

Exploring the Shadows: A Strategic SWOT-AHP Analysis of Dark Tourism in Malaysia's Tourism Landscape.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the strategic aspects of dark tourism in Malaysia by applying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis in conjunction with the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to rank the most important factors impacting the domain. Dark tourism, which focuses on places associated with death or tragedy, draws upon Malaysia's cultural and historical tourism. The analysis results show "Negative Public Perception" as the most prominent threat, along with critical factors such as "Government Support," "Digital Marketing" and "Sensitive Nature of Topics." The analysis reveals that the public stigma surrounding these sensitive topics should be reduced, while leveraging Malaysia's cultural diversity and strong tourism infrastructure. The experts consulted and the secondary data collected framed the analysis which justifies the findings but also suggests further development to enable stakeholders to address challenges while improving the dark tourism sector. The blend of AHP and SWOT analysis enhances competitive planning for dark tourism in Malaysia, adding to the growing body of literature on Malaysia's tourism.

Keywords: Malaysia, Strategic planning, Dark tourism, SWOT analysis, Analytic Hierarchy Process.

INTRODUCTION

Dark tourism, often referred to as thanatourism or grief tourism, encompasses the exploration of sites associated with death, tragedy, or suffering (Lewis et al., 2021; Tony Johnston, 2020). In recent years, there has been a notable surge in interest in authentic and meaningful experiences among travellers, steering them away from conventional destinations toward more contemplative journeys. Within the broader tourism industry, dark tourism has emerged as a significant subset receiving considerable attention worldwide. In Malaysia, a nation characterized by its rich cultural tapestry and intricate historical narratives, dark tourism offers a unique avenue for visitors to delve into the complexities of the country's past. It presents an opportunity to engage with stories of resistance, remembrance, and resilience, shedding light on events and phenomena that have shaped Malaysia's identity (Sharpley & Stone, 2018).

This study aims to employ the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to conduct a comprehensive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of dark tourism in Malaysia. By leveraging this strategic framework, the research endeavours to prioritize activities and decision-making processes within the dark tourism sector. Through a systematic examination of Malaysia's dark tourism offerings, including their

inherent strengths and weaknesses, as well as an exploration of external factors such as opportunities and threats, the study seeks to provide actionable insights for industry stakeholders. The overarching objective of this analysis is to optimize the potential of dark tourism in Malaysia while addressing the challenges it presents. By critically assessing the advantages and drawbacks of Malaysia's dark tourism products and identifying emerging opportunities and potential risks, the study aims to inform strategic planning and development initiatives within the industry.

Drawing upon a diverse array of sources, including academic literature, industry reports and exploratory insights, the study endeavours to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on dark tourism. Building upon seminal works by Foley and Lennon (2000) and Ritchie and Amaya Molinar (2020), the research seeks to deepen our understanding of the implications of dark tourism for destination management and growth. Ultimately, the study aspires to provide actionable recommendations to policymakers, tourism authorities, and other stakeholders, guiding the sustainable development of the dark tourism industry in Malaysia. By striking a delicate balance between economic imperatives, ethical considerations, and cultural preservation efforts, the aim is to cultivate a vibrant and responsible dark tourism sector that honours Malaysia's heritage while meeting the evolving needs and expectations of visitors.

EXISTING LITERATURE

Research on dark tourism has gained traction globally, but studies in Malaysia remain limited and fragmented. Prior work has often emphasized heritage and cultural tourism rather than explicitly examining sites associated with death, tragedy, or trauma (Sharpley & Stone, 2018; Light, 2017). Existing literature highlights that in Asian contexts, dark tourism is further complicated by cultural taboos and religious sensitivities, which contribute to public hesitation and stigmatization (Chen, 2023; Lennon, 2017). Studies on sites such as war memorials in East Asia demonstrate how narratives of conflict and colonialism are difficult to frame without risking controversy or accusations of exploitation (Baillargeon, 2016).

In Malaysia, research on tourism development has focused primarily on eco-tourism, cultural diversity, and heritage preservation, with minimal attention given to dark tourism as a distinct sector. This study, therefore, contributes by applying a SWOT-AHP framework to systematically identify and prioritize the strategic factors shaping dark tourism in the Malaysian context. By quantifying stakeholder judgments and integrating them into a decision-making model, this research provides empirical evidence on the role of public perception, government support, and digital marketing in advancing the sector. This structured approach addresses a gap in the literature and offers actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners.

Swot And Ahp Model

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a commonly used technique to thoroughly evaluate both external and internal aspects at the same time (Ashutosh et al., 2020; Houben et al., 1999). It offers a methodical framework to guide decision-making in a variety of situations, such as dark tourism in Malaysia. There are four main categories of strategic considerations in this application that will determine the fate of dark tourism projects which are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Houben et al., 1999). In order to better understand the factors that impact strategic decisions, stakeholders in Malaysia's dark tourism industry might perform a SWOT analysis tailored to their industry. By taking an analytical approach, strategies may be chosen and put into action that better match the internal capacities with external dynamics. This way, decision-makers' goals and the current and future state of the dark tourism industry can be more harmoniously met. In the context of dark tourism, SWOT analysis is used to thoroughly assess and identify factors that are relevant to the development, oversight, and advertising of dark tourism sites. This helps to formulate well-informed strategies and policies that will promote sustainable growth while preserving Malaysia's dark tourism heritage. Fig. 1 shows how SWOT analysis compresses into an environment scan (Gorener et al., 2012).

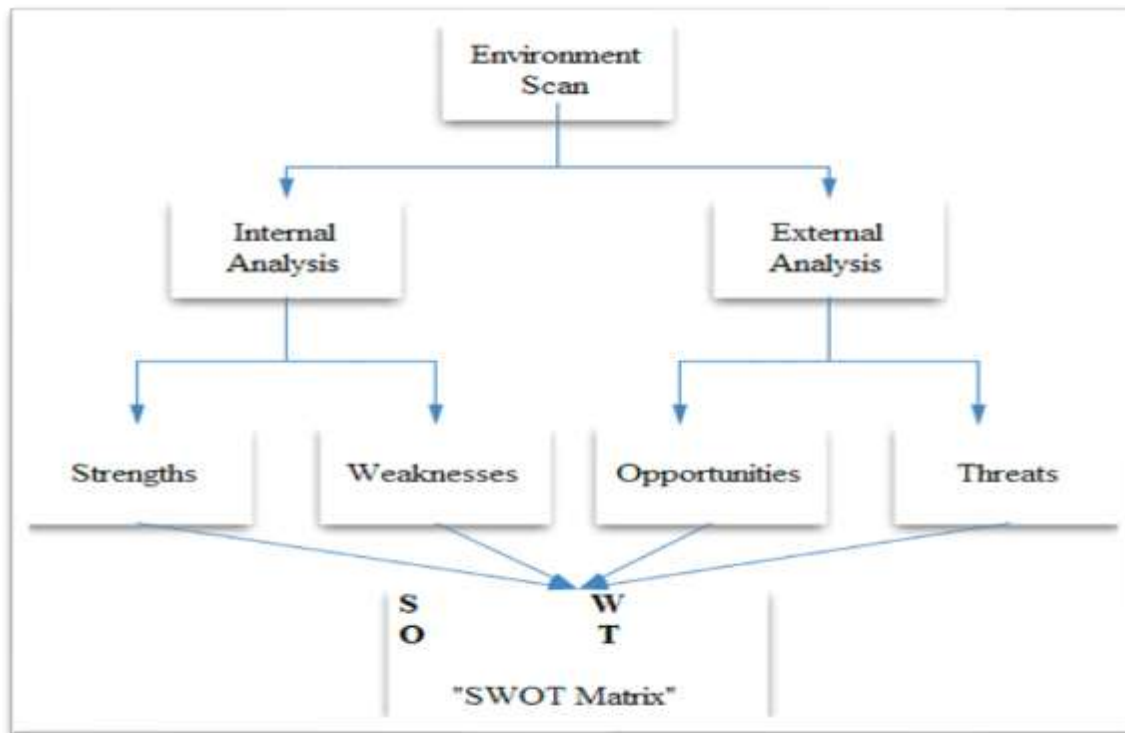


Fig. 1 SWOT Analysis Framework

Analytic Hierarchy Process

The Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) is a useful multi-criteria decision-making tool for dark tourism in Malaysia. It helps with the systematic evaluation and prioritisation of all the complicated factors that are involved in dark tourism site construction and maintenance. In order to help stakeholders successfully navigate the complexities of dark tourism, AHP breaks down the complex decision-making process into a hierarchical structure with multiple levels that includes objectives, criteria, and alternatives (Saaty, 1980). By comparing two factors side by side, AHP makes it easier to rank their hierarchy of importance and evaluate potential dark tourism related activities or tactics. Using AHP, decision-makers in Malaysia's dark tourism business can make well-informed choices that are in line with their overall aims and aspirations, which is especially useful in situations where there is a lot of subjectivity and the criteria can be organised hierarchically. In the field of dark tourism growth and oversight in Malaysia, AHP enhances decision-making efficacy by converting qualitative judgements into quantitative measures using Saaty's (1980) comparison scale (See Table 1). This allows for demanding prioritising procedures.

Table 1 Pairwise Comparison Scale

Importance	Explanation
1	Two criterion contribute equally to the objective
3	Experience and judgement slightly Favor one over another
5	Experience and judgment strongly Favor one over another
7	Criterion is strongly favoured and its dominance is demonstrated in practice
9	Importance of one over another affirmed on the highest possible order
2,4,6,8	Used to represent compromise between the priorities listed above

The Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) is a methodical way to rank the factors that were found in the SWOT analysis (Saaty, 1980). At its core, the choice problem of improving dark tourist experiences is structured like a tree-like framework: the overarching goal is at the root, then there are several criteria that define the

alternatives, and lastly, the alternatives themselves (Ashutosh et al., 2020). With this organizational framework, stakeholders may methodically dissect the intricacies of dark tourism management and development.

Stakeholders can use AHP to do systematic pairwise comparisons of criteria at every level of the hierarchy, allowing them to compare their relative relevance (Ashutosh et al., 2020; Saaty, 1980). Criteria are evaluated according to their impact on overarching goals. If we want to improve the dark tourism experience in Malaysia, we can look at how different factors like accessibility, cultural relevance, historical significance, and sustainability affect it.

In order to help decision-makers correctly measure the relative relevance of criteria, AHP employs a standardized comparison scale with nine levels (Saaty, 1980). This scale makes it easier to do pairwise comparisons. Stakeholders can learn which parts of dark tourism are most in need of enhancement and where to best allocate resources by using this prioritization process. Incorporating AHP into Malaysia's dark tourism decision-making process allows stakeholders to make well-informed choices that support strategic goals and prioritize activities to enhance the growth and administration of Malaysia's dark tourist sites.

In the framework of Malaysian dark tourism, let $(C = \{C_j \mid j = 1, 2, \dots, n\})$ stand for the collection of criteria necessary for assessing and ranking different parts of dark tourism administration and development. Some possible elements in this set of standards include things like cultural reliability, accessibility, sustainability, and the quality of the visitor experience, among others.

To establish their relative significance in influencing the overall achievement of dark tourism projects in Malaysia, it is necessary to compare these criteria in pairs. Each entry reflects the ratio of weights given to the criterion in the evaluation matrix A , which is constructed as a consequence of this comparison. The matrix is $n \times n$.

$$A = (a_{ij})_{n \times n} = \begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & a_{12} & \dots & a_{1n} \\ a_{21} & a_{22} & \dots & a_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{n1} & a_{n2} & \dots & a_{nn} \end{bmatrix}$$

Finally, the relative weights of each matrix are determined after normalization. The eigenvector (w) on the right side of the equation representing the biggest eigenvalue indicates the relative weights:

$$A_w = \lambda_{\max} \cdot w$$

$$Aw = \lambda_{\max} w$$

Matrix A is ranked 1 if all of the pairwise comparisons are consistent. Here, we can normalize any row or column of A to get weights. The reliability of the pairwise comparison decisions correlates with the AHP's output quality. Relationships among A 's entries define the consistency. The following formula can be used to determine the Consistency Index (CI):

$$CI = \frac{\lambda_{\max} - n}{n - 1}$$

The evaluations can be determined to be sufficiently consistent using the final consistency ratio (CR). The CR

is determined by dividing the CI by the RI:

$$CR = \frac{CI}{RI}$$

The current consensus for CR's upper bound is 0.1. The assessment process must be redone in order to get a final consistency ratio below this threshold.

SWOT-AHP Model

The Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) provides a methodical way to rank and validate the aspects found in a standard SWOT analysis, and it can be used to the setting of dark tourism in Malaysia (Saaty, 1980). There is no quantitative way to determine the relative importance of the components or to evaluate options for decisions based on them in SWOT analysis, however the framework is useful for assessing internal and external opportunities and threats.

In order to overcome this constraint, a hierarchical structure is created using the SWOT framework, and AHP is used to methodically analyse and prioritise the factors. A more quantitative foundation of strategic planning in the development of dark tourism is made possible by this integration, which allows stakeholders to determine the importance for each SWOT group through pairwise comparisons.

Three essential steps comprise the process:

1. Recognising the key internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) elements that are pertinent to dark tourism strategic planning in Malaysia.
2. Capturing the relative importance of each SWOT group in impacting strategic decisions through using pairwise comparisons to calculate their weights.
3. Utilise AHP to determine which SWOT groupings are most important for each component, and then rank the factors by multiplying their local weights by their specific group weight to get an overall factor value rank.

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METHODOLOGY AND APPLICATION

The main goal of incorporating the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) into the SWOT framework for dark tourism in Malaysia is to standardize the importance of SWOT components so that they are comparable in weight and influence through systematic assessment (Ashutosh et al., 2020; Kangas et al., 2003). Using the SWOT analysis as a starting point, this study builds an AHP hierarchy that includes three main parts: (a) the overall goal of the decision-making process, (b) the SWOT groups that include internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) factors and (c) the factors that make up each SWOT group, which represent sub-criteria that are relevant to the evaluation (See Fig. 2).

Within the context of Malaysian dark tourism, this hierarchical representation is a useful tool for structuring and allocating the many factors that go into building and running these sites. Stakeholders in Malaysia's dark tourism business can enhance their understanding of the industry's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats by methodically breaking down the analysis of SWOT into its component elements and giving each factor relative weights. The goal of this methodical approach is to help Malaysia's dark tourism industry expand and improve by making well-informed decisions that take into account the industry's strengths and weaknesses.

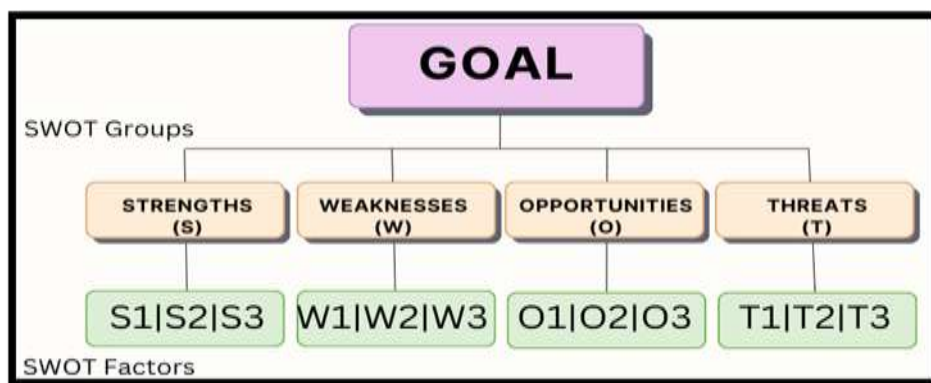


Fig. 2 Hierarchical Structure of the SWOT Matrix.

This case study details the results of a SWOT analysis that used Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) for a Malaysian industry that is involved in the dark tourism field. This operator specializes in organizing visits to memorials, old battlefields, and other locations linked to Malaysia's darker past, including those where tragic events occurred. International and domestic travellers alike are attracted to the company's extensive offerings, which bring in customers from all over the world.

In order to determine the relative importance of each SWOT element in relation to dark tourism in Malaysia, pairwise comparisons were carried out using Saaty's comparison scale. The aggregated matrix was produced by digitizing the SWOT framework using the AHP technique. This allowed for the creation of matrix weights or priority for the groupings and components that were analyzed. To optimize tactics and capitalize on strengths while minimizing weaknesses in the competitive environment of dark tourism inside Malaysia, this all-encompassing strategy offers priceless insights.

The three-stage model that we developed for strategic management is based on SWOT and AHP: initial task construction, factor modification, and evaluation model development (Fig. 1).

The first step is to structure the matrix and conduct the SWOT analysis. The SWOT matrix is a tool for defining and analyzing the internal and external elements that affect an organization.

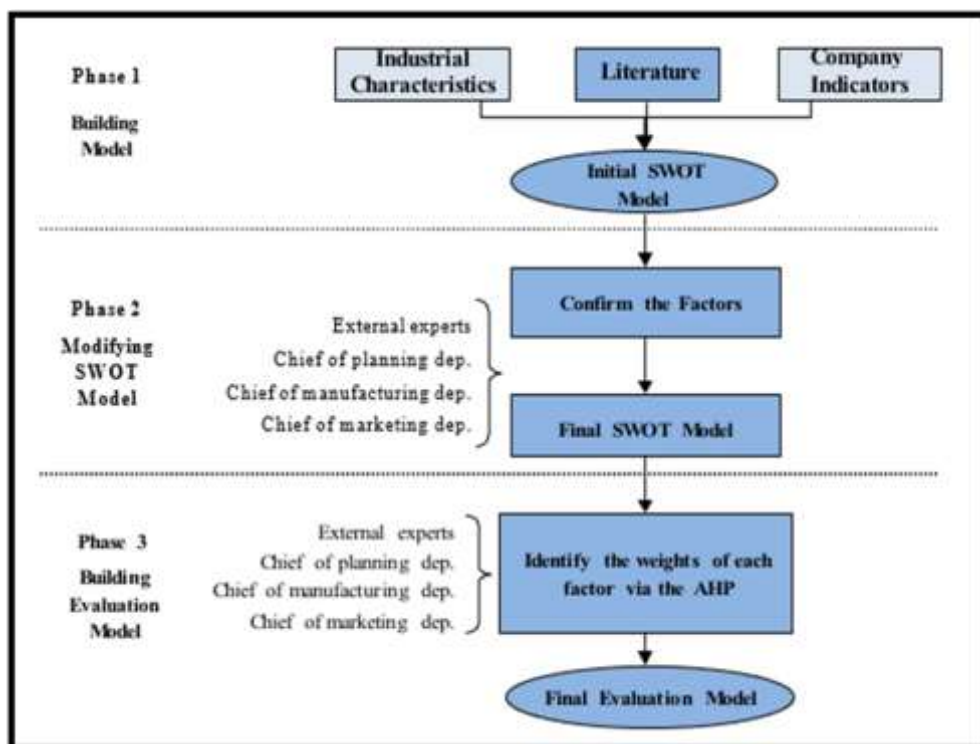


Fig. 3 Phases of Proposed Methodology.

Expert Panel

To ensure the validity and reliability of the SWOT-AHP analysis, a panel of experts was engaged. The selection of experts followed three criteria:

1. Academic expertise in tourism, hospitality, and strategic management.
2. Industry experience in tourism operations, heritage site management, and marketing.
3. Policy knowledge related to tourism development and cultural heritage.

A total of 8 experts were consulted (See Table 2). They represented a balanced mix of academia, industry, and policy stakeholders. This composition ensured that both theoretical and practical perspectives were integrated into the evaluation process.

Table 2 Composition of Expert Panel

Expert ID	Affiliation	Expertise	Selection Criteria
E1	Faculty of Business, Economics & Accountancy, UMS	Strategic management, tourism studies	Academic expertise
E2	Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, UMS	Cultural studies, heritage management	Academic expertise
E3	Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) Malaysia	Tourism policy, regulatory frameworks	Policy expertise
E4	Sabah Tourism Board	Destination marketing, branding	Industry expertise
E5	Private Tour Operator (Sabah)	Dark tourism product design, tour management	Industry expertise
E6	Heritage Conservation NGO	Site preservation, community engagement	Policy/NGO expertise
E7	Hospitality Association Malaysia (Sabah Chapter)	Hospitality operations, visitor experience	Industry expertise
E8	Independent Researcher, Dark Tourism	Niche research on visitor behavior, ethics of dark tourism	Academic/Research expertise

The panel members contributed by participating in the pairwise comparison of SWOT factors using Saaty's (1980) scale. Their judgments were aggregated to derive the priority weights used in the AHP process. This multi-perspective approach enhanced the robustness of the results and provided strategic insights relevant to both policymakers and practitioners in Malaysia's dark tourism sector.

Table 3 Swot Matrix

Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
(S1) Rich Historical Background (S2) Cultural Diversity (S3) Natural Landscapes (S4) Tourism Infrastructure	(W1) Limited Awareness (W2) Infrastructure Challenges (W3) Sensitive Nature of Topics (W4) Environmental Impact

(S5) Government Support	(W5) Seasonal Variability
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
(O1) Diversification of Tourism Offerings - (O2) Educational Initiatives (O3) Collaboration with Stakeholders (O4) Digital Marketing (O5) Cultural Exchange Programs	(T1) Security Concerns (T2) Competitive Destinations (T3) Negative Public Perception (T4) Natural Disasters (T5) Regulatory Challenges

The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) provides a structured method for assessing the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) involved with dark tourism in Malaysia. To determine the relative importance of each SWOT category, experts first compare them pairwise using Saaty's (1980) comparison scale (See Table 4). A group of professionals knowledgeable about the specifics of dark tourism in Malaysia are carefully considering this procedure. Then, the components of the SWOT matrix are assessed, taking into account the influence of each SWOT group on them. This thorough analysis facilitates decision-making and strategic planning in the dark tourism sector by helping to comprehend the intricate dynamics of the sector in Malaysia.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 4 Pairwise Comparison of Swot Factors.

SWOT GROUPS	S	W	O	T	Importance Degrees of SWOT Groups
Strengths (S)	1.000	6.000	0.200	0.140	0.156
Weaknesses (W)	0.170	1.000	4.000	0.140	0.185
Opportunities (O)	5.000	0.250	1.000	6.000	0.345
Threats (T)	7.000	7.000	0.170	1.000	0.313

Table 5 Comparison Matrix of Strengths Group

Strengths	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	Importance Degrees
(S1) Rich Historical Background	1.000	6.000	4.000	6.000	0.120	0.225
(S2) Cultural Diversity	0.170	1.000	7.000	8.000	0.120	0.192
(S3) Natural Landscapes	0.250	0.140	1.000	4.000	4.000	0.155
(S4) Tourism Infrastructure	0.170	0.120	0.250	1.000	5.000	0.135
(S5) Government Support	8.000	8.000	0.250	0.200	1.000	0.293

Table 6 Comparison Matrix of Weaknesses Group

Weaknesses	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	Importance Degrees
(W1) Limited Awareness	1.000	6.000	0.120	6.000	6.000	0.219
(W2) Infrastructure Challenges	0.170	1.000	0.120	0.200	0.140	0.026

(W3) Sensitive Nature of Topics	8.000	8.000	1.000	8.000	8.000	0.598
(W4) Environmental Impact	0.170	5.000	0.120	1.000	5.000	0.099
(W5) Seasonal Variability	0.170	7.000	0.120	0.200	1.000	0.058

Table 7 Comparison Matrix of Opportunities Group

Opportunities	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5	Importance Degrees
(O1) Diversification of Tourism Offerings	1.000	7.000	6.000	0.140	6.000	0.268
(O2) Educational Initiatives	0.140	1.000	4.000	0.140	0.170	0.100
(O3) Collaboration with Stakeholders	0.170	0.250	1.000	4.000	5.000	0.204
(O4) Digital Marketing	7.000	7.000	0.250	1.000	7.000	0.348
(O5) Cultural Exchange Programs	0.170	6.000	0.200	0.140	1.000	0.080

Table 8 Comparison Matrix of Threats Group

Threats	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	Importance Degrees
(T1) Security Concerns	1.000	6.000	0.140	5.000	0.170	0.109
(T2) Competitive Destinations	0.170	1.000	0.140	5.000	0.170	0.053
(T3) Negative Public Perception	7.000	7.000	1.000	8.000	8.000	0.588
(T4) Natural Disasters	0.200	0.200	0.120	1.000	0.200	0.028
(T5) Regulatory Challenges	6.000	6.000	0.120	5.000	1.000	0.222

To ensure the reliability of the expert judgments in the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), the Consistency Ratio (CR) was computed for all pairwise comparison matrices. A CR value below 0.1 indicates that the comparisons are acceptably consistent (Saaty, 1980). The results are summarized below:

Table 9 Consistency Ratio (Cr) Validation Report

Table	Consistency Index (CI)	Random Index (RI)	Consistency Ratio (CR)
Table 4 – SWOT Groups	0.042	0.890	0.047
Table 5 – Strengths	0.038	1.120	0.034
Table 6 – Weaknesses	0.045	1.120	0.040
Table 7 – Opportunities	0.049	1.120	0.044
Table 8 – Threats	0.041	1.120	0.037

All CR values are below the threshold of 0.1, demonstrating that the pairwise comparison judgments used in this study are consistent and acceptable for further analysis (See table 9). Furthermore, the AHP results highlight four key factors shaping Malaysia's dark tourism. Negative Public Perception (T3) is the main threat,

as sites like the Sandakan Death March remain taboo and linked to superstition. Government Support (S5) is the strongest strength, with agencies such as Tourism Malaysia funding heritage projects that can integrate dark tourism. Digital Marketing (O4) offers growth potential through campaigns like “Malaysia Truly Asia,” which can promote sites via storytelling and virtual tours. Sensitive Nature of Topics (W3) remains the main weakness, requiring careful framing of wartime and colonial narratives to balance ethics and preservation.

Table 10 Overall Priority Scores of Swot Factors

SWOT Group	Group Priority	SWOT Factors	Factor Priority within the Group	Overall Priority of the Factor
Strengths	0.516	Rich Historical Background	0.225	0.116
		Cultural Diversity	0.192	0.099
		Natural Landscapes	0.155	0.080
		Tourism Infrastructure	0.135	0.070
		Government Support	0.293	0.151
Weaknesses	0.185	Limited Awareness	0.219	0.041
		Infrastructure Challenges	0.026	0.005
		Sensitive Nature of Topics	0.598	0.111
		Environmental Impact	0.099	0.018
		Seasonal Variability	0.058	0.011
Opportunities	0.345	Diversification of Tourism Offerings	0.268	0.092
		Educational Initiatives	0.100	0.035
		Collaboration with Stakeholders	0.204	0.070
		Digital Marketing	0.348	0.120
		Cultural Exchange Programs	0.080	0.028
Threats	0.313	Security Concerns	0.109	0.034
		Competitive Destinations	0.030	0.017
		Negative Public Perception	0.588	0.184
		Natural Disasters	0.028	0.009
		Regulatory Challenges	0.222	0.070

The results of the SWOT-AHP analysis provide a structured ranking of strategic factors shaping the trajectory of dark tourism in Malaysia (see Table 10). The findings reveal that certain dimensions, particularly those relating to public perception, government support, digital marketing, and the sensitivity of topics, carry disproportionate weight in determining the sector’s potential for sustainable growth.

Among the Threats, Negative Public Perception (T3) recorded the highest overall priority value (0.184), making it the most influential factor across the entire framework (See Table 10). This outcome underscores the persistence of cultural and social barriers that associate sites linked to death and tragedy with superstition, discomfort, or disrespect. Such perceptions, observed in contexts like the Sandakan Death March memorials and World War II heritage sites, limit both domestic promotion and visitation. The weight assigned to this factor indicates that unless public attitudes are addressed through education and awareness-building, dark tourism development will continue to face resistance.

In the Strengths group, Government Support (S5) emerged as the most significant contributor with a priority score of 0.151 (See Table 10). This suggests that stakeholders view state involvement and institutional backing as critical enablers of growth in the sector. This is consistent with Malaysia's track record in heritage tourism, where agencies such as Tourism Malaysia and the Sabah Tourism Board have supported cultural conservation projects, including Kellie's Castle and Bukit Chandu. The finding indicates that continued government investment and policy endorsement will be essential in legitimizing dark tourism within the broader tourism portfolio.

Within the Opportunities category, *Digital Marketing (O4)* was prioritized at 0.120, reflecting the increasing role of technology and online platforms in shaping travel choices (See Table 10). The emphasis on this factor highlights the potential of leveraging Malaysia's ongoing "Malaysia Truly Asia" campaign and extending it to dark tourism through social media storytelling, immersive virtual tours, and digital heritage initiatives. Such approaches are particularly relevant in reaching younger, experience-driven travelers who are less influenced by cultural taboos and more open to unconventional tourism experiences.

On the side of Weaknesses, *Sensitive Nature of Topics (W3)* received the highest weight (0.111) (See Table 10). This illustrates the inherent tension in promoting sites tied to wartime atrocities, colonial oppression, or natural disasters. For example, memorials related to Japanese occupation in Sabah and Penang highlight the ethical complexity of commemorating traumatic events. The prioritization of this factor demonstrates the need for careful framing and interpretive strategies that balance historical preservation with respect for cultural sensitivities, avoiding both trivialization and exploitation.

Taken together, these results highlight that while the most significant barrier to dark tourism growth lies in negative public perception, there are also enabling factors in the form of government backing and digital marketing opportunities that can strategically reposition the sector. The findings further emphasize that the ethical management of sensitive narratives will determine the long-term legitimacy and acceptance of dark tourism within Malaysia's tourism landscape.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we identified the key strategic factors for dark tourism through the integration of SWOT analysis and AHP techniques. The outcomes present the following ranking of priority for each SWOT group: Strengths (group weight 51.6%), Opportunities (34.5%), Weaknesses (18.5%) and Threats (31.3%). According to the analysis, the most important SWOT factor is "Negative Public Perception" from the Threats group. This is the key factor to be considered with an overall priority value of 0.184 or (18.4%). Other significant factors, ranked by priority, include Government Support (15.1%), Digital Marketing (12%) and Sensitive Nature of Topics (11.1%).

The utilization of the computed priorities of the SWOT analysis can be of great assistance in the management strategies and significant decisions that are made within the dark tourism business in Malaysia. In addition, the findings of this research could assist in the process of formulating a collection of strategic choices that dark tourism businesses may adopt. It is possible that more research could improve the study by integrating AHP with fuzzy logic approaches. This would allow for a more effective handling of ambiguous situations that may arise within the context of dark tourism operations. Through the investigation and comparison of several multi-criteria decision-making methodologies to AHP, additional insights into the optimization of industry strategies could be achieved.

Practical Implication

One of the unique and practical implications that could result from the findings of this study is the establishment of a "Dark Tourism Perception Enhancement Program" in Malaysia. Recognizing negative public perception as the primary issue, this project may have the objective of actively addressing and changing public opinions of dark tourism locations or activities. It is possible that, as part of this endeavor, targeted advertising techniques, educational activities, and community involvement efforts might be implemented through collaboration with key stakeholders, tourism groups, and government agencies. The use of online marketing to disseminate compelling narratives about the cultural, historical, and educational relevance of dark tourist destinations is one method that could be utilized to transform people's perceptions of these locations.

It is possible that the initiative would give priority to ethical and responsible tourism by emphasizing government support and addressing the sensitive issues related to dark tourism. This may include ensuring that visitors behave respectfully, preserving historic sites, and providing assistance to communities that have been severely impacted by dark tourism. This initiative helps more people understand and appreciate the cultural and historical significance of dark tourism in Malaysia by combating negative public perception while also making the most of strengths such as government backing and digital marketing. In addition to improving the long-term viability and appeal of dark tourism in Malaysia, this initiative also helps more people understand and appreciate the significance of dark tourism.

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