



Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi

The Journal of International Social Research

Cilt: 8 Sayı: 40 Volume: 8 Issue: 40

Ekim 2015 October 2015

www.sosyalarastirmalar.com Issn: 1307-9581

PRISON TOURISM AS A FORM OF DARK TOURISM

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*"Great and terrible is the castle. 300 iron gate, like a giant guards, handles bars depend on, and each of the mustache, the 10 men hanging many notorious inmates are. Signs in the guards dragons such as walking. God forbid, then sentenced to flight, but the bird even flew They do not."
Evlıya Çelebi on Sinop Fortress Prison, Seyahatname*

Abstract

It can be said that dark tourism is a phenomenon that has emerged in recent years. Changes in tourist motivations, the effects of media culture, the rapid spread of information by globalization has made dark tourism areas more interesting for people. Former places of war, punishment, prison etc. have become a popular tourist experience. This mentality has exposed a new kind of tourist named "dark tourist". Therefore, most of these areas are converted into museums or dark tourism sites. By visiting these places tourists can establish ties with past and make a connection with the sufferer who live in past. Prisons, as one of the subgroup of dark tourism, are the places that host violence and suffering. Former prisons which were turned into museums draw attention of tourists. In this study, firstly it has been tried to describe the general framework of dark tourism and prison tourism, then, Sinop Fortress Prison that also draws attention with historical features, is tried to emphasize.

Keywords: Dark Tourism, Prison Tourism, Sinop Fortress Prison.

Introduction

As niche tourism, dark tourism has drawn great attention in recent years. Although it is not a new phenomenon, it can be said its name has been heard lately. In recent years there have been academic studies about marketing of sites of tragedy. Thus, the interest of dark tourism continues to increase rapidly in the world.

Over the past decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. More people have been involved in tourism each year. This shows that more and more people are open to new experiences.

The tourism industry has been quick to label different type of experiences, reflecting the fact that there are different types of tourists, and hence different types of tourism, perhaps because there is a marketing justification for doing so (Timothy and Boyd, 2003: 2).

Dark tourism is a new kind of experience which is travelling to the sites associated with death, suffering and tragedy. With this experience, people make a connection with past and empathize with people who suffered in the past. By doing so, they satisfy their cultural needs.

The attraction of death and disaster has always been and will continue to be a powerful motivation factor for dark tourists. Nowadays, wars, battlefields, cemeteries, concentration camps, prisons, dungeons, assassination sites, ghost stories, and other man-made disasters, are being packaged and is presented to the people as a tourism attraction. As a subgroup of dark tourism, Prison tourism itself is an important heritage field. Prisons are places which host lots of different people as well as different stories. Escape attempts, deaths, violence, suffering are all part of these stories. Therefore prisons have always been an interesting experience for people.

Turkey has a great historic culture about prisons. Both the structure of prisons and jail inmates have formed prison culture in Turkey. One of the most famous prisons of Turkey is Sinop Fortress Prison. In this study, the conceptual framework of dark tourism, motivations, supply and demand in dark tourism is tried to evaluate. Furthermore, prison tourism in the context of dark tourism is explained and given some information about Sinop Fortress Prison as an example.

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1. Dark Tourism: Conceptual Framework

Travel and tourism professionals have tried to create products that appeal to specific audiences. One such “niche” is called dark tourism (Tarlow, 2005: 57). According to Sam Merrill and Schmidt (2009: 4-5) the memorialisation and remembrance of death, pain and suffering is not a new phenomenon. Dark tourism is an increasingly popular research topic although, from a definitive viewpoint, it is still in infancy (Smith and Croy, 2005: 212).

Whilst often appearing to grow out of the morbid curiosity of death and disasters of the 19th and 20th century, dark tourism has its origins much further back than this (Robinson and Dale, 2008: 2). Indeed, early examples of death-related tourism may be found in the patronage of Roman gladiatorial games, or attendance at medieval public executions, or perhaps in the guided morgue tours of the Victorian period. Thus travel to sites of death and suffering may simply be an old concept in a new world (Stone, 2005: 112).

Most dark tourism researchers and academics acknowledge that people traveled to places associated with death well before the advent of modern touring (Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010: 188-189).

Since dark tourism is seen as a specific subgroup of cultural heritage tourism, the task of defining it and building a conceptual framework for further studies is rendered more difficult by the ongoing and still unresolved debates in defining cultural heritage tourism itself, which in its turn mirrors the debates over defining the more general concepts of culture and heritage (Kazalarska, 1998: 16).

The term “dark tourism” was first used in the mid 1990’s. There is another term used to describe the same concept, “thanatourism” (thanatos means death in Greek language), but also other labels are used in modern literature, such as, “disaster tourism”, “grief tourism”, “morbid tourism” and “black spot tourism” (Niemelä, 2010: 10).

Kazalarska’s (1998: 3) point of view, dark tourism is a form of cultural heritage tourism that involves visiting sites associated with death, disaster, human tragedy and atrocity of various kinds, as the main purpose of the trip.

In addition to definition given above, dark tourism means the journey/trips to the parts of the world connected with death, catastrophes, misery. “Dark tourism” can be understood as interplay between the circumstances of both, the past era and the modern world (Molokáčová and Molokáč, 2011: 2). Demystifying dark tourism, the emotive experience of one’s dissonant heritage may be at once spiritually and ideologically meaningful while remaining embedded within ordinary lived experience (Kidron, 2013: 191).

In addition, the concept of dark tourism is at once rendered more complex by a number of variables, including (Sharpley, 2009: 13-14):

- The immediacy and spontaneity of “sensation” tourism to dark sites of contemporary death and disaster compared with premeditated visits to organised sites or events related to near and/or distant historical occurrences;
- The distinction between purposefully constructed attractions or experiences that interpret or recreate events or acts associated with death, and “accidental” sites (that is, sites such as churches, graveyards or memorials that have become tourist attractions ‘by accident’);
- To extent to which an “interest” in death – to witness the death of others, to dice with death in dangerous places, to learn about the death of famous people and so on- is the dominant reason for visiting dark attractions; and why and how dark sites/experiences are produced or supplied-for example, for political purposes, for education, for entertainment or for economic gain.

It thus appears that while “dark tourism” initially is focused upon sites of horror and destruction, its extension toward the bizarre, the morbid and the strange begins to either dilute the original concept, or to change the nature of the original concern of death to one of a form of tourism whose importance is that it queries the nature of contemporary society. However, it can be observed that many forms of tourism possess this feature without having to incorporate death, destruction or morbidity (Ryan, 2005: 188).

In addition to those mentioned above, dark tourism sites present governments and other authorities with moral and ethical dilemmas, where recent tragic history often confronts the dynamic of commercial development and exploitation. These dilemmas include depicting and managing the often-contentious past. Commemoration of events and practices can also be manipulated for political reasons. There is also a need to consider the families and communities who have been affected by the tragic events that form part of tour routes (Tifflin, 2004: 3).

2. Motivations in Dark Tourism

Different observers may evaluate the tourism attraction differently. Some believe that ethnic identity commercializes history and culture-packaging the cultural soul of the people for sale along with their other resources—and thereby forces cultural change on people already facing problems from urbanization and industrialization (Walker and Walker, 2011: 337).

Travel destinations linked to dark tourism in its various forms and shades becomes more diverse and interesting in recent years (Molokáčová and Molokáč, 2011: 3-4). A wide variety of dark tourism consumption practices may seem to be defined by or related to the social world of the tourist; that is, dark tourism experiences may be consumed in order to give some phenomenological meaning to tourists' own social existence. Included in this category are visits to: war cemeteries/memorials; battlefields; other war-related museums or attractions (Sharpley, 2009: 17).

According to Baldwin and Sharpley (2009: 204) memorials provide a reason for people to visit battlefields; they provide a focus for public and private remembrance. This is particularly true of the memorials to the missing. They also provide evidence on the ground of the battle- without memorials, visitors can be disappointed.

The individual's visitor's motives for travelling to these sites range considerably. Some tourists go to the sites to reflect, some are survivors or descendants of survivors/victims while others are researchers (Jangula, 2006: 18-19). Some wish to mourn for ancestors lost in what they would consider to be a sacred site, some pay for a guide to learn about what they perceive to be a telling moment in history, and some remain unmoved due to boredom, antipathy, apathy, or preoccupation with someone or something else. Some visit memorials weekly, annually, once in a lifetime, or never at all (Bowman and Pezzullo, 2010: 190).

This attempt in many cases sees the "darksumer" (a term developed to describe users/consumers of dark tourism products) attempting to objectify, better understand and recreate the circumstances in which the tragic events happened. This form of dark voyeurism is itself often sadly lacking in those commercialised "darktainment" like products and might go some way in explaining why, the search for authenticity is ever consuming, with the "darksumer" continually striving to better each dark experience (Robinson and Dale, 2008: 3).

People are fascinated with death partly because of its absent-present paradox. Dark tourism is a channel to observe the themes associated with death and suffering safely from a distance. Emotional and educational motives are strong, as well as seeking one's own heritage, indulging curiosity and searching for nostalgia (Niemelä, 2010: 40).

According to Bittner (2011: 154), the visit to a dark /thanatological tourist attraction was motivated by cultural need. Several respondents have mentioned the fact how historic events like wars, mass executions and so on, severely influence the very culture of a nation, which means that the visits, thematically connected to such an event, were very much motivated by cultural needs.

Furthermore, while most people would not want to live the experience, many do want, in the simulate of the experience, the model in which they live at home. That is to say, tourists seek the different in the protection of the familiar, they seek the danger of history in the protection of the known (Tarlow, 2005: 52). In addition to this, the visit to a thanatological tourist attraction can most definitely be considered an extraordinary touristic experience. Disregarding the motivation and previous knowledge on the subject that initiated the existence of such a tourist attraction, it can be considered that the visitors will better understand the events thematically connected to that attraction (Bittner, 2011: 155).

In a dark tourism context however, internal obligations including personal duty and/or a sense of obligation appear one of the main reasons for traveling to dark tourism sites, with a further effect on both on-site experiences as well as benefits gained. To date the notion of internal obligation has not been fully examined when it comes to dark tourism experiences, and is thus a key recommendation for future research (Kang et al., 2012: 262). A lack of an authentic experience in these particular touristic experiences opens up a wide realm of interpretative fallacy (Podoshen, 2013: 265). There is a blending of past and future, creator and observer, when perpetrators become producers of the "attraction" - the niche product, and those who remember the victims become the consumers (Tarlow, 2005: 52).

As a result, the understanding of tourist behavior at a post-disaster destination is likely to be incomplete (Biran et al., 2014: 3). Nonetheless, within dark tourism, death becomes real (again) for the individual. Consequently, the real is represented so that the represented might become real. In other words, real actual death is (represented and commodified within dark tourism sites in order for it to become existentially valid and therefore inevitable for the individual who wishes to gaze upon this "Other" death (Stone and Sharpley, 2008: 588). In short, tourists are motivated to see places like Belfast, Beirut and Cambodia because these are the only places left where it is possible to experience an unmediated and authentic encounter with "the real" (Lisle, 2007: 335).

Ryan, (2005: 188) asserted that "dark tourism" can seemingly encompass a wide range of any questioning of modernity. These examinations would appear to range from the serious to the apparent meaningless. They include:

- a questioning as to whether human society has advanced given its continuing ability to inflict harm on its own members and to exhibit cruel behaviours;

- whether current behaviors are sustainable or indeed threaten the very bio-system upon which we depend;
- to, at another extreme, exhibitions of credulity that perhaps Elvis Presley is alive, that Jim Morrison’s ghost has been seen or that the American government did dissect aliens at Roswell.

3. Supply and Demand in Dark Tourism

Modern society increasingly consumes, willingly or unwillingly, both real and commodified death and suffering through audio-visual representations, popular culture and the media (Stone and Sharpley, 2008: 580). If physically going to witness an execution may be labelled dark tourism, may not turning on a computer or mobile phone to witness the same execution be similarly labeled (Walter, 2009: 44).

The important point is, however, that earlier attempts to define or classify dark tourism lacked theoretical foundations and are hence largely descriptive. That is, although pointing to the scale of the phenomenon of dark tourism, little is revealed about nature of demand for and supply of dark tourism experiences (Sharpley, 2009: 11).

Table 1: Definitional Elements of Dark Tourism

Dark Tourism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply <p>A site of death or destruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand <p>Identify and personalize the site of death or destruction</p>

Source: Smith and Croy, 2005: 201.

Dark tourism comprises both supply and demand elements. The supply element is that the site is that of death or destruction. The demand element is that the site is identified as a site of death or destruction, and within this that the site is personalized, as is shown in Figure 2 (Smith and Croy, 2005: 201).

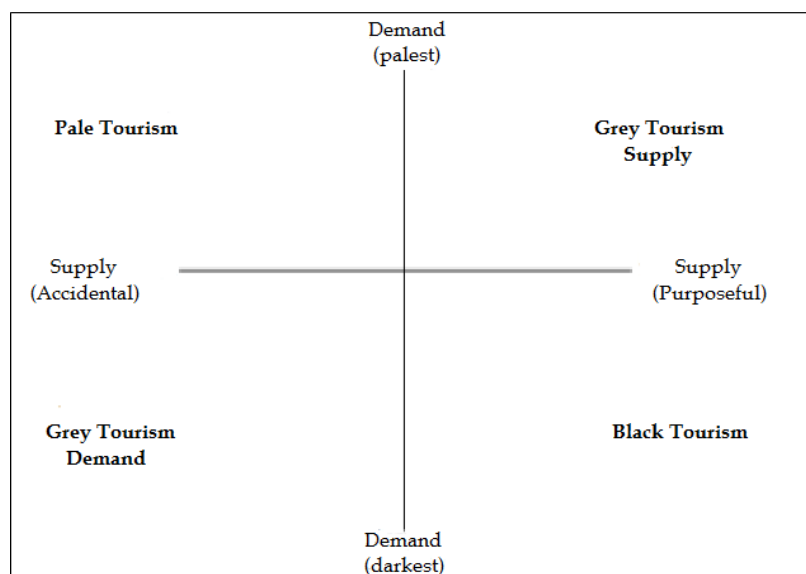


Figure 1: Matrix of Dark Tourism Demand and Supply

Source: Sharpley, 2009: 19.

According to Sharpley’s matrix, “dark tourism attractions or experiences are measured by the extent to which both a fascination with death is a dominant consumption factor and the supply is purposefully directed towards satisfying this fascination. As a result, it is possible to identify four “shades” of dark tourism” (Sharpley, 2009: 20):

- Pale tourism: tourists with a minimal or limited interest in death visiting sites unintended to be tourist attractions.
- Grey tourism demand: tourists with a fascination with death visiting unintended dark tourism sites.
- Grey tourism supply: sites intentionally established to exploit death but attracting visitors with some, but not a dominant, interest in death.
- Black tourism: in effect, ‘pure’ dark tourism, where a fascination with death is satisfied by the purposeful supply of experiences intended to satisfy this fascination.

Stone (2006: 152), has a different point of view about supply by ranging products from “darkest” through to “lightest”. Considering the idea that some sites may now offer a darker product, depending upon product traits and perceptions, it is possible to begin to formulate a conceptual framework in which to locate various types of “dark suppliers”. The idea of a “spectrum”, as outlined in Figure 3, takes into account possible shades of darkness, that is, a perceived level of “macabreness” within an overall dark tourism product. On the other hand, according to Miles (2002: 1175), there is a difference between sites associated with death, disaster, and depravity and sites of death, disaster, and depravity. If visitation to the former is rightfully characterized as “dark tourism,” then journey/excursion/pilgrimage to the latter constitutes a further degree of empathetic travel: “darker tourism”.

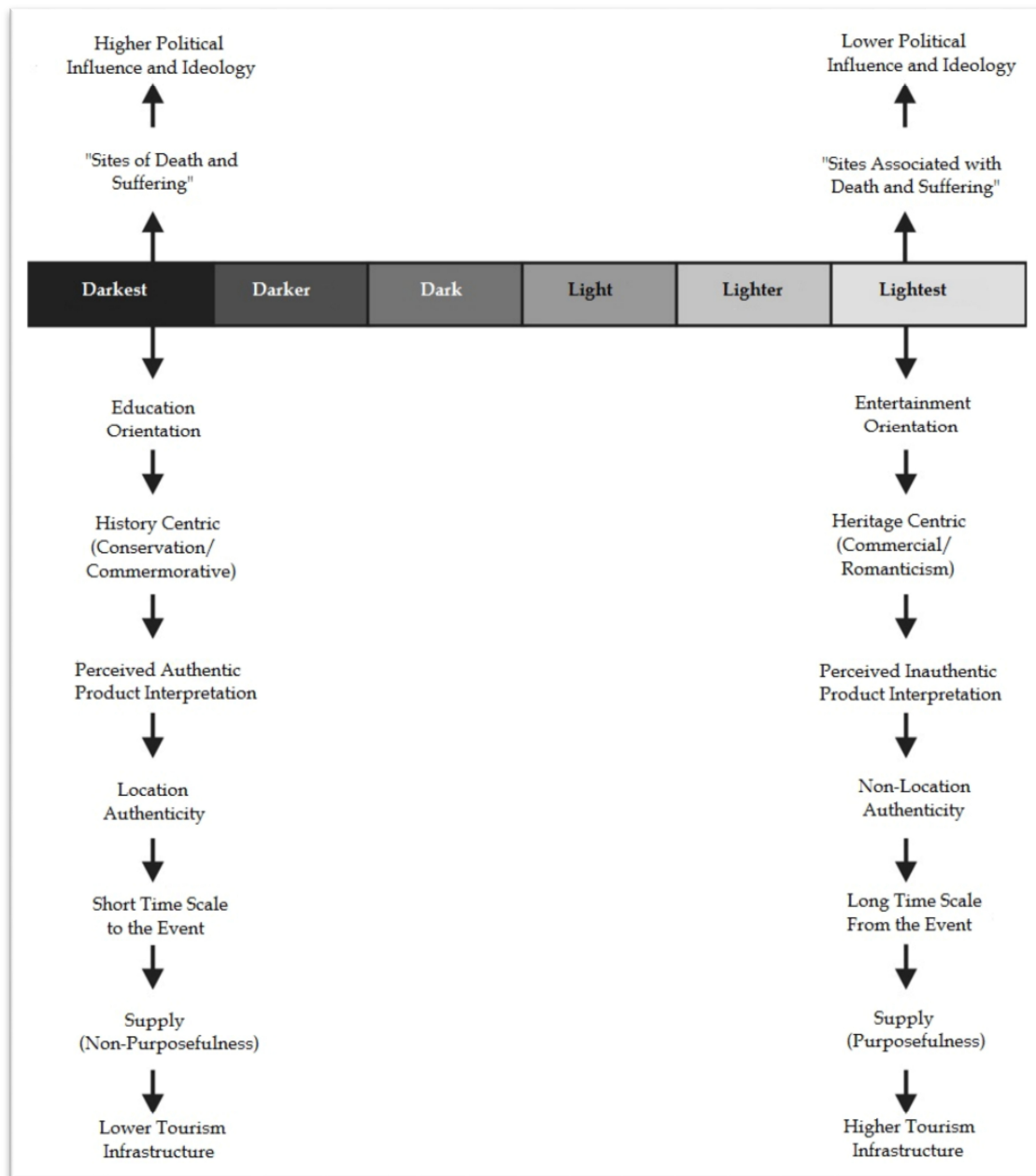


Figure 2: A Dark Tourism Spectrum
Source: Stone, 2006: 151.

Importantly therefore, prior to the more fundamental task of extracting and interrogating consumer demand, the need to appreciate dark tourism supply more fully is evident. As a diverse and fragmented set of dark tourism suppliers exists, so equally diverse are the motives of tourists who visit and consume these products (Stone, 2006: 147).

As an important supply element, war is presently among the most popular historical tourism resources. Stories about war heroes, battlefields, fortresses, weapons, and many other aspects, fact and fiction, can all be turned into tourism attractions (Kostiainen, 2000: 1074). For example, ANZAC period is the

highest point of demand for the hospitality sector in Çanakkale. Forecast results will give the maximum necessity and also the limits of investments in the area. March and April are considered in the period of low demand for Turkey. Increases will influence the length of high/mid season (Uca Ozer et al., 2012: 388). Even the reflexive attempt to recreate a simplified national image produces its own complications and contradictions: the Australian military archetype, the Anzac, has been so apotheosized for many people the focus of national identity is, paradoxically, an offshore Dark tourism site on a foreign coast: Gallipoli (Slade, 2003: 782; Wilson, 2008: 173).

4. Prison Tourism

Visiting a decommissioned prison or jail turned museum is now a common form of tourism and leisure. Penal museums are popular tourist stops the world over, from The Clink in London (England), to the NS Dokumentationiszentrum in Köln (Germany), the Celica hostel in Ljubljana (Slovenia), Alcatraz in San Francisco (United States), Robben Island near Cape Town (South Africa), Freemantle Prison (Australia) and many more (Walby and Piché, 2011: 452). There are more than 100 prison museums worldwide; and in the tourist-rich cities of San Francisco, London and Dublin, historic prisons are the single largest attractions (Web 1).

While “darkest/darker” tourism appears to have received an increasing amount of academic attention, the lighter forms of dark tourism – that is, those commercial visitor sites and attractions which recreate and commodify death, suffering and the macabre, and which are entertainment -centric-have received limited attention within the tourism literature (Stone, 2009: 168).

Prisons have always been interesting for people. For example, Australians always identify “prisons” and anything to do with prisoners and prison life as an aspect of heritage that they consider to be top priority when deciding how to spend their heritage-related leisure time (Shashi, 2006: 16).

According to Wilson (2008: 10-11), exactly why former prisons are so fascinating to so many people is itself a subject meriting much discussion. The reasons are diverse and complex. They have to do centrally with our innate need to formulate the stories about ourselves that locate us in the world that locate us in the world.

Prisons refer to those sites and attractions which present bygone penal and justice codes to the present day consumer, and revolve around (former) prisons and courthouses. These product types essentially have a combination of entertainment and education as a main merchandise focus, possess a relatively high degree of commercialism and tourism infrastructure, and occupy sites which were originally nonpurposeful for dark tourism (Stone, 2006: 154).

Almost all prison museums market themselves as tourist attractions and, predictably, have created attractive brochures and websites. These museums vary in terms of the visitor's experience. Some allow a great degree of engagement with the exhibits, while others are very passive, leaving the visitor to simply stroll through the site with its minimal signs and markers. The prison museums also differ regarding the extent to which they focus on education versus entertainment (Ross, 2012: 113).

One of the most famous prison museums is Alcatraz. Alcatraz was incorporated into the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1972 and is now operated by the National Park Service. Since then it has been opened for tourists, whose number increased to over 1 million per year. A museum and shops were opened on the island and there are self-guided as well as guided tours comprising its overall history, including natural history (Prodan, 2009: 13). At Alcatraz, rangers' efforts to educate tourists into informed “visitors” and to represent the island's non-penal history are constantly undermined by Hollywood tutored tourists, whose expectations are primed by commercialized images of “the Rock” (Strange and Kempa, 2003: 388-389).

A theme very commonly featured at former prisons, and one which holds great interest for both visitors and tour guides, is that of escapes and escape attempts. As historical episodes in the life of the prison, escapes embody inherent elements of drama and novelty (Wilson, 2008: 132). In Alcatraz between 1934-1963, 36 men were involved in 14 escape attempts. Of these, 23 were caught, 6 were shot and killed during their escape and two drowned. Officially no one ever succeeded in escaping from Alcatraz (United States Penitentiary, 2008: 40).

5. Sinop Fortress Prison

Turkey has significant tourism attractiveness in terms of prison history. The most known prisons are Sultan Ahmet, Ulucanlar and Sinop Prisons (Aliağaoğlu, 2004: 57).

Throughout history, Sinop has always been a city whose face is turned to the sea more than Anatolia. Due to its geographical isolation, it has been difficult to reach the city from land. Therefore, Sinop has been an exile and prison city (Tırıl, 2011: 591). All of these features make Sinop so attractive for visitors that, every year more and more tourists visit the city. The most important touristic attraction of the city center is Sinop Fortress Prison (Ipar and Tırıl, 2014: 49).

Sinop Fortress Prison is a building which was built inside the Sinop Castle, old shipyard area. Historic Sinop Prison is surrounded by high ramparts (Ünal, 2014: 92). The location of the Sinop Prison, was the largest shipyard of the Ottomans in Black Sea. The prison had been constructed within the citadels in the old shipyard area and used for this purpose since 1887. The prison, which was surrounded by high citadels, made it impossible for the prisoners to escape (Behramoğlu, 2007: 20).

Described by the famous 17th century Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi as a “large and frightening fortress,” the complex is nominee to become one of Turkey’s most modern museums (Aliğaoğlu, 2004: 57; Web 2). The prison was permanently evacuated by the Ministry of Justice in 1997 and it was allocated to Ministry of Culture and Tourism to be used for cultural activities and to serve visitors (T.R. Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2011: 4; Web 3).



Picture 1: General View of Sinop Fortress Prison
Source: Author

Another factor that attracts the attention of tourists is that, Sinop is well known as a place where many famous Turkish writers served sentences. Historic prison's guest list has always been interesting. Among the guests, starting from 1713, the Crimean Khan Devlet Giray, Refik Halit Karatay, Mustafa Suphi, Burhan Felek and Zekeriya Sertel can be counted. Sabahattin Ali was also hosted in 1932 (Aliğaoğlu, 2004: 58).

In this prison, which became famous with the impossibility of escape in the historical process, the prisoners take part in production by being taught crafts such as carpentry, jewelry, carving. These hand-made ornaments in prison have made an important contribution to the promotion of Sinop (Yılmaz, 2009: 9).

Conclusion

Compared to many types of tourism studies, dark tourism examination is still in its early stages. But as a new type of tourism, Dark tourism creates a great potential to the countries especially which have a long history. Tourism professionals, who are aware of this potential, have tried to create products to appeal to specific mass. So that is called a niche market which is dark tourism.

Turkey has great wealth about dark tourism sites. For years, people are visiting these sites with different reasons. Çanakkale is one of the most known dark tourism sites in Turkey. Çanakkale Martyrs' Memorial, Battlefields, the ANZAC Cove attracts national and international tourists every year. Alongside battlefields, prisons are also important in history of Turkey. Sağmalcılar, Ulucanlar, Sinop and more can be counted. Among them Ulucanlar and Sinop Fortress Prison have been opened for tourist visit. In this study because of its structure and historic importance Sinop Fortress Prison is tried to explain.

As one of the oldest prisons of Turkey, it is located on the northwestern part of Cape Sinop. The fortress prison is currently open to the public for sightseeing aims. Originated from the increasing presentation of the prison in the recent popular culture, there is an accelerating interest in visiting this place. The historical prison hosts thousands of tourists every year.

Although Sinop prison was turned into a museum, it is one of the areas that need protection. In 2014, The Culture and Tourism Ministry used restoration grant from the EU, handed out during the EU membership negotiation process, to transform the Sinop Fortress Prison into an arts and culture complex. By this fund the complex is planned to become one of Turkey's most modern museums as part of the 9.2 million-euros Project. Once the project is completed, the historical prison will be submitted for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List (Web 2).

Despite of its importance, the information and academic researches about prison tourism and Sinop Fortress Prison is limited. Proliferation of academic and practical studies about this subject will increase the interest to the subject. Therefore, increased awareness of this subject may contribute to alternative tourism diversity of Turkey, which has rich sources about dark and prison tourism.

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