Promoting the thrills: A study of emotional reactions to advertisements for fright tourism heritage attractions

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Abstract

The paper examines emotions generated in potential visitors through the promotional imagery used in fright tourism, a form of dark heritage tourism. In fright tourism, an unusual combination of human emotions of fun and fear are experienced by tourists through activities such as haunted house visits and ghost tours. A modified model, based on Russell's (1980) Circumplex Model of Affect, was developed to measure emotions in fright tourism advertising. The model was constructed with empirical data from the United States and New Zealand. The data were obtained through interviews with business owners of fright tourism attractions, focus groups, and a questionnaire of potential visitors. Findings indicated statistically significant correlations exist between human emotions in different quadrants of the model (positive/pleasant and negative/unpleasant). The findings suggest, contrary to the application of the Circumplex Model in more conventional tourism settings, that fright tourism business' advertisements induce contradictory emotions. The study challenges current understandings of visitor experiences and contributes to knowledge about how fright tourism heritage experiences may best be promoted.

Keywords: fright tourism; emotion measurement; tourism advertising; tourist experiences

Introduction

Tourism is an activity in which the assumption is that individuals pursue and obtain pleasure during tourism consumption (Nawijn & Biran, 2018). Nawijn and Biran's (2018) study of negative emotions in tourism however reminds us that negative emotions form part of tourist experiences in specific tourism contexts. In these situations, tourists experience fear, anxiety,

anger, and similar emotions. These are often experienced as part of what might be termed fright tourism, or tourism that centres on the provision of fear at a destination. Fright tourist experiences involve tourists seeking "a scary opportunity for pleasure at a destination that may have a sinister history or may be promoted to have one" (Bristow & Newman, 2004, p. 215). Studies (Andersen et al, 2022) have investigated the appeal of fear in a recreational or entertainment (Biran & Buda, 2018) context, most notably in relation to horror films (Andrade & Cohen, 2007; Carroll, 1990; Clasen, 2017; Nickel, 2010; Pinedo, 1996; Tudor, 1997), as well as tourism (Hoedt, 2009; Norfelt, et al., 2022).

Often considered as a subset of dark heritage tourism (Bristow, 2020), fright tourism is based on macabre elements, and patrons seek a thrill or shock from the experience. Tourist attractions include haunted houses, ghost tours, murder-mystery weekends, and numerous other fright activities. Fright tourism is not new (Ashworth & Isaac, 2015; Bristow, 2020) and prior to the 2020 pandemic was growing rapidly (De Visser-Amundson et al., 2016; Holloway, 2010). The ghoulish aspects, the frightening, the ghastly, and the association with strange or cruel death, are the defining characteristics of the subset of attractions which provide fright tourist experiences. What makes fright tourism distinct is a level of fantasy—a removal from the realism of dark historical events—and a level of staged experience that includes elements of the supernatural (Bristow, 2020; Zhang, et al., 2022).

Stone (2006) places this form of tourism into the 'lighter-dark' category on his dark tourism spectrum and defines it as "commercial visitor sites and attractions which recreate and commodify death, suffering, and the macabre, and which are entertainment-centric" (Stone, 2009, p. 168). McEvoy (2016) however argues fright tourism is part of 'Gothic Tourism' and

notes that it does not closely fit with Lennon and Foley's (2000) term of dark tourism, despite the efforts of Stone (2006) to place it there, in his 'dark fun factory' category. She notes:

> Gothic tourism is tourism that is intimately connected with Gothic narrative, its associated tropes, discourses and conventions. Scare attractions, with their mocked-up buildings, characters familiar from film and literature, and their attempts to see the adrenaline racing, are very obvious examples of Gothic tourism (McEvoy, 2016, p. 5).

McEvoy claims that salient characteristics of gothic tourism include its focus on locality, specifically its historical heritage (such as ghost walk stories based on performance). Virtually all gothic attractions are performed in some way, either by a tour guide or scare-actor, as well as through objects and physical spaces. "Gothic tourism…is characterized by very particular different attitudes to place, to affect, to the question of genre, and to the phenomenon of performance" (2016, p. 6). McEvoy (2016) asserts that tourism has played an essential role in the Gothic aesthetic from the beginning. She identifies five main areas that make gothic tourism distinct, such as a previous knowledge of the Gothic, having a performance/theatrical dimension, being an immersive experience, and having a strong affective response. Light, Richards, and Ivanova (2021) however suggest Gothic tourism is a combination of lighter dark tourism and literary tourism. They present an alternative conceptual model which "situates Gothic tourism as a particular form of urban heritage tourism that stands at the nexus of dark tourism and literary tourism." (2021, p. 232). They believe Gothic tourism to be "heritage tourism since most sites of Gothic tourism are in some way about the past" (2021, p. 230). Additionally, Heidelberg (2015) proposes that ghosts are part of the heritage of place and presents factors local governments should consider as they examine their role in dark tourism, such as planning for site

management, examining potential economic benefits, and ensuring that they have a voice in the stewardship of their history.

Other studies of this form of tourism include: ghost walk tourism (Gentry, 2007); Dracula tourism (Reijnders, 2011; Light, 2017); contemplation of death at lighter dark tourist attractions (Light & Ivanova, 2021); behavioral intentions of tourists in ghost tourism (Lee, 2021); design of interpretation at lighter dark tourism attractions (Wyatt et al. 2021); motivations for visiting light dark tourism attractions (Ivanova & Light, 2021); liminal experiences in fright tourism (Bristow, 2020); and operational changes at fright tourism attractions in response to Covid-19 protocols (Weidmann et al. 2022).

Irrespective of whether fright tourism is conceptualised as part of Gothic tourism or of dark tourism, its link to heritage tourism is clear. And by connection, just as the emotional experience is a vital part of heritage tourism (Smith & Campbell, 2015; Zhao et al, 2020), the same applies to fright tourism. There is growing acknowledgement of the importance of positive and negative emotions in heritage tourism, with a call for further exploration of how these positive and negative emotions are elicited (Prayag & Del Chiappa, 2021).

In particular, this paper is interested in the emotions that may be *expected to be* generated at fright tourism attractions- or what Zhao et al (2020, p. 1188) refer to as anticipated emotions that are "evoked by appraisal processes". For fright tourism, which offers attractions that are associated with potentially contradictory emotions (fear, fun), it is important from a managerial perspective to understand what emotions are evoked and how portrayals of attractions are received. However, there is also value from a theoretical perspective, employing existing conceptualisations of emotion, to further explore the interplay of such contradictory emotions and how they are 'resolved' in fright tourism. To this end, this paper reports on a study that

explored how the imagery of advertising materials of fright tourism attractions communicate emotions that may be encountered at the attraction to prospective visitors. Specifically, we aimed to create a fright tourism specific emotion measurement instrument to uncover how fright tourists are receiving the messages that businesses wished to convey through their advertising efforts.

Literature review

Imagery and fright tourism

Advertising for fright tourism attractions often features distinctive imagery, such as supernatural creatures, castles, derelict buildings, ghostly figures, and gothic imagery (Weidmann, 2016). For potential visitors, such imagery suggests the types of emotions that they might experience during a visit to the attraction. Images used in fright tourism advertising elicit a strong response from the viewer since "seeing an image is an embodiment of the physical attractions of the real world" (Messaris, 1996, p. vi). This is significant since one of the main functions of fright imagery in advertising is visual persuasion (Weidmann, 2018). Advertisers want tourists to connect with images from advertisements, and later turn that enthusiasm towards the purchase of the associated product (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Images in advertisements can produce this response by eliciting emotions through simulating a real person or an object (Messaris, 1996). The imagery often featured in advertising materials for fright tourism attractions is that of horror (Davenport-Hines, 1998). Twitchell (1985) argues that horror iconography is relatively consistent from generation to generation and is therefore immensely powerful.

Fear has often been employed in advertising in order to provoke a purchase decision to avoid bad consequences, such as purchasing insurance to avoid financial loss due to destruction

of property attributed to weather. This practice is known as a *fear appeal*, and its use has been well documented (e.g., Benet et al., 1993; LaTour et al., 1996). However, little research has explored the intersection between the use of fear in advertising and an actual frightful experience that is being sold - and then only in the context of horror films (e.g., Heffernan, 2004) not fright tourism. In this way, we hope to address the use of fear in advertising as an appealing attribute of the attraction, rather than as an avoidance technique.

Negative, positive emotions and fright tourism

As this study is focused on understanding how emotions of fright tourists are affected through advertising materials, it is important to distinguish between different types of emotions. Emotions are "conscious mental reactions such as anger or fear subjectively experienced as strong feelings, usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body" (Webster, 1992 p. 385). According to Lewin (1931), emotions have 'positive' (attractive) or 'negative' (aversive) valence (Liu et al., 1992). As a common negative emotion, fear prepares the body to flee a dangerous situation or to fight (Gray, 1987). This typically involves physiological reactions such as an increased heart rate, faster breathing, nausea, and muscle tension (Funkenstein, 1958). While some of these feelings may be unpleasant, they may be considered exciting and, in some cases, elicit pleasurable outcomes. It has been suggested that the thrill of fear mimics sexual response (Dutton & Aron, 1974) and that the opportunity to control levels of fear allows for enjoyment of negative emotions (Morreall, 1985).

Delgado (1966) offers general characterizations of emotion processes that are relevant to this study as they describe emotional reactions to a stimulus. Stimuli come from different sources

including advertising materials (Delgado, 1966). Such materials frequently use imagery and language that serve as an emotional stimulus, depending on the product or experience being advertised, and a potential customer's emotional reaction to that stimulus can foreshadow the experience for sale. For fright tourism attractions it is important to the success of their advertising campaigns to measure emotions generated by the imagery employed, given that presentations of fear and other emotions are an important part of this tourism sector (McEvoy, 2016).

Measurement of emotions in fright tourism

Fear, labelled as a negative emotion, is an unusual emotion to want to experience, given the hedonic assumption of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010). Thus, fright tourism, with varying levels of fear as part of the experience, in many ways defies expectations of what a tourist wants in a tourist attraction experience. In this way, attempting to measure emotions in tourist experiences with a variety of emotion measurement models that are in regular employment in tourism research, such as the Destination Emotion Scale (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010) and the Consumer Emotion Scale (Richins, 1997) becomes challenging. As the study reported here focuses on understanding a range of emotional reactions of fright tourists to advertising materials, a model that offers both positive and negative emotions was examined, namely, Russell's (1980) Circumplex Model of Affect (CMA). The model (Figure 1) posits positive and negative emotions as equally portioned quadrants, with emotions represented as a circle, rather than as a continuum (Russell, 1980).

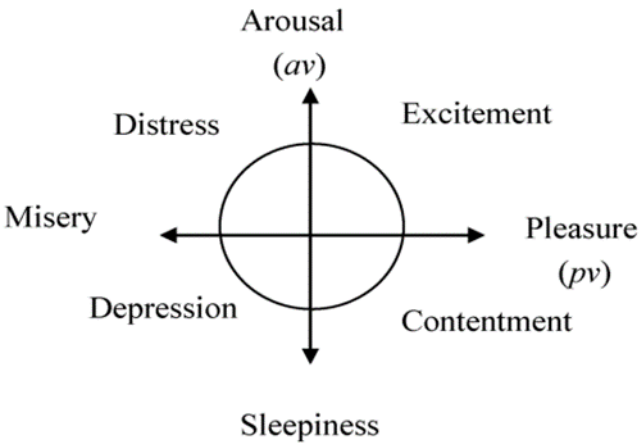

Figure 1 Circumplex Model of Affect (Russell, 1980)

According to Russell (1980), psychological researchers who had factor-analysed self-reported affective states (emotions) had concluded that there exist six to twelve *independent* monopolar states, such as sadness, anger, and elation. Russell and his colleagues (Mehrabain & Russell, 1974; Russell & Mehrabain,1977; Russell, 1978; Russell & Pratt, 1980) conducted several studies to determine whether self-reported affective states formed a circular order, which categories of emotion stimulus words fell into, and noted the fuzziness of emotion-denoting words (lack of boundaries between categories). Russell (1980) then proposed the Circumplex Model of Affect (CMA), with each of the eight terms (arousal, excitement, pleasure, contentment, sleepiness, depression, misery, and distress) plotted 45-degrees apart in a circular order, as the space is meant to be continuous, and an affective quality can fall at any point in that continuous space. The eight terms used are intended to represent general affective responses, with the idea that other affective responses can be effectively plotted on the grid alongside the terms they are most significantly related to (Russell & Mehrabain, 1977). The model predicts that emotions with a 90-degree separation will be un-correlated, while opposites (180-degree

separation) on the scale such as distress and contentment will have a correlation approaching negative one (-1) (Remington et al., 2000).

After developing the general model of affect, Russell and his colleagues (Russell & Pratt, 1980; Russell & Ward, 1982; Russell et al., 1981) developed the model of affective quality attributed to environments as an attempt to measure the affective responses of persons in different environments. To provide preliminary evidence as to whether there was consensus among observers as to the affective qualities of environments, Russell Ward and Pratt, (1981) used photographs that represented a sample of environments. Besides providing for convenient sampling, the use of photographic simulations ensured that the subjects were responding to the exact same stimuli. The Russell, Ward and Pratt's (1981) model was first applied to tourism by Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) to test whether its function held for large-scale environments that are not experienced directly. They applied the model to eleven Mediterranean destinations and found that most European destinations fell between the exciting and pleasant dimensions, some were perceived as unpleasant and distressing as destinations, and others sleepy and gloomy, suggesting poor affective image. The model has been further applied across a range of destinations, including cultural heritage destinations such as Egypt and Greece (Baloglu & McClearly, 1999; Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Nemec Rudez, 2014). The model has also been used to investigate the role of emotions in destination visitation intentions (White & Scandale, 2005). The use of the CMA model was thus particularly fitting for this study that involved the exposure of participants to advertising material (photographs and other Gothic imagery in tourist marketing materials). We were interested in emotions that are induced through these materials.

Methodology

The study was designed as a mixed methods study. There was an inductive, preliminary phase of research which was used to gather qualitative (interview and focus group) data, followed by a quantitative (survey) phase which involved statistical analysis. To meet the aim of exploring how the imagery of advertising materials of fright tourism attractions influence the emotions of prospective visitors, tourist advertising materials of seven fright tourism attractions were examined, two of which are presented in this paper. The materials consisted of tourist brochures of tourism attractions. These are still commonly used by this small tourism sector, despite the presence of modern digital marketing platforms, including social media groups.

Tourism attractions

The two attractions selected for inclusion in this paper capture the diversity of attractions in this industry (they represent a haunted house attraction and a ghost tour attraction), and display data on the model that exemplifies relationships between emotions patrons might expect to experience at fright tourism attractions, based on the brochures. Although haunted houses and ghost tours are different experiences, with the ghost tour offering educational historical stories, both types of attractions use performance tactics to offer a scary experience while telling stories or following a storyline (McEvoy, 2016). The remaining five were excluded from this paper as they broadly fit the themes of the selected two attractions, and to adhere to paper space constraints.

The first attraction is Chambers of Terror, a year-round haunted house attraction and ‘dry-gore' (does not use bloody props) haunted house, which is not tied to a particular historical event. The attraction is rooted in fantasy, is scare-oriented and plays on such fundamental primal fears as spiders, abandonment, the dark, and the unknown. The brochure features what appears to be a brick wall, that has had a hole smashed in it to reveal a scene behind it of a woman crouched

down with her hands over her ears and her mouth sewn shut (Figure 2). Behind her is a faceless girl (hair drawn over the face) holding an axe, the tag line reading ‘We’re bringing scary back!’.

Figure 2 Chambers brochure

The second tourism attraction is the Haunted Footsteps Ghost tour, a ninety-minute walking ghost tour, lantern-led by a costumed guide. The tour visits 17-18th century homes, buildings and cemeteries, with ghost stories of things that have happened—murder, accidental death, and supernatural, with the tour company billing themselves as a supernatural tour

presented in frightening detail. The brochure presents on a purple background with a headstone in dark grey in the forefront (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Haunted Footsteps brochure

In the upper left-hand corner is a cartoon ghost figure. Three paragraphs of text follow describing the tour experience with phrases such as '…as costumed guides resurrect Salem's deliciously dark past' and '…combine captivating storytelling, macabre humour, and stellar presentation to creatively convey Salem's authentic haunted history'.

Research process and sampling

The research process was a multi-step design and led to the creation of a modified, fright-tourism specific, version of Russell's (1980) CMA. This new version of the CMA then enabled the development of a questionnaire which was employed to examine the emotions induced by fright tourism brochures. The research project was international, with data collected in the United States of America (USA) as well as New Zealand. Research ethics protocols were observed, with ethics approval received from the university that sponsored the research (reference F15/007), and written consent obtained from research participants.

The multiphase process began with a qualitative phase in which business owners of fright tourism attractions at an iconic fright tourism destination in the USA, Salem, were interviewed. The goal in this initial phase was to understand the variety of emotions one may potentially experience at a fright tourism attraction, and the design elements that went into the creation of their advertising materials to convey those emotions. Owners of fright attractions are experts in the fright tourism industry and their opinions regarding the emotions that their patrons experience is a suitable avenue to understanding what those emotions are (Step One). Purposive and snowball sampling were used to secure access to these business owners for semi-structured interviews (N=7). Face to face interviews with these business owners were then held in order to obtain in-depth understanding of the experience the attraction owners provide, with a detailed discussion of their brochures and how they communicate emotional messages to consumers.

Next, three focus groups were conducted (Step Two) to elicit responses to the brochures from participants in order to obtain in-depth information about the effectiveness of the brochures in communicating emotional messages. Convenience sampling of students from a university in

the USA was used to secure the participants in the focus groups in this phase. They represented potential consumers of the attractions, given that business owners indicated college-age persons make up a significant segment of their market. Every effort was made to recruit a broad range of participants through placing advertisements in a variety of locations around the university. The focus groups comprised four to five persons each, and participants ranged in age from 20-40yrs, were 74% female, and included international students as well as Americans. The group of participants was considered in terms of gender, age, and ethnic diversity, and judged to be representative of the university-age sector of customers that frequent these types of attractions. This approach was taken rather than recruiting actual tourists at the destination, as those participants would have had varying degrees of exposure to the publicity material and possibly have visited some attractions. Thus, their perceptions of the brochures would subsequently have been shaped by those experiences. The university student sample on the other hand represented potential tourists who viewed the brochures with a sense of newness and discovery.

This qualitative phase of the study produced the emotion terms which were used to modify the CMA model (Step Three). Table 1 summarizes the terms generated during the qualitative phase by the business owner interview participants, the student focus groups, and terms that were mentioned by both. As Table 1 demonstrates, most terms suggested by business owners were also mentioned by the focus group participants, although the focus groups also offered additional emotional terms that they felt the brochures evoked.

Table 1 Qualitative Terms

Interviews	Focus Groups	Mentioned by Both
Quality/satisfaction	Boring	Nostalgia
Relief (from rollercoaster)	Crowded	Rollercoaster
	Goofy	Shock
	Repulsive	Frightening/scary
	Grotesque	Terrifying/horrifying
	Disgusting	Thrilling
	Unnerved	Exciting
	Loss of control	Fun
	Fascinating	Humorous
	Amusing	Interesting
	Creepy	Chilling
	Dull	Historical
	Stress/anxiety	Educational
	Peaceful	Spooky

The terms were then populated on the model by a convenience sample of students at another university (Step Four) to develop variables for the survey instrument. This was a sample from a New Zealand university, the student cohort at that time being more accessible than the USA respondents. Five groups of two to four New Zealand student participants took the list of potential emotion terms and placed them on a paper copy of the original model where they best thought the terms were represented. These participants were not exposed to the advertising materials or introduced to the fright tourism context - they simply viewed the terms and the original model.

After the placement exercise, some terms were then excluded from the final survey due to either lack of consensus amongst groups as to where the term belonged, or from their placement on opposite sides of the scale by two or more groups. While the terms could have

been further reduced to offer equal numbers of terms for each quadrant, (e.g., only offering three terms per quadrant), the high number of terms in the high-arousal pleasant and unpleasant dimensions was reflective of the terms provided by the business owners and focus group participants. Therefore, representing them on the model and then using them as items for survey respondents to respond to was considered necessary to accurately reflect the variety of emotions the business owners and focus group participants felt the attractions offered. Although many terms were categorized by the student participant groups as *pleasant* and *arousing* (quadrant one), they are all emotions that are different from one another. Thus, excluding them on the basis of being in the same quadrant would be missing an opportunity for measurement of these emotions.

To measure the emotions generated by the tourist advertising materials, a self-completion questionnaire was then employed on a convenience sample of 101 university students at the same New Zealand university (Step Five). In keeping with Russell's original methodology in creating the CMA (Russell, 1980; Russell and Pratt, 1980), university students were used in this study.

Participants were provided with an image of the fright tourism attraction brochure, the list of emotions, and asked to rate the emotions they felt the attraction experience would offer, based on their assessment of the image. In attempting to align with Russell's methodology as closely as possible, a 7-point Likert-type scale was used (from 1= *extremely inaccurate* to 7=*extremely accurate*) (Russell & Pratt, 1980).

The finalized model (Figure 4) is divided into concentric rings that correspond with survey response categories, with section number one, at the centre, representing *extremely inaccurate,* and number seven, the outer ring representing *extremely accurate.*

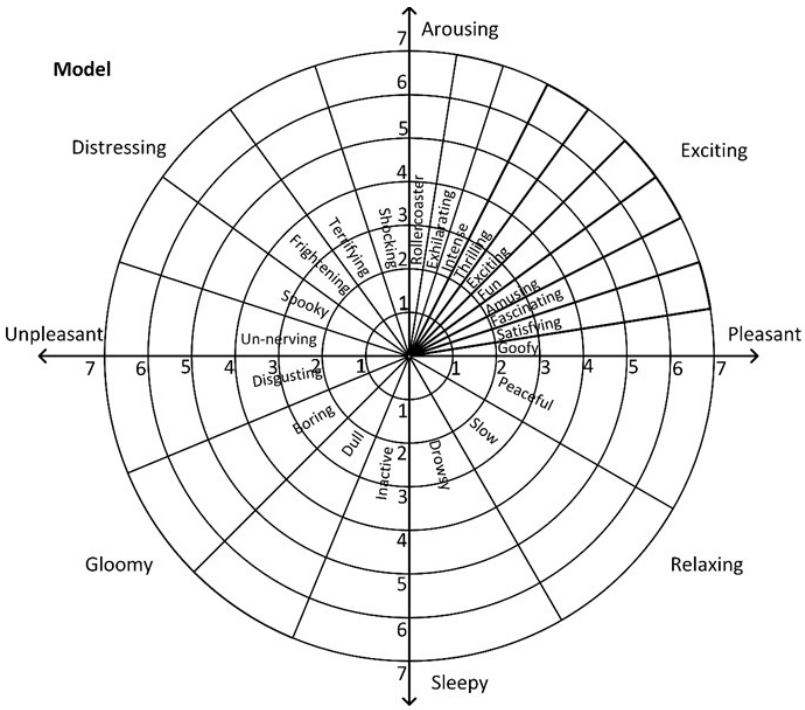

Figure 4 Final Model

The newly adapted fright tourism specific model maintains Russell's (1980) circular two-dimensional bipolar representation of emotions, and further continues to utilize the same eight categories of emotions placed on the axes of pleasant/unpleasant (valance) and sleep/tension (arousal). The model depicts *expectations* of emotions achieved through advertising, over emotions actually experienced at the attraction. While maintaining the axes of the Russell and Pratt (1980) model, a change in interpretation between positive and negative emotions does take place in this model. Russell and his colleagues used arousal as the dominant determinant between positive and negative; for example: high-arousal emotions were keyed as positive while low-arousal emotions were negative. In this study, the interpretation of positive and negative was focused on the pleasant/unpleasant axis. Most emotions that were reported as descriptors of the attractions by focus group participants were high-arousal rather than low-arousal, so arousal is clearly a dominant factor in the emotions expected at these attractions. Therefore, whether an

emotion is considered pleasant (fun) or unpleasant (terrifying) is of consequence in the fright context.

Descriptive statistics were then used to identify the central tendency of responses depicted by the arithmetic mean for each emotion term (depicted in the circular figures in the results section). Tests of association (Pearson correlation) between emotion terms were undertaken to help identify the extent to which emotions that are considered pleasant and unpleasant may co-occur (Harris, 1998). In the study r=0.5 was considered to suggest a medium-strength level correlation sufficient to indicate the existence of one emotion being present at the same time as another, especially with regard to 'opposite' emotions, which Russell (1980) asserts would be *uncorrelated.* While a significance level of $p<.05$ is commonly accepted in social sciences (DeVaus, 2002), the significance threshold was set at $p<.01$ in order to provide an increased level of confidence in the results reported.

Research locations

The location selected to conduct phase 1 of the research was Salem, Massachusetts, USA, a city that offers numerous attractions that fall into the fright tourism category. In 1692, a witchcraft 'hysteria' gripped the village of Salem in the colony of Massachusetts (Boyer & Nissenbaum, 1974), leading to the execution of twenty people, and is considered a foundational trauma of the young United States (Hill, 2002). In the centuries since, the destination image of Salem has shifted to maritime capital, America's wealthiest city, birthplace and fictional breeding ground of American author Nathaniel Hawthorne, and manufacturing centre, with the witch trials mostly relegated to status of shameful historical secret. The need for a new industry to take over from a declining manufacturing economy in the mid twentieth century (Weir, 2012) led to the portrayal

of the witch trials for consumer consumption, in the form of tourist attractions, leading to a large heritage tourism industry (Gencarella, 2007). These attractions range from witch history museums, which tell the story of what happened in 1692, multiple ghost tours, to fright tourism attractions. Attractions in Salem that endeavour to provide a frightful experience for patrons, whether based on the witch trials or not, are numerous in Salem, and especially for a city of its relatively small population of only 42,000 people. While Salem is situated in the larger county of Essex, with a population of around 800,000, all attractions are in the downtown Salem area. These attractions include ghost tours, haunted houses, interactive theatre experiences and museums, and offer a good pool from which to collect data on emotions, particularly fear-eliciting, that are intended and generated from promotional materials. Since the city of Salem lacks in authentic sites (most of the actual witch trials activities took place in modern-day Danvers), the 'tourist' sites have developed their own 'authentic product' to construct the witch history for tourist consumption—and tourists know and accept these copies as the 'real deal' (DeRosa, 2009). DeRosa further suspects that for most of the tourists in Salem, it is not as much about moral lessons from history as much as a chance to experience the thrill of Salem's dark heritage history in an entertaining way. As the most well-known destination for Halloween in the world (Destination Salem, 2016), the city provided the perfect backdrop, and backstory, for an investigation into the world of fright tourism.

In phase 2 of the study, focus groups were conducted at a regional university in the state of North Carolina in the United States, so as to reduce study participants' potential prior exposure to the Salem attractions. Students in/near Salem were not part of the study, and no participants stated they had been to Salem. The research location for the remaining phases of the research study (4 and 5) was a well-established university in a small coastal town of Dunedin,

New Zealand. Dunedin is a town with a modest population (of around 130,000 people) but is an important university centre. It is one of the Southern Hemisphere's best-preserved Edwardian and Victorian cities, characterized by gothic-style architecture and heritage attractions. The city has a developed tourism industry, frequented by student travellers. The industry includes a small number of fright tourism providers such as Dunedin's authentic ghost tours (New Zealand Tourism, 2023).

The two universities (US and NZ) are located in cities of approximately the same size, and both institutions host students of national and international backgrounds. Whilst there are subtle differences between the two countries, the similarities between the two cultures (New Zealand and USA) are extensive (Okleshen & Hoyt, 1996), especially given the popular culture and nature of the research topic. Culturally, as Western English-speaking countries with a developed a tourism infrastructure, New Zealand and the USA student university cohorts are broadly comparable. There is evidence to suggest that the fear literature and cinematic material popularly consumed by the young adult audience in New Zealand is primarily that generated by the USA and strongly influenced by that body of creative output (Lealand, 1988). Survival horror video games are gaining popularity in the USA (Taylor, 2009) but are also amongst the most popular online activities for young adults in New Zealand (New Zealand Game Developers Association, 2017). Haunted house attractions, ghost tours and haunted buildings are all evident in New Zealand's mix of visitor attractions. Overall, the consumption patterns of popular culture, and opportunities for fright tourism, are very similar between the two countries.

Recognizing that the qualitative research data gathered in the initial phases of the multi-step research process primarily served to develop the survey, the following results section

focuses on reporting the quantitative results of that survey using the two attractions described above as illustrative cases.

Results

The data shows the central tendency of responses by the arithmetic mean generated by the survey. The tables for individual attraction include the mean (sum of responses divided by total responses); the mode (most-often occurring response); variance (extent to which responses extend around the mean); and the standard deviation (square root of the variance). Other relevant features of the distribution are also included in each attraction table and include skewness (lack of symmetry) and kurtosis, which shows the sharpness of the peak of the distribution curve. The mode is included because the survey results, while numerical, are representations of descriptive fields. Therefore, while the mean may be 4.75, the numerical value of 'four' is the actual response choice of 'neither', a category of response which was actually selected less often than others in many cases. The mode offers the opportunity to view the description chosen most often by survey participants, and the direction of the responses is also established by skewness. Skewness for both attractions varied substantially, thus including the mode descriptor assists with interpreting the means.

Survey results for the Chambers of Terror indicated that the most accurate emotions to expect from this attraction are *frightening, terrifying, intense,* and *spooky*. Correspondingly*, peaceful, boring,* and *dull* were indicated to be the least accurate words available to describe the experience (Figure 5).

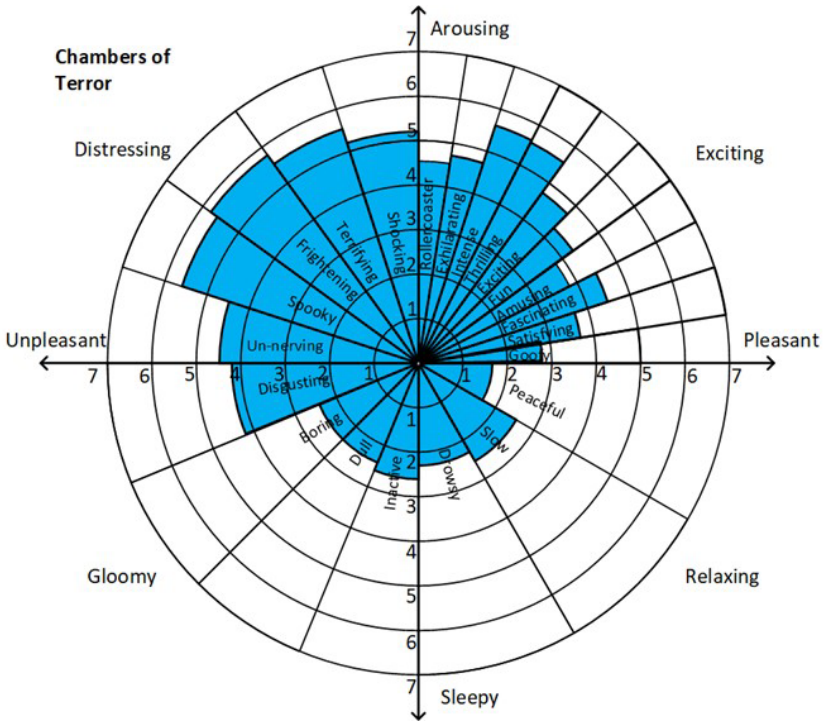

Figure 5 Chambers data on model

Chambers of Terror offered several descriptors that were rated "extremely inaccurate" as the most recorded response. In addition to *peaceful, boring,* and *dull*, these terms included *slow, goofy,* and *drowsy*. However, the mean scores of these words indicated that most respondents did not rate them quite as extremely inaccurate, and instead chose very or slightly inaccurate (Table 2).

Table 2

Chambers of Terror Statistics

	Mean	Mode	Mode Descriptor	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intense	5.63	6	Very Accurate	1.654	2.734	-1.736	2.369
Peaceful	1.65	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.153	1.329	2.473	6.787
Terrifying	5.59	6	Very Accurate	1.430	2.044	-1.262	1.315
Exciting	4.84	6	Very Accurate	1.635	2.675	-0.901	-0.069
Fun	4.18	5	Slightly Accurate	1.684	2.836	-0.445	-0.828
Inactive	2.60	2	Very Inaccurate	1.443	2.082	0.970	0.550
Frightening	5.85	6	Very Accurate	1.211	1.468	-1.430	2.376
Slow	2.49	1[a]	Extremely/Very Inaccurate	1.460	2.132	1.111	0.981
Fascinating	4.42	5	Slightly Accurate	1.505	2.265	-0.580	-0.054
Satisfying	3.57	4	Neither	1.603	2.571	-0.107	-0.934
Disgusting	4.21	5	Slightly Accurate	1.627	2.646	-0.187	-0.706
Thrilling	5.48	6	Very Accurate	1.432	2.052	-1.282	1.475
Spooky	5.79	7	Extremely Accurate	1.402	1.966	-1.596	2.628
Goofy	2.71	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.622	2.632	0.744	-0.469
Emotional "roller coaster"	4.42	5	Slightly Accurate	1.716	2.945	-0.393	-0.474
Un-nerving	4.56	5	Slightly Accurate	1.830	3.348	-0.580	-0.639
Boring	2.35	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.500	2.249	1.274	1.179
Shocking	5.07	6	Very Accurate	1.544	2.385	-0.899	0.309
Dull	2.30	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.578	2.491	1.317	1.204
Drowsy	2.32	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.607	2.583	1.294	1.005
Exhilarating	4.82	5	Slightly Accurate	1.670	2.788	-0.737	-0.091
Amusing	3.90	5	Slightly Accurate	1.764	3.110	-0.338	-1.162

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest numerical value is shown, both mode descriptors displayed

At the opposite end of the spectrum, with a mode of seven (extremely accurate), *spooky,* as indicated by the survey results and shown on Figure 5 and Table 2, was the term chosen that most accurately communicates what this attraction is all about, with only a total of 8.9% of participants considering spooky to be inaccurate. *Spooky* (or strange and frightening) had the highest overall mode and mean, which reveals the power of the imagery in conjuring up a ‘dark’ atmosphere. Table 3 presents correlations of statistical significance for the Chambers of Terror

attraction, the highest correlation coming between *intense* and *spooky*. These two emotions are presented on the model in two different quadrants: *intense* being considered as a pleasant emotion, and *spooky* being unpleasant.

Table 3 Chambers statistically significant correlations

'Pleasant' Emotions	**'Unpleasant' Emotions**	**Pearson Correlation**	**Significance (2-tailed)**
Intense	Terrifying	0.617	$p < 0.001$
Intense	Frightening	0.543	$p < 0.001$
Thrilling	Terrifying	0.506	$p < 0.001$
Thrilling	Frightening	0.492	$p < 0.001$
Intense	Spooky	0.637	$p < 0.001$

The Haunted Footsteps tourism attraction responses revealed that low arousal emotional terms are more accurate than high arousal terms, as shown in Figure 6.

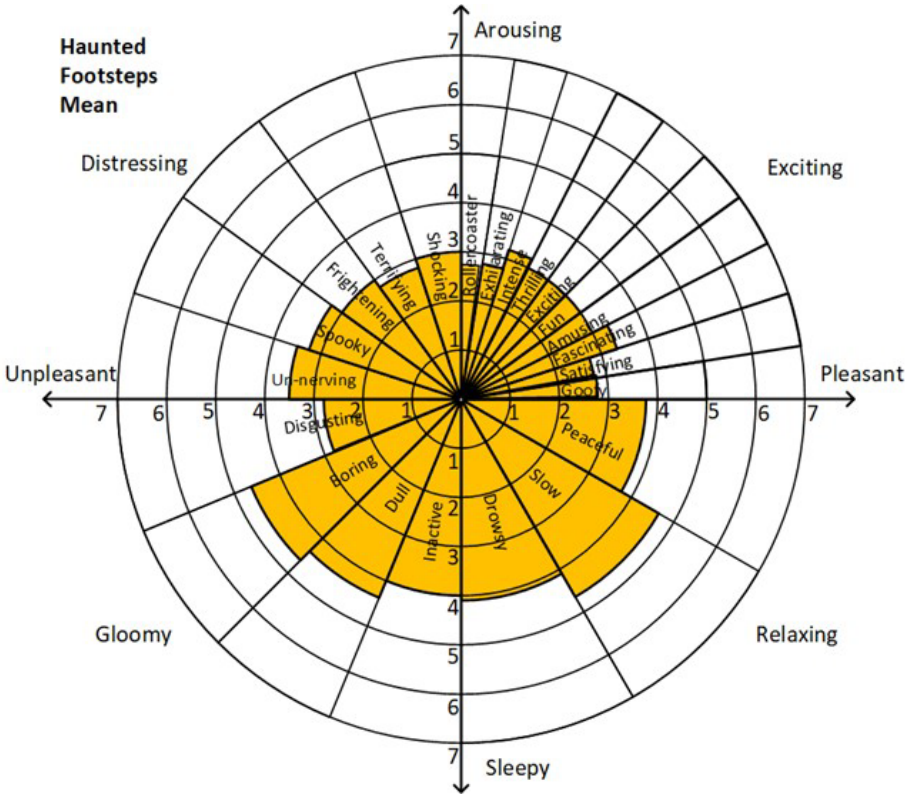

Figure 6 Haunted footsteps data on model

These included terms like *peaceful, slow, boring,* and *dull*, in opposition to almost every other attraction rack card. Least accurate terms included *terrifying, frightening, fun, disgusting,* and *amusing* (Table 4).

Table 4

Haunted Footsteps Statistics

	Mean	Mode	Mode Descriptor	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Intense	3.06	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.958	3.835	0.606	-0.920
Peaceful	3.64	4	Neither	1.784	3.182	0.071	-0.875
Terrifying	2.91	1[a]	Extremely/Slightly Inaccurate	1.615	2.608	0.677	-0.161
Exciting	2.94	3	Slightly Inaccurate	1.569	2.461	0.518	-0.631
Fun	3.00	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.752	3.071	0.540	-0.849
Inactive	3.97	5	Slightly Accurate	1.887	3.560	-0.095	-1.191
Frightening	2.99	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.709	2.919	0.574	-0.494
Slow	4.53	5	Slightly Accurate	1.930	3.726	-0.485	-0.873
Fascinating	3.28	5	Slightly Accurate	1.724	2.971	0.243	-1.032
Satisfying	2.87	3	Slightly Inaccurate	1.488	2.215	0.415	-0.670
Disgusting	2.69	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.595	2.544	0.606	-0.259
Thrilling	3.03	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.672	2.797	0.375	-0.867
Spooky	3.24	1[a]	Extremely/Slightly Inaccurate	1.830	3.349	0.387	-0.915
Goofy	2.87	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.709	2.922	0.677	-0.318
Emotional "roller coaster"	2.94	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.699	2.885	0.600	-0.385
Un-nerving	3.53	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.992	3.969	0.299	-1.043
Boring	4.65	6	Very Accurate	1.946	3.785	-0.517	-0.935
Shocking	2.99	3	Slightly Inaccurate	1.580	2.495	0.378	-0.568
Dull	4.43	5	Slightly Accurate	1.986	3.945	-0.348	-1.027
Drowsy	4.12	5	Slightly Accurate	2.017	4.067	-0.100	-1.169
Exhilarating	2.91	3	Slightly Inaccurate	1.558	2.426	0.578	-0.304
Amusing	2.99	1	Extremely Inaccurate	1.703	2.899	0.354	-0.894

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest numerical value is shown, both mode descriptors displayed

This attraction offered negative (left) skewness for the terms *slow, inactive, dull, boring,* and *drowsy*, indicating expectancies of these emotions at this attraction. This is significant because this brochure relies heavily on language to communicate its message.

In relation to the pleasant -unpleasant continuum, the survey responses show a mean score of 3.00, which classifies them as 'slightly inaccurate'. For example, *fun* and *frightening* have nearly identical responses: a mean of 3.00 and 2.99 respectively, and 1.00 as the mode. This can imply that text, without the inclusion of photographs or other pictorial elements, was interpreted as less arousing and less pleasant to these participants. Statistically significant correlations for the Haunted Footsteps attraction are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 HF correlations

'Pleasant' Emotions	**'Unpleasant' Emotions**	**Pearson Correlation**	**Significance (2-tailed)**
Intense	Terrifying	0.649	$p < 0.001$
Exciting	Terrifying	0.596	$p < 0.001$
Exciting	Frightening	0.645	$p < 0.001$
Exciting	Spooky	0.603	$p < 0.001$
Fun	Terrifying	0.528	$p < 0.001$
Fun	Frightening	0.701	$p < 0.001$
Fun	Spooky	0.606	$p < 0.001$
Fascinating	Terrifying	0.603	$p < 0.001$
Fascinating	Frightening	0.706	$p < 0.001$
Fascinating	Spooky	0.663	$p < 0.001$
Satisfying	Spooky	0.511	$p < 0.001$
Satisfying	Frightening	0.582	$p < 0.001$

Thrilling	Terrifying	0.68	$p < 0.001$
Thrilling	Frightening	0.674	$p < 0.001$
Thrilling	Spooky	0.743	$p < 0.001$
Thrilling	Shocking	0.549	$p < 0.001$
Exhilarating	Terrifying	0.593	$p < 0.001$
Exhilarating	Frightening	0.601	$p < 0.001$
Exhilarating	Spooky	0.596	$p < 0.001$
Amusing	Terrifying	0.557	$p < 0.001$
Amusing	Frightening	0.51	$p < 0.001$
Amusing	Spooky	0.544	$p < 0.001$

Of note is the high number of statistically significant correlations for this attraction. Like the Chambers of Terror attraction, pleasant-unpleasant correlations of significance are present. However, in this case, the statistically significant correlations are most notable for their low level of accuracy (i.e., not being an emotion that is expected to be encountered at the attraction). For example, *intense* and *terrifying* are strongly correlated at the Haunted Footsteps attraction, but both are considered extremely inaccurate emotions in terms of what patrons expect to experience at this attraction. Additionally, *fun* and *frightening* are also both considered to be highly inaccurate terms to describe this attraction.

Discussion

In comparison with the original circumplex model (Figure 1), the ordering of the emotions on the model completed by the student participant groups shows several similar placements of emotions in the affective quadrants. While most of the terms in the current model are unique to this model and were not present as the cluster adjectives in the original CMA (Russell & Pratt, 1980), for terms that are repeated, their placement is remarkably similar. This includes the terms *exciting, frightening, disgusting* and *boring.* Additionally, the term *peaceful*, while a little bit closer to the pleasant axis in the new model, is still in the same quadrant as in the original model, that of pleasant/sleepy. This is important because it supports the placement of the terms on the new model.

For the Chambers of Terror attraction, *Amusing* had the highest level of variance and a mean score of 3.90 (with 4 being 'neither'), which may indicate that for those people who do not enjoy the horror genre at all, they were able to determine quickly what the attraction is and also that it would not be at all amusing to them. The mode for *amusing* was 5 (slightly accurate), which indicates the remaining responses were significantly lower than 3 (slightly inaccurate) to achieve a mean of 3.9. Since there are few words on this brochure, this implies that the imagery is quite effective at communicating the emotional tone of the attraction, whether people enjoy it or not. As mentioned previously, statistically significant correlations between emotions that varied between 'pleasant' and 'unpleasant' emotions are of importance, as shown in Table 3. For this attraction, the most unexpected correlations that are relevant to this study are between *thrilling* and *terrifying, frightening,* and *spooky. Thrilling* lies in the quadrant of 'pleasant' emotions, while the other three—*terrifying, frightening,* and *spooky,* all reside in the quadrant of 'unpleasant', which, accordingly to Russell (1980) should be less likely to occur, given their

respective locations on the model of a separation of 90-degrees. The combinations of *thrilling* with *frightening* can tell us that people expect, from the depiction on the brochure, that fear of some level will be expected during consumption of the attraction. Although the correlations are modest, it can be suggested that fear (or other aspect of the attraction) will be *thrilling,* and that the thrill is a pleasant or enjoyable emotion. The correlation between *exciting* and *terrifying* also suggests that even though the attraction is expected to be scary, survey respondents also think it will be exciting. Therefore, the unpleasantness of terror either contributes to or is overlooked by the expected excitement, which is considered by its placement on the model to be pleasant. The placement of the emotions on the model may explain some of these correlations, in that survey participants may interpret these emotions differently in respect to their relationship to one another. *Frightening, terrifying, intense,* and *thrillin*g are all high arousal terms, and it is a high level of intensity which is a typical underlying driver of haunted house experiences. The statistically significant correlation between *intense* and *spooky* comingles high arousal pleasantness with medium-level arousal unpleasantness and may be interpreted as the willingness to experience unpleasant emotions and perhaps even enjoyment of them, in order to attain high levels of arousal.

The data for the Haunted Footsteps ghost tour attraction offers some interesting contradictions; for example, the modes and means show respondents think the attraction will be slightly *fascinating* and very *boring,* as seen in Table 5. One would expect that with an expectation of *boring*, that it would not be *fascinating* at all. However, this may indicate that some people actually are reading the text, in contrast with the perspective that people would never take the time to read the entire brochure. In comparison with the haunted house attraction, the ghost tour generated low arousal emotions rather than high arousal emotions. However, the

unpleasant low arousal emotions were rated as more accurate than the pleasant low arousal emotions. This could be a problem for the business owners, as presumably they do not want their advertising materials to present the attraction as *dull* and *boring*, as this would likely impact ticket sales.

Overall, these observations suggest that study participants may have had varied responses to the different elements of text and image, and within an advertising context, and in this industry, text-reliant brochures may be missing an opportunity to communicate more exciting emotions.

Conclusion

Based on the survey results, (and the qualitative data that led to the modification of the CMA model), we found the revised model is effective at representing the variety of emotions in fear tourism contexts. It is hoped that the adapted emotion model (Figure 4) can provide usable data for researchers in evaluating the successes and weakness of an advertising campaign. The research study also contributes to the study of fear in advertising (LaTour et al., 1996). Previous research in this field focused on use of fear in advertising to avoid unpleasant consequences and change behaviours related to health (LaTour et al., 1996). The current study however examined scary experiences for tourism consumption, filling an important knowledge gap.

In terms of the contribution of this research to heritage tourism, given that emotions are significant drivers of heritage tourism experiences (Prayag et al., 2021; Prayag & Del Chiappa, 2021) this study enhances our understanding of the range of emotions, both positive and negative that may be evoked in the fright tourism subset of heritage tourism attractions. Recent research (e.g., Prayag et al; 2021; Zhao et al 2020) focuses on how managers may exploit this range of

emotions to benefit the sustainable management of heritage attractions (e.g., fostering responsible behaviours; or growing positive word of mouth promotion of heritage sites). Our research broadly aligns with the above; understanding anticipated emotions in fright tourism may lead to efficacy in promotional efforts, which ultimately will contribute to greater patronage and economic viability of attractions. Where such fright tourism attractions rely upon or are integrated with authentic heritage attractions, such patronage and revenue generation can benefit the ongoing sustainability of those heritage components, i.e., negative emotions being associated with positive outcomes (Nawijn & Biran, 2019).

Notwithstanding the above contributions, the study has limitations, the first of which relates to the manner in which the emotions were studied. The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate emotions they *expect* they would feel at the attractions. Given that respondents were responding to advertisements rather than the actual experience at the attraction, the model as employed in this study does not show emotions actually experienced at the attractions. Future research could employ the model to show a distribution of responses actually experienced, if respondents were surveyed post attendance. Additionally, although psychological theories were used in the design of the research, this tourism study was not a typical experimental investigation akin to many psychological studies. The study specifically focused on the perceptions of the imagery, and we did not consider it necessary to include an experimental group that did not view the advertising materials. Despite the limitations, it is hoped the findings will contribute to future conversations about the emotions of fear in tourism and that future researchers will be inspired to develop the revised model further.

The model as presented in this research is a prototype that can be further refined to increase its usability. Future interview and focus group studies could limit the number of terms

on the model or replace terms that are deemed to be less valuable in knowledge-gathering. A further line of research involves different cultures being specifically surveyed regarding their opinions of the brochures. Cross-national comparisons of interests can be useful for advancing sociological knowledge (Davidov et al., 2014), so comparing results from different cultures could reveal similarities as well as differences between cultures with regards to their opinions of fear as leisure, imagery, and the language used in the brochures. This future research may offer additional insight into the social construction of emotions, as well as advance understandings of consumer interest in fright tourism from different cultural perspectives. Future research could investigate changes in attitudes towards fright attractions after advertising exposure, whether exposure leads to intent to purchase a ticket, or whether the emotions expected at the attraction (through the advertising brochure) are actually those experienced by patrons visiting the attraction.

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