



## ASSIGNMENT



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# **ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR SOUTH AFRICAN DARK TOURISM IN 2032: CONNECTING TRAGIC PASTS, A FRETFUL PRESENT AND HOPEFUL FUTURE**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

**Tourism in South Africa** is regarded as a key sector for driving GDP growth and creating employment opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled citizens. The current ruling party of the African National Congress (ANC) has placed tourism as one of its key pillars in the Economic Recovery Plan with ambitions of achieving 19 million arrivals and creating 2 million jobs by 2030 (NEDLAC, 2020b, 2020a; South African Government, 2022). The attractiveness of South Africa's tourism offerings has relied heavily on typical sea, sun, sand, and wildlife destinations, however **heritage tourism, as a niche tourism segment, is emerging as the fastest-growing segment desired by travellers globally** (Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017).

**Dark tourism (DT), a subset of heritage tourism, has emerged in popular culture, attracting visitors to attractions and sites** associated with suffering, tragedy, death, disaster, crime, and atrocity. Popular mainstream DT sites include the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, Chernobyl in Ukraine, and the 9/11 memorial site in the United States. However, there is no easily distinguishable divide between DT and heritage tourism, and the motivations seem varied in the pursuits of novelty, entertainment, pilgrimage, curiosity, and nostalgia. There is, however, a spectrum of darkness. At the darkest end are actual sites of death and suffering, and the lightest end is most tourism offerings linked with entertainment (Kennell & Powell, 2020). In South Africa, DT sites could range from dark sites such as Robben Island as a political prison site, to lighter more symbolic museums and statues (Hartmann et al., 2018; Light, 2017a; Proos & Hattingh, 2020, 2022; Stone et al., 2018). **If difficult and traumatic heritage is the demonstration and construction of that tragic past, then dark tourism is the consumption and experience of that history** (Hartmann et al., 2018).

**However, DT is a complex and often controversial topic** that raises questions about the benefits of engaging with such dark, dissonant, dystopian views of history. Researchers argue that DT can also have a profound, transformative, emotional, and cognitive affect on individuals, challenging existing beliefs, stimulating new insights and potentially foster social cohesion through collective shared experiences (Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017). Ethical concerns arise when promoting content that attracts sensationalist attention, the risk of exploiting and commercializing tragic sites and their victims (Light, 2017a).

The aim of this paper is to **explore potential futures of DT in South Africa by the year 2032.**

### **1.1 Dark tourism**

Death, suffering, tragedy, visitation, and tourism have been closely intertwined throughout history. In ancient Roman times, one of the most popular forms of entertainment involved brutal slaughter in gladiator battles and chariot races. These blood-fuelled spectacles were designed to satisfy the desires of tourists seeking excitement and entertainment and held an enduring appeal. Nineteenth century Britain witnessed adventurous, globetrotting tourists who sought to explore the world's darkest and

remote corners, collecting gruesome and macabre souvenirs. Pre-modern tourism was steeped in dehumanising and dissonant traits (Pimentel Biscaia & Marques, 2020).

In 1996, Malcolm Foley and John Lennon defined the concept of DT as an activity and a service that contributed to tourism studies. As a niche segment in heritage tourism, DT definitions is driven by tourist motives rather than site or destination characteristics (Hartmann et al., 2018).

In the past two decades, scholars have debated DT, including DT as a concept, definition, research methodologies, ethical considerations linked to representation and commercialization of suffering and death, politics, and the management and promotion of sites (Hartmann et al., 2018; Light, 2017b). It is noteworthy that research articles have primarily focused on post-war sites, prisons, and battlefields as the main DT destinations.

DT, exploring death-related sites, is motivated by horror, curiosity, and empathy (Proos & Hattingh, 2022; Stone, 2020). It is also driven by education, remembrance, and novelty seeking. The popularity of 2018 'Dark Tourist' documentary and the 2019 'Chernobyl' miniseries on HBO demonstrates mainstream interest in this type of tourism. Chernobyl has seen a 1,200% increase in tourism to the site since 2016 (Sheppard, 2018).

## **1.2 Critique of dark tourism**

The tourism industry argue that the term DT is unhelpful and used without consent. Some researchers are unconvinced that DT differs from dissonant heritage tourism. For this paper, DT or dark tourists will be used as an academic term to designate heritage sites that aim to contextualize, interpret, and communicate historic cultural trauma (Hartmann et al., 2018).

A literature review published in 2022 suggests that research into the evolving themes in DT over a 26-year period had possibly stagnated and that there is a need for a more novel approach and lines of inquiry to advance knowledge and understanding beyond heritage tourism (Thornhill et al., 2019).

## **2 APPROACH**

Ramirez et al. proposes that to create interesting and innovative research, the use of scenarios methodology as a scholarly form of inquiry is one way to help challenge existing assumptions, identifying novel lines of inquiry, and revealing new research opportunities. To explore what alternate DT futures could look like in 2032, the method of creating multiple alternate scenarios is a preferred way for sense making in addressing uncertain and complex contexts to produce interesting findings and possible courses of action (Ramirez et al., 2015).

Scenarios have a goal-setting function in assisting decision makers to formulate goals and take the necessary actions towards the desired future. Lastly, as a decision making and strategy development function, scenarios reveal leverage points that assist in developing strategies, options, and available levers for taking necessary action as well as to test the robustness and reliability of development policies

(Kosow & Gaßner, 2008). As an example, Clem Sunter, and his scenario planning function used gameboards and flags to develop high and low road futures that helped South African corporates and citizens to take action towards their preferred future (Galer, 2004).

The tourism industry and the concept of DT are constantly evolving and can be difficult to understand. Using scenario methods is therefore a preferred method for developing alternate DT futures. Many factors are unpredictable and are influenced by a multitude of different actors and actions, making it open to change and continuously shaped by emergent outcomes.

The scenario approach used in this paper is an explorative stance aimed at revealing present day signals, trends, discontinuities, events and seeks to explore possible future developments and actions.

The scenario techniques used for the identification and analysis of key factors and the different techniques used to generate scenarios will include a mixed-method approach using quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The scope chosen for the development of the DT scenarios has a fundamental impact on achieving the desired outcome by reducing the complexity enough to synthesize the scenarios. In this case, a time horizon of 10 years is chosen, supported by the government's mandated goals for tourism performance in 2030. The geographic scope is exploring possible DT futures for South Africa, however macro-meso-micro categorization of factors will be considered as part of the key factor identification and analysis.

## 2.1 Methodology

The scenario approach chosen is a **4-phase process**.

The **first phase** involves the scenario field identification to clearly define the purpose the scenarios are developed for and includes boundaries of research that will be considered and included. A causal layered analysis (Inayatullah, 1998, 2019; Inayatullah, Sohail and Milojević, 2015) is conducted to uncover any personal biases and assumptions on the DT theme and ensure a comprehensive thematic exploration.

The **second phase** of key factor identification included the identification and inclusion of trends, developments, and events. Desk research for empirical and theoretical analysis of the theme. A soft systems methodology was used to develop a rich picture of the domain (Checkland, 2000), ensuring that the scope was well-defined with the intent to reveal as many possible factors as possible and their relationships. Moreover, two additional methods were used. A systematic literature review of DT over a 25-year period was used to analyze the progress and development in the field, key issues and challenges, and to identify gaps and future research implications. Sources included academic perspectives from both Western and Non-Western cultural contexts. Secondly, a STEEP analysis (Conway, 2009; Hines & Bishop, 2013) was conducted to identify key factors in the domain.

The **third phase** is a key factor analysis using two key factor-based scenario techniques. Firstly, a creative-narrative intuitive logics method was used to reveal pivotal uncertainties by plotting key factors and categorizing them. This can also assist in uncovering possible wild cards for the domain. The second method used was a systematic-formalized method to conduct an impact analysis, resulting in two key pivotal uncertainties chosen for the next phase of scenario generation.

In the **fourth phase**, four scenarios are created with clear and distinctive titles and narratives.

### **3 SCENARIO FIELD IDENTIFICATION (PHASE 1)**

This phase involved identifying the scenario field, with the primary purpose to explore plausible, alternative futures for DT in South Africa as the tourism sector continues to represent higher than GDP growth projections over the coming decade. The significance of tourism development in South Africa is directly linked to the government's goals to transform the tourism sector supply chain and its commitment to increase the participation and access of African women and youth through employment creation and SMME investment (Department of Tourism, 2019b; Ministry of Tourism, 2020; Wesgro, 2020).

The impact of the macro contextual dimensions on tourism – environmental, economic, technology, social, political, and legal – are critical in shaping and influencing DT opportunities, as well as the relationships and interactions with meso factors including government policies, legislation, competition, and industry trends.

As part of the scenario field identification phase, a Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) (Inayatullah, 2019) revealed personal bias against the exploitation of tragedy for commercial gain, and the morbid sense of the value of DT sites as destination attractions. These were important insights required to expand personal views and mitigate negativity should future scenarios potentially create commercial opportunities for domestic tourism operators. The CLA is included in Appendix A.

### **4 KEY FACTOR IDENTIFICATION (PHASE 2)**

This phase involved identifying the central factors or 'descriptors' that have an impact on the field including events, trends, developments, variables, and parameters. Multiple methods were chosen to recognise 'as many voices' possible on the topic, adding adequate knowledge of the field, and gain deeper understanding of the interactions of the various key factors as they emerge (Kosow & Gaßner, 2008).

#### **4.1 Rich picture**

To 'find out more about the problem', a soft-systems method (SSM) rich picture was created as an exploratory approach to the problem situation, and a visual interpretation of the initial interactions and relationships evident (Checkland, 2000; Zexian & Xuhui, 2010). Relationships emerged between agency, desired affectiveness, immersive and experiential preferences, motivations, accessibility, and commercialization. The rich picture is provided in Appendix B.

## 4.2 Expert panel

In a published round table discussion, five leading scholars in DT suggest forces of modern and postmodern motivations are evident. The former connected to learning and education, the latter is connected to increased interconnectivity and a growing awareness evil and atrocities through mainstream media. This impact being increased demand for DT sites. DT requires historical grounding and is not a homogenous phenomenon as different sites have different meanings for different visitors, each having different experiences. (Hartmann et al., 2018).

## 4.3 Literature review

Insights from existing literature reviews over 20 years of academic progress categorized the following themes (Light, 2017b):

- Theorizing the concept, scope, and methodology of DT and thanotourism (Light, 2017b; Shekhar & Valeri, 2022).
- Nature of demand.
- Ethical debates, commodification, and authenticity.
- Political and ideological dimensions (Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017).
- Marketing and management of sites and destinations (Kennell & Powell, 2020).

Rajasekaram et al. argues that the themes have remained consistent over time, indicating a possible stagnation and the need for a novel approach (Rajasekaram et al., 2022; Shekhar & Valeri, 2022). Major research gaps included multidisciplinary research, non-western cultural perspectives on DT, the concept of death as a taboo topic for some cultures and what motivates these tourists based on identify or spirituality, and experiences of children and young adults (Kerr et al., 2021; Kerr & Price, 2016).

## 4.4 STEEP analysis

The contextual environment and the trends, events, factors that influence the tourism industry, and DT as a special interest travel segment, were explored conducting a STEEP analysis. Included in these analyses are the OECD tourism **megatrends** shaping the future of tourism. These megatrends capture globally significant changes in **social, economic, political, environmental, and technological changes** over the long terms and have decade long term impacts with the potential to transform the sector (Department of Tourism, 2019a; OECD, 2018; Tutek et al., 2015).

The impact of Covid-19 caused unprecedented disruption to the tourism industry, resulting in closures and job losses. This sudden and significant disruption in the travel system could be considered a **discontinuity** in that it changed the way in which travel is recovering with trends like 'revenge travel' (News desk, 2022a), more outdoor and nature-based travel, conscious and sustainable travel, digital nomadism, and community-based and cultural tourism continuing to support recovery to pre-pandemic levels (Masiga, 2022). Heritage and cultural tourism is a fast-growing segment, accounting for an estimated 40% of all tourism worldwide. Countries that take advantage of their heritage and



contemporary culture can boost economic growth and sustainable tourism development. In South Africa due to its apartheid history, available cultural and heritage products are considered under-represented and perform poorly despite being highly desirable (Department of Sports, 2020; Department of Tourism, 2012; Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017). It is also a significantly complex phenomenon that is impacted by greater ecological, educational, political, and economic dimensions (UNESCO, 2022).

#### **4.4.1 Technological**

The technological dimension is seen as a major driver of change in society. New technologies are transforming the way in which individuals travel and experience destinations, and the magnitude and pace of disruption increasing as emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain (BCT) converge to radically alter the tourism ecosystem. Trends that will continue to shape DT include: enabling technologies and advancements changing the visitor experience of dark tourism sites and its appeal to the changing demographics, motives, behaviours of tourists; potential for privacy and security concerns from big data analytics in altering the nature of the visitor experience; the role that AR and VR technologies will play in delivering an immersive dark tourism product offering in the future; blockchain technology set to enhance security, store private information and digitally archive and immutable record of historical information, artifacts, records related to dark sites, victims, perpetrators, and survivors. Travel is becoming more affordable, accessible, and efficient to new markets and the continued trend of intermediaries reshaping how travellers connect with tourism partners (Department of Tourism, 2019a; OECD, 2018).

#### **4.4.2 Environmental**

Tourism can have negative impacts on the environment, and climate change will continue to affect future generations (Glocker & Haxton, 2020; OECD, 2018, 2021; Uppink & Soshkin, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2023). South Africa is committed to sustainable tourism through its responsible tourism mandate (Department of Tourism, 2017; Ministry of Tourism, 2021, 2022). Sustainable tourism seeks to reduce negative impacts on the environment, cultural heritage, and local communities. Over-tourism is a phenomenon where overcrowding negatively affects the quality of experience, local communities, and the environment (Ali, 2018). However, the continued trend of global travel democratization is increasing accessibility and affordability of travel, regardless of their social and economic status. This is enabled by low-cost carriers, advancements in technology, transportation, and tourism infrastructure, and the growth of the sharing economy. Over tourism both influences and impacts the rise of dark travel through more accessible and affordable travel, as well as stimulating desires for more 'off the beaten track' experiences that can be typically characteristic of DT sites (Mihalic, 2020).

#### **4.4.3 Social**

The demographics of tourism are set to change significantly over the coming decades, with increasing demand for authentic travel experiences (Department of Tourism, 2019a; OECD, 2018; South African Tourism, n.d.). Culture and heritage tourism is not only of economic importance but is recognised as

having a role to play in reconciliation, inclusiveness, national pride and identity, maintaining cultural diversity, and mitigating the adverse impacts of modernisation. It has continued to gain popularity as visitors seek to acquire new knowledge, deepen, and enrich personal experiences, and feed their curiosity about life and death (Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017; Wu et al., 2023). However, there is a risk of societal polarisation and erosion of social cohesion, particularly in South Africa, which is considered the most unequal society in the world (Swanepoel, 2022). DT is emerging as a potential solution to address aspects of national identity and build trust across race, religion, and political biases (Department of Sports, 2020; Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017).

#### **4.4.4 Political**

Political instability in South Africa impacts its attractiveness as a destination. Ongoing issues of corruption, crime and violence, racial tensions, and economic instability have contributed to this perception. The 2024 general elections could have a significant impact on the country's stability. While the government has supported tourism, issues such as uneven tourism investment, particularly rural tourism development, limited participation of previously disadvantaged individuals, slow transformation, and aging infrastructure continue to plague the sector (Dludla, 2022; Ministry of Tourism, 2017, 2022). Additionally, heritage tourism is a contested segment due to political and collective memory issues. The government's political agenda, social cohesion approach, geopolitical instability, South African brand competitiveness, and contested narratives of DT sites are emerging themes (Department of Sports, 2020). Political instability has a direct impact on attractiveness of a destination and will especially dissuade visitors from a destination (Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017).

#### **4.4.5 Legal**

Travel mobility and facilitation are important for improving accessibility and desirability of destinations. Global geopolitical instability has a direct influence on travel mobility and a significant uncertainty (OECD, 2018). South Africa has continued to address its competitiveness and attractiveness as a destination, with improvements in its facilitation measures with the launch of evisa program now available in 14 eligible countries, and its commitment to the (AfCFTA) as one single market enabling free flow of goods, services, and individuals across the continent. Heritage laws includes policy mandates and guidelines to protect heritage sites (Department of Sports, 2020; Department of Tourism, 2012) and the constitutional rights of South African citizens to access religious and cultural programmes as well as the right to freedom of expression (Richotte, 1996). Human rights laws and ethical considerations in dark tourism (Light, 2017b) are complex and should not promote or glorify apartheid era human rights abuses, as well as tourist's insensitive behaviour and spectacle at dark tourism sites.

#### **4.4.6 Economic**

Tourism plays a pivotal role in social and economic progress around the world (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020; WTTC, n.d.), and is recognised as a valuable contributor to South African economy (WTTC, 2021). Tourism's direct contribution to South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) pre pandemic was approximately 3.7%, and often exceeded agriculture, construction, or utilities sectors

(Webb, 2022). The impact of Covid-19 saw a drop in GDP contribution to 1.3% in 2020 causing significant impact on the economy progress plans (Ministry of Tourism, 2023b). Despite this, the government continues to focus on the recovery post-pandemic, prioritizing the growth and transformation of the sector through various programs such as the Tourism Equity Fund and Women in Tourism. Rural tourism development faces challenges in income inequality, underdeveloped infrastructure, and poverty, but it is still considered important by the Ministry of Tourism.

Unemployment levels have remained high, with youth unemployment a major challenge and trends are likely to continue over the next decade. Added pressures of improving the standard of education are directly linked to prosperity and innovation. Tourism is identified in the National Development Plan (NDP) as a priority sector given its labour intensiveness, and its contribution to job creation and skills development goals (Department of Tourism, 2017; South African Government, 2022). Heritage as a tourism product is distributed across rural and urban areas, however developing rural tourism has challenges in income inequality, underdeveloped infrastructure, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, and a lack of understanding of tourism priorities to contribute to tourism development in a meaningful way (Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017).

## 5 KEY FACTOR ANALYSIS (PHASE 3)

In this phase, key factors that started to emerge in phase 2 are expanded and visualized in terms of their future developments. A mind map of emerging factors is detailed in Appendix C.

### 5.1 Intuitive Logics

Using a creative-narrative '**Intuitive Logics**' technique, key factors are mapped on a 2 x 2 matrix that measures the degree of impact against the degree of unpredictability (Kosow & Gaßner, 2008). This matrix is intended to draw from the intuition and 'gut feelings' of experts in the field, and help categorize key factors from the academic review, round table discussion, and STEEP analysis into 4 distinct groupings:

- High uncertainty / high impact = **pivotal uncertainties**
- High uncertainty / low impact = **potential jokers**
- Low uncertainty / high impact = **significant trends**
- Low uncertainty / low impact = **context shapers**

The identification and evaluation of the key factors should become clearer, as well as gain a better understanding of their one-to-one relationships. The following table represents the analysis of the key factors:

Key factors	Impact	Uncertainty
Enabling technologies and advancements	High	High

Over tourism	High	Low
<b>Climate change on tourism demand</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Social cohesion / national identity</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
Evolving traveller demand	Low	Low
Emerging middle class with propensity for travel	High	Low
<b>South African democracy as ideological position</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Government ownership control of heritage sites</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
Government priorities in heritage infrastructure development	High	Low
<b>Ethical considerations</b> (commercialisation and commodification of dark sites)	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Nature of dark visitor demand and experiences</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
Heritage laws associated with promotion and consumption of darker sites	High	Low
<b>Political agenda for heritage tourism and dark sites</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Governments commitment to heritage (and dark) tourism as a growth segment</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Government funding of heritage tourism</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Risk of youth unemployment</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Safety and security of destinations</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
Economic and pricing model for dark sites	Low	Low
Marketing and promotion of dark sites	High	Low
<b>South African economy</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>South African brand for tourism and investment</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>

The key factors identified as pivotal uncertainties (high impact, high uncertainty) are detailed below:

**Heritage and dark tourism** are directly influenced by the political agenda of government, especially given their ownership of heritage sites, the historical narratives associated with controlled sites, and the collective memory of what transpired. If government doesn't place value on heritage and cultural tourism, could dark tourism even flourish as a segment?

**The ability of enabling technologies and advancements** to modify and enhance the visitors experience of the dark tourism sites is dependent on what could appeal to the changing demographics, motives, and behaviours of future tourists. Younger audiences tend to seek out highly immersive, rich storytelling to consume cognitive, emotional and relationship experiences however heritage and dark tourism sites may not deliver accordingly.

**Social cohesion** impacts the economic and social prosperity of a nation. As South Africa emerges from a divided and painful division, some argue that reconciliation has halted, and that society remains fragmented driven by a contentious social (and political) narrative. Could dark tourism play a role in levels of national identity and trust across race, religion, and political bias?

The multitude of **ethical and moral dilemmas** linked to the commemoration, commercialisation, and commodification impact the future of heritage and dark tourism sites, and the future demand by tourists. How far can boundaries be pushed and what is acceptable in delivering a dark tourist offering?

The **nature of visitor demand and experiences in dark tourism** in terms of understanding what motivates a visit what kind of dark tourism site, and what possible and unique, cognitive, emotional, and relational experiences occurs with each visit, by each visitor given that it differs for everyone. What could the transformational impact of affective dark tourism be for each visitor, if any?

The **economic outlook and responses** could influence how attractive South Africa is as a destination, whilst it battles high debt, high levels of unemployment, particularly of its youth, with its rising cost of living crisis which could all impact the future demand and supply of tourism.

In addition to the above pivotal uncertainties, two potential STEEP surprises emerged. The movement towards a **climate crisis, and its impact on tourism demand** (including dark tourism potential). Despite climate change ranking high on impact and uncertainty, it could be underestimated in terms of its credibility to propel action. The progress of sustainable development goals by countries have been severely hampered by the pandemic, and 2030 goals fighting for adequate resources and investment. Climate change is considered a poly crisis, existential risk that still lacks full commitments and execution against set targets by all developed and developing countries. The second could follow if South African veers from its ideological stance as a democracy. As democracies fail globally, more countries are considering a different position, increasing protectionism, and increasing levels of autocratic control in an effort to face the wicked problems impacting them. This kind of shift could radically transform the face of travel to and from the country, could well change the political agenda entirely.

## 5.2 Impact Analysis

Using the pivotal uncertainties from the analysis, a systematic formalized scenario technique of an impact analysis was conducted to understand to what extent a direct relationship takes effect between these pivotal uncertainties (Kosow & Gaßner, 2008).

- Political agenda of dark tourism
- Enabling technologies
- Ethical considerations of dark tourism
- Social cohesion (national identity)
- Nature of visitor demand and experience
- Economic considerations

The factors were evaluated according to the relationship between its active and passive sum and is divided to better understand the strength and influence of the relationships. The results are consolidated below:

Evaluation of factors according to relationships	Factors	Active	Passive
<b>Active and impulsive factors</b> (high active, low passive) are factors that influence the problem	<b>Political agenda of dark tourism</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Enabling technologies</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Reactive or passive factors</b> (high passive, low active) are more strongly influenced and used to observe a situation	<b>Social cohesion (national identity)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Critical or dynamic factors</b> (high active, high passive) has a strong influence but is also strongly influenced	<b>Ethical considerations of dark tourism</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>Nature of visitor demand and experiences</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Buffering or lazy factors</b> (low active, low passive) has a weak influence and is also weakly influenced.	<b>Economic considerations</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

## 5.3 Inputs for the next phase of scenario generation

The two critical or dynamic factors with both high active and high passive scores are the **ethical considerations of dark tourism, and the nature of visitors' demand and experiences**. Both these factors have high active and high passive scores, meaning that the relationships are both strongly influencing and strongly influenced. It is because of this relationship, that the extremes of these two factors will be mapped in a 2 x 2 grid that will shape the four scenarios.

The **political agenda of dark tourism is an active and impulsive factor** characterized by a high active and low passive score, meaning that this is seen as a lever that strongly influences the future of dark tourism. This factor will play out in varying ways in the scenarios as the ownership, mandate, and control of heritage tourism shifts in each scenario. **Social cohesion, and national identity are considered reactive factors**, and are more strongly influenced by the other factors like governments political agenda. Economic considerations and enabling technologies are considered buffering factors, that may have a weaker influence on the other factors. All these factors will be considered in varying ways as the scenarios play out against the two extremes of the critical factors.

The scenario matrix is detailed below:

### Long Walk to Freedom

- Recognition of heritage that hurts but commitment is slow
- Endless political and ethical debate stymie progress
- Funding insufficient and dark tourism offering doesn't provide enough opportunities
- Preference given to the lighter shades of dark tourism which are less transformational

### We Free Cause I'm Free

- Transformational affective experiences with heritage that hurts
- Trust & identity build tolerance and Ubuntu
- Distinctive South African dark tourism offering builds tourism supply and SMMEs

### Behind Enemy Lines

- Heritage is lost
- Highly politicised and polarizing agenda used to sow discord
- No contribution to the sector to create new opportunities for African owned SMMEs as European travel offering remains dominant

### Scarred for Life

- Narratives resonate with some, but for others its damaging
- Dark tourism offerings are commercially exploitive
- Tolerance but trust erodes further



## 6 SCENARIO GENERATION (PHASE 4)

### 6.1 Scenario: We free Cause I'm Free

*(Possible paths to 2032 where government's agenda is highly favourable towards developing heritage tourism further and exploring new ways to add opportunities by prioritizing and investing. Given the complex and controversial nature of dark tourism, ethical considerations are at the forefront, and commitment to sufficient voices and discipline in how these segments can be commercialized are highly impactful for visitors. The use of heritage tourism for social cohesion is built on the premise that building trust and national identity are crucial in improving Ubuntu).*

In this scenario, a new ruling party is appointed at the 2024 elections and was faced with major risks in low economic growth projections and a fracturing society seemingly still divided across racial lines. Social cohesion was seen as part of a possible cure for addressing inequality, poverty, unemployment, corruption, and gender violence (Swanepoel, 2023) and the economic and employment opportunities that heritage tourism, as the highest growth interest segment could offer the country, was prioritized.

As the custodians of heritage tourism, Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DAC) gazetted their revised mandate to significantly elevate heritage tourism as one of their dominant demand and supply growth opportunities, and received 5 year funding investment cycles for significant infrastructure development and maintenance of sites, the tourism development aspect for tourism supply partners, and partnership with the academic field and leading universities to leverage enabling technologies to digitize and archive key historical artefacts and national treasures (Kennell & Powell, 2020).

Government's new political agenda included the establishment of a multidisciplinary working group with the then newly created Ministry of the Future, and included many of the individual ministries as stakeholders, tackling how heritage that hurts could be more powerfully curated and integrated under Ubuntu efforts, and what could be created to transform a fractured society. The Ministry for the Future brought new critical thinking to the team challenging colonial past approaches, and actively working at decolonizing historical narratives and ethical considerations linked to the commodification of dissonant heritage. The impact became evident in the many open, inclusive, and historical narratives that were developed over the years and were considered to be instrumental in rebuilding trust and reconciliation. Annual polls had showed that citizens were becoming less polarized in their responses on national identity and trust when the narratives shared were extensive and representative (Swanepoel, 2022).

The benefit of having the DAC lead the progress was evident in the support from the creative and artistic community that created new transformational stories and theatre to the public. The highly publicised, and controversial dystopian installation in 2027 on Robben Island was heavily criticized at first, however the productive negative intensities created impacted the affectiveness of each transformational personal experience, and upon reflection could have created the seismic shift in embracing more difficult narratives of the past (Sigala & Steriopoulos, 2021). This dark tourism installation was recognised as a global icon as it travelled worldwide for 2 years challenging global discourse on democracies, and the journey that countries like South Africa emerge from a racially segregated state to a 35-year-old democracy leading the way with their Ubuntu philosophy (Pimentel Biscaia & Marques, 2020).

Governments support of the progress in the academic field of heritage and dark tourism was instrumental in challenging Western views of how visitors consume death, tragedy and atrocity, especially bringing novel lines of inquiry in African culture and its relationship with death, creating a curiosity and fascination that sparked African continental travel to sites of dark tourism, with the Rwandan Genocide Memorial and Robben Island Museum leading in popularity. The funding of



academic research into South African opportunities also provided insight into the spectrum of dark tourism sites, from darkest to the lightest, which created scope for tourism operators to develop offerings that spanned from most intense to much lighter, edutainment and manmade destinations. The most popular is combining the ghost tours in the Karoo, with the battlefield tours (Proos & Hattingh, 2020).

As travel demand continued to increase globally, and South Africa visitors' numbers continue to climb towards the original 19 million target by 2030, the dark tourism segment proving to be one of the most impactful and well-funded success stories. South Africa had done well to position itself as a leader in Responsible Tourism, and both urban and rural tourism flourished as the tourist demand expanded from mainstream sea, sun, sand destinations. As the rural tourism grew to incorporate more dark sites, such as the tourism development in the Free State battlefields, more African owned SMME's were able to, with very low barriers to entry, bring about community involvement and development of new offerings into tribal experiences, African initiation ceremonies, and explore to indigenous ways of living and thriving outside of modern traps (Proos & Hattingh, 2022).

Social media has continued to be the dominant marketing and sharing platform, however with the education program on how to respect victims and sites, the content become more insightful, deeper connections in shared stories, and multiple perspectives that added to rich discourse (Yu & Egger, 2022).

AR and VR concerns about visitors not wanting to physically visit sites was unfounded. In 2029, the most popular tourism sites showed record numbers of visitors who commented on the power of face-to-face connections. The benefit of online booking helped prevent overcrowding at sites, and the night-time experiences heightened the experiences.

The credit given to stronger social cohesion by The President in his 2030 speech was a significant moment in recognising the progress in heritage tourism, and the impact it had in transforming trust across race groups, and trust in government. Trust across gender was still a major concern, and the President had indicated that heritage tourism could play a role in the future as stereotypes of gender were still prevalent in historical narratives and stated his ongoing commitment to further invest in the field (Adie & Snell, 2021; Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017).

## **6.2 Scenario: Scarred for Life**

*(Possible paths to 2032 where the commercial opportunities presented by a growing visitor demand for the dark tourism offering brings about potentially dangerous and damaging pursuit and abuse of dark heritage assets. Growth for tourism supply is potentially stronger as operators craft their own commercial responses to demand).*

In this scenario, government's support of heritage and dark tourism continues along the same path, and by default the segment only benefited from the increase in visitors interested in dark tourism (Sheppard,

2018). Heritage sites continued to face enormous financial pressures as marketing to new visitors and their demands was costly (News desk, 2014; Phiri, 2023).

Over the years, it seemed that sensationalism and spectacle sold more tickets, so partnerships were sometimes on the dubious side (Stone & Grebenar, 2022). Robben Island had been heavily compromised on social media with significant reputational damage in an attempt to drum up much needed funding. A silent disco on the prison grounds were intended for sale, however the surviving prisoners caused a revolt in disgust of dancing on the graves and site of atrocity (McCain & Ebrahim, 2023).

As the swell of demand continued by international tourists, the response by the tourism supply chain was driven purely by commercial and shock value. There had been a few legal cases suing operators for the trauma that their children experienced as dark and atrocious conditions were mimicked to create more and more immersive experiences.

The DAC was more focused on bush and sport tourism, and most of the funding over the years was committed to offshore sponsorship deals, leaving insufficient funding for heritage sites. As a result, more lighter shades of dark tourism were heavily pursued as these could be recreated in more affordable, and less legislated sites. Some of the tourism operators that could afford to, created entertainment orientated experiences, and romanticised and commercialised haunted houses, ghost tours, escapes from prison cells however the ongoing criticism was that it lacked authenticity and visitor numbers dwindled as novelty wore off. It seemed that the trend of online gaming and virtual reality experiences were able to mimic death and the macabre easier, competing against visiting of any dark sites and this didn't benefit the tourism supply chain.

Human rights and ethics activists became more vocal about the lack of control in the narratives surrounding these sites, particularly those darker sites that were highly politicised and ideological. The tactics used to create narratives were accused of being more biased to propaganda than educational and diversified.

By the end of the decade, most of the darker heritage sites had fallen into disrepair, and most not fit for any volumes of tourists. Uncertain if the artefacts have been preserved, as most had been sold in auctions of the years to raise money.

### **6.3 Scenario: The Long Walk to Freedom**

*(Possible paths to 2032 has a fundamental desire for Ubuntu and the role of heritage tourism is seen as a possible vehicle, however efforts are not integrated nor coordinated which stymies progress and concerns for ethical issues related to dark tourism take centre stage, as opposed to the benefits of it. Growth for tourism supply partners seem lack lustre as barriers to entry are complex and prohibitive).*

In this scenario, and with so many challenges facing government leading up to 2030, the enormous pressures of balancing investment and resources was seemingly impossible. Although tourism was driven as part of the Economic Recovery Programme, it relied heavily on promoting sea, sun, sand, and wildlife experiences as the hallmark of the visitor experience in South Africa. This didn't appear to have a significant impact on growing the tourism supply market, and no real growth was evident in the SMME sector as barriers to deliver competitive products were too onerous and costly.

With the global risks highlighting social erosion as a major concern, government was intent on making significant inroads into rebuilding trust and improving national identity. DAC projects were extensive, and often seemed disparate as projects pitched included erecting a South African flag, costing R22m at Freedom Park Heritage Site and Museum as a symbol for unity. Criticism at the time was scathing, with a country facing low economic growth projections, and plethora of social issues in inequality, poverty, unemployment, corruption, and gender violence, the investment was dubbed a vanity project.

Inroads into improving social cohesion were not effective, as the country seemingly continued with racial divisions. Commitment to telling an impartial, uncontested, and collective memory of the past was a desire by multiple government departments tasked with working together to bring to life Ubuntu. There had been significant academic contributions in research to indicate that using heritage that hurts is a powerful tool in moving forward as a society, and that reconciliation in this form of tourism could be the shift needed. Government had been supportive of continuing in funding for heritage sites, and laws prevented commercial exploitation of sites and victims for tourism. Incentives had been introduced for tour operators to get educated and upskilled in managing the delivery and experiences offered by local guides and ensure that it did not negatively affect communities. However, progress in developing dark tourism was slow, rising costs of talent needed to operate these dark sites put financial strain, as well as limited resources to transform the experiences and complement with richer, and more immersive storytelling techniques. Without a competitive and compelling product offering, visitors only visited the most popular sites, like Robben Island or Hector Pietersen Memorial Museum, but annual consumer research conducted at these sites showed little affective impact on visitors.

#### **6.4 Scenario: Behind Enemy Lines**

*(Possible paths to 2032 seem to show a disregard for the potential and power of heritage tourism. Either it incites reactions that seem to teeter on the brink of unrest, or its avoided completely. Narratives are highly contested and used for political agendas that don't seem to offer the same affective and transformational opportunities. No real opportunity for growth in the tourism supply is created).*

In this scenario, heritage tourism receives very little investment in the coming years as the country battled major economic and social challenges, with the general sentiment that these dark sites are not beneficial, throttling of all funding renders them unusable and dysfunctional. Many contested voices and narratives on the collective memory incite anger and retaliation. The vandalising and defacing of memorials, considered on the lighter side of dark tourism were the first to be toppled and defaced, with

the general public placing little value in heritage, and over the years that followed more darker sites were systematically attacked and destroyed. Historical artefacts lost, almost as if in a war zone, and the media and citizens seemed indifferent about it. The stories told seemed highly charged with either colonial or racist overtones, and it made for uncomfortable experiences, especially for the younger generations who lacked historical context.

The general mood of distrust remained in communities, sticking to one narrative that was told to them by their parents. Better, and safer to avoid any discussions about heritage, choosing to only trust those in the family group, distrusting others from another race, religion, political party, and worse from another African country. South African society showed signs of being heavily fractured, life had become more difficult and not even sports seemed to unite like it did before (Swanepoel, 2022; Viljoen & Sonwabile Henama, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2023).

Tourism seemed to become more insular, and it seemed safer and more comfortable to holiday with similar looking people, going to the same places. Traveling to tourist sites didn't have the same feel as it did years ago, where a tour guide or travel agency could enhance the experience with suggestions of places to visit, or a guided historical tour at a site that was taught in school history.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

The use of scenarios in this case allowed for possible futures for dark tourism to be explored within a selection and combination of key uncertainties and factors and is not a comprehensive image of the future.

Dark tourism in South Africa is more than just another niche travel segment promising increased visitors and spend and has the potential to spark transformative changes in the hearts and minds of its citizens, if the political desire, willingness, and action is supportive.

As the country battles with the usual suspects of inequality, crime, poverty, unemployment, and cost of living crisis, the unity and cohesiveness of its society is the tipping point making heritage and dark tourism at the mercy of factors beyond its control.

The scenarios sought to explore if a desire for ethical, affective, and transformational dark tourism opportunities could play a significant role in growing tourism in South Africa. Research opportunities include understanding the emergent effects of a dark tourist experience from a cognitive, emotional, and relational aspect of the visitor's experience tapping into the motivations of curiosity, education, remembrance, learning, and possibly even escapism, as well as the interpretations of historical trauma that disturbs societal consciousness and drives societal polarisation.

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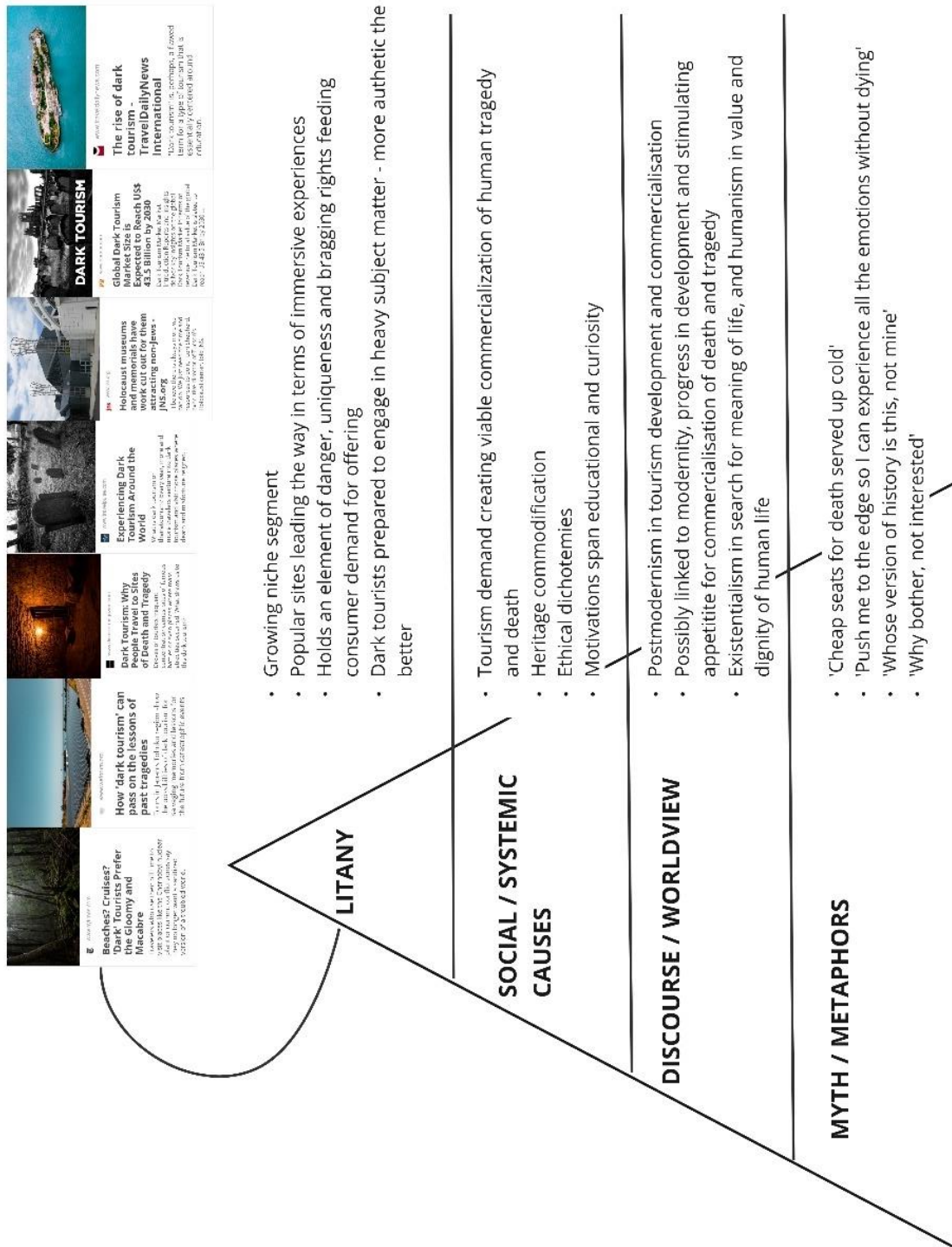
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## 9 APPENDICES

### 9.1 Appendix A: Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)





### 9.3 Appendix C: Key factor identification phase

