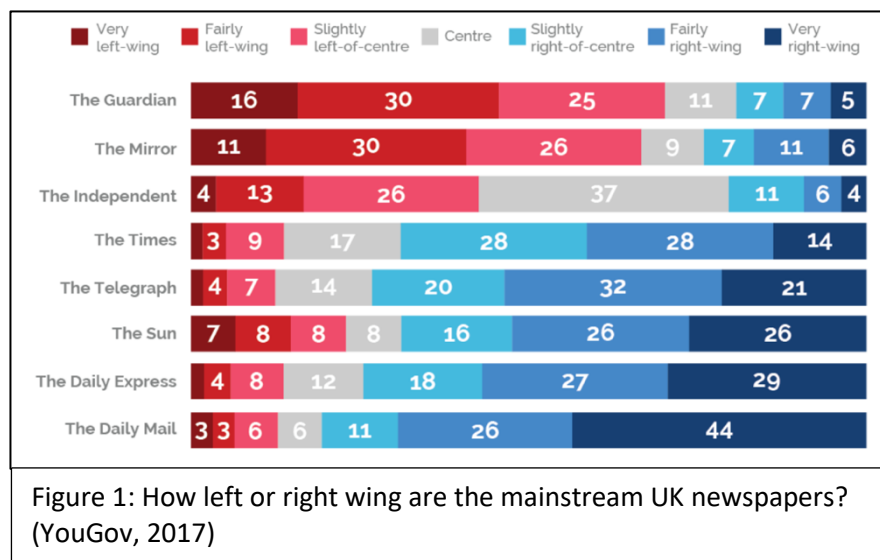
The four chosen newspapers have different levels of consumption by UK readers. The Daily Mail has the biggest reach of the four newspapers sampled, with the Independent having a comparatively low average issue readership (Figure 2). It is also worth noting that different newspapers have different demographics, and so articles relating to dark

tourism will have a different type of consumer depending on which newspaper has published them (Ofcom, 2017)
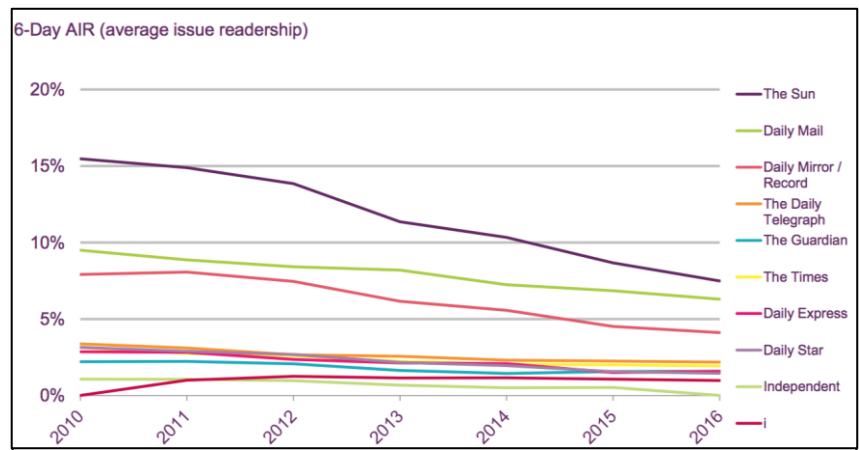


Figure 2: Reach by title, 2010-2016, UK-wide titles only (Ofcom, 2017).

Online readership is a significant part of overall consumption figures for newspapers, which is why this dissertation chose to focus on the British online press (Ofcom, 2017).

The newspaper articles sampled in this dissertation have a date range of 1999 to 2018. This date range was chosen due to availability of articles, and to examine portrayal of dark tourism in the British Press after the Czech Velvet Revolution in 1989, and the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1992 (Mahoney, 2011; Bookman, 1994).
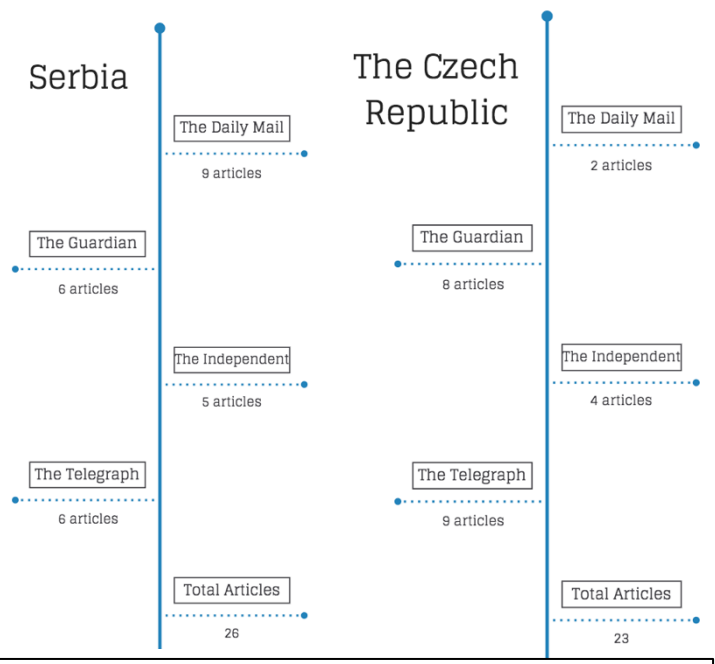


Figure 3: Articles sampled, divided by country and newspaper (Author's own)

Examining articles from before this time period, when both the Czech Republic and Serbia were under Communist rule, would likely have been difficult due to the lack of integration with the West, therefore a more recent period was chosen. The total number of articles gathered was 49, with 23 of these being about the Czech Republic, and 26 about Serbia (Figure 3).

*Analysing the Data*

To explore the data, this dissertation utilises qualitative document analysis to examine both the government documents and the online newspaper articles pertaining to tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic. This method helps determine key themes across a large number of documents, and is valuable for researching case studies (Bowen, 2009). Choosing to analyse the media alongside a document analysis is useful for extracting themes that may not be a focus in the government documents and helps to provide more rounded analysis by viewing the case studies through an additional lens (Bryman, 2012; Bowen, 2009).

Themes are a form of 'coding' for qualitative document analysis, and by examining multiple documents and articles you are able to code thousands of words into several primary themes (Bryman, 2012). The NVivo software was used to import data from multiple sources and organise and store the data in one place to make it easier to code (NVivo, 2018). Firstly, a word frequency analysis was undertaken to determine which words were being used more than expected, and which less than expected, based on the key themes highlighted in the literature review. This provided a base to outline the kinds of words and that were present in the data. The dissertation then undertook a more in-depth qualitative data analysis, examining and comparing all documents to search for key themes. The data analysis chapter is structured around the word frequency study, and the highlighted themes.

*Limitations*

Whilst the methods chosen were generally suitable for examining the research question, there were some limitations. Both Serbia's Tourism Development Strategy (2016), and the Czech Republic's Marketing Plan (2017) were produced on behalf of the government, and so will inevitably contain some element of bias towards the administration (Bryman, 2012). Knowledge of this bias can also leave the documents open to interpretation from the author (Bryman, 2012).

A lack of language skills restricted this dissertation to examining English language documents, and analysing articles in the British press. A comparative analysis of local

Serbian or Czech newspaper articles would have been valuable to the research but was not possible with the researcher's skillset.

There is also potential personal bias from the author about the newspapers selected due to being brought up in the UK where preconceptions of the nature of each paper may have been formed (Bryman, 2012). This was something which needed to be kept in mind throughout the data analysis stage. The newspapers chosen were selected on the basis of the accessibility of their online archives. It may have been that other newspapers had better quality articles relating to dark tourism which were not examined, due to the accessibility of their online archives.

However, the analysis and research methods chosen proved to be suitable for answering the research question: 'Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Study of Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies, and the Portrayal of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British Press'. The following chapters will provide some historical and political background for Serbia and the Czech Republic, before exploring the data in greater detail.

## Chapter Three: Country Profiles

*Introduction*

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the history of the Czech Republic and Serbia to provide some context for the data examined in Chapter Four, and to the familiarise the reader with the background of these countries.

*The Czech Republic*

The Czech Republic is located within Central and Eastern Europe, and is bordered by Germany, Poland, Austria, and Slovakia. The country has an area of 78,866 sqkm, with its capital city Prague located towards the centre of the Czech Republic (BBC News, 2018a; Figure 4).



Figure 4: Map of the Czech Republic, Adapted by Author (Google Maps, 2018)

The Czech Republic has had a turbulent history (Figure 5). Czechoslovakia was founded in 1918 (a combination of Slovakia and the Czech Republic), and this post-WWI period is often thought of the 'golden age' of Czech history; political parties were



Figure 5: Brief History of the Czech Republic, Adapted by Author (Mahoney, 2011)

democratically elected and Czechoslovakia performed better than other countries in the region, despite discontent from ethnic Slovaks (Cashman, 2008). However, when the Czechoslovak Communist Party took control in 1948, Czechoslovakia became a satellite state of the Soviet Union until the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 (Mahoney, 2011; Figure 5). Under the close control of the USSR, Czechoslovakia struggled with the economic stagnation common amongst the satellite states of CEE; this helped prompt the 'Prague Spring' in 1968, when attempts to liberalise the political system were squashed by the Soviet Union (Spieker, 1986; Cashman, 2008; Mahoney, 2011).

It was only in 1989 when a series of peaceful demonstrations dubbed 'the Velvet Revolution', sparked the transition of power from the Communist Party, and marked the end of Soviet rule in Czechoslovakia (Mahoney, 2011). The end of Communist Czechoslovakia led to the eventual break-up of the state, and the Czech Republic was officially established on the 1st of January 1993 (Brunclík and Kubát, 2016).

The emergence of the Czech Republic at the start of the 21st century opened the state up to a newly globalised world. This meant the state now faced the task of developing a new image on the global stage, integrating itself into international democratic institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union, and shaking off the legacy of Communism (Pick, 1994; Mahoney, 2011; Brunclík and Kubát, 2016).

As is currently stands, the Czech Republic has a well-developed tourism sector. Tourists visit from all over the world, and Prague is considered one of the best tourist destinations in Europe (CzechTourism, 2017; Behr, 2004; The Guardian, 2006). Tourism in the Czech Republic has maintained a consistent level, apart from a dip during the 2008 financial crisis; but the sector has since recovered and is popular for both domestic and foreign tourists (Jurigova, 2016).

*Serbia*

Serbia is located to the South of Central and Eastern Europe, and is bordered by Hungary, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the disputed territory of Kosovo (BBC News, 2018b). The capital Belgrade is situated in the northern half of the country and is the largest city in Serbia (BBC News, 2018b; Figure 6).

Serbia has had an even more traumatic past than the Czech Republic. Serbia was established as an autonomous principality in 1817, before being integrated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 (renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929) (BBC News, 2018b; Figure 7). The Socialist

Figure 6: Map of Serbia, Adapted by Author (Google Maps, 2018)

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was formed in 1945 under Josip Broz Tito (BBC News, 2018b; Figure 7).

Tito's regime was separate from the Soviet Union for the majority of its' existence, but he believed in similar Socialist principles, and applied techniques to oppress any dissent about the running of Yugoslavia, which caused tensions to steadily grow as time progressed (Bookman, 1994). When Tito died in 1980, ethnic tensions that had been
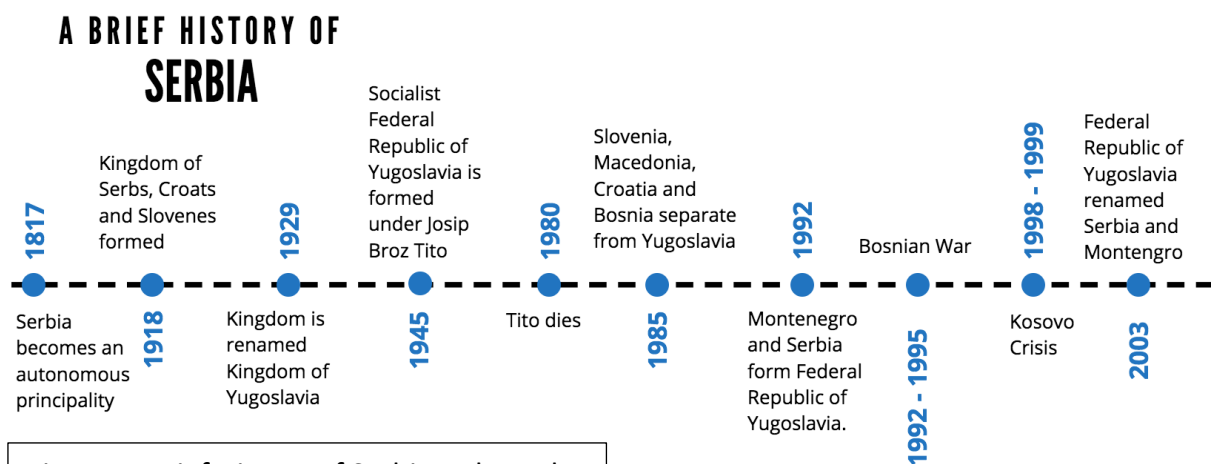
Figure 7: Brief History of Serbia, Adapted by Author (BBC News, 2018b)

present for decades began to take on a more prominent position, and dissatisfaction with the regime increased, leading to the separation of Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia and Bosnia in 1985 (Bookman, 1994; BBC News, 2018b; Figure 7). Serbia was eventually established as an independent state in 2006 after separating from Montenegro (BBC News, 2018b). By this point, Yugoslavia was no more, and its' components were now separate functioning states.

However, the 1990s saw a period of war, intense violence and international intervention in Serbia and areas of former Yugoslavia, with the breakup of states being far from peaceful (Bookman, 1994; David, 2015). The Bosnian War of 1992-1995 saw the culmination of ethnic tensions between Bosnians and Serbs; the Serbian leaders were motivated by ethnic cleansing of Bosnians from Serbia, and this goal was achieved 'at a very high human and material cost to all parties involved during the conflict' (David, 2015; Ferrero, 2017:53). Of particular note during the Bosnian War was the systematic use of rape and sexual violence by both sides, but especially the Serbs, which was given significant international attention (Skjelsbæk, 2006). The War had no real 'winner' and has left deep and significant scars on the region (David, 2015).

In modern day Serbia, there have been attempts to shift national and international attention away from the atrocities committed during the 1990s and to focus tourists' attention on Serbian victimhood, particularly during World War Two (David, 2015). Whilst the tourism sector is not yet as developed as other Central and Eastern European states, there has been significant growth over the last decade, with more scope to grow in the future (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016).

# Chapter Four: Data Analysis

## *Introduction*

This chapter will contain a comprehensive analysis of the Czech Republic and Serbia's tourism marketing plans or strategies, alongside analysis of news articles related to said countries from the online British press. The two key government documents under scrutiny are the Czech Republic's Marketing Plan 2018 (CzechTourism, 2017), and Serbia's Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2016 – 2025 (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). The documents will be hereafter referred to as 'Marketing Plan' and 'Tourism Development Strategy'. To supplement these documents, an analysis of news articles discussing tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic in the online British press will be undertaken, focusing on The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Daily Mail and The Independent.

The intention of chapter four is to compare and contrast the Government's goals, perceptions and visions for tourism in their respective countries, with how Serbia and the Czech Republic are being portrayed in the online British press. From the data sets, this dissertation will seek to discern the relationship between the case study countries and dark tourism. The chapter also seeks to discover similarities and differences between the two case study countries, to illustrate how difference historical, social and political backgrounds may have impacted tourism.

## Word Frequency Study

Before examining the key emergent themes from the data analysis, a word frequency study of key words across the government documents and online media articles was undertaken. The purpose of this was to highlight words which were more/less frequent than expected based on the research conducted in the literature review, and to provide an indication of what may or may not emerge as key themes in the data. This section is divided by country and ends with a table comparing word frequency of words that were deemed important from analysis of the literature.

*The Czech Republic*

Figure 8 shows words that appeared more frequently in the data than expected. The word 'Prague' was mentioned 272 times across 23 different documents/articles and the word 'city' is mentioned 118 times, suggesting that the focus remains on the Czech capital rather than branching out to other towns/rural areas.

The frequency of the word 'beer' was a surprise, being mentioned a total of 37 times (Figure 8). This indicates that much of Czech tourism is still focused on a culture of partying and suggests that this reputation may be something which is still prevalent in the media.

Prague 272
City 118
Tourism 41
Destinations 38
Beer 37
Homeless 35
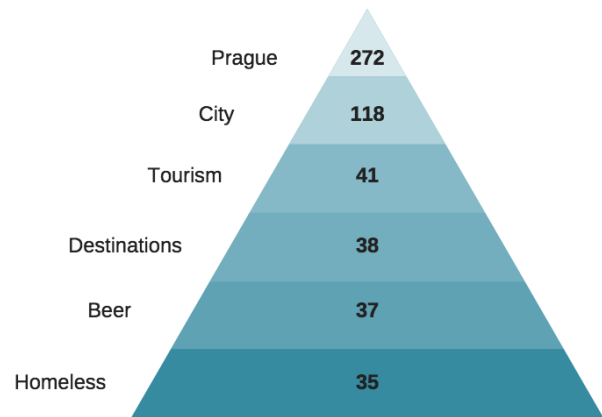
Figure 8: Czech Republic – More Frequent (Author's own)

The word 'homeless' was also surprising to see amongst words like 'destinations' and 'tourism' as some of the most frequently used phrases. Mentioned a total of 35 times (Figure 8), it suggests that homelessness may be an issue which the government is struggling with, if it is something which is being so consistently highlighted in the British Press.

1989 21
Experience 19
Czechoslovakia 18
Communism 17
Soviet 15
Branding 6
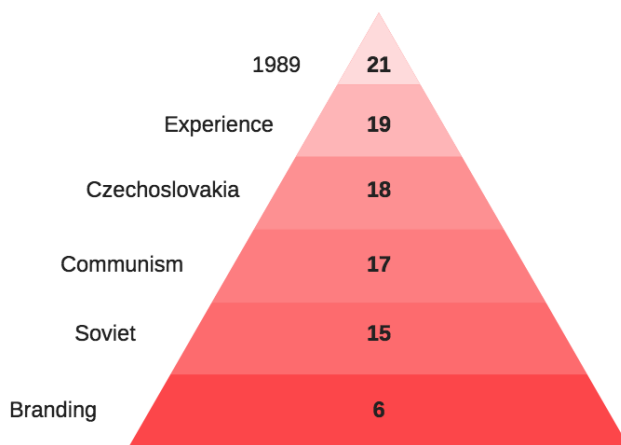
Figure 9: Czech Republic – Less Frequent (Author's own)

Figure 9 illustrates words which, from the literature, would have been expected to appear more frequently. The fact that '1989' only appears 21 times when it is arguably the most significant date in the Czech Republic's history is unexpected (Mahoney, 2011; Figure 9). This may be indicative of reluctance from the Czech Government to highlight a period of turmoil and uncertainty, instead choosing to focus their efforts on other – pre-socialist

– periods of history (CzechTourism, 2017). The same can be said for the low frequency of 'Czechoslovakia', 'Communism' and 'Soviet'. These words were only mentioned a collective 50 times across 23 separate documents and articles, which seems very low when you appreciate these words' importance in Czech history (Figure 9; Mahoney 2011).

The word 'branding' is only used 6 times (Figure 9). From the literature review, it would have been expected that the Czech Republic would have a more sophisticated branding strategy; as a more established tourist destination it was expected that they would better understand the importance of branding (Simpson, 1999). Again, the same could be said for the limited use of the word 'experience' (Figure 9). Authentic experiences were highlighted in the literature review as being a key motivator for modern tourists, so the fact that it is only mentioned 19 times is surprising (Podoshen et al, 2015; Podoshen, 2013; Figure 9).

*Serbia*

Figure 10 examines words in the articles and government documents relating to Serbia which were mentioned more frequently than expected. Similar to the Czech Republic, Serbia's capital city 'Belgrade' was mentioned extensively, a total of 215 times across 26 documents. Again, this would suggest that the focus of the Serbian government is currently on the capital.

| | |
|---|---|
| Belgrade | 215 |
| Activities | 200 |
| Market | 121 |
| Products | 120 |
| British | 93 |
| Government | 72 |

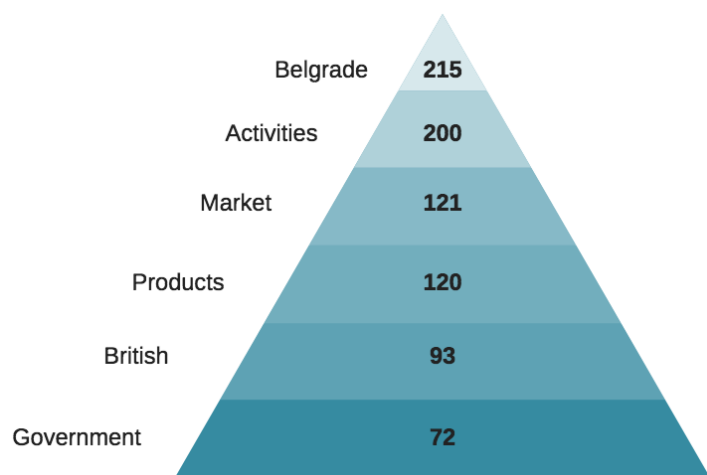Figure 10: Serbia – More Frequent (Author's own)

The frequency of the words 'activities', 'market' and 'products' are significant (Figure 10). The phrases are mentioned consistently across the documents examined and suggest more of a focus on treating tourism as a business venture. By considering destinations and activities as products, it indicates that Serbia may be making moves to

better consider how they brand and market themselves to tourists (Podoshen et al, 2015; Light, 2017).

Additionally, the frequency of the word 'government' suggests that tourism may be becoming priority for the Serbian government, or that the government is becoming more involved in the process as there is more understanding about how valuable tourism is in the modern ages (Light, 2017; Figure 10).

Figure 11 represents words in the text which did not appear as frequently as might have been expected from examining the literature. The infrequency of 'Yugoslavia' and '1990s' is important, given that Yugoslavia and the conflict of the 1990s were integral to the creation of modern Serbia (Bookman, 1994). The infrequency of references hints at reluctance to discuss this time

Figure 11: Serbia – Less Frequent (Author's own)
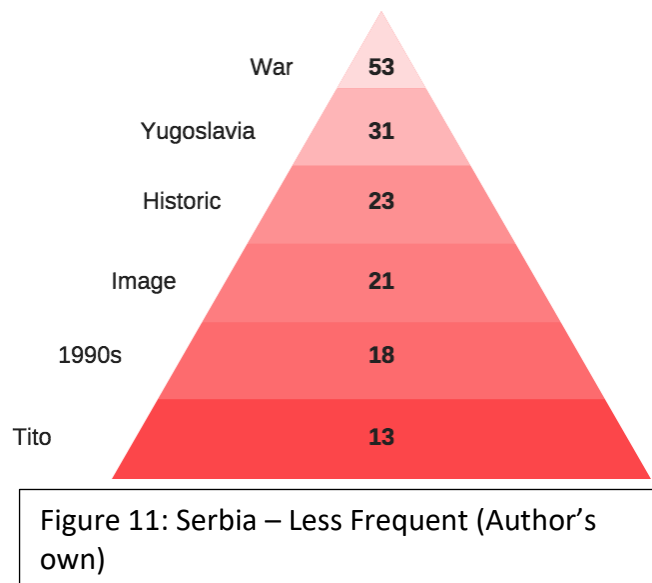
period, with neither the press nor the Tourism Development Strategy choosing it as a period which they believe will appeal to tourists. The fact that as significant a figure as 'Tito' is only mentioned a total of 13 times across 26 documents adds further weight to this argument and indicates a possibility of a 'collective amnesia' approach from both the Serbian government, and the British Press (Light, 2017; Figure 11).

Given that words like 'market' and 'products' were mentioned frequently and suggests an understanding of the business side of tourism, the fact that 'image' has been neglected is significant (Figure 10; Figure 11). This implies that Serbia might not yet be at a stage where the careful creation the country's image is at the forefront of their approach.

'Historic' also has an unexpectedly low appearance across the data set. Given that learning about history is deemed to be one of the most popular reason for travel, it is

surprising that there are only 23 instances of the word's use (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015; Figure 11). Again, this may indicate a desire to move the focus away from Serbia's darker history, and instead focus on other aspects of the tourism sector.

*Comparison*

Figure 12 shows a comparison of word frequency across the data set, comparing Serbia and the Czech Republic. For this table, the focus was on words which were deemed by the author to be important because of the key themes highlighted in the literature review.

As discussed previously, references to the capital city is more frequent than any other word, with Prague being mentioned slightly more – 272 versus 215 – than Serbia's Belgrade (Figure 12). This would indicate a preference for the capital city of both countries from the government and from the British press, suggesting that the city will be the area most familiar and appealing to British tourists.

The word 'image' is more frequent throughout the data sets relating to Serbia than the Czech Republic (Figure 12). However, 'brand' is more common for the Czech Republic than for Serbia (Figure 12). This suggests that it may be a case of different preferences for word choice in how the countries' respective governments are marketing themselves to tourists, rather than one having a more specific image or branding strategy than the other.

| | THE CZECH REPUBLIC | SERBIA |
|---|---|---|
| NAME OF CAPITAL CITY | 272 | 215 |
| IMAGE | 7 | 21 |
| CULTURE | 28 | 46 |
| WAR | 31 | 53 |
| EXPERIENCE | 19 | 21 |
| BRAND | 20 | 4 |

Figure 12: Word Frequency Comparison (Author's own)

References to 'experience' were similar between the two countries' data sets, with 19 mentions for the Czech Republic and 21 for Serbia (Figure 12). This indicates that both

countries likely have a similar level of understanding of the changing motivations of tourists, as experiences become an integral part of the tourism sector (Podoshen et al, 2015).

Both 'culture' and 'war' are mentioned more frequently across Serbia's data sets (Figure 12). It may be because Serbia is more of a newcomer to international tourism than the Czech Republic, and so these are two areas which are easier for both the government and the British press to focus on.

*Word Frequency – Conclusion*

The word frequency analysis has helped make some initial assumptions and theories about the information contained within the data sets, and highlights some of the themes which will be discussed throughout this chapter. However, it is important to note that the word frequency analysis must be supported by a more comprehensive qualitative analysis of the content of the data sets in order to make any substantial claims about their content.

**Government and Tourism**

Section one will examine how the governments and tourist boards of Serbia and the Czech Republic perceive the tourism sector in their countries, or their 'vision' for the future. The vision is the end goal which the government is seeking to produce and is based on a variety of factors unique to each case study. The analysis will explore how the governments of these countries currently view the state of tourism in their country and the vision they have for the future.

*Government Perceptions of Tourism*

Firstly, this section will discuss how the governments of Serbia and the Czech Republic view the current state of tourism in their countries. The Marketing Plan is the more

brief and succinct of the government documents, preferring to use graphs to illustrate the current numbers of tourist arrivals and income from tourism (CzechTourism, 2017).
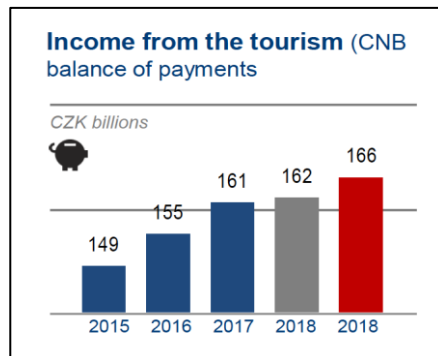


Figure 13: Income From Tourism (CzechTourism, 2017)
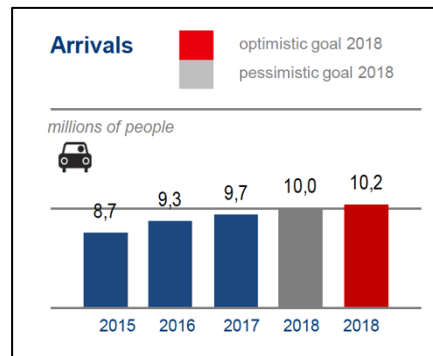


Figure 14: Arrivals to the Czech Republic (CzechTourism, 2017)

Figure 13 and Figure 14 show that the Czech government is currently seeing an upward trajectory for tourism, with both arrivals and incomes from tourism increasing incrementally year-on-year.

The Czech government also sought out data on the perceptions tourists have about the Czech Republic (CzechTourism, 2017; Figure 15). Of particular interest to this
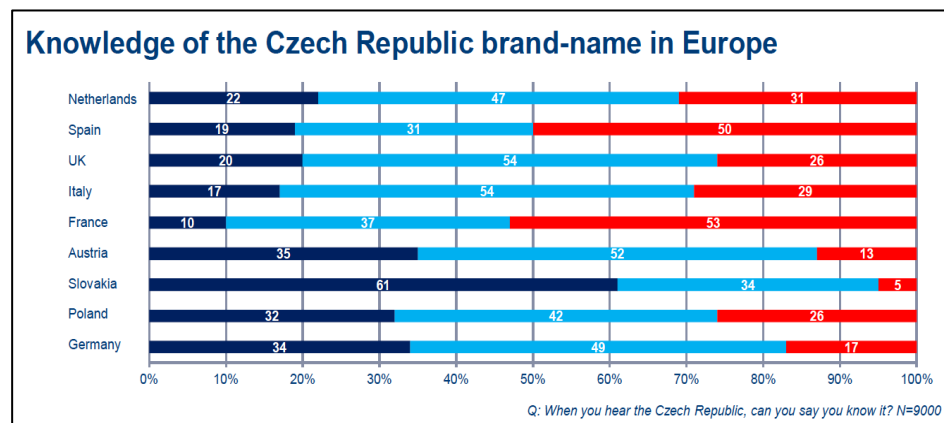


Figure 15: Knowledge of the Czech Republic brand-name in Europe (CzechTourism, 2017)

dissertation is current perceptions of British tourists, of whom the majority seem to have knowledge of the brand-name, but no real idea of what the Czech Republic has to

offer them as tourists. This is a theme across the European countries surveyed, making it an area of concern and much-needed growth for the Czech Government.

The Tourism Development Strategy of Serbia is a far more detailed document, with a chapter devoted to analysing the current state of and characteristics associated with Serbian tourism (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). The document recognises the Serbian government's poor track record of developing an appropriate tourism strategy and allocating sufficient funding; this has led to the tourism sector not being as developed as it should be and has limited the amount of revenue produced (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). This is reflected in the number of foreign visitors to Serbia (Figure 16). Figure 16 shows stagnation in the number of foreign tourists to Serbia from 2007 to 2010, with the numbers beginning to increase from that point.

| Figure 16: Tourist Arrivals (Thousands) | | | |
|------|-------|----------|---------|
| Year | Total | Domestic | Foreign |
| **2007** | 2,306 | 1,610 | 696 |
| **2008** | 2,266 | 1,619 | 646 |
| **2009** | 2,021 | 1,376 | 645 |
| **2010** | 2,000 | 1,318 | 683 |
| **2011** | 2,068 | 1,304 | 764 |
| **2012** | 2,079 | 1,270 | 810 |
| **2013** | 2,192 | 1,271 | 922 |
| **2014** | 2,192 | 1,160 | 1,029 |
| **2015** | 2,437 | 1,305 | 1,132 |

Figure 16: Tourist Arrivals (Thousands) (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016)

The Ministry of Tourism notes that in 2015 Serbia saw the number of domestic tourists increase by 12%, and they are looking to replicate this increase in foreign tourists (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). The Serbian government seems to be more critical of their approach to tourism and is looking to develop a more effective approach to dealing with the tourism sector so as to be more competitive with its neighbours (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). As it stands Serbia is failing to create tourism products which match the interests of modern tourists, and the plan extending into 2025 seeks to address this issue (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016).

*Governments' Vision for the Future*

The vision that governments have for the future of their country shapes the strategies they choose to implement, and so it is therefore important to outline what this vision might be. The common goal between Serbia and the Czech Republic is that both countries want to increase the number of foreign visitors (CzechTourism, 2017; Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). The Marketing Plan breaks foreign tourists down into countries, with the UK making up 7.4% of tourists in the region, the most tourists in the short-haul markets (CzechTourism, 2017). The goal is to further expand existing markets, and to further expand into markets with increasing potential including: Latin America, South-East Asia, Iran etc. (CzechTourism, 2017).

Serbia is looking to capitalise on increasing numbers of foreign tourists to boost GDP, and to reinvest that capital to help trigger further socio-economic development and increase jobs throughout the country (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). The Ministry of Tourism is looking for a similar level of commitment to developing the tourism sector that the government has applied to other areas; they argue that tourism has shown the highest level of resilience worldwide, and so would be a sound investment (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016).

**Branding and Marketing**

To achieve their vision, countries look to develop their unique selling points into a cohesive and attractive brand. Countries may choose to do this a number of different ways. Themes which have emerged from the data analysis include the selection of target markets, development of branding strategies, and the highlighting/omitting parts of history and tourism sites depending on the desired marketing strategy. These areas will be examined extensively in the following section.

*Target Markets*

The Czech Marketing Plan is explicit in its selection of target markets. It outlines the 18-34 and 35-64 age groups as being key targets, and groups them under the

subheadings 'Cool' and 'Pleasure Seekers', with the common theme between these groups being desire for a more 'experiential' or authentic trip (CzechTourism, 2017). One of the key barriers to travel highlighted is political instability, an image which the states of Central and Eastern Europe have had difficulty shifting (CzechTourism, 2017). The Serbian Tourism Development Strategy has a less explicit approach to target markets, only referencing a desire to increase the number of European tourists from early and medium age groups, omitting an older target market (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). Throughout the various newspaper articles, there is no specific reference to 'target markets'. There is discussion of the Czech Republic's desire to move away from the 'party tourism' of stag parties and hen nights, to a higher spending target market (Bridge, 2009), however there is no clear reference to changing target markets in Serbia. This suggests that Serbia is not creating an awareness of who their target groups are, which may be contributing to tourists not considering the country a viable destination.

*Branding Strategy*

The word 'brand' is mentioned a total of 24 times across four different sources from the sample, with 20 of these instances contained within the Czech Marketing Plan, suggesting that the Czech Republic is more driven to create a tourism branding strategy, but that the idea of the Czech 'brand' is not necessarily what is being picked up in the press (Figure, 12). CzechTourism is choosing to brand the Czech Republic as the 'Land of Stories', commemorating the 100-year anniversary the establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia, focusing on the inter-war period of 1918-1938 (CzechTourism, 2017). The choice of this time period is not insignificant. Choosing to focus on this perceived 'golden age' of Czech history, rather than the German occupation or the extended period of Communist rule suggests a desire to highlight a period which the governments perceives as being more 'culturally rich' (CzechTourism, 2017). The lack of engagement with the Czech Republic's darker past, indicates that the government may not wish to capitalise on elements of 'dark tourism'.

The only specific reference to branding in Serbia is an acknowledgement of an undeveloped national tourist identity/brand (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). Serbia instead prefers to focus on a number of different strategic business areas, and

linking each to possible tourist motives/experiences, and final products and destinations which could fulfil these motives (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). The Strategy makes indirect reference to the growing worldwide phenomena of dark tourism, stating that between 2014 and 2015 there was an increase of 19% in the number of visits to important cultural monuments, including war memorials, places of suffering and sites of iconic historical moments (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). Acknowledgement of this fact suggests an understanding of the importance and possible benefits of dark tourism. Due to its more recent emergence from a period of war, Serbia has a less developed tourism sector than other countries in CEE, so in order to further attract international tourists Serbia may find it beneficial to engage with the ever-growing dark tourism market. The Strategy is still reluctant to explicitly call attractions 'dark tourism sites', instead relying on phrases like 'cultural and historical heritage' and 'special interest' (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). Serbia does not appear to be at the stage where a carefully crafted brand is being developed, but it still looking to capitalise on its' unique selling points without creating a unified brand.

**Motivations of Tourists**

This next section will examine the motivations of tourists travelling to Serbia and the Czech Republic, and how well these connect with the motivations highlighted, and products and experiences provided by the countries' respective tourism boards. Key motivations which emerged from analysis of the online British Press included the cost of holidaying, increasing importance of achieving an authentic experience, as well as interests in history, cultural heritage and curiosity about relatively newly opened borders.

*Cost of holidaying*

The cost of holidaying in Serbia and the Czech Republic emerged as a key theme in the press, with articles across all four online newspapers choosing to emphasise the value for money for a British tourist travelling in these areas. An article from the Daily Mail discussing holidays in Belgrade emphasises price straight away by including '£1 a pint' in the headline (Smith, 2012). Value for money is even highlighted by Rasim Ljajic, Minister of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications; in an interview he said, "We

offer good partying, hospitality, fun and history – and all that at bargain prices"
(Vasovic, 2018). There is a sense in some articles that journalists are letting readers in
on a secret that Serbia is cheap holiday destination; the idea being to attract tourists
with the initial price and promises of how far their money will stretch, and then they
will appreciate other attractions available (Prentice, 2003; Telegraph Travel, 2017).
This illustrates that whilst the government of Serbia thinks the attractions available are
interesting to tourists, they recognise that some tourists may require some financial
incentives to visit a former war zone. The price may, however, further encourage dark
tourism enthusiasts to visit Serbia, and make them better able to explore other
motivations discussed in the subsequent sections.

The Czech Republic has a reputation for being an excellent destination for a cheap party
holiday, especially common in the press is discussion of stag parties in Prague (Behr et
al. 2004; Bridge, 2009; Chan, 2014; Scallon, 2017). The motivator here is again price,
in particular the high-quality, reasonably priced, Czech beer (The Guardian, 2006).
However, the Czech Government are more reluctant to highlight prices than their
Serbian counterparts, instead seeking to emphasise alternative attractions such as music
and architecture (Bridge, 2009). As time has progressed, stag parties as a key feature
of Czech tourism have become less prominent (Behr et al. 2004; Bridge, 2009; Chan,
2014; Scallon, 2017). CzechTourism now choose to emphasise cultural tourism, active
tourism, spa therapy and medical tourism as their key foci, as opposed to a more 'party
focused' approach (CzechTourism, 2017). They still understand that tourists want a
cost-effective visit, but no longer wish this to be the main reason for travel
(CzechTourism, 2017). This further indicates a desire to rebrand as a cultural and
experience 'hub', which is in line with the CzechTourism branding strategy
(CzechTourism, 2017). As the Czech Republic works to erode this image of a European
party capital to reveal more historical and cultural depth, they may find an increasing
use for dark tourism attractions as tourists seek more authentic experiences.

*Authentic Experiences*

The theme of the increasing importance of authenticity for tourists that emerged in the
literature review is also present in the British press, as well as being understood by
governments in both the Czech Republic and Serbia.

The Serbian Tourism Development Strategy contains a list of their expectations for modern trends in tourism, with 'living like a local' being one of the key motives for tourists (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). Tourists want to visit locations that other people have not heard of and to explore new areas as globalisation and European integration continue; areas such as Vojvodina in Serbia have the 'off the radar' experience that is increasingly fashionable (Whitelocks, 2016). Tourists are now looking for a more authentic experience and looking to discover 'hidden gems' that might not be advertised as one of the more traditional tourist attractions (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). This is where dark tourism may provide an excellent unique selling point, especially given Serbia's relatively recent emergence from a high-profile period of conflict. 'Off the beaten track' dark tourism sites highlighted throughout the various news articles included: 'Skull Tower' in Nis, where the skulls of Serbian revolutionaries were used by the Ottomans to discourage further uprisings, the site of the Kisiljevo vampire legends, and the fallout from the NATO bombings in 1999 on Kneza Milosa (Smith, 2012; Mourby, 2010; Reuters, 2018; Tanner, 2005).

Serbia is comfortable allowing a more authentic – and to a certain extent 'dark' – experience when it relates to Serbia's more distant past or where Serbia can be painted as a 'victim' in more modern atrocities but is less comfortable in acknowledging Serbia's crimes committed during the Yugoslav wars, which is reflected in the experiences of tourists (Mourby, 2010). Boulter discusses how a site of ethnic cleansing of Muslim Bosniaks perpetrated by Serbia during the Bosnian War was 'glossed over' by her Serbian tour guides, which suggested an effort to keep that part of history out of the minds of tourists (Boulter, 2012). The Serbian Tourism Development Strategy is comfortable discussing memorials and sites that relate to the World Wars at several points throughout the document but choose not to even mention the existence of the Yugoslav Wars throughout the 114-page document (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016). As the strategy extends to 2025, this indicates that this is not something that the Serbian government wishes to address for at least another seven years. By omitting Serbia's part in the Yugoslav Wars, the tourism board is cutting itself off from tourists and profits that may be available to them through capitalising on dark tourism. This may impede the authenticity of experiences available

and reduce the likelihood of certain tourists visiting Serbia due to this lack of authenticity and truth.

The Czech Marketing Plan seems less concerned with marketing authentic experiences, instead seeming to focus on historical and cultural appreciation, which will be addressed in the subsequent section (CzechTourism, 2017). However, authenticity and tourists' desire for authentic experiences emerges as a strong theme throughout articles across the four sample newspapers. The new phenomena of 'homeless tourism' in Prague is strongly linked to this theme of authenticity and is inextricably tied to dark tourism. The idea behind 'homeless tourism' is that homeless guides show visitors how they experience familiar tourist destinations; this creates work for people who might otherwise struggle to gain employment, and at the same time allows tourists to experience cities like Prague through an unfamiliar and 'authentic' lens (Allen, 2016; Gillies, 2017). This is not an initiative that was produced by the Czech government, but rather by the social enterprise group Pragulic, and the fact that the scheme has not been shut down suggests that the group's work is deemed acceptable or valuable (Allen, 2016). However, there has been some criticisms that this is 'poverty tourism', with tourists exploiting their homeless guides to gawp at how poor people live their lives (Allen, 2016). This is where the growing need for authenticity intersects with the morbid nature of dark tourism. The literature highlighted the social stigma that comes with being a dark tourist, however as dark tourism becomes a more mainstream part of tourists' experiences then the likelihood is that this stigma will lessen, and governments will choose to better engage with elements of dark tourism (Heřmanová and Abrhám, 2015).

*History and Cultural Heritage*

Interests in the history and cultural heritage of Central and Eastern European countries emerged as a key motivator for tourists in the literature review, the government documents and was consistently mentioned throughout the articles sampled from the British Press. Where governments and newspapers draw the line between a historical or cultural site, and a dark tourism site was less clear cut for Serbia and the Czech Republic.

History and Serbia's wealth of historical and cultural sites was highlighted as an area to focus on in the Tourism Development Strategy (2017). Serbia recognises the international attractiveness of having well-developed and accessible areas of cultural heritage, including museums, archaeological sites, archives etc (Tourism Development Strategy, 2017). One of Serbia's strategies looking forward to 2025 is to develop and implement a cultural tourism programme and strategy for Serbia, whilst also ensuring this is done in a way which is respectful and does not produce undue stress for heritage sites (Tourism Development Strategy, 2017). The lack of a proper plan for – and consistent investment in – historical sites has been a problem area for the Serbian government and is something which they are clearly seeking to improve.

From analysing articles in the British Press, interest in history is presented by journalists as being a key motivator for tourists. The Museum of Yugoslav History is a favourite for tourists looking to learn more about the period between the Second World War, and the death of Tito in 1980; the museum contains Tito's mausoleum, making it a strange mixture between a classic museum and something more morbid (Smith, 2012). Depending on the motivations of the individual visitor, this site could be classed as either a cultural heritage site or a dark tourism site. Here is where the lack of a universal definition for what constitutes 'dark tourism' makes categorisation of dark tourism sites in these countries difficult, if not impossible (Collins-Kreiner, 2016). Without further detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis of *why* tourists choose to visit this site – be it historical interest, for the purpose of a morbid experience, or even for pilgrimage to Tito's tomb – it is difficult to say whether or not interest in history is intertwined with dark tourism.

History is an integral of the Czech Republic's appeal to tourists and is a key part of the Czech Marketing Plan. The tourism board has chosen to focus on the history of Czechoslovakia in the period 1918-1938, largely because they understand that tourists are seeking to learn more about a country which was not very accessible during the 20th century (CzechTourism, 2017). Much like Serbia, the Czech Republic is looking to highlight the positives wherever possible, focusing on attractions which epitomise what makes the Czech Republic great, such as spa therapy, quality gastronomy and Czech industrial prowess (CzechTourism, 2017). By selecting a niche time period, the Czech Republic frees itself from addressing darker areas of its' history for another year, and

so do not need to directly address the dark tourism elements of history and culture in the CzechTourism Marketing Plan 2018.  Historical sites are some of the most famous attractions in the Czech Republic, one of the more well-known ones being the Sedlec Ossuary or 'Bone Church' in Kutna Hora East of Prague (Pickering, 2013).  The chapel is decorated with the remains of up to 70,000 plague victims and remains one of the most visited sites in the Czech Republic (Pemberton, 2015).  Part of the acceptability of using the Bone Church as a tourist attraction may be that the victims are not in the living memory of the locals, and therefore lack the political impact of other – more controversial – sites.

The Czech government's unwillingness to acknowledge elements of their history becomes apparent when examining articles in the British Press.  The famous site where Oskar Schindler rescued 1200 Jews from persecution from the Nazis towards the end of the Second World War is located 140 miles to the North-East of Prague, but the industrial building is in an extreme state of disrepair (Tait, 2016).  The story – famously the inspiration for Spielberg's '*Schindler's List'* – is well-known throughout Europe and is an inspirational tale of an individuals' importance in battling atrocity (Tait, 2016).  However, the Czech Government is resisting attempts to restore the building and turn it into a museum commemorating Schindler through the combined efforts of the Shoah and Oskar Schindler Memorial Endowment Memorial Foundation, and European Union funding (Tait, 2016).  Resistance stems from conflicted feelings from the Czech public and government surrounding Schindler's work as a spy for the Nazi foreign intelligence service and as a Nazi party member; this reputation is more engrained in Czech memory than his wartime heroism so well-known to the rest of the world (Tait, 2016).

The Czech government's lack of willingness to acknowledge and support the reimagining of this site as a tourist destination suggests that they are not yet ready to throw support behind any historical figure who might be perceived as being controversial and could impact their political standing.  Despite the fact that this is an internationally renowned story, the Czech government finds the feelings of the general public – as highlighted by Tait (2016) in their article – to be more important than development of a site which could be considered a morbid 'dark tourism' destination.

The Jewish Museum in Prague and the Old Jewish Cemetery act as positive sites for visitors, where people can learn more about the plight of Jews in the Czech Republic without celebrating controversial figures (The Telegraph, 2007).  This would suggest that whilst the Czech Republic does choose to capitalise on the darker aspects of its past, some sites are too close to the living memories of the general public and have too many political ramifications and would therefore be controversial to develop.

**Perceptions of the British Press**

The final section of data analysis will examine how the British press portrays Serbia and the Czech Republic as possible tourist destinations for British visitors.  It will also explore how important online newspapers' focus is on highlighting sites which could be considered 'dark'.

*How is Central and Eastern Europe portrayed in the British Press?*

Despite its concerted efforts to deliver a more modern, 'European' brand, Serbia is primarily presented in the British Press as still being a country putting itself back together after a recent period of war.  The Daily Mail in particular uses the idea of a 'war torn' country regularly.  It uses sentences such as 'it is easy to forget that this welcoming and very beautiful country only recently emerged from a ferocious armed conflict' and 'hard-earned political stability', to emphasis the idea that you are visiting a country which has only recently become accessible (Smith, 2012; Vasovic, 2018).

The Independent discusses the prominence of post-war tourism in former Yugoslavia, noting the influx of tourists travelling specifically to see ruined cities in the region and to experience countries devastated by war (Atiyah, 1999).  The Serbian tourist board has worked hard to try and rebrand, but their image in the British Press is still affected by the lack of funds injected into tourism after the war (Tourism Development Strategy, 2016).  Lack of investment meant that fallout from war remained visible for an extended period of time, and because it was generally not utilised as 'dark tourism' the British Press has characterised Serbia as having a 'brutal' landscape (Smith, 2012).

As a more established international tourism centre, the Czech Republic has cultivated a more 'European' image than Serbia. Prague in particular is hailed in the British Press as being one of Europe's 'must visit' and 'fairy-tale' cities, with its combination of beautiful architecture, dynamic history and excellent bars and restaurants (Behr, 2004; The Guardian, 2006). Prague is now categorised as a 'mainstream world destination', described in The Telegraph as 'medieval made easy' (Bridge, 2009). The mainstreaming of Prague as a tourist destination may have the unintended consequence of commercialising its 'dark tourism' sites – such as the Museum of Communism – to make it easier for the consumption of international tourists, which was a common concern highlighted in the literature (The Telegraph, 2007; Podoshen et al, 2015; Light, 2017). Articles also highlight 'hidden gems' outside of the capital (Rushby, 2018; O'Shea, 2018). The fact that the press does not exclusively highlight Prague, suggests a belief that there are other areas of the country that would be appreciated by British tourists. However, in regard to dark tourism sites, the focus is generally on experiencing post-Communist Prague, rather than the post-Communist Czech Republic as a whole, despite there being significant tourism sites such as the Schindler factory elsewhere (Tait, 2016). On the whole, the Czech Republic is portrayed as being a more accessible 'Brit friendly' tourist destination, with Serbia still struggling to shift the post-war reputation which held back many countries of Central and Eastern Europe from quickly expanding and developing their tourism sector.

### Do newspapers choose to highlight 'dark' sites?

The extent to which sites – that could be categorised as 'dark' – are mentioned in articles in the British Press is an important aspect of this dissertation. Whether or not newspapers choose to highlight dark tourism sites determines, for many people, how much knowledge and exposure they have to this kind of tourism. Where a 'dark tourist' might choose to seek out this information, it might not ordinarily be a motivating factor for travel for an ordinary consumer of one of these newspapers. But as dark tourism becomes more accepted and is increasingly becoming part of tourism rhetoric in the British Press, the lines may become blurred between traditional 'dark tourists' and those with a newfound interest in dark tourism.

Sites in Serbia and the Czech Republic are never specifically branded or referred to as 'dark tourism sites', suggesting that the social stigma attached to dark tourism still remains to the extent that marketing sites as such is not appealing to either the governments or the authors of articles (Light, 2017).  However, dark sites and dark tourism experiences are consistently highlighted throughout the four newspapers.  For example, the Czech Republic's Sedlac Ossuary, and Serbia's 'Bone Church' are mentioned several times across multiple articles (Pemberton, 2015; Pickering, 2013; O'Shea, 2017; The Independent, 2005).  The frequency of references to these experiences suggests that the British public are actively consuming articles about dark tourism in Eastern Europe.  Whether or not these articles are considered a motivating factor for British tourists travelling to Serbia and the Czech Republic is, however, a question which needs to be explored through further research.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, from thorough analysis of the Tourism Development Strategy (2016) and the CzechTourism Marketing Plan (2018), combined with investigation of articles in the British Press, I was able to extract a number of key themes.  The themes highlighted as most important are: government and tourism, branding and marketing, motivations of tourists, and perceptions of the British press, and within these are a number of sub-themes.  Before examining the key themes in detail, a word frequency study was undertaken to provide an overview of the kinds of themes which may emerge during the subsequent qualitative analysis.

The section on government and tourism explored the governments of Serbia and the Czech Republic's current perceptions of the status of tourism in their states, and their visions for the future.  The chapter then goes on to explore branding and marketing, specifically drawing out target markets and branding strategies as being important for the case study countries.  Subsequently, the motivations of tourists were discussed.  The key motivations highlighted in the data were found to be the cost of holidaying, authentic experiences, and historical and cultural appreciation.  Finally, the perceptions of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British press were examined.  The integral sub-

themes gathered from the data were how Central and Eastern Europe are portrayed in the British press, and the extent to which newspapers choose to highlight 'dark' sites.

The data analysis has helped to highlight where Serbia and the Czech Republic choose to capitalise on dark sites, but also where they look to avoid drawing attention to parts of their pasts that are less easily marketed to tourists. This chapter provides a comprehensive comparative study of government-produced tourism documents in Serbia and the Czech Republic, and related articles in the British press to help answer the research question: 'Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Study of Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies, and the Portrayal of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British Press'.

## Concluding Statements

The study of tourism is becoming increasingly important as our society embraces globalisation and international travel. Within tourism, the sub-genre of 'dark tourism' is yet to be fully explored. Previous literature has discussed various definitions of dark tourism, as well as the motivations of dark tourists. Dark tourism has been examined in the context of memory politics and nation building, where interpretation of dark sites has been used in the construction of narratives and collective memory by both governments and the press. Additionally, the branding and marketing of trauma for the consumption of tourists has been discussed, particularly the importance of branding in determining how people interpret and relate to dark tourism sites.

Whilst the literature provides a good overview of the subject, there are several areas this dissertation highlights as having scope for further research. Throughout the literature there was a lack of comparative case studies, where dark tourism sites are compared and contrasted. Additionally, whilst some studies focussed on states in Central and Eastern Europe, these were limited to a few countries and were particularly lacking in former Yugoslavia. There was also a gap in the literature for studies examining the role of the media in dark tourism, with a focus on the British press. This dissertation explores these gaps in the literature through the research question: 'Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Study of Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies, and the Portrayal of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British Press'.

Using the literature as a basis for further analysis, this dissertation undertook a qualitative, thematic document and media analysis, in conjunction with a word frequency analysis to extract key themes about dark tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic. Whilst the research methods were fit for purpose, some limitations to the research were noted. These included government bias in the tourism strategies, possible personal bias against newspapers, in addition to a lack of language skills limiting the research to English documents. However, the analysis was able to uncover information that was not apparent in the literature review.

Chapter three comprised of country profiles for the Czech Republic and Serbia. This provided some historical background to each country and put the data analysis into context whilst discussing some of the darker aspects of their histories.

The data analysis chapter involved careful analysis of Serbia's Tourism Development Strategy (2016), the Czech Republic's Marketing Plan (2018), and a sample of articles from The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Independent and The Daily Mail, beginning with a word frequency study. The key information extracted is the prevalence of each country's capital city, as well as the frequency of words like 'market', 'products' and 'destinations'. There was also an unexpectedly low frequency of words relating to each countries' traumatic past, suggesting a lack of desire from both governments and the British press to highlight trauma to tourists. The chapter then progressed to a more in-depth qualitative analysis, where several key themes and sub-themes were highlighted.

The first section examined the governments Serbia and the Czech Republic in their approach to developing the tourism sector. The Czech Republic has a far more developed tourism sector than Serbia, with increasing incomes from tourism and widespread knowledge of the Czech brand-name. However, British tourists have a limited knowledge of what they can expect from the Czech Republic, making it an area for development. Serbia has had little success in developing appropriate tourism strategies, and the number of foreign visitors has been stagnating. Both countries are looking to develop strategies that will encourage more foreign visitors.

The dissertation then goes on to discuss the branding and marketing of these countries and discusses the extent to which their branding strategies engage with dark tourism. Both states' tourism documents highlight target markets. Throughout the news articles there is no real reference to target markets, however there is mention of the Czech Republic looking to move away from 'party tourism', to higher spending demographics. The Czech Republic is choosing to focus on the 'golden age' of Czech history in the 1918-1938 period. This indicates a shift to focusing on more historical aspects of tourism, however the lack of engagement with the darker periods of Czech history is apparent. Whilst Serbia has an extensive tourism development strategy, their approach to branding is less concrete, and there is no clear branding strategy.

Serbia has seen significant increase in the number of tourists visiting 'dark' sites, and so engaging with dark tourism may be beneficial for any future branding strategies.

The motivations of tourists visiting Serbia and the Czech Republic were then explored. A common theme was tourists' desire for value for money, with Serbia still attracting tourists based primarily on its' cheapness. The Czech Republic acknowledges the importance of price, however there is drive for a more cultural brand. Authenticity was a theme carried from the literature review which appeared across the data. There is an understanding the importance of authenticity, and both the states and the newspapers are looking to promote sites this. For Serbia and the Czech Republic, many 'authentic' sites are sites which could be considered 'dark'. However, there is a limit to the governments' engagement with these sites. Serbia is uncomfortable with engaging in aspects of its past where crimes have been committed but are willing to promote sites where the Serbs can be considered victims. This impacts authenticity and suggests that Serbia is not yet willing to fully engage with dark tourism. In the Czech Republic, this dissertation highlights the rise of 'homeless tourism' in Prague. This type of tourism can be considered both authentic and dark; as this is becoming more accepted, it suggests acceptance of this aspect of dark tourism. History and cultural heritage was also discussed as a key motivator. The Serbian government has struggled to create a historical strategy, however are looking to develop this into 2025. Serbian historical sites were often cited as 'must visit' in the newspaper articles, but the line between historical sites and dark sites is blurred due to Serbia's traumatic history. The Czech approach is to highlight sites from positive periods of history, rather than examining darker areas. This is clear throughout the newspaper articles, where sites that could be considered controversial are not promoted, again suggesting a lack of willingness to engage with elements of dark tourism.

Finally, portrayals of Central and Eastern Europe in the British press are examined, as well as the extent to which newspapers highlight dark sites. Serbia is portrayed as still recovering from the 1990s; the country has tried to emphasise positive aspects of tourism, however negative perceptions in the British press may be impacting their ability to rebrand. The Czech Republic has a more 'European' image and Prague is now a well-established tourism destination, making its' portrayal in the British press

positive. From analysis of the data sets, articles never explicitly discuss sites as being 'dark' sites, suggesting that social stigma surrounding dark tourism still exists. Despite this, 'dark sites' are mentioned consistently throughout the articles. The frequency of promotion of articles about these sites suggests that it is something that Brits are consuming, whether or not they are aware of dark tourism.

This dissertation is a valuable contribution to the literature because it provides an in-depth comparison of Serbia and Czech Republic, who's relationship with dark tourism is yet to be analysed comprehensively. Moreover, analysis of the British press provides an additional lens through which to view these countries. The research provides detailed case study analysis and will be valuable to researchers looking to do similar studies in the future.

Whilst conducting the research, a number of areas emerged which have the potential for further research. Analysis to determine to what extent each of the motivations highlighted in this dissertation contributed to tourists' decision to visit Serbia and the Czech Republic would be valuable both for the literature and for the states' tourism boards. Research into how far articles in the British press motivate tourists to visit dark sites would also be interesting and would help to determine how important the media is for bringing dark tourism to a wider audience.

To conclude, both Serbia and the Czech Republic have difficult histories that they have integrated into their tourism sectors. Both countries have varying levels of willingness to engage with aspects of dark tourism and have a tendency to ignore less favourable parts of history. Articles in the British press help to highlight dark tourism in these countries, but the social stigma surrounding the subject is still present, and so darker aspects of history are not as publicised as they might otherwise be. In sum, this dissertation was able to provide a detailed analysis of the research question: Dark Tourism in Serbia and the Czech Republic: A Comparative Study of Government-Produced Marketing and Tourism Strategies, and the Portrayal of Serbia and the Czech Republic in the British Press.

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