Global Issues in Tourism: Sex Tourism

It’s thought that sex tourists are provoked by two motivational drives: psychological and physical needs. Two key propositions are addressed (1) The person’s level of perceived modernity relates to the perceived level of personal needs; and (2) The person’s level of perceived personal needs relates to the person’s desire of travel for sexual participation (Tepanon, 2019). The psychological problems included 'hedonistic drive' and 'modernity.' The physical gains (tangible attributes) and psychological gains (sense of belonging, freedom and excitement, and power reestablishment) attracted sex tourists to the sex tourism destinations (Tepanon, 2019).

Another issue that strikes within sex tourism is the illegal trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children is particularly rife in tourist cities. Colombia particularly being one of the biggest distributors within the area. According to Colombia’s attorney general’s office a recorded 32,000 women from ages 16-28 and 19,500 children have been reported to be victims of sexual exploitation, including child pornography since 2013 (Moloney, 2018). Unfortunately, it’s not as easy to prevent sex trafficking as it’s difficult to pinpoint and find the sex trafficking rings within an area. Preventions made available are working with local police within the area and community to help stop trafficking by supporting a victim service provider or spreading awareness of human trafficking (United States Department of State, 2019).

Unplanned pregnancies are another key issue with the sex tourism niche. Due to a lack of contraceptive resources such as condoms and the contraceptive pill etc, many female workers are subjected to unplanned pregnancies. A case study done within the city of Zambia, Africa shows a result of 946 women eligible for this analysis, 84.1% had been pregnant at least once, and among those 61.6% had an unplanned pregnancy, and 47.7% had a terminated pregnancy (Chanda et al., 2017). In Zambia, because safe, legal abortion is inaccessible to many women, an unknown number of women each year resort to illegal abortions, many of which are performed under unsanitary and unsafe conditions (Likwa, Biddlecom and Ball, 2019). Currently there are no preventive measures put in place by the African Government in order to decrease the number of unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortions within Zambia but international organisational groups and charities such as Womankind Worldwide have pleaded to strengthen family planning service provision and demand which will provide family planning services and information – including ensuring the availability of contraceptive supplies and training providers to help educate the locality (Ndonyo, Biddlecom and Ball, 2009).

A negative impact on the sex tourism industry in an area such as Thailand is the incurable diseases such as the human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV) due to lack of resources e.g. condoms and education on sex health. Thailand has developed into the sex capital of the world which encourages many looking to part-take in this type niche tourism to visit this specific country. However, this brings the danger of increasing the spread of HIV and a higher transmission rate of this transmitted disease to the home country of the traveller. As reported by Advert, The Global Information and Education on HIV (2018), Thailand has one of the highest HIV prevalence’s in Asia and the Pacific, accounting for 9% (480,000) of the region’s total population of people living with HIV (Avert, 2019). Although, sex tourism is not the only reason for HIV spreading through the country this fast, but it is the main reason. Other infections such

as Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, Genital herpes, warts and lice are also consequences of unprotected sexual activities. Although these infections are mainly curable (except for the herpes virus) many sex workers might not have the accessibility or finance to redeem the correct methods such as anti-biotics to help cure their infections. Prevention methods put in place such as 'Thailand National Strategy on STIs Prevention and Control, 2017 – 2021' plan to stop the spread of infections and disease by 2030 by 50% (Searo.who.int, 2017).

It is false to standardise a sex tourist as someone who interacts primarily with traditional

prostitution (Papathanassis, 2011). Particularly women tend to pay for the sexual services in a more indirect way than men. For example, males in Kenya are often compensated with valuable objects like cars and cell phones or loans for businesses (Heinrich, 2007). Furthermore, a main differentiation factor between traditional prostitution and tourism-related prostitution is that the services offered exceed the pure sexual aspect (Miller and Jayasundera, 2002). Oftentimes, the prostitutes act as girl/boyfriends for the full length of the stay. It is not unusual that a prostitute accompanies a single tourist for several weeks. Especially women tend to prefer this kind of prostitution because it provides space for a more romantic experience (Ins, 2002). Although the initial motivation of sex tourism is not the cause of sexual exploitation, it presents easy access to it. The temptation of this easy money has caused many gangs and individuals to present themselves or others such as young people, including children, to trade their bodies in exchange for some money and many times to help provide a life to them and their family or for material goods. In other sickening situations children are trafficked into the brothels on the margins of the tourist areas and sold into sex slavery, very rarely earning enough money to escape (UKEssays.com, 2018).

The sex tourist is a person/s who predominately plans a vacation for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity. One of the main attractions is the important cost differential that exists in the provision of both tourist and sexual services in the developing world compared to such provision in the industrialised world (Hall and Ryan, 2001). Sex tourists are primarily men that come from more developed countries who then travel to underdeveloped countries such as Thailand (De Buck, 2016). "Nearly half of prostitute users have been found to be married men, often with children. The majority of users are is Caucasian, employed full-time, self identified heterosexual and have personal income excess of $30,000 USD per year" (Jeff Heinrich, 2007) (Papathanassis, 2011). However, women from developed countries are also starting to travel with the goal of pursuing sex tourism, they do, however, visit different countries such as Brazil and the Dominican Republic (De Buck, 2016).

Sex Tourism essentially refers to the act of travelling to another region either national or international for the purpose of part-taking within sexual activities in return for a sum of cash. Sexual tourism is a very lucrative industry that spans the globe. Estimates from ECPAT International show that each year, approximately 250,000 people travel internationally to engage in sex tourism with children and youth and that the industry generates over $20 billion in revenue (Westmacott, 2017). There are many different types of sex tourism; it can range from illegal brothels to pornography, erotic phone calls, street prostitution or call girls (De Buck, 2016). Many countries have become involved with sex tourism, whether legal or illegal these countries have become dependent on this type of tourism. Countries such as The Netherlands – Amsterdam, Thailand, Columbia, Brazil and the Philippines are some of the most popular locations for the sex tourist to visit. According to a city estimated stated by Christopher F Schuetze (2016) of the Irish Times states 'Last year, 20 million tourists visited Amsterdam.

During the busiest times of the weekend, as many as 6,000 visitors can pass through that alley – or attempt to – every hour' (Schuetze, 2018). Each of the above countries have both and culturally-compelling and beautiful cities that lure more than your average tourists, but they also all have very visible and widespread prostitution that attract visitors of another kind. Sex Tourism originally started from the sex trade, it originally made Thailand extremely favoured as a locality because it was accessible and had no laws concerning the sex trade. Prostitution was legal in Thailand until 1960, until it was changed as the government of Thailand saw that sex tourism was no longer an ethical and safe way of developing the economy of Thailand. Soon after 1960, the parliament came up with the Prostitution Suppression (Prohibition) Act. This act says that it is illegal for every person in Thailand to participate in the sex industry except the clients, for them it is still legal (De Buck, 2016).