Visitor Perceptions of European Holocaust Heritage: A Social Media Analysis

Keywords: European Holocaust Heritage; Discourse Analysis; Netnography; Social Media; Dark tourism, Foucault

Abstract

This study presents a netnographic discourse analysis of social media content generated around three high profile European Holocaust heritage sites: Ann Frank's House in Amsterdam, The Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland, and the Jewish Museum in Berlin, Germany. It identifies four salient discourses under the headings of Holocaust heritage as social memory, reactions to Holocaust heritage, obligation and ritual, and transgressive visitor behaviour which frame the values, existential anxieties, emotions, priorities and expectations of visitors. The findings will be of interest to stakeholders involved in the planning and management of Holocaust heritage since they provide unique access to a synthesis of unmediated visitor feedback on European Holocaust heritage experiences.

1. Introduction

This article combines the methodological principles of netnographic research with a post-structuralist discursive analytic to critique User Generated Content (UGC) on the social media sites of three high profile European Holocaust tourism attractions. In doing so, it harnesses the potential of such data to provide insight into visitor views, experiences and interpretations of European Holocaust heritage. UGC was extensively captured and catalogued from the official Facebook and Trip Advisor websites of Anne Frank's House in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, the Memorial Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, and the Jewish Museum in Berlin, Germany. The logic behind the selection of these sites reflects their representativeness of European Holocaust heritage and their popularity in terms of the annual volume of visitors that they receive. Each is an example of the type of European Holocaust tourism discussed by authors such as Cole (1999) who examined contemporary perceptions of the Holocaust 'industry' and Beech (2000) who was amongst the first authors to note the moral and management challenges of the idea of Holocaust tourism. Such sites, as noted by Ashworth (2010), and Lennon and Foley (1999) are challenging to manage, since their role is to interpret history to those that associate with both the victims and perpetrators of atrocity. As touristic spaces, they have a particular role in shaping the collective identity of the global Jewish community (Podoshen and Hunt, 2011). They are also

the only European Holocaust tourism sites to feature amongst the top ten most visited dark tourism sites in the world (darktourism.com, 2017).

The rationale for the study has its genesis in four antecedents. Firstly, it is motivated by the increasingly active role of social media as an information source for travel and tourism (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Social media sites play a key role in travel planning and the purchase decision-making processes (Fotis *et al,* 2011). Second, a detailed search of published literature reveals that there is scope to build on existing research by carrying out an in depth exploration of social media as a cultural resource that provides insights into the consumption of genocide tourism. In this sense, the research builds on Podoshen's (2016) work, which examines the discursive trajectories of meaning making amongst Jewish Holocaust tourists to atrocity heritage sites. In an environment of what he refers to as renewed global antisemitism, this paper responds to an opportunity to take a closer look at how visitors, as a broader community engage with, and make sense of atrocity heritage in the rarefied setting of social media. Third is the overwhelming attention that European Holocaust attractions, and particularly Nazi death camp heritage sites such as Auschwitz have received in the academic literature, and in the spheres of popular cultural that focus upon Holocaust. Fourth, the paper takes orientation from previous commitments to studying tourism consumption discourses, such as Siengenthaler's (2002) analysis of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japanese guidebooks, and Cole's (1999) observations about the role of visitor testimonials in relation to European Holocaust sites as windows into understanding visitor interpretations of Holocaust. The article leads with a discussion of Holocaust tourism in Europe before exploring the role of social media as a space in which experiences become overtly recorded and discussed.

The methodological framework is informed by Foucault's concept of material repeatability (Foucault, 1969) in order to approach social media sites as spaces that produce and maintain specific objects of discourse. This philosophical position was combined with the principles associated with netnography, a naturalistic research method to access online communities to understand tourist experiences and reflections. The findings identify four salient discourses around European Holocaust heritage comprising of Holocaust heritage as social memory, Holocaust reactions, obligation and ritual and transgressive visitor behaviour. The analysis provides insight into the values, existential anxieties, emotions, priorities and expectations of visitors to three of Europe's most high profile Holocaust heritage sites based upon free access to unmediated reflective narrative. The findings will be useful reference points for stakeholders involved in the planning, design and management of European Holocaust heritage sites who want to understand more about their visitors.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Holocaust Heritage in Europe

Since around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991, public interest in the Holocaust has spiked around Europe, and many European counties have come to confront the more inconvenient aspects of their Second World War histories through film, literature and tourism (Podoshen, 2016; Banke, 2005). Podoshen and Hunt (2011) suggest that the twin catalysts behind the rise of tourism to European Holocaust sites have been the collapse of Soviet-endorsed governments in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, and a concurrent resurgence in the Jewish search for roots. Holocaust heritage sites have become must-see attractions that are increasingly profiled through the marketing efforts of National Tourism Organisations such as the Polish Tourist Organisation and its promotion of the UNESCO status Auschwitz-Birkenau site alongside Ghetto tours of Warsaw and Krakow. The Destination Marketing Organisation Amsterdam Marketing features Anne Frank's House as part of the I-Amsterdam collaborative marketing initiative. Such sites have grown in popularity as a consequence of a spike in Holocaust commercialisation which began in the late 1990s (Cole, 1999) when Holocaust came into sharper focus in the public culture through theatre, television and fiction as well as non-fiction literature. Amongst the more recognisable cultural signifiers of Holocaust figures that have come to dominate these popular cultural settings are Anne Frank, Oskar Schindler and Adolf Eichmann. The tourism spaces that have come to signify Holocaust include Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland, Yad Vashem in Israel and, as a consequence of the exporting of Holocaust out of Europe, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC.

These characters and spaces, for Cole (1999) represent a Holocaust cultural 'industry' which and they can be traced to the arrival of Holocaust onto the centre-stage of Western public culture in the 1990s (Partee Allar, 2013). The release and critical acclaim of such popular films as Schindler's List (1993), and Roman Polanski's Academy award winning biographical drama The Pianist (2002) coincided with the emergence of 'Schindler tours', and a spike in visitor numbers to Auschwitz-Birkenau Visitor Centre (established in 1947) which welcomed a record-breaking 2,053,000 people in 2016 (Auschwitz.org, 2017). Holocaust tourism now operates as a large-scale enterprise, fuelled by a growth in budget airline routes across regional destinations. Holocaust concentration camps in particular are amongst the more popular types of visitor attractions, and it was Beech (2000) who first debated the unique challenge in attempting to define these spaces as tourist attractions, linking visits to concentration camps with the broader concept of dark tourism; now a firmly established

trope within the academic literature. Indeed, dark tourism has come to serve as an all-encompassing term for any tourism site associated with death and disaster, and analyses tend to focus on heritage sites where tragedy and historically noteworthy death has occurred (Tarlow, 2005). Such sites, by definition interpret real or commoditised death and disaster and it has been argued that the motivations of visitors who pay to consume them as experiences are complex. Amongst these motivations are the pursuit of historical knowledge (Seaton, 1996) and the undertaking of pilgrimages to feel a connection to loved ones or famous figures at sites of internment (Chang, 2014). Indeed, the motives of visitors to dark tourism sites have been a particular area of focus in the literature. For example, Podoshen (2013) used mixed methods to profile visitation to black metal festivals, and found that the salient motives were simulation, and a desire to reconcile comparisons between imagined landscapes and topographical reality. Stone and Sharpley (2008) presented a sociology of death to suggest that dark tourism experiences are consumed as a means of confronting culturally sequestered ideas about death and dying.

The motives of the Jewish diaspora, including the descendants of Holocaust victims have been examined in detail in specific terms of Holocaust tourism (Kidron, 2013; Podoshen and Hunt, 2011). Kidron (2013) studied the motivations and experiences of Israeli descendants of Holocaust survivors who embark upon tourism visits to heritage sites associated with Holocaust with their survivor relatives. Her work highlights the centrality of heritage tourism as a ritual that involves cultural, familiar and collective legacy, and she suggests that Holocaust tourism shares many of the traits of genealogical tourism including visits to, for example, the homes of Holocaust-victim relatives. An interesting counterview emerges out of Podoshen and Hunt's (2011) research into global Jewish citizens and Holocaust tourism. Their findings suggest that Holocaust tourism can be a space in which to articulate animosity, but they also argue that some Jewish tourists avoid visits to Holocaust tourism sites because of the absence of 'Jewish life' in the environs. Wollaston (2006) proposes four cultural and societal roles for Holocaust heritage sites, suggesting they simultaneously satisfy roles as sites of mass tourism, memorials to the dead, vehicles of historical exposition and educational organisations that exist to communicate the lessons of Holocaust. These arguments resonate with the well-documented concept of heritage dissonance (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). Fundamental to the concept of the dissonance argument is the idea that the management of atrocity heritage is a particularly complex challenge that must recognise the diversity of the various cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds of tourists who visit including various victim groups, the families of perpetrators and witnesses and observers of atrocity. Victim-dissonance is addressed in the context of European Holocaust tourism by Lennon and Smith (2004) who offer an analysis of contrasting visitor

interpretation approaches at Terezin and Lety; two Nazi concentration camp sites in the Czech Republic with similar histories as sites in which Jewish and other prisoners were imprisoned and persecuted by the Nazis. Paradoxically, however, the former has evolved as a visitor attraction that exclusively articulates Jewish victimhood, whilst the latter interprets Roma and Sinti victimhood.

Wight (2016) extends the reach of this critique to Lithuania and notes that some heritage operations, such as 9th Fort; a site of internment for Jewish Holocaust victims tend to lean heavily on narratives of ethnic Lithuanian genocide at the hands of the Soviets, perhaps as a means of achieving parity and "…manufacturing the semblance that the Holocaust and suffering of the Jews are similar to or equal to the suffering of the Lithuanians under Soviet occupation" (Ahrad, 2012:1). The challenge for iconic European Holocaust tourism heritage sites such as these Lithuanian sites and the more culturally iconic sites such as Auschwitz is to acknowledge and respond to the often-complex motives and expectations of a range of visitor types that seek to legitimate their identity through tourism. However, the observation that not all visitor motives are complex when it comes to genocide tourism provides an interesting rejoinder to this argument. Ashworth (2010) for example seeks answers to the origins of Holocaust tourism and calls into question the enabling conditions that have given rise to atrocity as a tourism attraction in Europe. He suggests that product uniqueness, empathy, and the sheer entertainment value of the unusual may be amongst the key motivations of 'Holocaust tourists'. The fact that so many of these sites are now included amongst the shortlist of must-see attractions is, in itself, perhaps reason enough to want to visit. Visitor motivations are central to understanding the consumption of Holocaust heritage (Lennon and Foley, 1999) and can help researchers understand the cultural returns on Holocaust tourism experiences. Efforts to access Holocaust tourism visitor narratives through primary research have been made in the past, yet social media as a broad unit of analysis in this context remains relatively undisturbed, as discussed below.

2.2 Experiential Reflections on Heritage Experiences

What is particularly interesting about Holocaust tourism in the context of this paper is the role of visitor feedback and narrative records of views, experiences and understandings of European Holocaust tourism sites. Visitor books, although featured in almost all museums are rarely consulted as data sources to inform research into heritage at a general level, and dark tourism more specifically (MacDonald, 2005). Yet such resources and their various online equivalents including blogs, forums, social media sites, podcasts, vlogs, photo sharing communities and virtual realities represent an indispensable space for the accumulation of

rich qualitative data, which is ripe for narrative analysis, particularly using discourse analytical methods. Visitor feedback media are the primary means through which heritage attractions and museums can access their audiences. Such sources are useful for heritage researchers to consult, particularly where there is an interest in critiquing various styles of entry and ways in which visitors talk about exhibition media and types of display. They are particularly valuable units of analysis where the aim is to understand how exhibitions are made sense of through the lens of personal experience (*Op Cit*: 119). The comprehension of visitor perceptions of heritage settings is recognised as a particularly challenging task (Miglietta and Boero, 2012) that must consider how exhibited ideas are perceived, why heritage sites are visited, and what the various expectations and perceptions of visitors are following an exhibitory experience. As Silverman (1995) notes, humans have in common a fundamental need to express meaning by retelling experience in the form of stories to others, or through the ritual of creating some form of formal or informal record. Amongst the more typical methods of measuring formal visitor interpretations of heritage are questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, telephone and online surveys and participant observation, all of which involve varying degrees of mediation (Binks and Uzzel, 1994, cited in Miglietta and Boero, 2012).

What is particularly valuable about visitor books and their online equivalents is that these formats are *un*-mediated, and thus informal, and they consequently provide a free indication of perceptions (Alexander, 2000). They are reflective, interactive rhetorical devices that gather the thoughts, perceptions and feelings of visitors who are exposed to exhibitory environments (Hooper-Greenhill *et al,* 2001). In this sense, they can be understood as interactive and integral extensions of the exhibitions themselves, and they merit consideration in any in-depth study of exhibition discourses. Visitor guest books, particularly in the context of heritage sites that interpret genocide have been described as repositories of "…some of the humblest, yet most dangerous outlets for anonymous writing in public places… some signatures have the literary quality of a drunken phone call, while others contain eloquence worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize" (Morris, 2011:4). Their content is therefore far from predictable, and they capture a range of perceptions and viewpoints from a variety of anonymous voices.

2.3 Social media and User Generated Content

Far less predictable, and certainly far less subject to regulation or outright censorship are the kinds of experiential reflections on tourism and heritage encounters that continue to amass on social media platforms. Social media are perhaps the most easily and overtly accessible

examples of public discourse in contemporary culture, and the User Generated Content (UGC) that is their lifeblood provides social scientific researchers with a rich and varied data set at a time when even successful commercial research organisations struggle to obtain data from consumers (InSites Consulting, 2012). Tourism is an information-intense business, and it is perhaps because of this fact that technological innovations have facilitated rapid growth in the distribution and accessibility of travel and tourism data and information (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Continued growth in the usage of social media has led to the overwhelming popularity of online user reviews of tourism experiences (Akehurst, 2009). Those that facilitate the generation of written or spoken narrative in particular are useful to social scientific researchers in pursuit of qualitative data.

Particularly remarkable about UGC in the context of travel and tourism is its ability to influence others. Empirical research has demonstrated that traveller reviews have a significant impact on online sales (Ye *et al,* 2011) and traveller review ratings have demonstrably boosted online bookings by some 5% in Chinese markets. However, research by Cox *et al* (2009) suggests that such sites are approached as ancillary resources that play a secondary role to authoritative sources of information such as government funded tourism bodies including National Tourism Organisations. Nonetheless, these platforms are valued by travellers and are approached as trusted intermediaries that offer rankings, league tables and qualitative reflections (Jeacle and Carter, 2011). TripAdvisor, foursquare, yelp and Google+local represent high profile examples of tourism-specific social media spaces that empower consumers to exchange information, opinions and recommendations in relation to destinations, tourism experiences and services (Akehurst, 2009). The power of such media is clear, given that around half of all smartphone owners across the world are comfortable researching, booking and planning their trips to new travel destinations using a mobile device (Techradar, 2018). It has been established in the literature that the primary role of social media platforms specific to tourism activity is to facilitate appraisals of products and experiences (see Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). Amongst the motives for sharing experiences on social media are a variety of perceived personal and community related benefits, and the amassing of social capital (Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). Mkono and Tribe (2016), however suggest that such research rarely looks beyond the role and nature of social media to focus upon the experiences and behaviours of social media users in their cyberspace interactions.

Light (2017) summarises the wide range of methodological approaches that have been deployed in various disciplines to examine dark tourism. Notably, the methods used, particularly by tourism scholars have been overwhelmingly qualitative in scope, and have

involved primary research and analytical approaches such as interpretive accounts of experiences and stakeholder interviews. Secondary sources, including website content and visitor books are identified amongst the sources that have been analysed, although the methodological nature of these analyses are not identified, and there is no specific mention of social media as a unit of analysis, or of critical discourse analysis as a guiding methodological approach. Following Light's observations, discourse analysis, including social media content analysis was undertaken by Podoshen, (2016) who applied assemblage theory to analyse how tourists engage with atrocity heritage tourism. In doing so, Podoshen challenged the idea that Holocaust sites produce fixed meanings. He applied a systematic approach to content analysis to expose the fluidity of meaning that is ascribed to Holocaust sites within diasporic communities. This paper develops upon these findings by exploring meaning making within the wider tourism community setting of social media to identify and discuss further salient discourses that circulate in communities with an interest in Holocaust. In particular, it responds to Podoshen's (2016:14) call for further research in this area so that "…more specific or unique trajectories can be examined among Holocaust tourists."

Such a gap in knowledge creates an opportunity to study social media sites as spaces in which discourses of, and about Holocaust are produced and maintained as a rarefied, fluid field of knowledge. This is particularly the case given that existing research into heritage visitor narratives has predominantly been achieved through primary research involving interactions with visitors in social scientific data-gathering settings including interviews, focus groups and surveys (see for example Jansen-Verbeke and Rekom, 1996 and Marty, 2007) and also research into analogue records of visitor feedback of the type discussed above (MacDonald, 2005). Less obvious in the published literature are studies of visitor narratives that accumulate around the web and social media platforms, particularly in the context of genocide heritage experiences. It is to this gap in the literature that the current paper attends using a netnographic approach informed by Foucauldian reasoning.

3. Methodology

The challenges associated with gathering data from respondents where the research topic or setting can be considered sensitive can be overcome through the adoption of passive netnographic research (Langer and Beckman, 2005). Such an approach provides a naturalistic method to access online communities in order to make observations about tourist experiences and reflections (Podoshen, 2013). Netnography is a flexible interpretive research methodology (Kozinets, 2015) that optimises ethnographic research techniques to analyse virtual communities and the social interactions that take place within these (Ahuja

and Alavi, 2018, Toledano, 2017). Free access to such vast volumes of accumulated and archived social interactions means that the practice of ethnography and indeed of social scientific research has completely changed (Kozinets, 2017). Research can be carried out both actively through participation in communities, or passively based on monitoring online community activities. With particular reference to the latter approach, the challenges associated with gathering data from respondents where the research topic or setting can be considered sensitive can be overcome through the adoption of passive netnographic research (Langer and Beckman, 2005). This approach provides a naturalistic method to access online communities in order to make observations about tourist experiences and reflections (Podoshen, 2013).

Using netnographic research, the researcher is released from the obligation to attend a physical space to conduct observations and is free to explore the variety of social interactions that take place in virtual communities. The data itself, in the context of social media is User Generated Content (UGC), and the research strategy often involves taking field notes and screenshots (Mkono and Markwell, 2014). Netnography has its roots in ethnography; a research methodology that focuses on studying a culture-sharing group (Kulavaz-Onal and Vasquez, 2013) to identify common beliefs, values and behaviours amongst members. Netnography extends the contextual reach of ethnography into "…new temperospatial cultural coordinates that are mediated by contemporary networked communications" (Kozinets, 2017:4).

Netnography tends to be undertaken as a component of a broader triangulated or mixed methodological strategy in tourism research, yet there is nothing to suggest that it cannot be deployed as an autonomous methodological endeavour. The extent to which it can be effective on its own depends on the research question, goals and requisite sources of data (Mkono and Markwell, 2014). In the case of this research, a netnographic strategy using a Foucauldian discursive analytic was applied to interrogate social media touristic perceptions of European Holocaust heritage sites. Specifically, the principle of material repeatability from Foucault's methodological treatise *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1969) was applied to critique the essentialist ways in which objects of knowledge come to be known as inevitable or natural (Hollinshead, 1999) in social media settings. In particular, the concept of repeatable materiality was instrumental in identifying the "regularities and rules of formation" (O' Donnell and Spires, 2012: 2) within the data to identify the discourses presented in the findings section. Nicholl's (2009) interpretation of Foucauldian reasoning was applied to engage with a plurality of texts and source materials with the aim of identifying thematic continuities. Data were accessed in a candid and inclusive way, without the need to plan

how to access participants in the field within the confines of negotiated physical site access. Previous examples of netnographic research that have been applied to tourism research contexts include Podoshen's (2013) study of black metal tourism under the debatably incongruous category of 'dark tourism' and Podoshen and Hunt's (2011) study into the interactions of global Jewish citizens with Eastern European Holocaust themed heritage sites. Liyanage (2015) carried out an active 'micro-netnography' on 15 visitors to Dachau concentration camp in Germany to explore the psychological impact of such visits, and Upton *et al* (2017) analysed travel blogs to explore perceptions of battlefield tourism sites amongst visitors to Vietnam. The current research offers a fresh take on netnography by analysing visitor motivations and interpretations in relation to three high profile Holocaust tourism sites in Europe. It also represents a departure from the types of research methods that are most typically associated with netnography which are those that belong to the positivist category of content analysis which fetishises counts of words and patterns in speech usage achieved through analytical strategies such as coding and thematic analysis (Johnston, 2008). Such an analytical strategy lacks a critical edge and often approaches language as a pattern, rather than as a way of representing, and understanding knowledge creation in discrete community contexts. A Foucauldian approach also brings to the research setting of social media particular analytical areas of focus, such as critical analyses of power and discipline, and the ability to observe how social media spaces impose behavioural patterns on participants, such as a perceived need to engage and to self-disclose.

3.1 Data: Shared narratives, Foucault and subjectivation

This methodology takes orientation from Foucauldian reasoning in two ways. Firstly, online sharing is approached as a behaviour that resonates with panopticism and subjectivation. The second adaptation resides within the methods used to critique UGC on social media, not based on a positivist preoccupation with counting instances of words or phrases, but by applying the more rigorous and critical concept of repeatable materiality outlined in Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*. Repeatable materiality refers to the rules and practices that are built into institutional systems, which come to shape what is regarded as knowledge. The role of the discourse analyst is to examine such language practices to understand how what is said (the 'fact' in language) comes to be understood as 'true' knowledge in various settings. Viewed from a Foucauldian perspective, social media is more than just a mechanism that hosts the exchanging of information. It is also a vehicle for the formation of identity since it involves 'subjectivation' (Kelly, 2013). Subjectivity describes our

ability to shape our own conduct and personality, and this shaping process is itself what Foucault identifies as subjectivation. A Foucauldian approach to social media therefore focuses on the very process that underpins its value: sharing. The sharing of content reaches beyond the simple process of exchanging information. Indeed, when content is shared across social media services, this takes place transparently in the presence of others. The act of sharing is therefore a performance that shapes the logic and experience of the act itself. As such, there is a self-reflexive motive to sharing content on social media spaces such as Trip Advisor and Facebook. In the same way that actors are aware they are being watched by audiences, and they vary their behaviour for effect, sharing on social media involves selecting and framing content with the aim of performing for a particular crowd. Unless content is shared anonymously then what is shared becomes an existential marker of the self. For many, this compulsion to share emanates from an honest desire to inform tribes and communities, and this is where netnography as a methodology finds a natural place as a means to critique what is shared, where it is shared and how it is received.

Data for this research were gathered between June 2017 and April 2019. An evolving text corpus compromising of social media posts from Trip Advisor and Facebook was accessed between these dates to identify salient social-mediatised discourses of Holocaust Heritage experiences. Given the sheer volume of narrative that qualified as relevant for this study, for example, there were some 13,404 TripAdvisor reviews of Auschwitz-Birkenau alone at the time of writing, it was necessary to identify a data saturation point. Rather than purely quantifying this point, (although approximately 1,700 Trip Advisor posts, and 1,000 Facebook posts were accessed) the analytical strategy followed the key methodological propositions advanced by Nicholls (2009). His suggestion is that, in the case of critical discourse analysis, particularly with Foucault in mind it is useful to engage with a plurality of texts requiring patience, attention to detail and an accumulation of source material until further investigation cannot yield new findings. Data reduction was achieved following Nichol's ideas in relation to accumulating familiarity with source-data, and Namey et al's (2008) design for data-driven content analysis. As such, entries were read closely and themes, trends and ideas became apparent over time to inform the analysis. Themes emerged *from* the analysis, rather than being fixed in advance, and in this sense a consensus across views was apparent. The point of data saturation was therefore reached across, rather than within cases (Strauss *et al,* 1998). The quotes that are provided in the analysis below are representative examples of the discourses that they are identified against. They are therefore provided to 'prepare the way' for analysis (Antaki *et al*, 2003),

but they do not, on their own represent analysis. Using Foucauldian reasoning, they can be considered statements, or basic units of discourse that belong to the wider discursive formation (Wight, 2016) that they are identified against.

As with any discourse analysis, this research cannot be offered as something that is 'complete' since it captures only a partial field of knowledge, bound to a specific temporal and spatial context. The discourses that are identified may be part of a more elusive positivity that could be identified through future research which examines other tourism encounters with Holocaust, through for example observations of tours and analyses of the contents of visitor books. One of the major limitations to netnography is captured by Podoshen (2016) who notes that in technology mediated environments there is no way of guaranteeing the authenticity of content. Individuals can also exert a degree of control over their self-image and their anonymity. Indeed, since anonymity is a defining trait of the population, it is an un-segmented sample, and so it is not possible to refine the data into demographic and other descriptive categories.

It has also been argued that any discourse analysis of social media should focus, not only on the text that is produced, but also on the processes that underlie the way in which it is created according to a set of fixed conventions (Bouvier and Machin, 2018). For example, in the case of Facebook, content is presented in a timeline format, so the 'latest' is of greater value, and content with the 'most likes' is seen as important. In the case of Trip Advisor, account holders are presented with a template interface for structuring reviews, and this necessitates the scoring of experiences and providing narrative and photographic feedback on the various component aspects of the holistic experience. The language that is accessed is thus very much integrated into forms of design, images, and data and so the social media platforms themselves come to shape the nature of content and discourse. The challenge of analysis was therefore to focus attention on the *social* dimension of social media, whilst bearing in mind the rules of engagement that are dictated by the technology. The discourses below were thus identified following an analysis of data for thematic regularity. The headings themselves describe these regularities.

Where not obviously signposted, the heritage sites that are referenced in the excerpts are abbreviated as follows:

- Jewish Museum, Berlin (JMB)
- Memorial Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau (MMAB)

- Anne Frank House (AFH)

A brief orientation to the three museums is provided in the table below.

Table 1: Profile of the three Holocaust Museums that are the subject of social media reviews for this research

Museum	Brief description	Visitor numbers	Source/s
The Anne Frank House	Ann Frank was a German born, Jewish Dutch girl whose diary of her family's two-year period of hiding during the German occupation of the Netherlands came to be recognised as a classic of war literature. The Anne Frank House which is the address where the family went into hiding was established in 1957 and its mission is to create awareness of Anne Frank's story across the world.	1,300,000 in 2019	Ann Frank House (2020)
Memorial and Museum Auschwitz Birkenau	Former Nazi concentration and extermination camp; the largest of its kind. 1.1 million men, women and children lost their lives at this site. Established as a museum in 1947.	1.5 million in 2014, and over 44 million since 1947	Auschwitz.org (2020)
The Jewish Museum, Berlin	Learning European museum designed by Daniel Liebskind with the aim of 'making palpable' German-Jewish history. Serves as a place of active reflection on Jewish history and culture.	722,000 in 2016	Jmberlin (2020)

4. Research Results and Discussion

4.1 Holocaust Heritage as Social Memory

The range of assumptions, motives and expectations about the museums and heritage sites that are the subject of this research soon come into focus as discourses of contestation over the purpose and meaning of the sites. There is, in particular, abundant evidence of Tunbridge and Ashworth's (1996) conceptual framework of heritage dissonance; the idea that various visitor groups, each carrying unique expectations attribute contrasting stories to heritage objects and spaces. Despite being recognised as a powerful means of celebrating shared identity and belonging, heritage also serves to disinherit and to divide, and to create ways of articulating differences with 'others' (Kisic, 2013). Heritage dissonance arises when various stakeholders attribute contested meanings and values to past events, which are encountered in heritage settings. In particular, contestation emerges around places, events, practices and people. To develop upon the latter of these categories of interpretation; people, the following social media excerpts are a reminder of the contrasting expectations of visitors anticipating a connection with the various 'other' victims of Auschwitz that are arguably less bound into the social memory of Auschwitz-Birkenau than Jewish victims. The site is, after all, a space that is possibly the most powerful cultural icon of Holocaust in the world.

> *We specifically visited the memorial to the Roma and Sinti, whose persecution, though smaller in numbers is no less devastating that the genocide of the Jews (JMB)*

> *Well, no matter if you are protestant, catholic, Jewish, Buddhist or else it is worth to see as it is not only about the Jewish holocaust, it's way beyond that. (JMB)*

> *The interesting aspect of Auschwitz is how it's seen and remembered by the Polish people themselves. The early information panels clearly tell you that the first 'victims' were ethnic Poles. (MMAB)*

Further evidence of dissonance in terms of practices and people takes the form of the polysemic character of cultural representation in heritage, particularly in terms of the Jewish Museum in Berlin; a site that clearly provokes a range of expectations amongst its visitors. In terms of social media narratives, some visitors had quite fixed expectations about the themes and narratives they expected to come across. For example, whilst there is nothing

inherently revealing in the title of the 'Jewish Museum' in Berlin that details the thematic focus of this collection, yet there is some anticipation that what one can expect to be presented with is a narrative of Jewish persecution and Holocaust. Where this likelihood was confirmed through experience, the accuracy and nature of what the museum is 'telling' visitors was called into question and judgements were typically shaped by preconceptions.

We thought it would be about the history of the Jewish religion and their sad persecution, it wasn't (JMB)

Very small section on the holocaust. Most of the museum is about Jewish history and culture (JMB)

Personally, when we first walked in it was not what was expected, we felt it was more about the architect than the actual Jewish Heritage. (JMB)

These narratives relate to what Kisic (2013) describes as a set of competing claims to understanding that are made in relation to heritage 'realities'. Conflicting sets of beliefs, values and expectations of others are often central to these claims, and in the case of the heritage sites that are the subject of this research where visitors are presented with narratives that can be uncomfortable or traumatic to encounter, these values, beliefs and expectations emerge as reflections on the consequences of, and lessons from genocide. The thematic regularity to these values is an example of what Foucault terms the *episteme,* a space of knowledge within which competing theories and concepts exist to shape the conditions of knowledge in a defined era. The narratives reveal much about the nature of the present day social memory of Holocaust, at a time when populist politics and the rival of the legitimacy of extreme political opinions take pride of place in mass media discourses. Touristic social media in this sense represent a clear example of what Foucault calls discursive practice. This term describes a set of culturally specific rules for circulating different forms of knowledge in groups or communities. The rules come into focus during the course of analysis and the process of discourse analysis itself is required to identify them. One of the most noticeable rules in the context of the social media sites that are the subject of this analysis is that Holocaust is routinely deployed as a reference point to warn visitors of what humankind is capable of and must affect to avoid in future. Some examples are reproduced below:

Very emotional site. A sombre reminder of times of man's inhumanity. All people should see this to hope it never happens again. (MMAB)

A warning in the age of a resurgence of right wing, nationalist and fascist views. (AFH)

...The entire history of Anne Frank unfolds before you and leaves you in total disbelief of what people are capable of.(AFH)

4.2 To Speak or not to Speak: Reactions to Holocaust

Saussure's theory of the sign, comprising of the signifier; the pointing finger, the word or the image, and the signified; the concept or meaning indicated by the signifier, is relevant here in attempting to understand how visitors perceive European Holocaust collections and heritage sites. As Plokhotnyuk and Mitrofaneko (2018) note, expositions can, and must be perceived or 'read' to negotiate their content, and this reading becomes clearer the more the visitor is able to combine items, inscriptions and arrangements into a common sense order or image. Museum language operates according to a particular code, and visitors to museums must negotiate the objects they encounter to make sense of the main message. Given that the framing discourses of the museums and heritage sites that are the subject of this analysis are death, crime, totalitarian politics and tragedy, such thematic content is uniquely difficult to make sense of, and to speak of in social media reviews. There is, after all, a commonly held view that the Holocaust is something that is 'unspeakable' (Richardson, 2005). The reviews analysed routinely expose moral dilemmas and difficulties in finding the right words to describe the sites and frame experiences as evidenced in the sample of review narratives below.

There really are no words to describe it (AFH))

It's hard to say you enjoyed a visit to Anne Frank House Museum. What happened is so harrowing; it's not for us to enjoy (AFH)

I'm still trying to process this place of unspeakable acts (MMAB)

I expected to feel more sadness inside, more anger while walking throughout this camps. I was very sad and disappointed with myself for being almost unfeeling and drawn into this touristic theme park setting.....(MMAB)

Visitors to European Holocaust sites who share their experiences on social media frequently position themselves between acknowledging the atrocities of the past and looking to the

future optimistically, framing the museum experience as a reference point in rejecting conflict and genocide. In many cases, the preservation of the physical building in which these experiences are undertaken are as important as the messages they convey. The following excerpts from reviews of Anne Frank's House are provided as examples:

> *Not just a place for sad reflection but also a place of inspiration and hope for the future.*
>
> *I think we all (sic) living in the modern world need this lesson of History to remember and keep our future safe from such terrible events.*
>
> *...This place is a must for people to visit to show the clear lessons that humans should take from our past.*

Memory in this sense is an active process in which the past is continuously renegotiated and re-interpreted at the level of the collective and the individual, not simply through the experiences of the present, but through the *needs* of the present (Smith, 2009). A number of the social media reviews that were analysed underscored the role of these 'present needs' which were typically articulated through a sense of anguish about the fact that atrocities are not consigned to the past, but are in fact a salient feature of present day society. The following excerpts, again from reviews of Anne Frank's House are relevant:

> *The visit is a must. It's a living memorial to a brave set of people and the horrors of the concentration camps and persecution of a religion must never be forgotten. Sadly this still goes on today in conflict and ironically in the name of some religions*
>
> *Thank god evil was stopped. If only more people today would remember the horrors. There are too many places in the world where genocide is still happening.*

Finally, as Goertz (1998:1) observes, the Holocaust tends to re-emerge in the public arena with each new generation as an unresolved memory. It occupies a liminal zone between history and memory, and between "…the past as an object of dispassionate study and the past as an affective part of personal and collective consciousness". It is therefore as much a challenge for the heritage industry to create a cohesive historical narrative to make sense of Holocaust as it is for visitors to find the words to reflect on Holocaust heritage experiences. What is clear from analysing this, partial field of social media discourses of Holocaust heritage is its power to invoke emotion and memory as part of the heritage gaze. Far from imposing its own influences on the present, the past is understood and shaped through

subjective experience and the lens of what is happening 'now'. The following excerpts underscore the use of the present as a lens through which to view the events of the past which are interpreted, in this case, at the Memorial Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau:

A place to be visited to ensure we realise what happened, and how lucky we are today to live in "our world"

The incomprehensible suffering these people endured – unbelievable to acknowledge that similar atrocities still occur in this world today – the human race should be ashamed

I believe anyone with a misunderstanding of what actually went on here should go, and then reflect on life today, and how lucky we are

In some sense, the excerpts above give credence to previous observations by Stone (2012) and Podoshen *et al* (2015), that dark tourism experiences can 'haunt' visitors. Whereas these two studies suggest that the Holocaust is integrated into the collective memories and narratives of Jewish people in particular, this research suggests that many visitors, not just the diaspora share a collective consciousness in relation to Holocaust, and a sense of obligation to remember, and to use the experience as a visceral, life affirming opportunity.

4.3 Obligation and ritual

Obligation has been identified as a motivation linked to remembrance in genocide heritage both conceptually (see Bowman and Pezullo, 2010) and through primary research (Kang *et al,* 2012) but it has never been examined in these contexts using netnographic analysis. Whereas Kang *et al.* (2012) established that visitors to dark tourism sites are motivated by education, curiosity and a genealogically powered obligation to connect with tragic events in the past, this research finds that, in addition to these motives, the iconic place of Holocaust in public culture is often sufficient on its own to compel visitors towards heritage attractions. The excerpts below, taken from reviews of the Memorial Museum Auschwitz Birkenau are salient, and confirm the level of familiarity visitors have with the various recognisable sights and structures:

Next stop is Auschwitz II. Birkenau. You go through the famous arched gate, and the size of the place takes your breath away.

Whilst in Birkenau, be sure to see the unmistakable gate, the ramps, the remains of the crematoria and the inside of the prisoners' bunkers.

We were taken in through the iconic 'Arbeit Macht Frei' gate

Many of the visitors that left reviews on the social media sites analysed make direct reference to having encountered Holocaust - including the Holocaust spaces that are the subject of their reviews - previously and elsewhere in the cultural realm, including in books, television and in film. Direct reference is frequently made to these encounters in articulating the extent to which the tourist experience lives up to set of previously engendered expectations. For many, Holocaust heritage, as well as other popular cultural iterations of Holocaust ostensibly qualifies as an educational orientation to history. The following excerpts underscore the role of popular culture in shaping touristic obligation:

...I have watched many films and read books on this subject, but still wasn't prepared for what we were to see. (MMAB)

We've all seen Schindler's List, Life is Beautiful, and The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas. Most of us will have read the Diary of Anne Frank at school. It is not until you come here and see the sheer scale of the camps (of many) that you realise the "efficiency" of Hitler's Genocide Programme. (AFH)

Auschwitz II (Birkenau) is the portion that is infamous in books and movies, where the train comes into the gate, and the fate of the prisoners was determined. (MMAB)

It's quite surreal, almost like a film, set, seeing what has become so familiar through documentaries and films (MMAB)

Central to the discourse of obligation is a shared and powerful sense that visits to iconic Holocaust heritage sites are *de rigueur*, and that the 'returns' on visiting are linked to an opportunity to encounter real and iconic Holocaust objects as part of an authentic experience. The quotes below illuminate the centrality of, and indeed expectations regarding site authenticity. The third excerpt is interesting in the sense that 'authenticity' is measured in comparison to something quintessentially inauthentic; a Hollywood film :

Amazing tour and information, and they have really retained the original feel (AFH)

Not at all what I expected. It was clean and tidy, with only one building feeling authentic (MMAB)

I could not believe I was walking the same grounds displayed in movies, and various documentaries. It was raining outside that lead to an authentic feeling from Schindler's List (MMAB)

Visits to Holocaust heritage sites are also perceived by visitors as ritualistic, symbolic gestures that legitimate the events that are commemorated as the following excerpts suggest:

Our group were hardly determined to visit this museum but were swayed by reviews. It almost felt like an obligation. (AFH)

It's so important to learn about something so awful to prevent anything like this happening ever again, I felt obliged to visit and see for myself the conditions people were placed in

I had said before visiting Krakow that I wouldn't visit Auschwitz or Birkenau. However, after speaking to several people who had, I felt I should visit as a sign of respect. By not going I felt it's like saying it didn't happen (MMAB)

To develop upon this idea of touristic ritual, Parekh (2019:100) offers a useful parallel to political obligation in noting "…moral and political capital cannot be built up once and for all, or left in the care of a few. It exists and is actualised in the thoughts and actions of its citizens… it is woven into the fabric of collective life". The very practice of visiting an iconic Holocaust heritage site is, to some degree an enactment of political citizenship, which can simultaneously be a gesture of protest against injustices and a way of helping to maintain the integrity of public memory. Social media spaces, given their popularity are in a unique positon to cultivate authoritative ideas around what counts as 'normal' behaviour, and in this context, what 'we' ought to feel compelled to do, particularly when in the vicinity of iconic Holocaust heritage sites (i.e., visit them). These social media reflections remind us of our responsibilities, and direct our gaze towards requisite routes, itineraries and rituals. In this sense, they have the potential to influence behaviours, and to regulate ideas about why and how to consume Holocaust heritage. However, as the discourse of moral transgression

identifies below, visitors to Holocaust sites can engage in a seemingly virtuous and cathartic form of consumption whilst remaining completely entrenched in a range of irresponsible behaviours, both consciously and subconsciously. Nonetheless, the role of social media in driving a compulsion to visit Holocaust heritage sites resonates with Barnett and Land's (2007:1069) assertion that the sense of duty to engage with such heritage is driven, not through 'monological reflection on one's own obligations, but by encounters with others'.

Finally, the fact that obligation is such a powerful driving force behind the sheer volume of visits to the sites analysed is something that visitors are increasingly aware of, and often uncomfortable with. This observation strikes a chord with the idea of 'overtourism'; a term that has come to describe the agitations between those advocating the right to travel, and residents and other communities with an interest in protecting environments from the damage of tourism (Butler and Dodds, 2019). The excerpts blow are illustrative of these tensions:

> *If you had the chance to visit other concentration camps, do not go to Auschwitz. Since it's the most popular, it's overcrowded It's not Well organized, you need to book weeks in advance (MMAB)*

> *When we finally got in it was so overcrowded that you couldn't move or walk to the next room. A lot of the time we were stood waiting to get into the next room. They let way too many people in at once (AFH)*

> *There was little time to pause and reflect as there were people behind you the whole way. (MMAB)*

The discourse of obligation therefore combines the discursive regularity of Holocaust as a powerful narrative within the wider public culture which serves as a 'push' factor, and recognition of the potential of the popularity of these sites to do damage to their longer-term wellbeing.

4.4 Ethical Codes and Moral Transgression

Tourism encounters are moral encounters, and morality in a tourism context is a socially constructed set of values shaped by the individual as much as by society (Pennycook, 1994). Caton (2012, cited in Mostafanezhad and Hannam, 2016) notes that morality describes the imaginative and discursive capacity for thinking about how things ought to be,

as opposed to describing how things are. This argument resonates powerfully with the social media reviews of Holocaust heritage that are the subject of this analysis. Many of these reviews betray a sense of moral outrage at the behaviour of 'other' individual tourists at these sites. There is a level of discomfort with the act of tourism itself taking place at sites which are regarded by many as sacred, and thus fundamentally incompatible with tourism, which is, after all and according to conventional wisdom an activity more commonly involving pleasant diversion to pleasant places. The excerpts below convey some of the moral panic surrounding the idea of tourism at Holocaust sites. Examples of both discomfort with tourism at Holocaust sites as a general principle, and with witness accounts of transgressive behaviour amongst individuals at these sites are provided:

> *Why do busloads have to trundle out to an extermination camp? Yes, we need to remember the horror so that it does not happen again, but there is something very distasteful about a concentration camp…becoming a place of morbid fascination for the tourist's 'to do' list. (MMAB)*

> *Again, be prepared for a general lack of respect, for example we saw a family allowing their children to climb onto the train wagon transport parked on the track in remembrance.(MMAB)*

> *I would begin by suggesting that this not be a check list item on someone's tour list. Go to learn and reflect not to check a box. (AFH)*

In some cases, as the excerpt below illustrates the tastefulness of practices within the museums are a source of anxiety:

> *I saw a little cup next to the till saying 'tips to Disneyland' – seriously?!?! (MMAB)*

> *It was a bit surreal having lunch at the Auschwitz café when you consider what you were about to see (MMAB)*

The issue of photography at Holocaust heritage sites across the world is gradually coming into focus in the literature, and the idea of taking selfies in particular has been cited as an example of morally transgressive behaviour (Dalziel, 2016). The selfie is an assemblage that connects, self, space, technology and social networks (Kedzior *et al.*, 2016). Murray (2015) suggests that many see the selfie as a putatively shallow and narcissistic cultural obsession, and he suggests that these self-imaging strategies, particularly popular amongst young

779 women are treasured by younger generations as one of the most effective outlets for self-
780 determination. Selfies are already the objects of a politicised discourse (Gannon and
781 Prothero, 2016) that create unrest, particularly around the putative objectification of women,
782 yet the practice of selfies at Holocaust visitor attractions has created an entirely new level of
783 moral panic, and the media has begun to take notice (see for example the Independent,
784 2019).
785
786 Perhaps not surprisingly, there are, within the accounts of Holocaust tourism experiences
787 examined for this research opposing viewpoints in terms of what counts as tasteful
788 photography. Capturing aesthetic photographs of objects (see the final two quotes below) is
789 viewed in stark contrast to taking selfies (see the first two quotes below) which, as the
790 excerpts below demonstrate is an act considered to be disturbing at best.
791
792 *Taking selfies at the site should not be allowed. We should be visiting this site to learn*
793 *about what happened and remember those innocent victims who lost their lives. I could*
794 *not believe my eyes when I saw some careless individuals talking selfies (MMAB)*
795
796 *..Taking photos posing next to razor wire, selfies with victim's hair in the background,*
797 *and even group shots in front of the crematoria had to be seen to be believed. The point*
798 *of it all was clearly lost on some. (MMAB)*
799
800 *I did take a large number of photographs at both sites, purely as a memory for myself,*
801 *though I did take great care not to include anything that was personal to the victims*
802 *(MMAB and AFH)*
803
804 *...However, whilst we took numerous significant photos here (and all but about 3 places*
805 *you are allowed to) neither of us took photos featuring each other (MMAB)*
806
807 The accounts above leave room for the possibility that inter-generational tensions exist when
808 it comes to photography at Holocaust tourism sites. However, the assumption is that selfie-
809 taking is narcissistic and careless, given the context. Yet taking selfies is something that
810 most of today's younger generation are comfortable with (*Op Cit)* and may be a legitimate
811 and natural means of forming a connection with the experience, which is, after all, a tourism
812 experience. Indeed, Iqani and Schroeder (2015) note that, far from being a form of digital
813 narcissism, the selfie is connected to concepts of authenticity, consumption and self-
814 expression. The selfie is a present day form of social currency, and the normalcy of selfies
815 as disposable snapshots of everyday consumption is accentuated by their emergence in

every corner of social life, spanning from kitten pictures and banal domestic settings to funerals, and tourism, including tourism to Holocaust commemoration spaces. If we accept the proposition that the selfie is a normalised social currency, the act of taking a selfie inside, for example a crematorium at a Holocaust memorial site is not designed to offend at all. It simply reinforces the role of the selfie as a moment of agency and self-expression, and the argument that deviance exists in the eye of the beholder. Indeed, Kozinets *et al*.'s (2017) typology of museum selfies is useful for contextualising and explaining this behaviour. Of the types of museum selfies identified (art interactions, blending into art, mirror selfies, silly/clever selfies, contemplative selfies, and iconic selfies) the latter two are perhaps the most salient. Museums, including Holocaust memorials are stages for identity work and they create opportunities to use selfies in the pursuit of profound self-reflection and the communication of emotions and expression.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes towards a clearer understanding of visitor perceptions of, and reactions to European Holocaust heritage in the context of social media reviews. It also proposes a hitherto untested approach to netnographic analysis, which is based on the methodological principles of Foucault's material repeatability, achieved through an accumulation of familiarity with a discursive setting. The four organising discourses identified draw particular attention to the values, existential anxieties, emotions, priorities and expectations of visitors to these sites based upon free access to unmediated, albeit anonymous reflective narrative. In terms of values, and indeed expectations, the findings identify the role of Holocaust heritage in shaping a social memory that is influenced by conflicting sets of beliefs, values and expectations. Visitors to European Holocaust heritage sites carry with them a range of complex expectations, which are typically shaped by prior encounters with Holocaust from elsewhere in the cultural sphere. In this sense, they seek confirmation of earlier interfaces with cultural expressions of Holocaust in, for example, films, books and television programmes, and these encounters temper the 'emotive intensity' (Kidron, 2013) of the Holocaust memorial experience. Given the iconic status, certainly of two of the sites analysed (MMAB and AFH), and the sheer power of the Holocaust as a discursive formation in popular culture, many visitors have very fixed expectations about what a Holocaust heritage experience should entail. The extent to which these expectations

are confirmed shapes judgements about the overall value of, and cultural 'returns' on such an experience.

In terms of existential anxiety, Holocaust heritage experiences are routinely contemplated through the lens of the present, and visitors use these experiences to articulate hopes for the future. Holocaust heritage, in this sense triggers an 'active' memory that engages the subject in self-reflection around present day politics and society. There are also anxieties in relation to how others behave at Holocaust heritage sites, and a putative, democratic code of ethics around what counts as morally acceptable tourist behaviour is gradually emerging and hardening within social-mediatised discourses of Holocaust heritage.

In terms of emotions, unsurprisingly these experiences elicit great sadness and pensive reflection as well as empathy for the victims of Holocaust. What is certainly more surprising and unexpected is the strength of feeling articulated in relation to other visitors and their behaviours (for example, selfie-taking), and to the very idea of Holocaust, itself as a form of heritage. The latter is a troublesome proposition for many visitors. Selfies on the other hand remain problematic since they are regarded as a form of deviant behaviour, and yet they form part of the social currency of a generation that is used to sharing, regardless of the context. Future research is required on the topic of selfies to understand more about the profile, and particularly the age categories of visitors who specifically take offence to these.

When it comes to priorities, Holocaust heritage focuses the mind. Amongst the salient returns on a visit to a Holocaust heritage site, according to this research are existential self-awareness and the urge to embrace life, an urgency to learn from the past, and a sense of obligation to remember the victims of Holocaust with a focus on the future. These findings have implications for the management of Holocaust visitor attractions since there is clearly a need to be aware of, and responsive to an emerging set of visitor expectations in relation to how to conduct oneself (and how not to) when visiting Holocaust heritage spaces. There is perhaps a need to (re)communicate a set of expectations to all visitors in terms of what is considered unacceptable behaviour, and a need to rethink what counts as tasteful photography. However, this must be balanced with clear recognition that photography, and the sharing of photographs is no longer just ancillary to the tourism experience, but is absolutely central to it.

In terms of the focus on social media, and, methodologically, the innovative approach to netnography, the research confirms the extent of the changing virtual landscape of tourism, and in particular, the growth in participation in online communities where tourists overtly

review and reflect on heritage experiences. The continued popularity of social media legitimates the use of netnography as a rigorous and efficacious standalone methodology, and the adherence to Foucaldian thinking as part of this process provides a useful strategy to focus the researcher on content and criticality, rather than simply on patterns and the regularity of words and phrases. In applying a specific model of netnography, it is hoped that the paper will raise greater awareness of netnography as a methodology and that it will encourage others to confidently execute netnographic research in tourism research. The management of museums is about collecting, and responding to visitor feedback as an ongoing pursuit. Studies such as this, which distil large and complex archives of visitor feedback into discursive themes offer stakeholders involved in the management of Holocaust museums a refined data set that offers a window into what visitors think of the collections, as well as what anxieties they have about the thematic content, and the behaviours of other visitors.

This paper therefore builds on existing research into Holocaust tourism in a number of ways. For example, previous research in this area has applied netnographic research to focus on the Jewish diaspora as a separate and segmented visitor type to analyse the reactions of this community to European Holocaust heritage (Podoshen and Hunt, (2011). This research develops upon earlier work by capturing some of the motivators and determinants of Holocaust tourism from within the wider, unsegmented communities of Holocaust heritage visitors that post to popular social media sites. In this sense, it removes the filters of market segmentation and ethno-religious identities to provide insight into the kind of reception that Holocaust heritage receives as shared public resource.

It has been suggested that visits to Holocaust heritage sites are ritualistic (Podoshen, 2016) and are, for some, a means to legitimate and shape contemporary Jewish identity. Indeed, many diasporic organised tours incorporate religious obligations such as memorial services, the lighting of memorial candles and recitations of ‘the mourner’s prayer’: *kaddish* (Sion, 2017) However, this research confirms the much wider role of obligation in the context of Holocaust heritage as a tourism experience that commands wider public appeal. Specifically, it suggests that the Holocaust museums that were the focus of analysis are fundamentally of interest to a wider community of tourists, beyond diasporic and other victim communities, since they signify such a powerfully iconic historical event, and one that is frequently encountered in other areas of the cultural sphere prior to visitation. In this sense, the research proposes that visits to Holocaust heritage sites are often driven by latent or implicit motives that have their roots in prior encounters with Holocaust, through for example film, theatre and literature. Holocaust tourism as a vehicle of self-representation and identity

formation, particularly for the Jewish diaspora (Podoshen and Hunt, 2011) is an argument that has been clearly made. However, when the filters of ethnic, national and religious identities are removed as is the case with this research it becomes clear that visitation is also driven by an obligation that has no specific link to identity formation. Rather, visits are motivated by responsible citizenship, and the need to legitimate such an evocative historical era that is so ingrained in the wider public imagination. The familiar marketing trope "*Tourism is everyone's business*" finds traction in this context, as does the notion that tourism is a ritualistic behaviour which, through various authoritative texts, directs us to consume in particular and predictable ways.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Managers and stakeholders involved in the supply of Holocaust heritage will be interested in the synthesis of reflective narratives that this research presents since it provides a window into the expectations, as well as the reactions of visitors to three of the world's most iconic examples of this type of heritage. There is clearly a need to be aware of, and responsive to an emerging set of visitor expectations in relation to how to conduct oneself (and how not to) when visiting Holocaust heritage spaces. There is perhaps a need to (re)communicate a set of expectations to all visitors in terms of what is considered unacceptable behaviour, particularly when it comes to photography. However, this must be balanced with clear recognition that photography, and the sharing of photographs is no longer just ancillary to the tourism experience, but is absolutely central to it. In addition, visitor reviews help tourism businesses evolve, and online reviews in particular offer managers a free insight into visitor expectations so that some thought can be given to how best to meet these. Given the profoundly emotive nature of Holocaust heritage, visitor reflections on social media can be particularly useful to the managers of such sites when it comes to planning interpretative strategies and the content of guided and non-guided tours.

The study makes three key points as follows:

- This research adds to knowledge in the domain of visitor interpretations of Holocaust heritage and identifies four salient discourses that draw attention to the values, existential anxieties, emotions, priorities and expectations of visitors.
- In addition to the emotions that are typically identified in wider studies of dark tourism (sadness, empathy etc.) this study provides further evidence of moral panic in relation to the behaviours of 'other' tourists at Holocaust heritage sites, and it

identifies a number of anxieties in relation to the function of iconic Holocaust spaces as tourism attractions. It further identifies that such visits trigger an 'active memory' that sees visitors contemplate Holocaust through the lens of the present

- The paper introduces new debate around the idea of selfies at Holocaust memorial sites. Despite the obvious offence that selfie-taking causes, this act has become an inextricable, normalised form of self-expression, particularly amongst the younger generation, and the popularity of selfies is not in decline. This paper identifies an opportunity for Holocaust memorial managers as well as visitors to debate selfie-taking, and to consider the possibility that Holocaust memorial sites are, after all, museums and therefore stages for 'self-identity work' and profound self-reflection.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

Whilst a study such as this cannot in itself capture the complete picture in terms of reviews of visits to European Holocaust heritage sites that are expressed freely on social media, it offers a useful analysis of a partial discursive field. Many thousands of relevant social media posts have been overlooked in the course of undertaking this research, yet the typical protocols associated with data saturation have been followed to ensure rigour. In this sense the study provides unique and new insights into how visitors react to Holocaust in heritage settings.

The research provides the basis for future inquiries to extend the reach of netnographic discourse analysis to other social media spaces, and to other tourism research problems. It also invites further debate and research around selfies, and the particular opportunity to carry out descriptive research to arrive at a better understanding of the profile of visitors who are offended by this practice.

The fact that social media provides free access to such a wealth of qualitative data should be embraced, particularly amongst discourse analysts who can access such an archive of information using netnography as a standalone method. There is an opportunity for future research to test the observations about the obligations of unsegmented visitors to Holocaust tourism heritage sites on other research samples using a range of methods.

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