

The Global Impact of the Sex Tourism Industry: Issues of Legalization

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Sex tourism is a widely popular industry that exists all over the world. Although the industry may be sometimes kept behind closed doors, there is a need to open those doors to explore and reveal the truth of the industry. The purpose of this research is to identify and clarify the global phenomenon of sex tourism. The research explores the statistics and demographics surrounding the number of men and the number of women who travel for sex tourism. The research will further discuss the potential solutions to the issues that pertain in sex tourism. **Key words:** Sex, Tourism, Trafficking, Prostitution, Legalization

Introduction

Tourism is the world's largest industry, having positive and negative effects on countries throughout the world. One popular sector of this industry existing world-wide is sex tourism. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization sex tourism is defined as “trips organized from within the tourism sector, or from outside this sector but using its structures and networks, the primary purpose of effecting a commercial sexual relationship by the tourist with residents at the destination” (WTO, 1995). Sex tourism has been an ongoing activity over the last several decades, the industry is mainly perceived as Western men travelling to foreign countries in search of lust and sometimes possible romance. According to Burns (2014), some of the most popular countries visited for sex tourism include: Thailand, Brazil, Spain, Indonesia, Colombia, The Philippines, Kenya, The Netherlands, Cambodia and Dominican Republic. Other countries not highlighted in the list but are known as destinations for sex tourism include: New Zealand, Germany and France (Jagyasi). These selected destinations are popular for sex tourism because the industry is most prominent in areas of high levels of poverty and unemployment. Prostitution is the backbone of sex tourism. They are interconnected to each other. Elements of sex tourism and prostitution are the same; otherwise, sex tourism involves the transfer of the customer from his/her home destination to the host destination (Ramirez, 2013). Sex tourism has vastly increased over a short period of time. Every country is directly or indirectly involved in sex tourism in some way. Some are known to be sex tourism generators while other countries are known to be sex tourism destinations (Langlois, 2011), even if sex tourism is not legal or accounted for. In most countries, very few rules and regulations have been implemented to control or reduce sex tourism and prostitution, and the regulations that do exist differ in different parts of the world.

According to Simoni (2014), academic debates on sex, tourism, and the phenomenon known as ‘sex tourism’ have flourished in the last two decades and have benefitted greatly from the insights of feminist theory. Research on the topic has emphasized the gendered dimensions of power and domination and their intersections with other vectors of inequality, such as class, ‘race’, and the political economy of North–South relations, with different authors giving more or less emphasis to one or the other of these aspects depending notably on their theoretical orientations and the empirical findings of their investigations. Sex trafficking is a form of human trafficking that exists world-wide. Sex trafficking is the abduction and trade of humans for the purpose of sexual slavery or commercial sexual exploitation. Sex trafficking consists of usually women who are victims in the industry and find themselves being abused and also difficult for them to escape their current situation. In 2010, human trafficking as a whole represented \$31.6 billion of international trade per annum and affects nearly 4.5 million people world-wide (Haken, 2011). Sex trafficking is known to be one of the fastest growing activities of national criminal organizations. This study will detail the issues with the sex tourism industry and the le-

galization of sex tourism, as well as a brief look into prostitution and the different types of sex tourists involved in the industry.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research are to:

1. Discuss the impact of sex tourism
2. Explore the statistics of men vs women tourists who travel for sex
3. Discuss the legalization of sex tourism in destinations

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to discuss and analyse the global impacts of sex tourism highlighting the issues surrounding legalizing the industry. The research further explores was made to explore and evaluate sex tourism, more specifically, the legalization of sex tourism and prostitution world-wide, pointedly focusing on the countries already listed above.

Methodology

The main purpose of this report is to recognize the sex tourism industry. The research followed a review of already existing and available journals written on the topic. The intention was to review these pieces of literature on the topic and to then incorporate the material into a new and intensive perspective.

Research Instruments

The research was primarily a desktop of extensive review which made use of scholarly journals, books and internet sources. These were critically analysed to obtain knowledge on sex tourism industry and the impacts of legalizing the trade has on tourism. Internet sources were used to gather information on current statistics on study areas.

Study Areas

This study uses a global approach examining top countries identified as popular with sex tourism. The key is to identify the countries which have legalized sex tourism against those countries that are not legal to evaluate any potential impacts.

Research Limitations

This study is limited to the review of literature such as articles, journals and websites. The articles written on this topic used for research specialized on certain destinations and not the issue of sex tourism and legalization as a whole. This led to finding information from many other sources. As well as most articles did not include the issue of potential solutions for the legalization of sex tourism but did include the consequences of non-legalization resulting in personal conclusions.

Review of Literature

The following section described the literature pertaining to the history of sex tourism, the impact and various case study examples to support the argument.

History of Sex Tourism

There is no exact date that leads to the beginning of sex tourism. Although, it is noted that sex tourism may have began during World War I and II. Sex Tourism traces its history when soldiers of World Wars I and II needed places to relax and recreate after a long walk and trajectories in camps. When the military started developing into seas, such as trade trips, the cities changed into busy roads with places of entertainment for sailors and dealers (Opperman, 1999). After the end of World War II, there was a drastic change in the Philippines. The signing of a mutual agreement between the Philippines and the US government was to provide for the Americans an unhampered use of 23 naval bases all over the country for 99 years. One of these many naval bases was the Olongapo Naval Base. With the want for entertainment of the soldiers was and has been catered by the residents of the military base. Soon after the agreement, bars and brothels were set in place in Olongapo to respond to the sexual desires of the American militia (Ramirez, 2013). Since then, sex tourism has become extremely popular with tourists originating from developed countries and traveling to developing countries. Although, most individuals do not travel with intent to engage in sex, there are certain countries that are labeled as sex tourism generators or destinations.

Issues of Demand and Supply

Demand is the push factor in the industry of sex tourism causing sex tourism to occur in countries world wide. As demand increases to engage in sex tourism, there will also be an increase in the supply of sex workers who contribute to sex tourism. The supply of men, women and children is the fuel that meets the increase of sex tourism around the world. Evidence suggests that increasingly younger product is sought, signaling a response to buyers' perceptions that younger victims are both healthier and more vulnerable (Smith et al, 2010).

Sex tourism statistics: male tourists

Male sex tourists are mostly white Western men who travel to developing countries in search of lust and sex. The male sex tourist usually has a significant other in their own country but will travel alone to find desire from other women. According to O'Connell Davidson (2000), there are two different types of Western male sex tourists, one being the "Macho Lad". The "Macho Lad" is a testosterone-fuelled, chauvinist who enjoys the abundance of cheaply priced sex that he can obtain from women in Third World nations during his holidays. These types of tourists see the female sex workers more so as slaves than people. They do not care for relations and usually does not care for who he beds. The primary motive for travel is the desire to engage in sex and have control over Third World women.

"I use them (Thai prostitutes) like I use any other amenity, a restaurant or a public convenience.

It answers my needs. No questions, no answers, no future. It's clean, it's efficient, it's over. I've never made the mistake of falling for them. Love in my book is a dirty word. Fuck isn't"
(Seabrook, 1996: p.33)

In saying this, there is also the second type of male tourists who travel to developing countries as well. These men are known as the “White Knights”. “White Knights” are men who do not travel with intent of forming a sexual experience, but do so in the process. The “White Knight” is essentially a sex tourist who identifies himself as a “good guy” in comparison to other foreign men who travel to Third World countries to engage in commercial sex with local women (Garrick, 2005). The mentality of this type of tourist is that they feel sorry for the prostitutes because they live a life of poverty or prostitution. Although they still engage in commercial sex with women, the “White Knight” usually feels as if they are able to help the prostitutes as they provide for the women through payments that may even continue after the male sex tourist has gone back to his original residents. Therefore, the “White Knight” tourist portrays himself as the greater good because he feels as if he is helping the local women who are otherwise “damaged” by the local men.

The center and main attraction destination for sex tourism is the country of Thailand. Thailand is infamous for the high amount of sexual services that are readily available, such as dance bars; brothels, massage salons and women offering sexual services on the streets. Most individuals who travel to Thailand and engage in sexual activities with the locals are men, more specifically, Western men. These men are common to this country that sometimes they may even be classified into categories such as “Macho Lads” and “White Knights” (Garrick, 2005). Although, sex tourism is such a prominent industry in Thailand, prostitution is illegal in the country. Prostitution was made illegal in 1928, and the laws against it strengthened in 1960. But it is an omnipresent part of the Thai society, tacitly accepted and tolerated. Prostitution goes on in brothels in the countryside, behind the garish signs over Bangkok's girlie bars and massage parlors. The industry is estimated to account for an estimated 3 percent of Thailand's economy, or about US\$4.3 billion a year. ("Thailand Holds Debate On Legalizing Prostitution," Taipei Times, Nov. 28, 2003) for a country that is underdeveloped with a popular sex tourism field.

Box 1: Vancouver Man Faces Sex Trials for Overseas Sex Tourism Crimes

Metro Vancouver — A British Columbia man who served five years in a Thai prison for sexually assaulting boys must remain in a Canadian jail while he waits for trial on new charges of abusing children overseas. Neil faces 10 charges; half of those are related to accusations based in Southeast Asia. RCMP have said they collected evidence abroad that the former English teacher committed sex crimes against children in Cambodia a decade ago. Neil is also accused of accessing and possessing child pornography while living in Metro Vancouver last year. Some of the charges fall under Canada's rarely-used child sex tourism laws and carry maximum penalties of 10 years imprisonment. They come one and a half years after Neil was deported back to Canada when a royal pardon granted him early release from the sentence in Thailand. Canadian authorities sought and obtained a series of strict conditions when he returned to B.C owing to the nature of the crimes. Neil has already been back to court for breaching the rules. He pleaded guilty to possessing devices that could access the Internet last year. The man spent many years in Asia prior to garnering global notoriety when he became the then subject of Interpol's largest international manhunt in 2007. Canada first enacted in 1997 laws allowing authorities on home soil to investigate and prosecute sex offenders who committed crimes abroad. Only eight Canadian citizens have been convicted under the extra-territorial provision of the Criminal Code in that time, according to federal RCMP. The initial, landmark case stemming from crimes in 2003 brought down Donald Bakker, a B.C. man convicted of abusing young girls in Cambodia.

Source: B.C. Judge Refuses Bail for “Swirl Face” as he Awaits Sex-Tourism Trial. (2014). Tamsyn Burgmann, The Canadian Press. www.vancouversun.com

Sex tourism statistics: female tourists

Female sex tourism has a significantly lower rate than male who participate in sex tourism. Normally, female sex tourists travel in seek of romance or a companion who will show affection or attention. Female tourists are mostly single, wealthy, older white women. The demographics of female sex tourism vary by destination, but in general female sex tourists are usually classified as upper-middle to upper class women from a developed country, which travel to less developed countries in search of romance or sexual outlets (Reuters, 2008). Female sex tourists also do not normally travel to the same popular destinations as men do, the most prominent sex tourism destination for female sex tourists are the Caribbean countries (Opperman, 1999). In the Caribbean, female sex tourists are easily drawn to “Beach Boys” for sexual activities. These beach boys are know for residing along the beach side during the day and capture the attention of females, regardless of the appearance of the women. They still engage in sex because they are aware of the western women’s economic lifestyles (Huffington Post, 2013). Female sex tourists also are seen as less harmful. Female sex tourists are looking for romance; therefore they prefer longer and more romantic sexual exchanges as opposed to shorter and meaningless sexual experiences (Clift, & Carter, 2000). Although sex tourism may be seen as a more dangerous lifestyle choice, female sex tourists are less likely to treat their male sex workers with disrespect, abuse and maltreatment. Male sex workers have more freedom and power to decide what they are willing to do, rather than female sex workers who are more likely to be controlled by pimps (Clift, & Carter, 2000).

Box 2: Sex Tourism in Cambodia

In Cambodia, where the regime of former Communist Hun Sen oversees a particularly vicious form of crony capitalism, economic options are severely limited and 40 percent of the population lives on less than \$1.25 a day. For young women, work in the sex industry—which includes hostess bars, karaoke bars, massage parlors, and freelance prostitution—is one of the few alternatives to work in the apparel industry, which produces 90 percent of the country's export earnings. Many women find it a preferable, if distasteful, alternative. The sex and apparel sectors draw from the same labor pool: young, poorly educated women from the impoverished countryside who send part of their earnings home to support their families. Almost all of the country's 350,000 apparel workers are women. Estimates of sex-industry workers range from about 20,000 to 100,000; the lower number is probably far closer to the truth as the latter comes from the hyperbolic, fundraising-driven claims of anti-trafficking organizations, which seem to assume that almost every sex worker is a "slave." A more likely estimate of the percentage of trafficked prostitutes is 10 percent. The Western-oriented sex industry arrived in Cambodia in the early 1990s, in lockstep with the U.N. peacekeeping mission that oversaw elections after the fall of the Khmer Rouge and decades of civil war. (When asked in 1998 what the U.N. mission's legacy would be, Hun Sen replied, "AIDS.") It further flourished with the flood of Western NGO workers, expats, and tourists that poured in after that. In his 1998 book *Off the Rails in Phnom Penh*, Amit Gilboa described Cambodia as "an anarchic festival of cheap prostitutes" where "you are never more than a few minutes away from a place to purchase sex." Prostitution isn't quite as flagrant these days, but the temporal distance from paid sex is roughly the same. Streetwalkers can be found day and night along the perimeter of Wat Phnom, the Buddhist temple that is one of Phnom Penh's top tourist sites. There are numerous karaoke bars and massage parlors, and freelance prostitutes abound at bars and night-clubs catering to Westerners.

Source: Sex Tourism in Cambodia. (2011) Brief Tour of Cambodia Sex Industry. www.slate.com

Socio-cultural impacts of sex tourism

There are numeral social and cultural consequences that come from a developing country being considered a popular breeding ground for sex tourism. These impacts range from mental to physical

issues. Health issues rise when there is an increased risk for the spread of HIV and STIs. Those who seek out sexual services, particularly those who are married or in other relationship, risk the lives of their partners when they return home. While awareness and prevention is the key to preventing these unfortunate outcomes, it is a reality that many wives, girlfriends, and boyfriends still become infected with these diseases, due to the irresponsibility of their loved ones (Ramirez et al, 2013). Considering the fact that those who seek sexual services in foreign countries may still have significant others waiting for them when they return home. Other health concerns that may form from sex tourism would be violence, primarily against women. Most women who participate in prostitution have no choice in the matter, they must do it to maintain a living and stay out of poverty. They may be seen as victims and be violently abused by sex tourists, this is due to the assumption by Western individuals that that they maintain greater power and authorities than the prostitutes. These impacts may also lead to mental health issues occurring in prostitutes as well. The on going practice of sex tourism has no existing social benefits because the industry may not be seen as a negative practice because it consists of numerous under informed individuals.

Economic impacts of sex tourism

Millions of dollars of government funding goes into the promotion and advertising of tourism each year, this draws in tourists to many different locations world wide which helps raise the country's economy. Sex tourism also has a large impact on the country's economy. Most sectors will benefit economically from sex tourism. Sex tourism increases tourist traffic in a country. Thus, it increases the flow of foreign currency fund in a country. Since sex tourism increases tourism arrivals, it helps develop the tourism industry, which in turn will create more jobs in a country. More jobs mean lesser poverty. Lesser poverty means a good and stable economy (Ramirez et al, 2013). This also includes the sex workers. Most sex workers who participate in sex tourism benefit because it keeps them out of the poverty line and they create a livelihood from the industry.

The case of child sex tourism

Child sex tourism is a very controversial topic. Child sex tourism is distinguished from the wider topic of sex tourism studies by its classification as a national or international crime. As adult prostitution is legal in some countries, adult sex tourism, while controversial, is not a crime under certain national jurisdictions (Tepelus, 2007). There is not a certain type of sex tourist who engages in child sex tourism, but can be classified as tourists engaging in CST often travel to developing countries looking for anonymity and the availability of children in prostitution (U.S. Department of State, 2005). Since children are more vulnerable and easily manipulated, there is a vast number of children trapped in the child sex tourism and child trafficking industry. CST is a shameful assault on the dignity of children and a form of violent child abuse. The sexual exploitation of children has devastating consequences, which may include long-lasting physical and psychological trauma, disease (including HIV/AIDS), drug addiction, unwanted pregnancy, malnutrition, social ostracism, and possibly death (U.S. Department of State, 2005). Although there are measures in place to control and diminish the industry, it will take vast measures to completely end child sex tourism and trafficking.

Box 3: Child Sex Tourism in Cambodia

The sex trade in Cambodia expanded in the early 1990s to service UN troops overseeing the transition to the current democratic government. The child-sex trade began to appear when the UN troops left and brothel owners discovered they could make more money catering to foreign tourists and local pedophiles wanting sex with kids. Today, officials estimate that the average age of the estimated 20,000 sex workers in Phnom Penh is 15. "Some men are fascinated by sleeping with virgins - they get excited thinking that they're the first to show a pre-pubescent girl how to have sex," says Beth Hedva, a Calgary

psychologist who has studied the child-sex industry. "Cambodia is catering to this market. Most Cambodians are also desperately poor - per capita annual income is about \$350. Child-sex workers tell hauntingly similar stories of being sold into prostitution by family members or friends. "Prostitution and the poor treatment of women and children is thousands of years old, but this form of sex-slavery has no precedent in history," says Majumdar. "Occasionally Cambodian politicians are shamed into doing something about it. But international pressure is inconsistent. While life expectancy for Cambodian women is 56, girls in the sex trade are lucky to live half that long. Officials claim nearly 20 per cent of Cambodia's prostitutes are HIV-positive, but since the majority of sex workers have never had a blood test, the actual percentage could be much higher. As well, the girls are often tortured and gang-raped at brothels by clients and pimps. Some younger girls are made to have repeated hymenoplasties, a surgical procedure to attach a piece of skin at the vaginal opening to make the girl appear to be a virgin. (Asian clients will often pay a premium to be with a virgin in the belief that it will make a man younger and heal medical ailments.) If they refuse to go with a customer, girls are often tortured. "These children are commodities who will be killed when they've outlived their usefulness, or they die from the torture," says AFESIP co-founder Somaly Mam."

*Source: Child-Sex Trade Thriving in Cambodia. (2013). Susan McClelland.
www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca*

The Issue of Legalization

Table 2: Legalization of prostitution

Destination	Legalization of Sex Tourism
Thailand	Illegal
Brazil	Legal
Spain	Limited Legality
Indonesia	Legal
Colombia	Legal
The Philippines	Illegal
Kenya	Illegal
The Netherlands	Legal
Cambodia	Illegal
Dominican Republic	Legal

Source: (Burns, 2014)

Sex tourism and prostitution plays a large role in the world's economy, but it is not always a legal activity in certain countries. Although prostitution may not be considered a safe industry, the legalization of prostitution is important for countries to be able to protect sex workers. Prostitution exists all over the world with a higher percentage of legal countries versus illegal in others. With legalizing prostitution the environment would be moderately safer. Countries are able to then control the health issues that occur between the sex workers and their partners, by engaging in mandatory health examinations and also having cleaner environments available for sexual activities to take place. With prostitution being legal there would be a less likelihood for sex trafficking to occur in the country. There are certain measures that take place in order for prostitution to remain legal, therefore with regulations in place it would be much more difficult for trafficking to occur because of necessary credentials in tack. Numerous empirical studies find that legalization of prostitution decrease instances of rape. And, the logic of it holds together fairly well. By bringing prostitution out of the shadows, predators will feel less able to rape prostitutes with impunity; particularly in the context of legal brothels with security cameras, guards, boundaries, and the threat of legal punishment, the potential for

instances of rape is dramatically reduced (Ramirez, 2013).

Lastly, the legalization of prostitution would help decrease mass tourism. Because sex tourism has many popular destinations, tourist population increases as well. With the legalization of prostitution, the flow of mass tourism would lessen because sex tourism would be readily available in other destinations.

Discussion

There are many issues that have developed from sex tourism. Because tourism is a source for economic benefits around the world, sex tourism is a branch of tourism that brings in revenue as well to underdeveloped countries. Although sex tourism does increase stable economies, it decreases well-being and livelihood of these countries as well. Sex tourism leads to exploitation of individuals in poor countries, leading to globalization. Unfortunately, sex tourism has become a dominate industry that will not be put on hold in the near future. This is because all forms of tourism benefit as well, such as: airlines companies, hotels accommodations, tour operators and local businesses throughout the world.

Major concerns for the sex tourism industry would be the sexually transmitted infections that arise. Unfortunately, individuals contract deadly diseases such as AIDS through sex tourism, including sex workers as well as sex tourists. The thought that child sex workers are less likely to carry disease is highly misunderstood. Because children do not have a fully developed immune system, they are more likely to contract diseases compared to men and women through sex tourism and trafficking. The use of condoms during sexual activities is not mandatory, therefore, sex tourists may believe that they do not have to use one because they are engaging with strangers in a foreign land, but in reality, they are contracting sexually transmitted infections and carrying them back to western countries. Therefore, popular diseases in underdeveloped countries are affecting developed countries because of the sex tourism industry.

Legalization is the top issue facing the sex tourism industry. In countries such as the Netherlands, sex tourism is seen as a safer industry than in countries where sex tourism is illegal like Thailand. Sex tourism needs strict modifications and regulations to provide a safer sex industry. Sex tourism will never fully be extinct, thus, the industry must change drastically. Even if there were regulations set in place to make the industry legal with the mandatory use of protect, the industry would start to change immediately. There would be less contraction of diseases affecting all areas of the world. As well as the protection against violence that is involved in the industry. Individuals commit to sex tourism as a way to keep themselves out of the poverty line but in return do not achieve any social or cultural benefits. Legalizing sex tourism could economically benefit sex workers with arranging better living arrangements and maintaining a safer lifestyle with the help of the government.

Possible solutions

It is hard to comprehend and supply possible solutions for sex tourism, this is because there is not one main problem to solve. The issue of unstable economies is a dominate trait that can not easily be settled. Individuals world wide commit to sex tourism and prostitution for a source of finances that was not accessible before hand. Hypothetically, if there were laws, regulations and policies in place making sex tourism and prostitution legal in most countries, then there would no longer be a demand for sex tourism. Without the demand, there would no longer be a supply as well. Thus, destinations' economies would decrease significantly without the flow of tourists and foreign exchange, putting many sex workers out of financial support causing more global poverty. In saying this, in countries where sex tourism is a demanded industry, governments could step up to the plate and initiate programs

to help provide mandatory education for locals. With an education background, individuals would have proper discipline and knowledge for more realistic career opportunities, improving livelihood and potential for the country's economy, allowing more gender equality as well. The issue of high disease and mortality rates would lower if sex tourism was legal as well. With sex tourism being a legalized industry, there could potentially be required medical care, screenings and promotion of the use of condoms. By providing these short-term measures countries could benefit overall with a healthy and sustainable workforce. These possible solutions will not change the issues of sex tourism immediately, but in the long run there could be a drastic change in this ongoing global phenomenon that will benefit future generations.

Conclusion

As presented in this study, sex tourism is a widely known industry. Although this industry is based upon trading flesh for money, the levels of sex tourism and prostitution are rising world wide. Through the use of technology, globalization and legalization of prostitution in many countries, soon sex tourism will no longer be seen as a bad word. This is because of the flow of sex tourists in a developing country and the financial power of western individuals will drastically increase revenue in that country with the exchange of foreign currency. These impacts that may seem to be on a smaller scale are slowly benefiting more underdeveloped countries into a country with a sustainable economy and a lower rate of poverty throughout. Sex tourism not only benefits economies, but as well as sex tourists, as they receive sexual activities through bars and brothels while enjoying the destination as a whole. Sex tourism will vastly increase and slowly become more of a public industry rather than a private industry.

Directions for Future Research

There are negative aspects that always need to be considered when discussing sex tourism such as the effects sex tourism has on locals. If mostly women are involved in a sex trade will it effect society? With men and women participating in sex tourism to stay out of poverty they are forgetting about themselves. There is a greater lack of education for individuals with this type of lifestyle. There is corruption of sexual outbreaks over the countries with lack of available health examinations and improper use of protection. This all comes back to gender inequalities for females. Nevertheless, there is no possible way to put a hold on sex tourism in this day and age. The bigger issue is since this phenomenon is going to continue, what can laws and regulations can be made around the world to make sex tourism healthy and safer for not only the workers but sex tourists as well.

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