Transforming Metro Manila Cemeteries in to Thanatourism Destination an International Dark Tourism Model

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Abstract

Thanatourism, or dark tourism, focuses on visiting sites related to death, tragedy, and commemoration. This qualitative study, employing a deductive thematic analysis, investigates the feasibility of Metro Manila cemeteries as thanatourism destinations. Five key sites—Paco Park, San Agustin Crypt, Manila American Cemetery, Libingan ng mga Bayani, and Loyola Memorial Park—were examined to determine best practices, commonalities, and distinct strategies from both tourist and tourism agency perspectives. Data collection involved interviews and observational analysis, guided by pre-established themes such as historical significance, visitor engagement, promotional efforts, and cultural sensitivity. Findings highlight that well-maintained cemeteries with rich historical narratives and structured tourism programs attract greater visitor interest. Tourism agencies emphasize ethical marketing, digital engagement, and heritage preservation as effective promotional strategies. Based on the thematic findings, an International Dark Tourism Model was developed, integrating structured development, immersive experiences, digital tourism, and sustainable management. This model provides a strategic framework for enhancing Metro Manila cemeteries as globally recognized thanatourism sites, ensuring a balance between tourism promotion and cultural respect.

Keywords: Thanatourism, Dark Tourism, Deductive Thematic Analysis, Cemetery Tourism, Metro Manila