



# **Chasing Shadows in Varosha: The Intriguing Allure of a Ghost Town**

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**Abstract**

The debate on whether ghosts are real has been ongoing for centuries. However, the fact that ghost towns are a reality is undoubtable. Varosha, in Cyprus, has been deserted for years. Victim of an invasion in 1974, this area is striped of any hustle. The only glimpse of life is the tourists that are attracted by its gruesome past. Therefore, this Cypriot town became a hot spot for dark tourism seekers. Dark tourism is a controversial trend that has been growing throughout the years. This paper aims to explore the motivations behind the decision to visit places that are known for their tragic past. The connection between the proximity to the event that led the town to be deserted with the motivations to visit that site it's another point of interest in this dissertation. To satisfy the research objectives, the conclusion will be developed taking into consideration the data collected from focus groups. The 24 participants will be divided into four groups, according to their nationalities with some groups being composed of mixed citizenships and the others being homogenous in that requisite. Based on the research using Leximancer, it was possible to determine that tourists are not motivated to visit ghost towns. The demotivators are affected by the proximity to the event, with Cypriots mentioning reasons such as anger and fear of supporting the illegal occupation, and other nationalities referring to an ethical motivation. This dissertation can help tourism operators and governments marketing their destinations in a more appealing way.

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**Palavras-Chave:** Turismo negro, Cidade-fantasma, Varosha, Chipre, motivações, Ética, História

### **Resumo**

O debate sobre a existência de fantasmas tem-se arrastado por anos. Contudo, a existência de cidades-fantasma é uma realidade inquestionável. Varosha, no Chipre está deserta há anos. Vítima da invasão de 1974, esta cidade encontra-se desprovida de qualquer vida. Os únicos sinais de atividade, são dados pelos turistas que são atraídos pelo seu passado macabro. Esta cidade tornou-se assim um hotspot para os ávidos de turismo negro. Turismo Negro é uma tendência controversa que tem vindo a ganhar popularidade. Este estudo tenciona explorar as motivações por detrás da decisão de visitar sítios conhecidos pelo seu passado trágico. A relação entre a proximidade ao evento que levou aquela cidade a tornar-se desertada e as motivações para a visitar, são também objeto de interesse para este estudo. Para satisfazer os objetivos de pesquisa, as conclusões irão ser desenvolvidas tendo por base os dados recolhidos na amostra. Os 24 participantes foram separados em quatro focus groups, de acordo com as respetivas nacionalidades, com grupos compostos por um misto de origens e outros mais homogêneos no que toca a este parâmetro. Baseado no estudo, usando o Leximance, é possível aferir que os turistas não estão motivados a visitar cidades-fantasma. Os fatores desmotivadores são influenciados pela proximidade ao evento, com os Cipriotas a referirem razões como raiva e medo de estarem a apoiar a ocupação ilegal, e com as outras nacionalidades a apontarem razões éticas. Esta dissertação pode ajudar operadores turísticos e governos a tornarem os seus destinos mais atraentes para potenciais visitantes.

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## 1. Introduction

After millions of years of evolution, the human species, even without being the oldest to inhabit the Earth, became the dominant force in shaping Earth's destiny (Vitousek et al., 1997). Humans have been studied relentlessly to answer questions that would allow us to understand each other better. However, some mysteries still need to be solved (Taylor, 1980). Our attraction to the dark still seems paradoxical, for it entices us to explore the grim, the shadows, the enigmatic, and the macabre facets of our existence (Lennon, 2017). This interest in the gruesome comes to such an extent that it can become deadly. In 2023, OceanGate Expeditions decided to develop Titan, a submersible that would allow the common human to go into the depths of the Atlantic to see what was left of Titanic's tragedy (Betts, 2023). After more than 100 years, a team of five people embarked on Titan driven by their curiosity and passion for the famous fatality. Unfortunately, the faith of Titan's passengers was the same as the Titanic's. With the submersible imploding, everyone onboard died (Ax, J., Gorman, S., 2023).

This attraction to the gruesome has given momentum to a phenomenon known as dark tourism. This new concept came to defy the traditional idea that tourism revolves around images of pristine beaches and breathtaking landscapes. (Lennon, 2017). The latter is shrouded in shadows and steeped in the macabre (Lennon & Foley, 2000). It represents an enigmatic, complex, and captivating parallel reality when it comes to the traditional tourism we are used to. Due to its dark nature, this conception is controversial (Lennon & Foley, 1996). Some questions have been raised regarding how sustainable and ethical this upcoming realm of tourism is (Lennon & Foley, 1996). However, these issues will be explored further in this dissertation.

The present dissertation is going to focus on the reality of ghost towns, more specifically Varosha, in the light of the concept of dark tourism. This region located in Famagusta was interdicted for over 50 years. The visitation of this site was only allowed to its previous residents, who inhabited the area before the Turkish invasion took place. Only in 2020, tourists were allowed to enter the region that is now under UN control (McDowell, 2023).

Even though dark tourism is a popular topic among scholars (Lennon, 2017), little research has been done when it comes to ghost towns. Varosha has also been written about a great amount. However, the majority of the papers focus on the decay of the city (Dobraszczyk, 2015) or its

troubled past (Arsoy & Basarir, 2019). Some of these papers already refer to this Cypriot region as a “ghost town” (Sterling, 2014), but there is a lack of research done in the efforts of trying to understand what motivates people to go to Varosha, under the light of the concept of dark tourism. Furthermore, having into consideration the current events happening around the world, with the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces, (MacFarquhar, 2023) we can see the similarities present in Cyprus’ past and transpose some of the conclusion of the research that will follow to the current reality.

The dissertation is going to focus on one main question to be answered:

**RQ1: What attracts visitors to explore ghost towns?**

To do so, different research objectives were established:

**RO1: What motivates people to visit ghost towns like Varosha?**

**RO2: Does the proximity to the event influence the motivations to visit a ghost town?**

The methodology used is going to consist of focus groups because it allows for a deep dive into the multiple layers of human perception that are crucial for the quality of this dissertation, and for the conclusions that come from this study.

These four groups of people will be divided taking into consideration their nationality. One of the groups will consist of only Cypriot nationals, as the other will be more diverse in terms of backgrounds.

This dissertation is organized as follows: firstly, the concept of dark tourism will be defined and developed; after that, we will narrow our horizon and focus on the concept of ghost towns; following we will limit our scope and concentrate on the Varosha area by giving a little bit of context and go in depth about its past but not without firstly investigate what are the motivations for tourism. Next, we will collect the data using the methodology previously mentioned that will further be explored to satisfy the research purposes and lastly, a conclusion will be presented taking into consideration the findings developed through the whole study as well as the limitations that were present during this dissertation.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter will give some context to the research being done. Also, this theoretical framework will be useful to help achieve conclusions concerning the purpose of this dissertation.

### 2.1 Dark Tourism Explained

The concept of dark tourism might be a novelty to some, but this phenomenon has been around for thousands of years. It started as soon as people were able to travel (Frew, 2012). The concept of dark tourism was first indirectly termed in 1996 in two distinct studies. One conducted by Foley and Lennon explored the reality of the presentation and consumption of sites considered “dark” (Foley & Lennon, 1996). The other study developed by Seaton presented the dark tourism concept as a symbolic exchange of tourists with the notion of death (Seaton, 1996). However, this topic is still debated among scholars who fail to agree on what the label of dark tourism is all about (Hartmann, 2014). One definition that can be used to help understand this concept is the one provided by Richard Sharpley which states that dark tourism consists of “(...) sites, attractions or events that are linked in one way or another with death, suffering, violence or disaster.” (Sharpley, 2009, p. 4). Another characterization is appointed by Seaton (1996) who says that dark tourism can be translated to “travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death” (Seaton, 1996, p.240).

The first concept related to dark tourism that was introduced in the literature was “Thanatourism” (Light, 2017). This term was introduced by Seaton in 1996 (Seaton, 1996). It is described as traveling to places with the intent or curiosity to directly confront mortality (Light, 2017). This concept is based on behavioral factors; the fact that thanatourism operates on a continuum of intensity based on two factors that consist of the motivations to visit the dark site and the extent of interest in death itself (Seaton, 1996). Throughout the years, the terms dark tourism and Thanatourism have been interchangeably used in literature since you cannot explain one without the other.

The scope of sites covered by the dark tourism concept is extensive and exhibits great variation (Lennon, 2017). Some of them can be categorized as nuclear tourism, war tourism, and grave tourism. Another method of separating the many varieties of dark tourism is based on practices, locations, reasons, experiences, and legacy (Light, 2017).

Dark tourism is not a consensual theme. Many questions have arisen concerning how ethical, respectful, and sustainable it is. These concerns refer to both the supply and the demand side (Potts, 2012). The association with death and suffering makes scholars and even the media question if it's acceptable to explore these sights from a touristic perspective (Light, 2017).

There is also a concern about weakening the connection and the meanings of such sites with the communities that suffered from these atrocities (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005). In order to make the tourist experience more pleasant for the visitors, there can be an adaptation of the gruesome history and facts that occurred (Foley & Lennon, 1996), to do so there is procurement to kitsch or kitchification in dark tourism (Sharpley & Stone, 2009b). Due to this happening, the educational purpose of these sites is compromised. This emphasis on the spectacle rather than on faithfully portraying reality is described as "dark edutainment" (Sharpley & Stone, 2009b, p. 111).

## 2.2 Ghost Towns

Ghost towns are one form of the many forms that dark tourism can take. It can be described as a widely used term to describe completely abandoned communities, which often leave little to no trace of their prior presence except for the deteriorating structures (Graves et al., 2009). This concept is distinct from the one of ghost tourism, which focuses on curiosity in ghostly encounters, fascination with the paranormal, and traveling to places associated with the supernatural. (Garcia, 2014, p.14). However, this does not mean that they can't coexist.

There are many reasons that can be appointed as to why ghost towns exist. The truth is people move because they believe their own lives, and those of their families can improve (Davin, 1999). Some of the push factors that can weigh on this decision are poor living conditions, lack of economic opportunities, land scarcity, and general poverty (Davin, 1999).

Nonetheless, there have been times when people are forced to leave their homes for other reasons rather than economic factors. Throughout history, disasters, diseases, and warfare have played a significant role in the emergence of ghost towns (Torlak, 2016). Natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods, and wildfires have repeatedly caused devastation, rendering areas uninhabitable and driving populations to seek shelter elsewhere (Drabo & Mbaye, 2015). From plagues to pandemics, infectious diseases have terrorized populations and, occasionally, caused major exodus as people fled affected areas (Mesnard & Seabright, 2009). In addition, as people

sought safety from the horrors of armed combat, the cruelty of war, from ancient battles to contemporary conflicts, have left a path of abandoned settlements (Duszczuk & Kaczmarczyk, 2022). As a result, the landscape is frequently dotted with unsettling signs of human habitation. These ruins convey tales of resiliency, tragedy, and the unstoppable march of time as they reverberate through the deteriorating buildings (Torlak, 2016).

### 2.3 Tourism Motivations

There are many different reasons why individuals travel. The truth is there is a lack of literature exploration when it comes to this fact (Cohen, 1974). However, the most common reason appointed relates to the notion of balance, meaning that people often travel in order to fulfill a need (McNeal 1973).

Some studies concluded that one's travel patterns are intimately tied to psychological needs (Li & Zhang, 2016). Those needs have a massive weight when it comes to causing a disequilibrium in an individual (Kim & Lee, 20002). This connection is essential when trying to understand the reason why someone decides to travel (Šimková & Holzner, 2014).

In an early exploration of this topic, the motivation appointed as the main cause of people traveling was psychosomatic exhaustion (Hill, 1965). This way, people would travel to different places in order to renew and revitalize their well-being by seeking to explore a novel approach that would allow them to enrich and recharge their spirits (Yousaf et al., 2018).

Other authors propose that the fundamental reason to travel is the quest for a respite from routine schedules and familiar surroundings, giving individuals an opportunity to alleviate mental fatigue (Todorović & Jovičić, 2016).

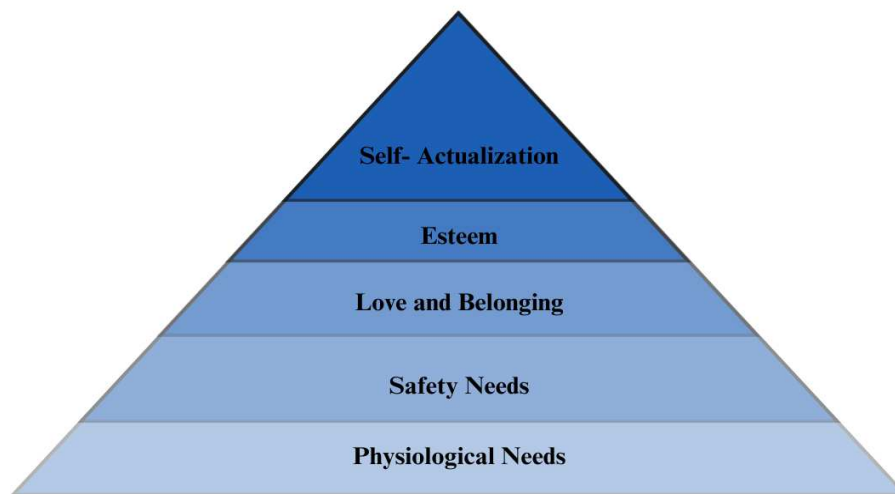
#### 2.3.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In order to understand the reason behind an individual's choice, we first need to learn more about one's behavior and motivations. With this in mind, Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs that tried to combine the extensive research done on human motivation thus far (Huitt, 2007).

This hierarchy consists of five levels of needs (Figure 1). To attain the highest level, it is essential to satisfy the need associated with the preceding level (Maslow, 1943).

## Figure 1

### *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*



*Note.* Maslow, 1943

By applying this theory to the tourism industry, we can start grasping the motivational process of travelers. Individuals anticipate the destination to fulfill basic requirements also defined as physiological needs (Fodness, 1994). Essential amenities such as appropriate accommodation, access to drinkable water, and restaurants offering food and/or cuisine options are prerequisites (Yousaf et al., 2018). These needs are so integral that they function as primary motivations for all travelers (Maslow, 1943). The next needs are based on safety. The likelihood of selecting a specific destination increases when a visitor is confident that the facilities will remain stable and prioritize their well-being and safety making this a very important aspect to take into consideration when understanding the decision-making process of traveling (Šimková & Holzner, 2014).

The third tier in the hierarchy is related to making connections among others with the purpose of cultivating a sense of social belonging and ensuring one's ability to nurture healthy relationships. Social belonging has an enormous positive role in making travelers gravitate toward a certain destination (Hudson, 1999). Once this need is satisfied, the fourth motivation associated with self-esteem comes next. The goal of traveling at this level is to impress friends, relatives, social groups, and other people in order to elevate their social standing (Maslow, 1943). Lastly, the last need in the hierarchy is the self-actualization stage. Individuals perceive traveling as a way of enhancing their skills by challenging themselves with different adventures.

Self-actualization in tourism can also be connected to the involvement in activities that result in some good to society (Šimková & Holzner, 2014).

### 2.3.2 Push and Pull Factors in Motivational Theory

This theory was introduced by Dann in 1997. The push and pull theory is a very consensual framework regularly used in tourism research that proposes two categories of motivations that entice tourists to travel to a certain location, these categories are denominated push and pull motivations (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

Push factors are intrinsic and internal, they urge an individual to travel impelled with the desire for rest, adventure, and escape from contemporary lifestyles (Crompton, 1979). Therefore, push factors can be defined as factors that influence one's motivation to travel, reflecting on their socio-psychological needs (Dann, 1997).

Pull factors are associated with the appeal of the destination, including considerations such as the quality of services, pricing, and overall infrastructure availability (Gnoth, 1997).

When done effectively, by leveraging push factors to attract tourists, destination planners can transform these factors into pull factors. Thus, destinations need to constantly meet customers' expectations which requires regular adjustment in terms of their offer (Yousaf et al., 2018).

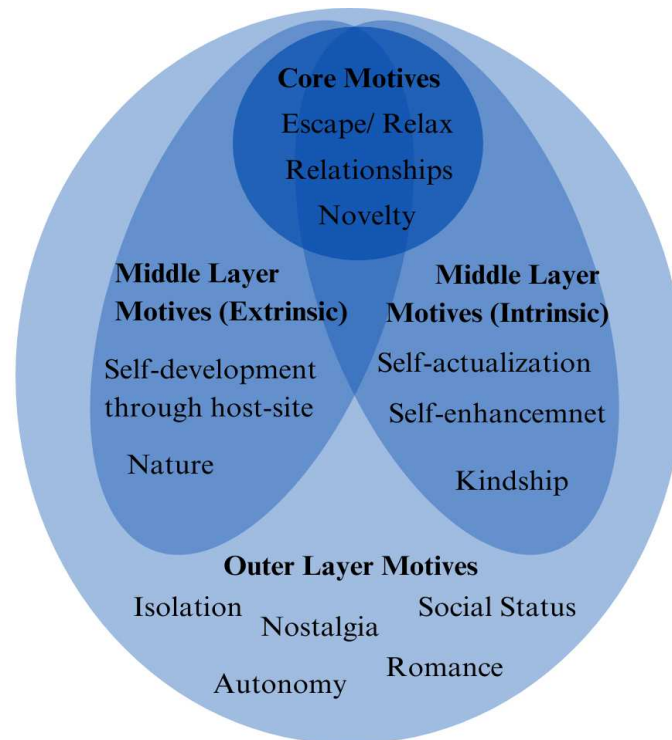
### 2.3.3 Travel Career Patterns (TCP)

The travel Career Patterns, developed by Pearce and Lee (2005) is rooted in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This theory is also based on a previous model developed by Pearce in 1988, the TCL (Travel Career Ladder). The differences between the TCP and the TCL are that in the context of TCL theory, travelers ascend the latter of travel motivations as they gain more travel experience. In contrast, the TCP theory explains that these motivations are multifaceted and dynamic processes involving multiple levels at the same time (Yousaf et al., 2018). This way TCP model, distances itself from the hierarchical emphasis present on the TCL, acknowledging that travel motivations can suffer changes and operate at different levels (Paris & Teye, 2010).

The TCP is centered on 14 factors: (1) Novelty; (2) Escape/ Relax; (3) Relationships; (4) Nature; (5) Kindship; (6) Self-enhancement; (7) Self-actualization; (8) Nature; (9) Self-development through host-site; (10) Autonomy; (11) Nostalgia; (12) Social Status; (13)

Isolation; (14) Romance (Figure 2) (Pearce, 2021). These factors play a crucial role in shaping the motives that prompt one’s motivation to travel and have a powerful influence on the decision-making process of travelers. (Pearce & Lee, 2005)

**Figure 2**  
*Travel Career Pattern Motives*



*Note.* Redrawn from Pearce (2021, p.176)

Research shows that among the 14 travel motivation factors, individuals with higher travel careers give priority to externally oriented motivation factors, which include self-development through host-site and nature. On the other hand, respondents with a lower travel career tend to give more emphasis to internally oriented motivations, such as self-enhancement, romance, kindship, and autonomy (Hsu & Huang 2008).

### 2.3.4 Dark Tourism Motivations

However, the reasons why people are motivated to travel to dark sites seem to be different and very diverse (Light, 2017). The early discussion about this topic was mostly hypothetical with scholars defending that the motivations were based on “remembrance, education and entertainment” (Foley & Lennon, 1997 p.155). As research went on, new conclusions were developed that argued that such visits could be accidental, or in other words not on purpose

since they came from serendipity, simple curiosity or they were part of tour companies' itineraries (Lennon & Foley, 2000).

Following the concept of "thanatourism" Seaton defended that the motivations of dark tourism came from the desire to encounter and interact with death (Seaton, 1996). The research went on and other studies were developed, namely one developed by Ashworth and Hartmann (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005), which outlined three main motives for visiting dark sites: the first one is related to the interest in the unusual; the second motive is appointed as an attraction to terror; and the last one is the urge to feel sympathy or affinity for the victims of horror (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005). Other popular motives mentioned are the need or chance for education, learning, or comprehension of what happened there (Best, 2007); the desire to connect with one's family history and heritage (Biran et al., 2011); religious motivations (pilgrimage) (Hyde & Harman 2011); and passion for history and/or culture (Best, 2007).

People who are connected to death and disaster often go back to visit the site where these events took place (Yuill, 2004). This can include direct ties like survivors or soldiers, but it can also consist of a more distant affiliation like descendants, friends, or relatives of the victims (Beech, 2000). There are even people who, even though are not directly connected to the event, still feel affected by it, like for example those who share a common religion, race, or nationality (Essah, 2001).

It's worth highlighting that those who are motivated to visit different sites motivated by heritage and identity don't necessarily only visit the locations where the incident took place but can also be interested in representative sites such as museums, reconstructions, or memorials (Hein, 2005). Visiting and paying homage to these events helps shape one's heritage (Essah, 2001).

These two concepts have been appointed by the literature on dark tourism as key drivers when it comes to the motivation of people to visit dark sites (Yuill, 2004). However, there is another notion related to these topics that is worth mentioning, nostalgia. Nostalgia was early defined as a painful yearning to return home (Holak & Havlena, 1998). However, there is still yet to be a consensus on what it actually means, with different authors having different perceptions of how to define such feelings (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). Different studies refer to this concept as a tourism motivator (Conforti, 1996).

## 2.4 A Look into Varosha's Past

The history of this city dates back to 1571 when it first emerged as part of the Ottoman Empire (Torlak, 2016). Following more than three centuries under Ottoman rule, the United Kingdom was given a protectorate over the island of Cyprus in 1878 that lasted for a century. This agreement was celebrated in exchange for the promise to protect the Ottoman territory from Russian forces (Tuncer, 2012). In 1914, during World War I, the United Kingdom proclaimed its takeover of Cyprus because of the claim that the Ottoman Empire was allying with Germany in the war against Britain (Akdeniz, 2021). During the decolonization period, the United Kingdom sought to grant Cyprus independence and hand over control to Turkish and Greek Cypriots, allowing for self-governance. This shift of power happened in 1960 with the signing of the Treaty of Guarantee (Tuncer, 2012). In 1974 Turkey launched a military operation that resulted in the division of Cyprus into two sides (Önal et al., 1999): Northern Cyprus also known as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), that is occupied by the Turkish and is only recognized by Turkey (In 1983 this state declared independence) (Oktay, 2007); and the southern part of Cyprus known as Republic of Cyprus, occupied by Greek Cypriots and officially recognized by the rest of the countries (Sharpley, 2022). This segmentation had a huge impact on people, with a big part of the population having to relocate according to the communal majority (Boğaç, 2020). On May 1st, 2004, Cyprus became a member of the European Union, meaning that all the citizens from this part of the island could enjoy the benefits prevenient from this agreement (Oktay, 2007).

**Figure 3**

*Map of Cyprus*



*Note.* Reprinted from “Simmering tensions over a divided island,” by *F. Fasanotti, 2021*, and *Geopolitical Intelligence Services 2021* by “*Federica Saini Fasanotti*”.

Varosha is located in the Famagusta region on the northeast coast of Cyprus. This city always lived in segregation since it had walls separating Turkish Cypriots (who lived inside the wall) from Greek Cypriots (who were settled on the shore) (Torlak, 2016). Even with this separation, Varosha always lived in peace and was once the busiest destination in the entire Mediterranean region (Sharpley, 2003). However, after 1974, Varosha became a ghost town since most of the population, constituted by Greek Cypriots, had to unwittingly abandon their home (Ram, 2015). Barbed wire fencing has been used to block public access to a sizable stretch of Varosha, with the Turkish army controlling one portion and the United Nations overseeing the rest (Tuncer, 2012). After this occurred, the city became interdicted with only a few exceptions of entry-exit (Karaoglu, 2022). In the beginning, it was thought that Varosha was being used as a catalyzer in the negotiations for a possible unification of the island, yet nearly 50 years have passed, and this town is still deserted and known in the international media as a ghost town (Boğaç, 2020). In 2020 the city reopened, making it accessible for anyone with a valid passport to visit (McDowell, 2023). Varosha is now being explored under a touristic scope with a lot of tours available to explore this site (McDowell, 2023). Even though this city is now starting to see a glimpse of life after so many years, the question still lingers: will it ever return to its former glory?

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter will focus on the methodology used to collect the data that will later be used to build conclusions about the topic at hand.

#### **3.1 Research Method**

The method used in this research consists of focus groups. This method, also known as group discussions (Finch et al., 2003) was chosen as the research approach since this qualitative way of retrieving data gives the participants the freedom to discuss the topic in question among themselves (Smithson, 2008). This framework facilitates the exploration of the concepts, which allows the data to be interpreted in a real-life environment instead of an experimental setting (Powell & Single, 1996) since it consists of a mix of “natural” discussion among participants with the constraint of a set of questions that aim to the study in hands (Smithson, 2008). This qualitative approach highlights the importance of the interpretations, perspectives, and experiences of the respondents (Powell & Single, 1996). Furthermore, this type of research generates in-depth, valid data that allows the formulation of a hypothesis as well as enabling

the advancements in the study's practical application (Du Bois, 1983). Another reason that supports the choice of this research dynamic is that dark tourism is not a solitary experience, people often tend to embark on such adventures with someone else. Therefore, it makes sense to have such a topic discussed among a collective arrangement of people.

To make sure we achieve the conclusions established as the goal for this dissertation, the questions that will be presented to be discussed in the focus groups will be open-ended and might require further detailed explanation by the participant. The script given to the moderator (Appendix B) features the inquiries to be made that were founded upon the literature presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. The questions that will be addressed during the focus groups (Appendix A) are divided into 3 blocks: 1. Travel Habits; 2. Relationship with Dark Tourism; 3. City of Varosha. After the data is collected, it will be imported into Leximancer to be analyzed.

### 3.2 Data Collection

Previous to the collection of the actual data, four different groups were selected. One of the groups is solely composed of Cypriot nationals and the others consist of people from different nationalities. This discrimination has in mind is the second research question to be answered in this dissertation. The goal is to understand how the proximity to the events that occurred influences the motivations of the visitors of ghost towns. In this case, given that we have chosen Varosha as the focal point of our study, and since it is located in Cyprus, it is reasonable to differentiate this group taking into consideration the participants' citizenships. Besides this aspect, there is no other point taken into consideration when selecting participants, since heterogeneity can be very valuable for the discussion (Smithson, 2008).

The collection of data will be done online using Zoom. The initial cause leading to this decision is flexibility, because at least one of the groups is located in Cyprus, and some of the participants of the same group are located in different parts of the world, therefore it would be impossible to conduct the focus group in person. Another cause is related to confidentiality, since there is a higher amount of anonymity perceived by online focus groups that works as a catalyzer for engagement in the discussion, because of the comfort it gives to the participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017). Therefore, we can classify this data collection method as Synchronous Online Focus Groups (Poynter 2010) known as the closest approximation to the traditional

presential focus groups, that feature a live discussion facilitated by a moderator, usually involving up to eight participants (Sintjago & Link, 2012).

The participants were selected through the author’s social network and were chosen to take into consideration their nationality to ensure some homogenous membership in one of the groups and more heterogeneity in the rest of the three groups (Ritchie & Lewis 2003). However, is it possible to identify some comparable traits between both fractions to enable comparison among them. At the beginning of the data collection, every participant was made aware of the rules and privacy policies applied in this process (Appendix B), to which all of them consented. All interviews were conducted in English, to ensure every participant could be part of the discussion. The respondents maintain their anonymity and can only be identified by an assigned number. In the table below it can be found an overview of the participants:

**Table 1**

*Overview of the participants*

<i>Group I (Cypriot Nationality)</i>			
<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
1	Male	27	Cypriot
2	Female	26	Cypriot
3	Male	29	Cypriot
4	Male	27	Cypriot
5	Female	52	Cypriot
6	Male	64	Cypriot
<i>Group II (Other nationalities)</i>			
<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
7	Female	21	Portuguese
8	Female	51	Portuguese
9	Male	53	Portuguese
10	Male	24	Portuguese
11	Female	22	Portuguese
12	Female	22	Portuguese
<i>Group III (Other nationalities)</i>			
<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
13	Female	25	Swedish
14	Female	25	Norway
15	Male	67	Cypriot
16	Male	30	Cypriot
17	Female	25	Portuguese
18	Male	33	Portuguese
<i>Group IV (Other nationalities)</i>			
<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
19	Female	28	Cypriot
20	Male	25	German
21	Female	24	German

22	Female	25	Portuguese
23	Male	27	Portuguese
24	Female	33	Portuguese

### 3.3 Data Analysis Approach

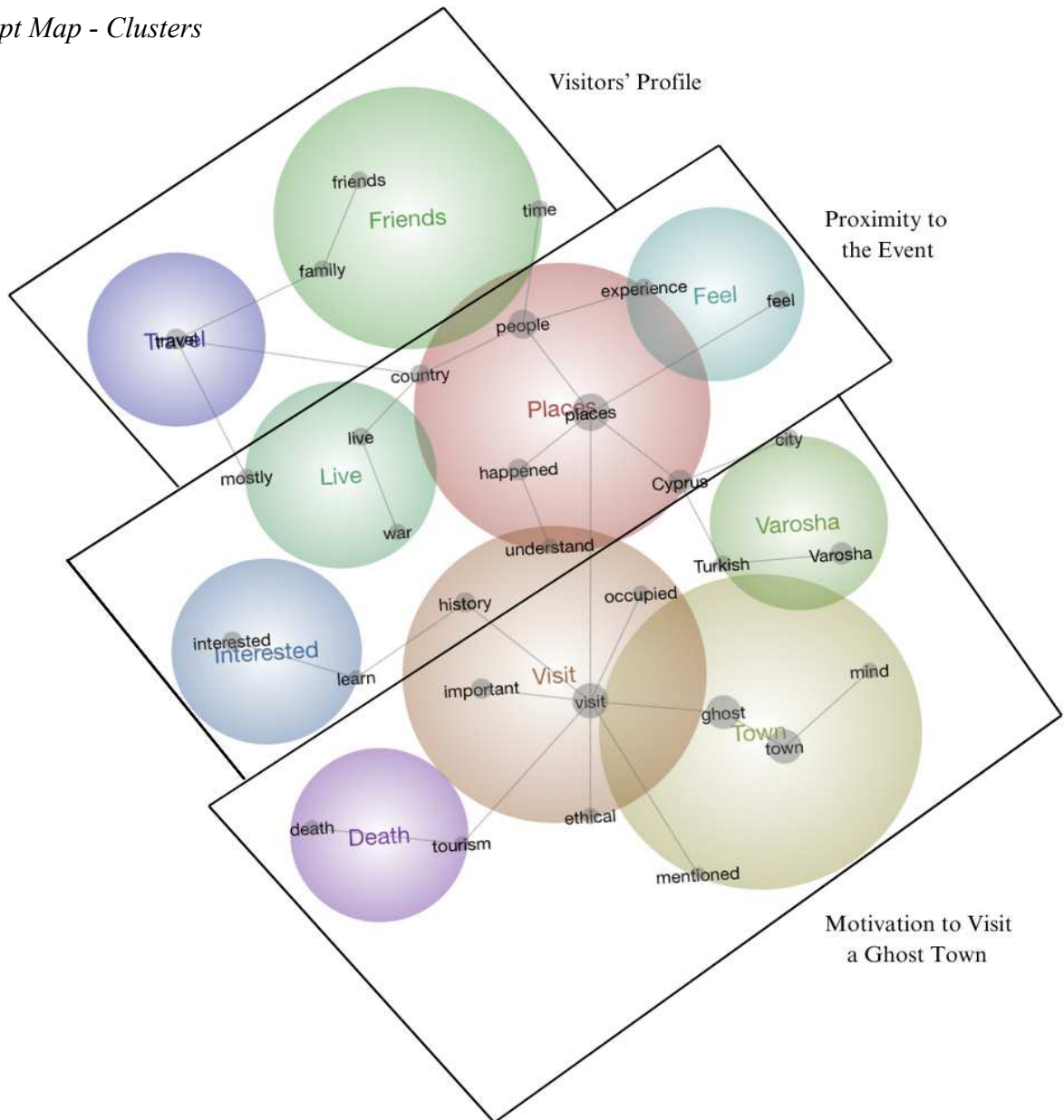
All data will be analyzed based on the transcripts of four focus groups previously conducted (Annex 3). To proceed with the treatment of the data, we will be using Leximancer which is a software tool for text analytics and data mining to obtain relevant information and highlight patterns observed in large amounts of unstructured text data. Its purpose is to help authors and researchers understand and study textual content, by utilizing various natural language processing and machine learning methods. With those techniques, Leximancer can automatically determine and present valuable concepts and textual relationships (Goh & Wilk, 2022). This is convenient for sentimental analysis and for the recognition of trends in the textual content.

In order to answer the research questions, the outcome of the analysis of the data collected will be presented graphically by the use of conceptual maps which allows the reader visually to grasp the connection between themes and concepts, while revealing the quantity and quality of these relationships (Tseng et al., 2015). These maps can be interpreted taking into consideration the size and color of which theme, with red meaning the most important theme and purple the least important one; and the bigger the size of the gray point, the higher the number of frequencies recorded (Cretchley et al., 2010). The relationship and mutual connection among concepts will be illustrated by lines linking the concepts together.

## 4. Results

Figure 4 is the visual representation of the conceptual map obtained by Leximancer. The results of the analysis carried out based on the transcript of the focus groups, highlight 10 themes: “Places” (310 hits), “Visit” (217 hits), “Town” (130 hits), “Travel” (91 hits), “Friends” (91 hit), “Fell” (83 hits), “Varsoha” (83 hits), “Interested” (73 hits), “Live” (71 hits), and “Death” (36 hits) (Figure 4). It was possible to further categorize these themes into three clusters, taking into consideration the context in which they were mentioned by the participants of the focus groups. These clusters include: Visitor’s profile, Proximity to the event, and Motivations to visit a ghost town (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**  
*Concept Map - Clusters*



*Note.* Leximancer Output

Each theme is linked to a variety of different concepts (Table 2). These notions consist of words that were mentioned by the participants that help give more insight and context to each theme.

**Table 2**  
*Themes and Concepts*

<i>Cluster</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Concepts</i>
Motivations to Visit a Ghost Town	Visit	visit, important, history, ethical, occupied, understand
	Town	town, ghost, mind, mentioned
	Varosha	Varosha, city, Turkish

	Death	death, tourism
Proximity to the Event	Places	places, people, Cyprus, happened, country
	Live	live, war, mostly
	Feel	feel, experience
	Interested	interested, learn
Visitor's Information	Friends	friends, time, family
	Travel	travel

*Note.* Leximancer Output

The cluster related to the motivations for visiting a ghost town helps us understand what is the driver that entices people to travel to a ghosted location. We can see that in the cluster the most frequent concepts mentioned are “visit” (84% relevance), “town” (64% relevance), “ghost” (63% relevance), and “Varosha” (32% relevance) (Table 3). By looking at the thesaurus output of Leximancer it is observed that the concept “visit” (score 8.42) is associated with other words such as “suffering” (score 4.64), “somber” (4.4), “dark” (score 4.1) and “monuments” (score 4.1). The concept “town” (score 8) relates to “ghost” (score 7.49), “disaster” (score 3.85), and “Varosha” (3.59). “Public” (score 3.09) and “children” (score 3.09) are notions that are tied to the fourth most relevant concept, “Varosha” (score 10.44) (Table 3).

In terms of importance, the concepts that are highlighted in this cluster are “Varosha” (score 10.44) and important (score 10.44), followed by history (score 9.14) and “city” (score 9.14).

**Table 3**

*Motivations to Visit a Ghost Town – Concept Relevance*

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Relevance Percentage</i>	<i>Score</i>
visit	136	84%	8.42
town	103	64%	8
ghost	101	63%	7.58
Varosha	52	32%	10.44
important	45	28%	10.04
history	31	19%	9.14
city	28	17%	9.14
death	27	17%	7.84
ethical	25	16%	8.13
mind	23	14%	8.24
occupied	18	11%	7.76
understand	18	11%	8.37
mentioned	17	11%	8.28

Turkish	17	11%	7.55
tourism	15	9%	6.29

*Note.* Leximancer Output

In response to the question about visiting ghost towns, 17% of participants acknowledge having visited one, about 35% stated they have never been and are not interested in doing so, 22% never visited a ghost town because they were unaware of any, 17% never visited due to their principals and beliefs and 9% expressed interest in visiting a ghost town in the future, despite not having done so yet.

78% of participants said they would never visit Varosha versus 22% that expressed interest in visiting the ghost town. Around 48% said to not know about the existence of Varosha, with 43.48% not willing to visit and 4.35% demonstrating interest in going there. 4.35% stated to be too scared to visit. The fact that the city is located in an area that is illegally occupied makes 30.43% of participants to not be willing to visit. However, 17.39% would be eager to take a trip to Varosha, driven by nostalgia (Table 4).

**Table 4**  
*Percentage of Visitation Intention*

	<i>Would Not Visit</i>	<i>Would Visit</i>
Never heard	43.48%	4.35%
Scared	4.35%	0%
Illegal occupied	30.43%	0%
Nostalgia	0%	17.39%

Related to the proximity one has to the event related to the reason why a town became deserted, we can observe that in terms of percentage, the more relevant words are: “places” (100% relevance); “people” (65% relevance); “interested” (36% relevance) and “feel” (32% relevance) (Table 4).

“Places” (score of 9.7) is related to other notions that help give more context to this result, such as “curiosity” (score 5.66), “search” (score 4.82), and “hidden” (score 4.48). The second most

frequent concept, “people” (score 14.4) is correlated with terms being “meet “(score 4.92), “kill” (score 4.04), “creating” (score 3.63), and “stressful” (score 3.63). The concept “interested” (score 7.12) is influenced by the notions of “view” (score 3.57) and “exploring” (score 2.94). Another concept that needs more background is “feel” (score 10.62) which is enforced by “post” (score 3.18), “emotional” (score 3.2), and “detached” (score 2.65).

The most important concepts observed related to the proximity to the event are “people” (score 14.4), “country” (score 10.97), “happened” (score 10.9), “feel” (score 10.62), and “experience” (score 10.29).

When taking a look at the Cypriot participants, we observe that 67% of them are not willing to visit Varosha, under the current situation it is under. In contrast, 22% are curious about going and have visited the region. About 11% are conflicted when it comes to this topic.

80% of non-Cypriot citizens have never considered visiting Varosha with 73% of them being oblivious of the existence of this city.

**Table 5**

*Proximity to the Event – Concept Relevance*

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Relevance Percentage</i>	<i>Score</i>
places	161	100%	9.7
people	104	65%	14.4
interested	58	36%	7.12
feel	52	32%	10.62
Cyprus	49	30%	6.71
happened	45	28%	10.9
country	44	27%	10.97
live	36	22%	5.86
experience	33	20%	10.29
mostly	23	14%	8.78
war	19	12%	8.1
learn	18	11%	7.69

*Note.* Leximancer Output

When asked if they had ever been to a dark site, 41% of participants said no, 23% said, and even though 36% also admitted never visited a dark touristic place, later on, during the discussion, mentioned having visited destinations that fall under the dark tourism spectrum.

When it comes to the profile of the visitors, we can see that the concepts that have the highest frequency are related to “travel” (57% relevance), “friends” (25% relevance), “time” (22% relevance) and “family” (20% relevance) (Table 5).

Associated with “travel” (score of 10.39) we have words like “decision” (score of 4.52), “exploring” (score of 2.67), and “safety” (score of 2.67). The concept “time” (score 10.17) is correlated with words such as: “short” (score 3.7), “tough” (score 3.35), and “children” (score 3.35). The other two concepts, “friends” and “family” are mentioned in the context of who the participants chose to travel with.

**Table 6**  
*Visitor’s Profile – Concept Relevance*

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Relevance Percentage</i>	<i>Score</i>
travel	91	57%	10.39
friends	40	25%	10.29
time	35	22%	10.17
family	33	20%	10.62

*Note.* Leximancer Output

When choosing who to travel with, participants had in consideration three criteria: company, which meant traveling with people that they appreciate and have fun with; financial, which has a base traveling with certain people due to the cost associated; and convenience, meaning that people have to consider traveling with other that have the same availability as them. These criteria are not mutually exclusive, with some participants mentioning more than one. The distribution goes as follows: 88% company; 13% financial; and 17% convenience.

Regarding the type of trips, 96% of participants said that they traveled for leisure and only 4% said that their main reason to travel was work. In relation to the frequency with which they travel, 67% considered themselves frequent travelers contrary to 33% who would place themselves on a non-frequent travelers’ list.

When participants were asked about their preference between more tourist places over less-traveled destinations, about 32% said to prefer the first one and 18% the least popular locations. However, 50% mentioned that they prefer a good balance between the two.

The reasons why the participants decide to travel are as follows: about 92% mention that the purpose of their travels is to experience new things and know a new culture, 8% referred they travel to visit friends or loved ones, 4% travel to develop new skills or perfect the ones they already have and another 4% say they travel to relax.

When choosing where to travel there are 6 criteria that are highlighted: cost; distance; accessibility; safety; nature; and weather. The most popular criterion used is the cost with 63% of the respondents mentioning they consider this financial restraint, followed by safety with 38% of participants attributing this criterion's relevant importance. 29% indicated nature, 21% mentioned distance, with further places being less desirable, 13% highlighted accessibility, where destinations that are harder to access prove to be less considered and lastly 8% said that the weather was also a dimension they have in attention when choosing where to go.

## 5. Discussion

To answer the research question is important in interpreting the results. In order to do so, each cluster will be examined separately.

### 5.1 Motivations to Visit a Ghost Town

McCain and Ray (2003) affirm that different people visit historic places for different reasons. With the results, it is observed that the motivations to visit a ghost town are highly correlated with the city of Varosha (score 10.44). When questioned about the term "ghost town," 21% of participants instinctively associated it with this particular concept as their initial thought. Out of those 21%, 60% didn't show interest in visiting Varosha. The reason behind this lack of motivation is tied to the historical past of the city, with the participants mentioning "(...) it's mainly the part about supporting, the illegal occupation, when you visit it in whatever way we would be supporting it, whether it's financially or not" (focus group I) (Appendix C) and "I would not go because it's illegally occupied and that's something that I am against to be very honest". The existing literature states that there is a strong sense of belief, that deters people from traveling to destinations that don't fit their ideals (Zhang et al., 2016). The notion of going against their beliefs in what is right is what steers these participants from visiting Varosha. Another factor that explains the small inclination to visit Varosha is the lack of awareness, with about 46% of participants not being aware of the existence of such a town.

Participants see the opportunity to visit a ghost town, as a valuable mean of knowledge in order to prevent history from repeating itself, which supports Biran's finding that the motives include a desire to learn about history (Biran et al., 2011). The concept "important" (score 10.04), highlights the need to give relevance to the aspects present on this specific kind of trip. The top words associated with this concept are "discuss" (score 3.8) and "awareness" (score 3.08). The importance of discussion is rooted in the past and present of this region and with the fear of having it repeated, with the participants indicating that "I think it's important to, to know and discuss to avoid new situations like that." (focus group II). Is with the same educational reasoning that the topic "awareness" is brought to the table. "But then, on the other hand, I think it's very important to spread awareness." (focus group IV). This aligns with Flank and Dierking's (2000) research that appoints the main motivation for traveling to be the willingness to expand knowledge.

When considering visiting a ghost town, ethics was mentioned as a relevant factor, with "ethical" having a score of 8.13. In this context, this concept acts as a demotivator of the travel to such places. Participants voiced a strong apprehension about the ethical aspects of being associated with a location where such tragedy happened, with someone mentioning that "I would probably have some ethical concerns, you know, talking to the interested parties and all of this." (focus group III). They also mentioned concerns that their visit could inadvertently contribute to the illegal occupation that is currently still a reality, as can be observed in: "I can't see myself going and financially supporting the illegal occupation" (focus group I) (Appendix C). Research suggests that the ethical concerns are aligned not only with a feeling of betrayal, from the Cypriot point of view but also with a fear of contributing to something negative. Therefore, ss Famarky's study shows, (Farmaky et al., 2019), these factors, make Varosha less attractive for tourists to visit.

Slade (Slade, 2003) states that the fact that people visit places associated with death, does not necessarily imply that they are thanatourists. The findings show that in fact, "death" (score 7.84) acted as a demotivator. About 53% said to not interested in the topic in contrast 47% of the participant expressed their curiosity about it. However, this interest stems from an educational and spiritual standpoint rather than a violent one as can be observed by "But I am not interested in how violent it is, I just think is interesting to understand why people do such things and how things happen." (focus group IV). This is the reason why, even though there is a considerable percentage of participants expressing curiosity about the topic, the interest in

death doesn't act as a compelling dimension to attract tourists to Varosha. This discovery is in sync with one of the theories proposed by Weaver et al. (2017) that suggests that curiosity related to a certain topic, will not associate with finding enjoyment in an experience related to it.

When it comes to the notion of dark tourism there appears to exist a lingering amount of unawareness. 17% of participants affirmed that had never been in a dark site before, and later, during the discussion mentioned having visited places that can be categorized as dark touristic places. This shows that participants are oblivious to the real meaning of the concept of "dark tourism" and are still tied to an idea that revolves around stigmas that dark tourists are people who seek suffering and death (Zheng et al., 2018).

## 5.2 Proximity to the Event

In terms of the proximity to the event, the word that had the highest score in this cluster was "people" (score 14.4). The mention behind this particular word was done in consideration of those who experienced some effect of the consequences that the war of 1974 brought. Related to "people" comes the word "kill" (score 4.05) which again, is allusive to the victims of the tragedy that took place in that region. While not explicitly mentioned, there is an implicit aspect of empathy seeking (Dunkley, Morgan & Westwood, 2011) that is aligned with the idea of an existing need to pay respect to the victims and those who were affected by the war, proposed by Isaac & Çakmak (2016).

Literature claims that someone's interest in visiting a location increases proportionate to their perception of that same sight as part of their heritage (Poria et al., 2006). However, the results of this study go against such claims. What was mentioned as the second most impactful concept taken into consideration is the "country" (score 10.97) with some participants mentioning "I mean, as we mentioned earlier, it's a bit conflicting for us, Cypriots, the thought of visiting Varosha for many different reasons." (focus group I) (Appendix C) and "So I don't think that it's ethical for me as a Cypriot to go there and to visit places, you know?" (focus group IV). We can see that the nationality of the participants fosters a bigger attachment and connection to the event that took place which results in more intense feelings towards the visit of Varosha. As proven by the finding of Bets (2007), emotions shape future travel intentions. The fact that these participants don't show an intention of traveling to that city due to their negative emotions

related to it, corroborates the previous findings. However, it goes against Fredrickson's (2004) theory that negative emotions are simply involved in basic instinctive human reactions to life threats. As we can see, going to Varosha does not represent a deadly danger to human life, however, it still raises negative feelings.

Another pertinent dimension is the historical background of the ghost town. Portia (Portia et al., 2011), conclude that individuals who view the town as an important part of their heritage, hold a meaning full significance and foster a sense of connection, in opposition the other individuals who only view that location from a historical aspect, as something to be studied and learned from, lacking a personal relevance. With a score of 10.9, the concept "happened" is the second highest observed. Participants mentioned "So, when you visit the ghost town, it's interesting to think about what happened there." (focus group I) (Appendix C). People who are closer to the event mentioned "I think having like the background of being a Cypriot and coming from a place where all of this happened and having this experience, I don't think I would be able to go (...)" (focus group I) (Appendix C), demonstrating the detrimental effects that the historical background has on them, which proves to be negative. On the other hand, people who are distanced from it, and even oblivious to the matter, "I think the most important is to learn with the facts that happened in those towns (...)" (focus group II). In this instance, the reference to the word "happened", even if it's related to the tragedy of war, carries an educational connotation. It is more connected to the learning and curiosity of knowing the events that transpired and their consequences, which comes from the intrinsic motivation of knowing more (Dunkley, Morgan & Westwood, 2011).

When it came to the expectations of what to experience in Varosha, people had a consensual response. Related to "experience" (score 10.29) we have words such as "anger" (score 3.5) and "emotions" (score 2.93). This shows that participants don't nurture positive feelings related to the visit of Varosha. This corroborates the study conducted by Nawijn & Fricke (2015) who concluded that visitors tend to experience negative emotions more intensely than positive ones. This can also be observed when it comes to the word "feel" (score 10.62), that associated with "emotional" (score 3.2) and "overwhelmed" (score 2.65). The two most frequent feelings referred to were anger and sadness. 63% of all the participants said they would expect to feel sad when going to the ghost town, "Also think I would feel sad, and the place would have very heavy energy." (focus group III) 67% of Cypriots said that they would experience anger when visiting Varosha mentioning "I think I would experience anger (...) due to the reason that, I

would be, envisioning the stories or the places that, my family has told me many times and, how great it used to be” (focus group I) (Appendix C). For these participants, we can agree with the assumptions of Tarlow (2005) that suggest that heritage weighs a travel motivation. However, these results challenge Portia’s research (Portia et al., 2011) which implies that individuals who have a heritage connection to the site, are emotionally involved, in contrast to other tourists. As we can see, people from other nationalities also expect to have an emotional impact when visiting Varosha and is for that reason that they are not willing to go, since they are trying to avoid negative emotions.

### 5.3 Visitors’ Profile

Literature suggests that safety, cost, and social constraints can be highlighted as the top three barriers to solo travel (Yang, 2021). Based on the results we observe that tourists prefer to travel with company. The majority prefers to travel with friends, due to the similarity in interest and the easiness in aligning availabilities. People who prefer to travel with family are usually older or do it for financial reasons.

Having a mix of touristy and less popular destinations was the preferred way of traveling. Participants stated that this preference depended on the purpose of the trip. However, it was highlighted touristy places are linked to stress and anxiety, “(...) is very stressful to go to touristic things because the lines are always very long, and you have to wait a long time and also there is always a lot of people so I feel like I can’t take my time and see things properly” (focus group III) and that for travelers it was hard to find our information about less traveled destinations and therefore they would not consider them as much, “I prefer more touristic places too because it’s easier to search and to get information and to see reviews from, from other tourists.” (focus group II). This is consistent with the kind of trips more frequent among the participants that are leisure trips.

As to the reasons to travel, participants fall on the motives 6 (self-actualization) and 7 (self-enhancement) of the TCP theory (Pearce & Lee, 2005), since the reasons appointed are to experience new things, priorate existing skills and develop new ones. There was also mention of visiting friends and loved ones can be categorized in motive 14 (Romance) of the same theory.

The biggest constraint of choosing a destination proved to be costs and safety. Another point mentioned was accessibility. As concluded in Maslow's theory (1943), Participants want to feel comfortable during their vacation therefore they look for a destination where they can have their basic needs met, such as safety and food, for which they need funds. Due to the restriction of time, accessibility is a major factor to consider because the longer it takes to get to a place, the less time a tourist has to enjoy it. Literature indicates that places with harder accessibility are less desirable for tourists (Hooper, 2015), making Varosha not a primary choice for future tourists.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this last chapter, the findings will be summarized to address the research question and to fulfill the research objectives previously outlined. The synopsis includes a review of the study's limitations as well as an investigation of the knowledge contributions. Thereafter, recommendations for further lines of inquiry are provided in the conclusion.

### **6.1 Main Conclusions**

There seem to be more demotivators than motivators when talking about visiting ghost towns. The reason behind why the town became deserted is the heaviest factor that influences the desire to travel to the dark destination. People don't feel comfortable visiting a place where something that violated their beliefs and ethics happened. Therefore, getting informed about the history and heritage of the place is crucial when considering traveling there.

The concept of death, when looked at from a historical perspective seems to be a pull factor, however, when explored in a violent approach, proved to not entice tourists to explore the destination. This concept also proved to carry a very heavy emotional impact on the participants that would result in them not wanting to travel to Varosha.

Looking at the results is possible to distinguish the push and pull factors related to the traveling preferences of the participants. As push factors we have: the desire to see new things; the wish to visit friends and loved ones; the need to relax and unwind from the everyday reality; the ambition to develop or improve abilities; and the distance to the destination. All these factors are related to the reasons why people decide to travel. The pull factors highlighted during the focus groups were the costs associated with the travel, the safety of the destination; the nature

and landscapes that the place has to offer; the accessibility of the area in question; and the weather.

Even though nationality influences the reasons why one would not consider visiting the Cypriot city, it doesn't seem to have an impact on the desire to travel to this place. For Cypriots, the topic of the Turkish invasion is still an open wound. Talking about visiting Varosha is still a sensitive topic, since, to this day, the effects of the ongoing political instability are noticeable in the Cypriot reality. There is also a fear of contributing financially to the northern region of Cyprus, which makes people more reluctant to go. However, not all feelings are negative towards Varosha, there is a sense of nostalgia and curiosity to get to know more about heritage.

When it comes to non-Cypriots, the demotivators seem to be concerned with an ethical dimension. Learning about the historical destination is crucial when deciding to visit a place with such a cruel past. For these people, the trip to a ghost town proves to have a more educational aspect, since people are looking to understand what happened but also how they can avoid past mistakes from occurring again.

The demotivators are also related to the visitor's profile since one important criterion mentioned when choosing a destination was accessibility, and Cyprus being a remote island does not follow through not making it an option. However, it does provide both touristy places, and less known locations, with a mix that tourists seem to prefer.

## 6.2 Theoretical Contribution

Research related to the topic of dark tourism tends to focus on the provider's side (Zhang et al., 2016). This dissertation has as the main focus the tourist itself, which contributes to the literature by providing insights on this less explored perspective. This way is possible for future researchers to have a more complete vision of dark tourism.

Ghost towns have also been neglected from a research perspective, with most of the investigation done on dark sites being focused on the Holocaust and battlefields (Light, 2017). Abandoned towns are also investigated from a paranormal perspective, with ghostly tours or ghost hunts being commonly offered in these destinations. However, there doesn't seem to exist an interest in exploring if there is a demand for the paranormal in general. From what

this dissertation concludes, the interest in ghosts is few and it was never mentioned as a reason for any participant to travel to Varosha.

In addition, all the literature about Cyprus seems to focus exclusively on the invasion and political conflict with Turkey. This study helps to fill an existing gap about not only tourism in Cyprus but also about the reasons that attract people to travel to such remote destinations.

### 6.3 Practical Contribution

The findings hold relevance for a considerable number of stakeholders. Firstly, it would release dark tourism from certain stigmas. As observed, people were not motivated to go to dark sites driven by the thirst for seeing others suffering. Death and suffering only proved to attract tourists from a historical point of view, with a lot of people being interested in not only learning about it but also making sure to be educated to prevent it from happening again. Which shows that dark sites can serve an educational purpose.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the present global landscape, with several international conflicts taking place, sharing similar characteristics with the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, these findings can help understand what the future of the cities affected by these recent wars could be.

With this, tourism operators and governments can understand how to not only improve their offer but also make it more appealing to attract more visitors. However, they should be careful with the adaptation made in order to fit the tourist's needs, to not risk losing or misrepresenting the facts that occurred, since this could compromise the authenticity of Varosha.

### 6.4 Future Research

The findings of this dissertation prove helpful in the understating of the motivations of tourists when deciding to visit a ghost town. To come to deeper findings, more exploration should be done on this topic, especially in different ghost towns to develop more diversified insights.

It is also suggested that the motivational topic should be researched when it comes to dark tourism, considering it would be interesting to understand if the reasons to travel to a dark site are consistent across all forms this type of tourism can take.

To improve the tourist's experience, it is also relevant to not only their motivations to visit but also the impact that such visits have considering this can influence their desire to repeat this dark touristic experience.

### 6.5 Limitations

This study is not free of limitations. The lack of data available about the city of Varosha proved to be a difficulty that had to be overcome. Also taking into consideration how recent the opening of the city of Varosha is for tourists to explore, makes the respective data scarce, especially since it happened during Covid years.

The sample size is not significant, with 4 focus groups and 24 participants, the data collected might not be representative. The fact that the Turkish invasion is a sensitive topic among Cypriots also proved to be a difficulty, especially when it came to the recruitment of participants for the focus group. The sensitivity of the subject proved to be a limitation. Furthermore, all the Cypriots participants in the focus group were Greek Cypriots, which could have outcome-biased results.

In addition, the term ghost town is very broad since it can take multiple different forms. Even though the data and conclusions can be applied to the case of Varosha, that might not be possible to apply in other ghost towns.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Questions to be asked

Topic	Literature Source	Reframed Question	Aim of the question
<b>Travel Habits</b>			
Travel frequency	Karl et al. (2015)	Do you consider yourself a frequent traveler? What types of trips do you take?	See what the frequency is of which people travel and what is the purpose of such trip
Travel Company	Hung & Petrick (2012)	Who do you usually travel with? Why?	Explore in if people travel by themselves or prefer to have company
Decision-making process for traveling	Khan, Chelliah & Ahmed (2019)	What are the factors that influence your decision to travel?	Understand the motivations behind traveling

Decision-making process when traveling	Weaver et al., (2017)	What factors are most important when making the decision on where to travel?	Understand the decision-making process behind when choosing a travel destination, and the key factors that influence such decision
Style of tourism	Isaac and Çakmak (2016)	Do you prefer to visit popular tourist destinations or less-traveled locations? Why?	Investigate what type of tourism people are motivated to do
<b>Relationship with Dark Tourism</b>			
Times of Visit of Dark Tourism Attraction	Yuill (2003)	Have you ever visited any dark tourist attraction?  If yes: Which ones?	Identify general dark tourism interest versus specific site preference or category inclination
Interest in death	Seaton and Lennon (2004)	Are you curious about knowing more about death?	Investigate if fascination with death is a motivational factor
Paranormal Interest	Tarlow (2005)	Are you interested in the paranormal?	Indicates if tourists' motivations are based on experiencing paranormal activities
Notions of Ghost Town	Jim et al., (2017)	What comes to mind when you hear the term "ghost town"? How would you define it?	Understand the association and perceptions related to the term "ghost town"

Times of Visit to Ghost Town	Lai, Li & Harrill (2013)	Have you ever visited a ghost town? Why?	Explore the level of familiarization with ghost towns and access if there has been a past experience with the later
The notion of ethical and social problems	Chen & Xu (2021)	Do you have any ethical or social considerations related to ghost towns that you believe are important to discuss?  If yes: Which ones?	Investigate the thoughts about ethical and social aspects associated with ghost towns
Motivation to Visit Ghost Town	Iliev (2021)	Does that impact your motivations to visit a ghost town?	Understand how important the notions previously mentioned are, and if they influence the motivation to visit a ghost town
<b>City of Varosha</b>			
Times of Visit of Varosha	Lai, Li & Harrill (2013)	Have you ever considered or visited Varosha in Cyprus? Why?	Explore if past visits indicate a stronger probability of certain push & pull factors related to heritage
Knowledge about Varosha	Chen, Hua & Wang (2013)	Are you familiar with the current status of Varosha? How did you come to learn about it?	Understand the level of awareness and

			familiarity about Varosha’s situation and see what source of information participants resort to
Expectations when visiting Varosha	Chen, Hua & Wang (2013)	What do you expect to experience in Varosha?	Understand what participants hope to encounter in Varosha as well as pre-existing ideas about this city
Legacy as a Motivational Factor	Biran et al. (2011)	Do you know anyone who has personally been affected by the incident in Varosha?	Could point to heritage and personal reasons as a motivational factor
Motivation to Visit Varosha	Siddique (2019)	Do any ethical or political concerns influence your motivation to visit Varosha?  If yes: Which ones?	Explores the ethical and political concerns related to Varosha. Allows us to explore the participant’s ethical sensibility

Appendix B: Moderator’s Script

**Chasing Shadows in Varosha: The Intriguing Allure of a Ghost Town  
Focus Group**

**Moderator:** Hello everyone and thank you for participating in our discussion about “Motivations of visiting a ghost town”. My name is “...” and I am currently doing my master’s dissertation that is related to the topic at hand. Today, I will be moderating this group session. Before we start I would like to make sure you understand the purpose of this session. Today’s discussion will be an open-minded and candid conversation where you can share your thoughts about the question that will be asked. However, some rules should be followed. Please let everyone finish their sentences and feel free to post your honest opinion throughout our session. Be reminded that there are no right or wrong answers. Our session will approximately last 60 minutes. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to let me know. By participating in this focus group you are agreeing with the session to be recorded and its content to be used for academic purposes. This focus group is confidential and anonymous with every participant to be assigned a number for further data analysis. Any questions? Otherwise, we can start with our first topic.

### **Travel Habits**

1. Do you consider yourself a frequent traveler? What types of trips do you take?
2. Who do you usually travel with? Why?
3. What are the factors that influence your decision to travel?
4. What factors are most important when making the decision on where to travel?
5. Do you prefer to visit popular tourist destinations or less-traveled locations? Why?

### **Relationship with Dark Tourism**

**Moderator:** This next part will be about dark tourism. A dark tourist is a form of tourism that involves visiting places associated with death, suffering, tragedy, or other dark and somber aspects of human history.

6. Have you ever visited any dark tourist attraction? Which ones?
7. Are you curious about knowing more about death?
8. Are you interested in the paranormal?
9. What comes to mind when you hear the term "ghost town"? How would you define it?
10. Have you ever visited a ghost town? Why?

11. Do you have any ethical or social considerations related to ghost towns that you believe are important to discuss? If yes, which ones?
12. Does that impact your motivations to visit a ghost town?

### **City of Varosha**

**Moderator:** This next part will be about Varosha. Varosha is a city located on the eastern coast of Cyprus. After the Turkish invasion of 1974, Varosha became deserted and is now considered a ghost town.

13. Have you ever considered or visited Varosha in Cyprus? Why?
14. Are you familiar with the current status of Varosha? How did you come to learn about it?
15. What do you expect to experience in Varosha?
16. Do you know anyone who has personally been affected by the incident in Varosha?
17. Do any ethical or political concerns influence your motivation to visit Varosha? If yes: Which ones?

**Moderator:** This finalizes our focus group. Are there any questions or final remarks that you want to make? Thank you again so much for participating.

### [Appendix C: Focus Group's Transcript](#)

#### **Focus Group I - 13 Nov 2023 at 06:20 pm**

**Moderator:** OK. So, hi, everyone in our discussion about the motivations for visiting a ghost town. My name is Beatriz and I'm currently doing my master's dissertation that is related to the topic at hand. Today, I will be moderating this group session. And before we start, I would like to make sure you understand the purpose of this session. So today's discussion will be an open-minded candid conversation where you can share your thoughts about the questions that will be asked.

However, some rules should be followed. Please let everyone finish their sentences and feel free to post your opinion throughout the session. Be reminded that there are no right or wrong answers, and our session will last approximately 60 minutes. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to let me know by participating in this focus group.

You have agreed that this session to be recorded and its content to be used for academic purposes. This focus group is confidential and anonymous with every participant to be assigned a number for further data analysis. Any questions so far? No. OK.

1: No.

**Moderator:** Otherwise, we can start with the first topic. So do you consider yourself a frequent traveler?

1: No, not really.

2: I travel once a year, I would say, ok, I would also not consider myself a very frequent traveler.

3: I used to be a very frequent traveler now. Not so much, but I very much love traveling.

**Moderator:** And you?

4: I travel at least once a year.

5: I also travel around once per year.

6: I travel a lot but only inside Cyprus.

**Moderator:** And what kind of trips do you take? Is it for leisure? Is it woodwork-related trips?

1: I take, leisure trips, leisure.

4: Me too.

3: Yeah, same.

5: For me is the same

6: I travel a lot for work but sometimes for leisure as well.

**Moderator:** And who do you usually travel with?

1: I travel with my friends

2: Friends, friends as well.

3: Yeah, sometimes with friends, sometimes alone.

**Moderator:** And why is that? Why do you choose to travel with your friends or by yourself?

**1:** Because, I want to have a fun experience on those trips, traveling and having fun with, people that I communicate well with.

**2:** I agree. It's nice to have someone to share your experiences with. It's also a matter of safety, I think. always going into a new country where you don't know the language. You don't know how safe or unsafe it is. It's always preferable to, be with someone else. And it's more fun.

**3:** Sometimes, you know, apart from the fun and everything there might be a specific purpose for a trip. Like, for example, I wanna visit this natural phenomenon. That occurs in northern lights, for example, which is fun. Yes, but also it is like a specific purpose for a trip sometimes if you do it with either friends or alone. So, ok.

**4:** And from my side, I like visiting with friends for fun activities. And, nothing special.

**5:** I usually go with my family because I don't have much time off and I like to enjoy the little time I have left with them.

**6:** For work, I go by myself because I work alone, but for leisure, I usually go with my kids because I like to spend time with them.

**Moderator:** And what factors influence your decision to travel? So why do you travel for?

**1:** New experience. Also, I consider the cost and the safety of the city I'm visiting. And what experiences can I experience in that place? Depending on culture, museum clubs. maybe the sea.

**2:** Mostly that's it, me it's got to do with seeing new cultures, doing things that you don't get to do daily, seeing new places, seeing the history behind new places, eating different cultures, food, and meeting new people. But I would say the number one thing is seeing new places and experiencing new cultures.

**3:** I would say pretty much the same although for me personally, I visit places usually to visit other friends in other countries. I do that very often. So even if it's places to like, I've been already like 1000 times like, in that instance.

**4:** I like it a lot. I mean, traveling, as I said, for new experiences to go sightseeing a lot.

**5:** Just for new experiences and learn new things. Expand my horizons like it was already mentioned.

**6:** As I said is mostly for work, but when is for leisure I decide to travel because I am interested in exploring a place or seeing new things.

**4:** I like tracking my friends around for sightseeing. I prefer to go, to places that have more nature or more, of, a beach because I like the beach, and to combine it with fun activities as well.

**Moderator:** So the next question was going to be what factors are most important when deciding where to travel. So, for you it's more related to the beach and if it's nature?

**4:** I always prefer the beach by myself. Here do you want to go first? Sorry.

**3:** Ok. so, I mean, obviously, a big part of a big factor when deciding on a trip is the cost. so, we look at that first, the distance as well. You know, if, it's a big difference if I'm gonna do a 10-hour trip rather than a two-hour trip. But let's say for example, that the cost was not an issue. The next factor for me would be, you know, I like to visit places, similar to Number 4 like with nature. I mean, not necessarily the beach but sometimes.

**5:** I'd like to visit places that, you know, are, for example, like within the mountains, like really nice views and stuff like that I would say that they're kind of my thing. I mean, so let's say costs and also like a distance like where it would go but also, you know, the type of place, like if it's within nature, if it's like a city like an old city, for example, or something like that. I don't know.

**Moderator:** What about the others? Is there any other factor that was not mentioned before that you would like to add?

**2:** OK, especially, as a woman. It's a factor to consider. certain countries are quite dangerous for everyone. Other countries are very dangerous for women specifically. And in general, like, it's very important in my book, it's very important to have safety. The country you're going to be a country that you can be safe in. Another factor is whether or not in the case that something might go wrong, is there somewhere that you can ask for help? Is there an embassy like your country's embassy or something that, someone that can help you should something go wrong. But for me, other than safety, another really big thing that helps me decide where I'm going is what kind of things are there to do in this country or this place. Are there sites to go see? Is there history to learn about it? Like what kind of things can you do or see?

**Moderator:** And what do you prefer to visit more touristic destinations or less traveled locations? And why is that?

**1:** For me, more touristic cause I usually tend to go for pleasure. So I'm gonna look for the galleries, mostly not museums. And I think there's a reason for those cities to be touristic. Because most of them are gorgeous. That's why most of the people go there, there are many

as well that are not so well known but that's why I prefer touristic mostly I'm, I'm gonna go to pleasure clubs, bars and also some sightseeing. And accessibility.

**2:** Honestly, I think it depends on why you're traveling. So if you're traveling to go sightseeing and to like to see the main spots that a country is known for, let's say you're going to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower or the Notre Dame or the Champs, Elysees. All these places are touristy because they are big landmarks, the country is known for. So you should go to those places if you wanna see the landmarks of a country. However, if you're going for a more integrated approach, if you wanna actually experience the culture, you would go to maybe cities or countries that are not such tourist hotspots to kind of experience the actual life there. If you have people to see, let's say, or something like that, you might be, more likely to go to less touristy spots. But if you're really wanting to see the country for what it's known for, usually those will be the tourist hotspots because those are the places people know.

**3:** I mean I pretty much, I was gonna say the same. I mean, I said earlier, like, one of my, when I look into things, for, in, in a country to travel, I like to go to places with nature and stuff like that. But I'm also a big fan of Barcelona, which is like the more one of the most touristy places in the world. I lived there. And even though there were a lot of people I liked visiting all of these famous monuments that Barcelona is known for. So for me, it depends, I, I mean, it, on the, on the mood that I'm in like whenever I plan for a trip like it's like 50-50 just depending on the purpose of the trip.

**5:** Basically, like if I'm gonna visit Barcelona like it was mentioned, I'm gonna visit all the monuments in Barcelona. But if I'm gonna go to less known countries, let's say I'm gonna look for the more local stuff like yeah.

**4:** When I go traveling, I consider myself an active person and I'm always trying to do as many things as possible. I'm trying to go for sightseeing. I'm trying to go. Maybe if there is, nature, I mean, a mountain or sea near it, I would love to go. and then I would love to go also for pleasure. I mean, for maybe a club or for some drinks with my friends because that's what I mean.

holidays are for pleasure and me as well for sightseeing. However, I think it's very important to have accessibility as Number 2 said safety and I think they covered most of the things.

**Moderator:** So this next part will be about dark tourism. Dark tourism is a form of tourism that involves visiting places associated with death with death suffering, tragedy, or other dark and somber aspects of human history. One example can be, for example, Auschwitz, the concentration camp. Have you ever visited a dark tourist attraction? No, which one?

**1:** Never.

**4:** No.

**2:** I'm not sure if it is considered dark tourism but in London, there are quite a few attractions you would say like there's a, there's a walking tour of all the Jack the Reaper murders I have.

**Moderator:** Yes.

**2:** I've done a few like London Dungeon which is the dungeons of London. So even going to see the tombs in, in Egypt, I guess, like the tombs and stuff?

**Moderator:** OK. And are you curious about knowing more about death? Are you interested in that? Like, do you read a lot about it? Do you think a lot about it?

**1:** No, to be honest, I, I don't. I'm not interested in like, learning more and more about it. I'm open to it but I'm not willing to do it.

**2:** I think I do, I have thought a lot about that, especially recently. but I think, and in general, I think that is a topic that always, is interesting. Like, we might think that we're not interested in death but it's something that is so widely understood in the sense that everyone dies. Everyone knows someone who's died. Everyone knows about people who have died. We're constantly, surrounded by it. We've sort of become desensitized to it. but and I think that kind of, everyone has an opinion on death or some sort of, they've thought about it at least once about what happens when we die or all that. I think everyone would have thought about that at least once or wondered or whatever it is. But I'm not gonna say that it's not something that I've thought about.

It's not something I constantly think about or try not to. But I think, because it's such a wide array of, like, it, it can cover such a wide spectrum of concepts and ideas. Religion is heavily associated with death. Like, every religion has, a concept of what happens to you when you die and where you go or what happens to you.

**Moderator:** What about the others? Is there? That's something you're curious about.

**3:** Well, I mean, I'm not gonna lie. I mean, there's some, I have thought about it, a few times, not in the sense that the, you know, obviously I have wondered what happens next and, and as somewhat, not so much but a little bit religious, you know, sometimes I'm thinking, ok, it is like my, somewhat faith gonna pay off at some point, like stuff like that. But I've also thought about that in the sense that, you know, it's something that you were not supposed to know what happens next.

And I think that's what makes it sort of human. Like you're not supposed to know, like, if, you know, I mean, because I mean, you might have an idea. Yes, but a hunch, a hunch, or something, but you're not supposed to know. And I think that's what, again, as I said next is human. So and that's what belief is, isn't it?

**6:** Belief is? You think that this is how it is, you think you're gonna go to hell or go to heaven or whatever you believe it. But there's no concrete proof. I think that's the difference between belief and science.

**Moderator:** And what about you? Are you interested in it?

**4:** I'm not particularly interested in this. As everyone, I think once, I mean, it passed from our minds. What is after that or what will happen, would I, or how I might die or those things? But, it's, it's not particularly in my mind.

**Moderator:** And are you interested in the paranormal?

**4:** Yes. I mean, who isn't? I think it's very interesting too.

**Moderator:** What about the others? Do you agree?

**2:** Oh, I'm very interested in the paranormal. I think it's very, it's very exciting and it's very, very exciting the idea that we don't just end when we die that there's some sort of ethereal plane or, like some sort of afterlife and ghosts and everything. It can be very exciting to think about. I don't know how much, you believe in it, but, like, I think it's very interesting to think about. Ok.

**3:** I mean, I agree and I, I also sometimes think about, you know, maybe all of us or some of us here in this call have seen paranormal TV shows and movies and stuff like that. Like, but it's also interesting to think about specific types of media, whether it's a movie a TV show, or something else that is based on true stories. So, for example, the conjuring films, I don't know if you've seen them, but all of those are supposed to be true stories. Like the characters in the movie are people that existed, and you see things that are happening in the movie and you're wondering, wow, did this really happen or not? And it's as if it really happened, you're, it makes the world a little bit scarier sometimes. But, well, if it didn't happen, that's the thing you don't really know. You're just sitting there wondering and so, I'm interested, it's interesting, to say the least.

**1:** I mean, I'm interested as well because something unknown, nobody can answer. And I have my opinions as well but they're just opinions and thoughts. Nobody can prove anything. And that's what makes it interesting. But, I have, some thoughts or just mind, like, their personal and doesn't affect anyone doesn't mean they're true. Most likely they are false. But it interests me something that I cannot explain. Ok, we always try to do that, don't we?

**5:** People, we try to explain things like oh she didn't hear the voices of ghosts or She just went crazy and that sound I just heard outside is the, like, like the cold is shrinking down the tiles outside or we always try to explain paranormal things.

**6:** Right.

**Moderator:** And what comes to mind when you hear the term ghost town?

**1:** Varosha. Yeah.

**Moderator:** First thing to mind. That's it.

**1:** Yes.

**4:** I would say I would say the same because we are from a place that had an illegal occupation and we have still the innovators in our homeland and we have the city of Varosha is a ghost town. So it's the first thing that is coming to my mind as well.

**2:** For me, when I hear the words, a ghost town, I don't immediately go to Varosha because it's just like I go to the concept of people having to leave their homes behind and, like you watch footage and there's like plates still like on the tables and like these people just left, it's like they had to run away. It's not like, they packed up and went to a better future. It's not like they actually left because they wanted to, they had to run away. And that kind of gives it a very ominous feeling like that's what I think about the fact that people had to leave their homes without any notice.

**Moderator:** OK. And what about you?

**3:** I mean, I would say Varosha just like the guys as well. I mean, being from Cyprus, it's, it's very easy for us to go to, that place when we think about Ghost Town. But obviously what Number 2 just said is like, very, it's impactful as well when you think about it. I mean, it's exactly what happened to, the citizens of Varosha back in the day.

**5:** I agree the first thing I would think about would be the city of Varosha. Even though I know what a ghost town is when thinking about I always think of Varosha.

**6:** For me when I hear ghost town, I think of a place that is abandoned, it can be for different reasons. That isn't anyone living there and is in ruins.

**Moderator:** And have you ever visited a ghost town?

**1:** No, I did not. Never, I always, it comes up on my mind if I'm gonna do it or not because my father's family is from there. So that makes me being from there as well. They got kicked out of their home, you know, that war causes, very, very bad situations for families and all the people that were involved in it. And, recently, we've learned that their home is currently occupied by the Turkish army illegally. So, to be fair, I don't know how I or my family, especially my family, would react if we went there and saw them, inside their home, living there. So, from the one part that's why I don't wanna go from the other part. I always wanted to go and see what it's like, but I don't wanna pay any money or give them the, like, satisfaction that I'm coming there to pay, even though I'm not gonna pay, they're gonna assume that, ah, he's coming to pay or, just to accept this fact. So, I'm very, conflicted about this. I haven't decided yet what to do. I'm, I'm mostly not going.

**Moderator:** OK. And what about the others? It can be any ghost and it doesn't need to be Varosha. Have you ever visited?

**3:** Well, I mean, I haven't visited and, when it comes to, like, Varosha, for example, like, I'm, I mean, I'm not from there, like Number 2 as well. Like I'm similarly conflicted when I, think about it. But also if you think about, I mean, obviously as Cypriots, we have a bias in this, like whether it's you know, obviously it's something that happened to our homes, our families, I mean, not ours as personally, you know what I mean? So we're obviously gonna have a very strong opinion about this matter. So if we, but if we think about it from the point of view of someone who's not from Cyprus, then it's, at least interesting to think about visiting a ghost town because, you know, a ghost town is like a place that has a lot of history behind it. So, when you visit the ghost town, it's interesting to think about what happened there. Why has it become a ghost town? And so, I mean, if the question is, if I would ever visit one, it's complicated.

**Moderator:** No, no, it's, have you ever visited? So, have you ever been there?

**3:** So, I've never been like, ok, let's just say that.

**6:** No, I haven't been to a ghost town.

**5:** No, I haven't been as well.

**2:** Would Pompeii be considered a ghost town? Yes,

**Moderator:** No one really lives there. It's more like touristic, but yes. And why did you decide to go to Pompeii?

**2:** For example, I didn't, I didn't, I was about, I was gonna go, I was just asking, I was gonna go over the summer but it didn't work with COVID.

**4:** I have only gone to Pompeii now that Number 2 mentioned it. For me, it's much in my mind, it's different from the concept of the ghost town of Pompeii with the ghost town of Varosha, for example, because Pompeii was destroyed by an eruption of a volcano. You can go see and see, go there and see the people like that. They are like statues, I mean real ones because they are humans, but they have become like that from the volcano. I found it, an educational trip because it's so ancient as well. However, I don't consider myself, to go on Varosha because of the sensitive matter.

**Moderator:** Wait, wait, sorry to interrupt you. We are not there yet. This is only like a ghost town if you've ever been to any ghost town.

**4:** Oh ok, so, I've been to a ghost town as well.

**1:** I didn't know Pompeii was considered a ghost town. Sorry. I didn't like it at all. It was a very bad experience for me. It was just, a sad and empty town with people that melted, let's say. And you, we were just, wondering around, and seeing like, destroyed homes and, that didn't make me feel well or enjoy my time there. That's about it.

**Moderator:** OK. Do you have any ethical or social considerations related to ghost towns that you believe are important to discuss?

**5:** Depending on why the town is a ghost town.

**3:** So in the case of, Varosha, like the others said, I think, as someone who knows it, 100% understand why people who are from Varosha would want to go back and see their home and their ancestral homes and houses.

**2:** I totally understand it. But as a person who doesn't actually come from Varosha. but as someone who is Cypriot and who sees the effects of the occupation every day, it's very, I stand firmly on not going given how and why Varosha is a ghost city. I think that it is really, it, it, it doesn't like my heart won't allow me to go and see, even though it is our country and it is where we come from. And I just, as someone who doesn't personally have familial ties to that town, I can't see myself going and financially supporting the illegal occupation. But if it's a country or a town like Pompeii, for example, or something that it's a natural disaster or somewhere that didn't involve the in period, a list takeover, hostile takeover of a country. that's very different. It's very important, it depends on if it's something that happened or if it's something that people did. Ok.

**Moderator:** So basically, your motivations are impacted by the reason why it became a ghost town the ethical part of it, and the social part of why it became a ghost town.

**2:** Like I, I don't feel ok with, because obviously to go there, you have to spend money, you have, you're gonna go eat, drink, you're financially contributing to these people being there when they shouldn't be there.

And it's sad because a lot of the people that are there have no, well, are there through no fault of their own? So, yeah, but still, yeah.

**Moderator:** Do you have any other considerations?

**1:** I would agree with Number 2. She raised a very good point there. The reason I visited Pompeii was, it was a natural disaster. So it really depends on the reason why, it's a town called Ghost Town. why did it happen? So if there is any chance that I would go to Augusta is where I feel ethically. Ok, to go like Pompeii?

**4:** I agree with Number 2 and Number 1.

**3:** I would say they pretty much captured everything I was gonna say exactly the same.

**Moderator:** So this next part will be about Varosha. Varosha is a city located on the eastern coast of Cyprus after the Turkish invasion of 74 it became deserted and is now considered a ghost town. Have you ever considered visiting Varosha? I know a lot of you already mentioned you wouldn't but the rest are the rest willing to go and why is that, why are you willing to go or not willing to go?

**3:** I mean, as we mentioned earlier, it's a bit conflicting for us, Cypriots, the thought of visiting Varosha for many different reasons. It's mainly the part about supporting, the illegal occupation, when you visit it in whatever way we would be supporting it, whether it's financially or not.

**6:** I mean, it's, I don't know, like, it's, it's a personal battle basically.

**5:** I mean, if we weren't Cypriots then maybe, I don't know, depending on the person it would be easier to think about. But as Cypriots, it's very hard for us to think about going there. I'm not sure actually.

**Moderator:** And you Number 4 would you go?

**4:** I wouldn't go. But the only chance I would consider myself going is because I think 49 years of illegal occupation are too much and the new generations have been already raised and we are as a society losing touch with the Cypriot problem. So I think because the younger generation of politics, politicians, they need to have the touch and be more informed or to have as well the pain inside their heart. So I think if I ever visit it will be in the summer with my coolers not giving a cent into the Turkish part. And I will make sure about it, but also I will only go on that very small chance because I would like to have that touch of what happened get bigger inside me. I mean, to get to know more get more familiar with the matter see how things are there, something like that, but I wouldn't consider myself on going on giving a single cent.

**Moderator:** Are you familiar with the current situation of Varosha? And how did you learn about it?

**2:** In Cyprus, because, although 50 years and 49 years are a lot, they're not enough to erase the pain and the trauma of many generations of Cypriots who got displaced. There is quite a bit of it, it, there's quite a bit of way that people remember and make sure the younger generations know. So if you're a young Cypriot going to school, especially public school, we have photos of our occupied lands including Varosha on our notebooks or on, our state-issued notebooks with the, with the words don't forget, printed on them. Ok. There are marches held it well up until the last 10 years when other issues in Cyprus became more pressing such as the financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Up until that point, it was a very big talking point for all of the political parties, and you would hear all about it on TV. It's still mentioned, but as Ario said earlier, it does feel that the citizens of the, the younger citizens of Cyprus are starting to kind of give up and lose touch with our occupied lands. They are not so much, inclined to

seek them back. So, but, but still when you're young, when, when you're in school, especially, especially through going to a public school, they hammer it in you about our, our occupied lands and Varosha and Kyrenia and all the places that, our people were forced to leave behind.

**6:** So, I mean, again, they pretty much covered most of the things that we feel about the Cypriots. I mean, the whole reopening thing was, I mean, it's not, let's just say it wasn't good for us. let's not say like, I mean, the part about the generations like forgetting, not forgetting, but like feeling more, more and more detached from the whole issue. I lived through it so I know very well what happened since I lived in real life.

**5:** I was also born during this period, and even though I don't have a lot of memories from the invasion year I still remember how it impacted the country, and everyone's life. I think I hear about it from other people like my family and friends, but I also have some memories since I was alive when it happened.

**3:** I mean, I feel like that's kind of natural to happen as time goes by and the issue just stays there. You know, it's obviously not the same for, let's say, not for me, but like for me as someone as a person from Gen who was born, generations later from the conflict. So it's not the same as when my parents felt it because when, because they were the ones who lived through the war, whereas I didn't live through it. I don't, I don't, I mean, I can sympathize with people who felt it but I haven't actually felt it. So that's why as more generations are born. Like they are not gonna feel the same things and then it's just, you know, I'm not sure what it will be 20 years from now, 30 years from now, if this issue doesn't get resolved. But, I feel like that's a natural sort of progression, unfortunately.

**Moderator:** So basically, you learned about it from your family and from school and from those kinds of resources because your parents lived through it. So they were the ones who told you how it happened and showed you the consequences of it all happening and everything.

**2:** Exactly. Yes. Ok.

**Moderator:** Well, if you were to visit Varosha today, what do you expect to experience once you got there?

**4:** I expect, I expect to experience, I mean, most of it, it will be a ghost.

**2:** I mean, empty hotels, empty town.

**6:** But now I know that Turkey is trying to open some parts of the Varosha illegally. So, I already know that I will find some things operating there, that I would not like.

**4:** However, I would not go for the pleasure part, or I would not go to organize things from Turkey. I will only go as I say, if I ever go to the places that are actually coasted that are actually historical places and I will know that I will actually get educated and get in touch with the subject.

**Moderator:** What about the others? What do you think? You would experience there.

**5:** I think, obviously you have to, first of all, I think any Cypriot who goes there will feel overwhelmed by the indignity

**2:** In the beginning, I would personally be indignant at the fact that this is, this was supposed to be part of my country. It should have been full of people bustling with young people, young Cypriots. It could have been, I think such a wonderful place. foot of opportunity. It, it kind of, it's kind of depressing really because you think of everything that could have been, had things not gone so wrong and all the missed opportunity and all the missed, beauty that place could have held it was known, as a place that it was supposedly one of the most advanced cities of its time in Cyprus and it's really like, comparatively to the other cities and it's really depressing to see that it's kind of stayed stagnant because if it was ahead of its time, who knows where, what it could have looked like today? Had it not been stuck in time? So, I think this overwhelming sense of loss and unfairness would likely, take over any Cypriot who goes there but also, the thought of the, the thought of this is the place where people had to run away from.

**Moderator:** And what about the others? Do you think you would have a similar experience or are there some things that you think would be different?

**3:** So, I mean, obviously the feeling of loss and fairness, all of that would pretty much prevail over a Cypriot feeling. But also, it's getting back basically to the topic of death. Like, let's say you're not a Cypriot person, who would be visiting Varosha or any ghost town really, you're getting back to the feeling of death. I mean, it was such a lively place and now for whatever reason, whether it's a natural disaster, or something else, it's not the living place anymore. So, I think I would be pretty not feeling okay, thinking about death again basically, like not, about my death or anything, like thinking about, you know, the concept in general because you're in a place that basically died. You can say.

**5:** Same for me as the other guys pretty much said a lot of things that I would say.

**1:** I think I would experience anger and sadness at the same time, anger is due to the reason that, I would be, envisioning the stories or the places that, my family has told me many times and, how great it used to be, and the sadness of, what it has become and why it has become like this without any reason. They're just illegally there and not even doing anything to that city. They just left it there throughout. And that's very sad.

**6:** I agree, they take advantage of many things like prices or so on to attract Cypriots to go there and, make them, let's say, forget and have a good time there. But I don't think like that. I don't believe that should change the way that we think we must forget what happened and we need to do everything that we can. So, we get an agreement or something to go back.

**Moderator:** Do you know anyone who has personally been affected by this incident?

**1:** Like I said before, my side of my father, the whole side was from there. They used to live there have, their, their workplaces, let's say and their houses, their land and they were all affected. They had to leave, and they all became like refugees when they came to other cities. Like many others there, they had to escape and find a new place. They used to live in tents until they had a home, and they suffered a lot as they have lost many in the war, many of relatives.

**2:** I, although my family again, am not personally from Varosha, think it's very hard for you to find a Cypriot that doesn't know anyone who has family from them. Our generation, we're talking about second-generation refugees. So, people who were born, after their parents had already been forced to leave or their grandparents even second to third-generation refugees. But there's not, someone in my family directly but I, of course, know a lot of, friends and family, friends, parents of friends, and grandparents of friends who've all talked about the experience. And again, as Number 1 said, they leave with basically the clothes on their back and living in tents.

**5:** As it was mentioned is hard to not know someone affected by this. My family was also not directly affected by it, but I know a lot of people who were. There are even certain places in Limassol, I'm sure there's something equivalent in every city but Limassol was one of the cities where a lot of the refugees ran to. So, we have quite a few refugee neighborhoods here. I actually live right next to one. And they are the refugees, some houses were built with government funding for the refugees. And they're kind of simpler, and smaller because they were meant to accommodate people for a short time, I'm sure they weren't expecting to actually not have a solution 50 years later. But I think it'll be very hard for you to find a Cypriot who doesn't know anyone who's been affected by it.

**6:** I was directly affected by this tragedy. My family lost everything, and we became refugees. We had to leave our whole life behind and live in pure terror. It was a very tough and sad time that definitely had a big impact on everyone in the family. We are still traumatized by this to this day. And it's just very hard to rethink about it.

**4:** Yes, I know lots of people. I have also very good friends who were affected by their families. but, as Number 5 said, Cypriots, and because I also live in Limassol, there are a lot of refugees living in Limassol that settled. So, I can see how they could experience it, I mean, their experience, their pain, their anger, and all of their emotions.

**Moderator:** And do you have some ethical or political concerns that influence you wanting to visit?

**1:** Yes, I do. I'm very, biased, to not visit that town or if I do visit in my own, way.

**2:** I think, I think that is a major driving factor and not just Varosha, but I think having like the background of being a Cypriot and coming from a place where all of this happened and having this experience, I don't think I would be able to go to a country or a town or a city that something similar happens to. So if not, I would never put myself in a situation where I would go and visit an occupied land. The way that I wouldn't go visit Varosha just doesn't sit right with me.

**5:** It's a very sensitive topic. I agree with Number 2.

**4:** For me first is the ethical issues and then, the political issues. I mean, it's ethical, because it's. I, it's ethical to go in any, goes down around, around the world, when it was a war zone before. however, it's more ethical, to go to a ghost town in my country. And, you know, people that were affected.

**3:** You, I mean, it's pretty much the same, like, as Cypriots, you know, you're not gonna, I mean, similarly like to Number 5 and Number 2 and my parents are, like, not from there, but, you know, they have been affected. I mean, I have heard this, they have told me the story of them escaping, going through the lemon trees, you know, stuff like that, trying to avoid the soldiers and it's like a imagine the scary situation that you have to be in. My family had to escape, I mean, not from their house but again, they escaped their sort of situation. So it's very, very conflicting. To say the least, I'm not, I mean, I'm not gonna say no, like outright to visiting. Like it's, I would, I would like to one day visit it, but right now I'm not sure.

**6:** I remember that it was a very tough time. Like, you will not be sure if you're gonna eat, if you're gonna survive if you're gonna, you know, all of these things. So, with that, I mean, there definitely comes an ethical consideration when visiting, you know, the town. because at the, at the one time you're thinking, like I lived through this, my parents lived through this. So like Number 3 just mentioned, I am very conflicted if I would like to visit or not because of the mixed feelings it brings up.

**Moderator:** Are there any final remarks that you would like to make?

**2:** I think just to sum up our, at least my views, is that any ghost city holds so much history, so much pain, usually so much emotion and history. It is beautiful but heartbreaking and it is something that the country always remembers. It's like, it's like a wound that has frosted over and time has gone by so quickly and people are moving on with their lives, but it's still there.

**6:** I agree, the wound is still there. And I think it's very hard for any Cypriot not to care and not to think about it

because it is our land. It is where we come from and it's very heartbreaking because there are constant reminders other than being a Cypriot and being raised and hearing all about this, the Turkish flag that you see when you go near, when you enter Nicosia and, the, the reminders, the constant reminders are just there and it's so heartbreaking and yeah...

**Moderator:** What about the others?

**5:** Not from my side.

**1:** I also have nothing to add.

**4:** She's covering everything perfectly.

**3:** I mean, I would pretty much say the same although I would add the part that I mentioned earlier about, you know, with his generation. It feels like every generation is not like forgetting but you know, it's, they don't, they don't have the same like interest or the same strong feelings, let's say the same drive about it. It's almost as if like you're watering down vodka basically, like, and every generation is just more water, less vodka, or whatever. I think it's because people have got to move on with their lives.

**2:** And you also think about, you know, stuff that happened, you know, in the 18th century and how people today are not even gonna think about what happened like centuries ago.

**3:** I feel like at some point this will happen to Cyprus as well. Although our situation is kind of different in the sense that, you know, the, the situation, I mean, the conflict hasn't been solved yet. You know, it's the Cyprus issue, it's still there and you still have Varosha. I mean, yes, it's kind of reopened, but also, it's kind of still a ghost town. And you know, you, you still have, you know, the situation with both sides here and there. So, I mean, I don't know, I just hope that, you know, the future generations learn about this. So, we don't, the same mistakes to happen again. Like no, not another world will happen. But let's see. Ok.

**Moderator:** This was perfect guys. Thank you so much.

**2:** Thank you.