

This problem is especially prevalent in economically depressed or politically unstable countries where the lure of money and a better life draw suppliers and their prey into commercial sex.

Researchers believe that the phenomenon of sex tourism has grown dramatically in recent decades because there are:

- increasing numbers of individuals traveling, especially to new and distant destinations;
- more situational abusers; individuals who did not intend to engage in sexual acts, but who get caught up in an atmosphere of freedom in their travels and lose their inhibitions;
- too many (often very poor) people, sometimes including local law enforcement, who derive too much income from the sex tourism trade to shut it down; and
- which has resulted in an increasing number of victims.^{36–38}

Once it takes root, it is very difficult to shut it down.³⁹ It is even more appalling to note that, as the sex tourism has grown, the age of victims has continued to decrease with “some as young as five years old” (p. 2).⁴⁰

While the majority of sex tourists come from the United States, Canada, and the European countries, governments worldwide are stepping forward in a unified front to bring awareness to the problem and fight it with criminal penalties. As these information and enforcement efforts are combined with those of non-governmental organizations, airlines, hotels, tour companies, and travel agencies, there is hope that this pervasive problem of human slavery can be brought under control. For example, the Australian government, in cooperation with the tourism industry, developed a “Travel with Care” leaflet that “is distributed in airports, travel agencies, travel medical centers, passport offices, embassies, and visa offices...and tour operators must complete the mandatory child sex tourism component before finishing their studies” (pp. 468–469).²⁷ And, Air France shows a video on long-haul flights targeted at male passengers traveling to developing countries for the purpose of sex tourism, warning perpetrators that they will go to jail.⁴¹

External Influences and Internal Problems

Many areas find that tourism development is the only viable “export” industry and therefore change their political and economic structures to accommodate the needs of tourism developers and tourists. To encourage tourism, the local governments often waive taxes, import restrictions, and environmental safeguards on tourism investors and develop infrastructure that is mainly available to tourists and not the native population. In this way, the natives see the trappings of a better life but do not participate in it. In 2004, factions within (and outside of) the Dominican Republic were arguing about denationalizing parklands to allow new tourism developments, thus expanding the tourism industry within the island country.

Crime also can become a serious societal problem when tourism succeeds. Researchers believe this phenomenon is due to both the increase in the number of potential victims and the resentment and envy of the apparent wealth and carefree attitude of the tourists. Milman and Pizam found a relationship between tourist season and crime season: Crime increased at the height of the tourist season but was lower during the off-season.⁴² Researchers suggest that the larger number of people in an area increases a criminal’s potential gain from crime and decreases the chances of being caught. This increase in crime becomes a social and economic burden on the local area because it raises fear and necessitates funding a larger police force.

Unfortunately, another social ill that sometimes occurs with the development of tourism is a decline in the moral conduct of the local people. This moral decay—promiscuity, prostitution, alcohol, and drug use—is particularly damaging to a society