

INVISIBLE HANDS OF HUMAN EXPLOITATION – SUPPLY CHAIN MECHANISMS IN SEX TOURISM

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Abstract

Sex tourism relies on extensive logistics management, encompassing physical elements like transport and accommodation, as well as digital tools that facilitate transactions and connections among stakeholders. This phenomenon raises significant ethical concerns, including the commodification of human bodies and the exploitation of victims—most often women and children, though men are also affected. Public policies frequently fall short in addressing sex tourism, as its supply chain mechanisms are highly adaptable and resilient. This article advocates for a systemic approach to tackling sex tourism, proposing research avenues that explore its financial flows, roots in class and gender disparities, and impacts on local communities. The goal is to enhance efforts to combat this complex and reprehensible issue by deepening our understanding of the economic, societal, and supply chain dynamics that sustain it.

Keywords: Class and gender disparities, Human exploitation, Logistics, Sex tourism, Supply chain.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sex tourism is a complex and disturbing societal phenomenon, often considered taboo in management research but widely studied in criminology and sociology (Le Roux et al., 2010; Uriely et al., 2011; Weitzer, 2023). It provides a striking lens into the deviant behaviors that occasionally infiltrate societies and challenge established norms, but it remains largely less studied in management than sexual harassment in companies and the psychological disorders of victims that it induces (Nyanga & Chindanya, 2020). Sex tourism goes beyond being merely a transgressive act or the result of individual misconduct. Rather, it is embedded in a systemic, globalized dynamic driven by a range of economic, cultural, and societal forces. Although often seen as a marginal sector within the traditional tourism industry—a kind of “outsider” sector, to use Becker’s (2018 [1963]) terms—sex tourism relies heavily on well-established criminal networks and highly efficient, though often invisible, logistical systems. These networks exploit legal loopholes to

facilitate the exploitation of vulnerable individuals, particularly women and children, while involving both public and private stakeholders, either directly or indirectly, thus perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

At first glance, human exploitation within the context of sex tourism may seem limited to isolated incidents, often portrayed by the media as scandals. A notable example in Europe is that of former French minister Frédéric Mitterrand, nephew of President François Mitterrand, who openly confessed in his autobiographical book *The Bad Life: A Memoir* to engaging in sex tourism in the red-light district of Patpong in Bangkok on multiple occasions (Mitterrand, 2010). However, a closer examination reveals that this phenomenon is deeply embedded in the social structures that sustain, legitimize, and make it economically viable. The sex tourism industry thrives due to a convergence of factors: fragile economies in countries where sex workers originate, endemic poverty, and entrenched social inequalities. More broadly, sex tourism cannot be fully understood without considering the impact of globalization, which not only facilitates the unprecedented movement of people but also amplifies existing class and gender disparities.

The role of modern technology in facilitating sex tourism cannot be overstated. By enabling anonymous transactions and creating invisible connections, the Internet and digital platforms play a crucial role in linking those who offer sex with those who seek it. Moreover, advancements in communication and payment systems have made it even easier to arrange such services discreetly. However, the physical mobility of consumers—sex tourists—must not be hindered when they are required to travel thousands of miles. Thanks to remarkable advances in logistics and a dramatic reduction in transport costs, geographical borders are becoming increasingly porous, making it easier than ever to travel from Europe to Asia. Over time, the sex tourism industry has evolved into a well-organized system, supported by highly efficient supply chain mechanisms. While these logistical operations are often poorly understood and sometimes disguised as ordinary tourism, they enable the sex trade to flourish in countries where laws are either inadequate or poorly enforced.

By examining sex tourism through its economic, societal, and, most notably, logistical dimensions, we can uncover the less-discussed aspects of this approach to human exploitation, which devastates millions of lives. Sex tourism is not merely an issue of morality, a disregard for humanist values, or a violation of human rights. It is also rooted in systemic inequalities—both gender-based and between wealthy and impoverished nations. The sex tourism industry raises critical questions about how class and gender disparities are exploited within a global framework, where the most vulnerable are targeted for unbearable exploitation. This exploitation is made possible by particularly efficient supply chain mechanisms, which include transport, financial systems, digital platforms, and corrupt regulatory practices. The power dynamics and managerial strategies driving this phenomenon warrant scrutiny, especially when considering the class and gender disparities involved, as well as the broader systems enabling their persistence and growth.

2. GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Sex tourism operates within a complex ecosystem where multiple categories of stakeholders interact (Lu et al., 2020). Whether directly or indirectly involved, these stakeholders contribute to the existence and perpetuation of a system of human exploitation with a long history, dating back to the earliest recorded instances of prostitution in Mesopotamia around 2,000 BC. The temples dedicated to the goddess of love and fertility, Inanna (or Ishtar), were home to sacred priestesses of Venus known as “hierodules,” who engaged in ritual sexual acts with worshippers as part of religious ceremonies (Lerner, 1986). Over centuries, such practices evolved and adapted, creating new iterations influenced by cultural, economic, and political factors. Today, consumers, operators, intermediaries, and victims of sex tourism intersect in a globalized network, where each participant plays a distinct role. This network relies on specific infrastructures and flows, some visible and some invisible, including organized crime, local economies, tourism marketing, and sociocultural attitudes, which sustain and perpetuate the system.

2.1 Consumers

Sex tourists, primarily from Western countries, are the driving force behind the industry, without whom it could not sustain itself. While most are middle-aged men, a minority consists of women seeking romantic or sexual encounters with young men, often referred to as “beach boys,” “beach bums,” or “hustlers” in regions such as East Africa and the Caribbean (De Albuquerque, 1998; Sanchez Taylor, 2006). These male and female tourists primarily come from Western Europe, North America, Australia, and Japan. Two key motivations are commonly identified among male tourists. The first is the allure of the exotic—the pursuit of unique and memorable experiences, aligning with traditional expectations of tourism as Taily (2018) notes. The second is the anonymity that travel provides; being thousands of miles from home, in environments where social norms differ, enables behaviors that would otherwise remain constrained by societal expectations and peer judgment (Goldberg, 1954). Additionally, some tourists are influenced by long-standing myths, particularly those perpetuated in films, which reinforce a distorted view of local cultures as overly permissive. These narratives shape fantasies and expectations, fueling demand for such experiences.

In Thailand, for instance, the perception of a “culture of sexual hospitality” is promoted to attract visitors seeking erotic pleasures, with Just Jaeckin’s French film *Emmanuelle* (1974) serving as a key archetype. This film played a significant role in shaping the image of an exotic, uninhibited paradise, drawing numerous tourists (Klemm, 2019). Similarly, in the Caribbean, destinations like the Dominican Republic and Cuba are marketed as places where paid sex is readily available (Cabezas, 2009). The Caribbean locations are viewed as environments where socio-economic barriers and cultural differences between tourists and locals create an imbalanced power dynamic, allowing visitors to indulge their desires without fear of judgment or

repercussions. This dynamic not only reinforces the vulnerability of those involved but also perpetuates deep inequalities, highlighting how sex tourism commodifies intimacy, exacerbates class and gender disparities, and sustains harmful stereotypes of exoticism, sexual availability, and objectification.

2.2 Operators

The human exploitation associated with sex tourism depends on a complex network of facilitators, with local pimps serving as its most visible figures. They organize the provision of victims, ensuring they are prepared to meet the demands of tourists in both quality and quantity. The role of local pimps extends far beyond simple exploitation; it involves intricate logistical planning, including secure accommodation, arranging local transport, and even falsifying documents for underage victims. On a broader scale, unscrupulous travel agencies, operating under legal pretenses, promote packages that include sexual services (Bang et al., 2014). While they never explicitly advertise prostitution, the language used in these offers leaves little room for misinterpretation. An “exotic tour” in certain parts of Asia sometimes includes “unique local experiences” that involve paid encounters, facilitated by intermediaries who coordinate transactions and ensure client satisfaction through personalized arrangements and exclusive access to victims.

The role of local authorities also deserves attention. In several countries, governments, aware of the economic impact of sex tourism, turn a blind eye to these practices. In some cases, corrupt police officers or complicit civil servants actively participate in or protect the networks involved. In the Dominican Republic, for instance, investigations have uncovered the active involvement of certain law enforcement members in sustaining and even expanding the sex tourism industry (Padilla, 2007). In other countries, local authorities simply ignore sex tourism-related crimes. Although laws may exist, their enforcement is often deliberately neglected or manipulated, allowing criminals to operate with impunity and perpetuating the system. Some local authorities may even profit from the sex tourism industry, further entrenching the illicit activities. State inaction in combating sex tourism leads to its normalization, reinforcing social and economic inequalities among local populations in a state of extreme vulnerability, where exploitation becomes routine.

2.3 Victims

Victims of the sex tourism industry typically come from vulnerable backgrounds. Poverty, lack of education, and social marginalization make women, children, and sometimes men susceptible to the false promise of a job or a better life. However, this promise proves to be a trap, with reality swiftly turning into brutal exploitation of their bodies, which can escalate to violence, torture, or even death in cases of resistance (Eger, 2021). Deceived by false opportunities, victims find themselves ensnared in criminal networks,

controlled through psychological and physical violence. This captivity deprives them of all freedom, autonomy, and recourse, heightening their vulnerability and making escape nearly impossible. Victims are subjected to social isolation, the confiscation of their identification papers, and constant threats, further entrenching their exploitation. Several examples from around the world highlight the gravity of their harrowing situation, emphasizing the need for comprehensive international efforts to dismantle these systems and protect those at risk.

In Southeast Asia, thousands of women are recruited each year under the false pretense of working in bars, restaurants, or as domestic help. Once they arrive, they are coerced into prostitution to repay debts that have been artificially created by their recruiters. Children are also victims: in Cambodia, NGOs have documented the sexual exploitation of minors in tourist contexts, facilitated by international networks (Thomas & Mathews, 2006). This is not an isolated case, as illustrated by the mapping conducted by Koning & van Wilsem (2023), which highlights the primary destinations for the sexual exploitation of children (see Figure 1). In the Caribbean, extreme poverty drives young women and men to seek paid relationships with tourists, in the hope of marriage or long-term financial support. These individuals face significant risks of abuse and degradation. Although these situations may appear consensual on the surface, they conceal deeply exploitative dynamics, with power imbalances that are pervasive, as previously noted.

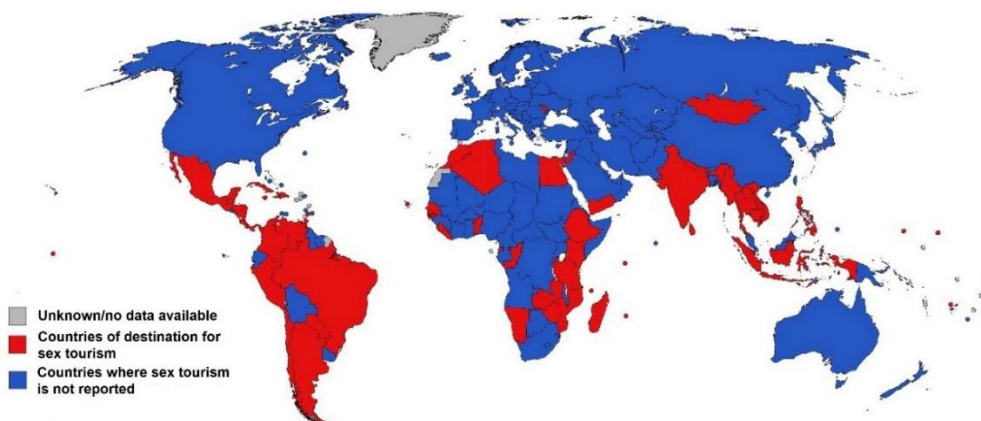


FIGURE 1. COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION FOR SEX TOURISM INVOLVING CHILDREN

Source: Adapted from Koning & van Wilsem (2023).

2.4 Flows

Certain regions of the world have become prominent destinations for sex tourism over time. Southeast Asia, with countries like Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines, along with parts of Africa, are cited as prime examples. The combination of permissive legislation, endemic poverty, and a flourishing tourist industry creates an environment where the sex tourism industry can thrive. Cities like Bangkok, Pattaya,

and Angeles City are among the most affected, with entire districts dedicated to prostitution, even though consumers are informed of the associated risks upon arrival at the airport. In Thailand, where prostitution is illegal, signs warn of severe penalties, including fines and imprisonment, for those involved in sex tourism-related activities. Europe is also affected; before the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022, both countries attracted a Western clientele seeking “authentic” and “less expensive” experiences, with women presumed to be both “beautiful” and “docile” (Konstantinovskaia, 2017).

The logistical organization of sex tourism varies depending on the chosen destination, as it is impossible to compare a prostitution site located three hours away by plane with one 15 hours away. Similarly, local mobility is influenced by the density and quality of transport infrastructure. Sex tourism is, therefore, reliant on international flights connecting consumers to their destinations, and the existence of interconnected air hubs, reliable land routes, and digital networks helps streamline every stage of the supply chain. Moreover, traditional tourism infrastructure plays a crucial role in the sex tourism economy. Hotels, taxis, restaurants, and even tour operators are key components of the supply chain, with some establishments actively facilitating meetings between tourists and sex workers. In certain cases, even the local population may indirectly contribute by offering services that support the broader industry. Building on Clancy's (2002) approach to studying sex tourism through the commodity chain concept, my investigation explores the logistical organization to better understand the complex issues involved, including the socio-economic impacts.

3. LOGISTICAL PILLARS

Sex tourism, while appearing as a series of individual and informal interactions, is ultimately underpinned by a highly structured logistical framework. Like traditional industries such as manufacturing or retailing (Florea, 2014; Minculete & Olar, 2016), the “performance” of sex tourism relies on coordinated flows and optimized systems designed to meet a demand that, unfortunately, shows no signs of disappearing. The logistics of sex tourism encompass both physical elements such as transport, accommodation, and security, as well as modern communication tools that efficiently connect the various players in the supply chain. Digital platforms, applications, and online services are also utilized to facilitate transactions, manage schedules, and ensure user anonymity. While there are significant operational differences between sex tourism and juvenile prostitution in Western countries, as recently discussed by Paché (2022) and Lavaud-Legendre (2024), logistical similarities—such as the need for careful coordination and discreet operations—can still be identified.

3.1 Transport

As previously mentioned, one of the key components of the logistics of sex tourism is the transport of people seeking illicit and condemnable pleasures (Thompson, 2017). Without an efficient travel infrastructure, the industry could not function effectively, much like the traditional tourism sector, as demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic. International air hubs, such as those in Bangkok, Havana, and Manila, play a crucial role, serving not only as entry points for millions of tourists each year, but also for those seeking sexual services. Indirectly, and often unwittingly, airlines contribute to the system of human exploitation by facilitating access to destinations favored by sex tourists. In fact, the price competition between airlines helps sustain sex tourism, as the cost of reaching these “markets” remains relatively low and attractive to consumers. For instance, in December 2024, a round-trip ticket from Paris to Bangkok could be purchased for just 460 US dollars, further incentivizing sex tourism and facilitating the movement of individuals across borders.

Once at their destination, local transport options such as cabs, tuk-tuks, and car rental services allow sex tourists to quickly reach dedicated areas or establishments. Mullings (2000) aptly refers to these as “fantasy tours,” emphasizing the idea of consuming sex in much the same way one might enjoy a local dish. Some well-informed drivers act as intermediaries, guiding their customers to locations where sexual services are offered, and in some cases, they receive a commission from pimps or establishments for each customer they bring. Travel agencies and online platforms also play a significant role in the supply chain, using travel forums to gather reviews and adjust their offerings to align with consumer expectations. Additionally, these online platforms provide discreet information about available options, helping maintain tourists’ anonymity while reinforcing the logistical framework that supports sex tourism. This interconnected network of transport, services, and digital tools ensures the experience is seamless, having sex tourism more accessible and efficient for consumers across the world.

3.2 Accommodation

It is difficult to imagine a sexual act, whether licit or illicit, without a venue, the identification, reservation, and use of which can sometimes pose significant challenges. From luxury hotels to modest inns, many establishments, either consciously or unconsciously, become physical spaces where transactions are organized, often without the knowledge of top management. In some extreme cases, entire hotels are dedicated to sex tourism, offering rooms by the hour and/or providing “complementary services” such as introductions to sex workers (Hall & Ryan, 2001). Even major international hotel chains, which present themselves as symbols of ethics and social responsibility, are not exempt. For instance, in 2023, the French group Accor acknowledged the presence of juvenile prostitution in its hotels in Asia, leading to

significant public outcry. Although the official policies of these major international hotel chains prohibit such activities, the practices on the ground can differ significantly, particularly in regions where staff corruption is common (Ryan, 2015). This inconsistency in enforcement often results in the continued exploitation of vulnerable individuals, as management fails to monitor or act on illegal activities happening under their roofs.

3.3 Information systems

Any supply chain requires advanced information systems for efficient management (for a literature review, see Pratt et al. [2023]), and the logistics of sex tourism is no exception. With the rise of the Internet and modern communication technologies, the sex tourism industry has found new ways to thrive, as websites and messaging applications make it easier to connect the various stakeholders involved. Platforms located on the dark web enable sex tourists to share information on destinations, prices, or even the best methods for avoiding local authorities (Graham, 2023). These platforms also serve as discreet showcases for pimps, who post the best “offers” of the moment, accompanied by photos, drawing on traditional tourism marketing tactics such as online reviews, rating systems, and customer testimonials (Tantrabundit & Jamrozy, 2018). Similarly, closed Facebook pages or groups, specific hashtags on Instagram, and even coded messages on X (formerly Twitter) provide users with information about services in specific areas, alongside the logistical facilities available to them. These digital channels contribute significantly to the global reach and efficiency of the sex tourism supply chain.

The management of financial flows is another clear illustration of the logistical efficiency behind sex tourism. Transactions occur on both an individual level—between the tourist and the victim—and on a broader scale, involving various intermediaries. With the rise of digital technologies, new financial tools have enhanced discretion while minimizing the risks associated with cash transactions. Online payment platforms, such as PayPal or similar applications, enable fast, relatively undocumented transactions. Even more concerning, cryptocurrencies offer near-total anonymity, making financial flows even harder to trace (Devi & Radha, 2024). These payment methods are commonly used by illicit travel agencies or websites that organize meetings between sex tourists and sex workers. The funds generated are laundered through legal businesses, such as restaurants, hotels, or transport agencies, where the money from sex tourism is mixed into the local economy, further obscuring its origins and complicating law enforcement efforts to combat this illegal trade.

4. ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

The organization of sex tourism is particularly pernicious because it seamlessly integrates into legitimate infrastructures—airports, hotels, transport services—and exploits modern communication tools originally designed to simplify everyday life. Each link in the sex tourism supply chain fits perfectly into the others, and the final human exploitation is the outcome of a remarkably efficient flow management system. By examining the supply chain mechanisms, it becomes evident that sex tourism is not the result of isolated individuals but rather a complex, globalized system deeply embedded in modern society. From this perspective, sex tourism raises a multitude of ethical and social issues, which, though ignored or downplayed in political discourse, are nonetheless crucial for understanding the economic dynamics at play. At stake are human dignity, fundamental rights, the systematic exploitation of human beings, and the profound effects of these practices on local societies, vulnerable individuals, and the broader international community involved (Brooks & Heaslip, 2019).

4.1 Commodification of the body

At the heart of the sex tourism issue lies the exploitation of victims, who are coerced into selling their bodies to survive. One of the most blatant ethical concerns is the commodification of the human body (Bernstein, 2008), a reality as old as the systems of prostitution, but one that, in this context, takes on an institutionalized and entrenched form. Victims are frequently reduced to mere objects of consumption, with their value measured solely in terms of their sexual utility to consumers. This objectification leads to forms of physical and psychological violence that leave deep, irreversible scars. Moreover, many victims are subjected to relentless pressure to “meet the customer’s expectations,” including engaging in unconventional sexual practices. In some instances, victims are even drugged or manipulated with substances, which heightens their vulnerability, particularly when children are involved (Mekinc & Music, 2015; Geldenhuys, 2016). This creates a vicious cycle of abuse, where the victims’ trauma is ignored or trivialized by those who profit from their suffering, further perpetuating a system of exploitation that thrives on dehumanization and disregard for human rights.

4.2 Relationships of domination

Power relations between consumers and victims are a critical issue in the context of sex tourism. These relationships are not merely economic; they are deeply shaped by disparities of power, class, and gender. The consumer, typically perceived as a “white, powerful male” from a wealthy country, positions himself within a dynamic of domination over a victim who, in most cases, is a poor, vulnerable woman or girl. As Jeffreys (2009) notes, this dynamic explicitly positions women as men’s leisure. In some cases, however,

we can also speak of men as women's leisure, particularly in certain regions such as Africa and the Caribbean, where women are the consumers and men the objects of sexual commodification. Relationships of domination extend beyond mere sexual exchange, influencing complex social perceptions and interactions. The sex tourist holds a position of control: he/she initiates the exchange, controls the financial resources, and sometimes finds himself in an environment where laws, social norms, and surveillance are less stringent than in his home country. This situation perpetuates racial, cultural, and sexist stereotypes, where victims are seen as "exotic objects" to be consumed.

4.3 Impact on local societies

Socially, sex tourism has a devastating impact on local communities, exacerbating issues like social inequality, corruption, and violence. In the most popular destinations, sex workers do not benefit from the economic gains generated by the tourism sector. Instead, they endure precarious working conditions and face increasing social marginalization (Robinson, 2006). Corruption flourishes, law enforcement agencies sometimes turn a blind eye, and these local societies become "paradises of human exploitation," where human dignity is routinely disregarded. Moreover, sex tourism contributes to the degradation of the image of the countries involved, which are perceived as places where prostitution is either legalized or tolerated, thus creating a stigma that impacts all sectors of tourism. A prime example is Thailand, whose Branding Thailand initiative attempts to counter the negative perceptions deeply ingrained in Western minds (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). Figure 2, sourced from a Royal Thai Police document, shows that while arrests for prostitution sharply declined between 2018 and 2022, there was a troubling rise in online child pornography.

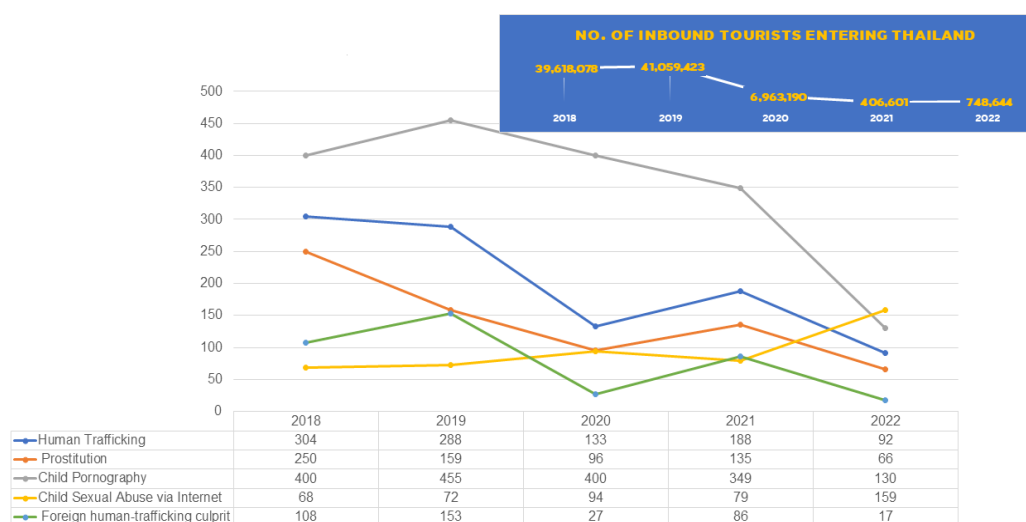


FIGURE 2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INBOUND TOURIST AND HUMAN-TRAFFICKING CASE IN THAILAND
Source: Royal Thai Police (2023).

4.4 Limits of public policies

Ultimately, sex tourism underscores how some societies are willing to overlook human exploitation to sustain economies rooted in stark inequalities. It also exposes the growing tension between globalization—which facilitates trade and travel—and the urgent need for stricter ethical controls to prevent exploitative practices that undermine the humanist ideals inherent in respecting human rights. The challenge extends beyond ending the exploitation of vulnerable individuals to dismantling the complex supply chain mechanisms that sustain the global sex tourism industry. However, legal responses to this pervasive issue vary significantly across the world. Some countries have implemented stringent laws against sex tourism, particularly those aimed at protecting children from sexual exploitation (Hashimoto et al., 2021). Yet even in these nations, enforcement remains challenging, especially when insufficient resources are allocated to address this ongoing, widespread social scourge. The lack of international cooperation further complicates efforts, as perpetrators often operate across borders, taking advantage of jurisdictional gaps in criminal justice systems.

To curb the sex tourism industry, if not entirely eradicate it, multilateral action is needed on three critical levels. A first level is to dismantle the criminal networks that support sex tourism, particularly by disrupting the organization of their complex supply chains. This requires increased international cooperation, aimed at identifying and punishing intermediaries, whether local or international, who enable and profit from exploitation. A second level involves tourism and digital platforms, which also have a key role to play in ensuring accountability. By imposing strict verification and transparency obligations on these platforms, it is possible to limit abuses, with severe sanctions acting as a strong deterrent. Finally, a third level focuses on local solutions, emphasizing education and economic development. By offering communities the resources, tools, and opportunities to free themselves from economic dependence, it is possible to reduce their vulnerability and, consequently, diminish the temptation to succumb to the dangerous allure of sex tourism.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article explored the complex and often invisible logistics of sex tourism, analyzing its stakeholders, networks, and mechanisms. By exposing the various aspects of this industry, it becomes clear that sex tourism cannot be reduced to a simple matter of individual consumption by wealthy Westerners or isolated deviant choices. Rather, it rests on a sophisticated and highly organized system of human exploitation, globalized and interconnected across multiple regions and industries. Numerous stakeholders, from travel agencies to criminal networks and hotel structures, all contribute to perpetuating a system of domination

and degradation that affects millions of women, children, and men around the world. The main originality of this article lies in shedding light on the logistics that is essential to the seamless functioning of this industry. Without this logistics, based on efficient supply chain mechanisms, sex tourism could not continue to exist on such a large scale, nor could it operate with such efficiency and impunity.

5.1 Contributions

One of the key contributions of this article is its focus on the supply chain issues inherent in sex tourism—a dimension that is often overlooked in academic research on the topic. By adopting a systemic approach, we can better understand how various stakeholders—from local authorities to travel agencies, transporters, and accommodation providers—implicitly collaborate to create a network of human exploitation that continues to meet an unfortunately persistent demand. This perspective provides valuable insight into the mechanisms that underlie the perpetuation of the sex tourism industry, demonstrating that, rather than being a series of isolated transactions between suppliers and consumers, the phenomenon is part of a complex, interconnected system. Each component plays a crucial role in maintaining a cycle of violence, social injustice, and economic exploitation, fueled by deeply ingrained cultural and institutional dynamics that sustain this global, exploitative problem, which disproportionately affects marginalized communities worldwide.

This article also highlights the various forms of human exploitation to which victims are subjected, as their bodies are “consumed” in the globalized market driven by neoliberal economic policies. The examples cited throughout the text offer a cross-cutting analysis of the economic, social, and psychological impacts of sex tourism, helping to identify the root causes of the vulnerability of individuals and entire societies to the phenomena of human exploitation. The result is an ethical reflection on the deeply asymmetrical power relations that structure the sex trade, with victims subjected to systematic domination, not only by consumers, but also by other stakeholders who profit from the commodification of bodies. My analysis also underscores the role of class and gender disparities, harmful cultural norms, and ineffective or contradictory policies in perpetuating an industry that is profoundly destructive of fundamental human rights, causing lasting harm to vulnerable populations worldwide.

5.2 Theoretical and managerial implications

The theoretical implications of the logistics of sex tourism are manifold. This theme opens a critical area of reflection for studies of supply chain management, the informal economy, and global trade, highlighting how illicit and reprehensible practices can be organized in ways as sophisticated and systematic as those found in the formal economy. The logistics of sex tourism, as a major societal phenomenon, illustrates how

the dynamics of power, commodification, and control of individuals interact on a global scale, while emphasizing the collective responsibilities of states, businesses, and consumers in the fight against the sex trade. Another important theoretical implication is linked to the study of globalization as a factor in exacerbating economic and social disparities. Indeed, this article underscores that, beyond simple human exploitation, sex tourism is rooted in a complex, interconnected system of interrelations that transcends national borders, further questioning the effects of globalization on human vulnerabilities and inequalities across diverse regions.

From a managerial perspective, examining the logistics of sex tourism has significant implications for tourism stakeholders. Sex tourism is often enabled by the complicity or inaction of key economic players, highlighting ineffective governance and its documented negative impact on organizations (Zuva et al., 2023). To address this issue, more stringent corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies must be developed. Effective measures should include verification, oversight, and awareness-raising mechanisms to prevent legitimate logistical facilities from being exploited for sexual exploitation with impunity. Strengthening collaboration with NGOs, local authorities, and international organizations could facilitate the implementation of more effective strategies to combat the sex trade. This also entails training employees, establishing ethical certifications, enforcing penalties for complicit behavior, and promoting educational initiatives to raise consumer awareness of the severe consequences of their actions. Ultimately, these efforts can foster a collective commitment to ending human exploitation.

5.3 Limitations and research avenues

Although this article has deepened our understanding of the logistics of sex tourism, it has several limitations. On the one hand, my analysis was carried out mainly based on publicly available, often indirect sources, and therefore lacks primary data from field surveys or direct testimony from sex tourism victims and operators. Additionally, the psychological and social aspects experienced by victims were not fully addressed, even though exploring the interdependence between different types of violence—physical, psychological, social—is crucial to understanding the depth and extent of the suffering inflicted on victims. Furthermore, the geographical scope of the study was deliberately limited to a few tourist destinations well known for their links with sex tourism, which makes it impossible to develop a universalist vision of the phenomenon. From this viewpoint, three research avenues are conceivable:

- A first research avenue would involve conducting field studies at the geographical level (Asia, Africa, South America) to investigate criminal networks and the practices of tourism companies involved in sex tourism. Gaining access to sensitive data could enable a more comprehensive cross-cultural analysis of financial mechanisms, money-laundering schemes, and how sex

tourism flows are organized. This would also include examining the digital technologies that facilitate these flows, such as online platforms and social networks.

- A second research avenue would explore the intersection of sex tourism and other forms of mass tourism, offering a fresh perspective on the connections between legal and illegal tourism industries and their impacts on local societies. Investigations could also focus on public policy, examining best practices in legislation and victim protection, as well as assessing the effectiveness of preventive measures such as training for tourism industry professionals, consumer awareness campaigns, and international cooperation in enforcement.
- Finally, a third research avenue would examine the psychological trauma experienced by victims of sex tourism, particularly through case studies, to better understand the long-term consequences and improve rehabilitation and support programs. This would include an analysis of the intergenerational impact of trauma, the specific challenges faced by children born from sexual exploitation, and the identification of cultural or societal factors that influence the effectiveness of psychological and medical support initiatives.

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