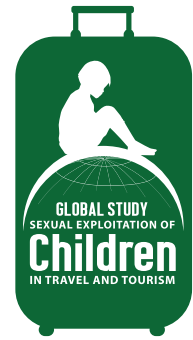


EXPERT PAPER



‘UPSTREAM’ TRAINING TO RAISE AWARENESS AND PREVENT THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN THE INTERNATIONAL TOURISM, HOSPITALITY & EVENTS INDUSTRY

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INTRODUCTION

A number of studies have identified the way in which the International Tourism, Hospitality and Events (ITHE) industry is frequently hijacked by individuals and criminal gangs in the process of child sexual exploitation (Clark 2003; 1 Matheson & Finkel 2012; 2 Panko & George 2012; 3 Tuppen 2013; 4 van Niekerk & Maurer 2013 5). A wide range of commendable efforts to tackle this process have been made by a number of different companies including tour operators, airlines, hotels and other trade bodies (ABTA 2015; 6 Accor 2014; 7 Delta 2013; 8 Kuoni 2015; 9 International Tourism Partnership 201510). Yet the scale, scope and complexity of business structures, seasonal influences and vulnerability to negative publicity inherent in the international tourism sector means engaging the industry in prevention activities is at the very least hugely challenging (Byerly 2012; 11 George & Smith 2013; 12 Miller 2001 13). Nonetheless, George & Smith (2013) highlight the significant international impact ITHE employees can make with basic but relevant awareness training. An alternative approach to

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alleviate issues of accessing and engaging the private sector is undertaken by Ray Nolan, a Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). This approach delivers relevant awareness and formal prevention training to university students studying for management degrees in International Tourism, Hospitality and Events as part of their core studies. Consequently, future managers receive training 'upstream' of their professional careers within the ITHE industry.

As a former professional practitioner in the prevention of human trafficking, Ray Nolan has integrated topics related to sex tourism into a number of relevant under and postgraduate modules. For example, the module topic 'Geography of Sex Tourism' has generated a great deal of interest amongst the students. Indeed, module feedback shows the students gain a sense of achievement that in their future career they would be able to contribute in some way to tackling child sexual exploitation. Firstly, this approach seeks to critically discuss why and what role their industry could play in tackling child sex tourism and secondly, to objectively analyse a range of mechanisms which would allow them as managers or employees to contribute to combatting child sex tourism and trafficking. The high level of subsequent student engagement and innovative discussion has offered opportunities to provide practical insights and training to those very individuals who will shortly become industry professionals in relevant companies, organisations and institutions across the world. As such, the student population of ITHE courses at SHU are highly international. Besides the UK, students come from a range of countries and regions including China, India, Africa, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, thus providing an international dissemination route for this work.

Such 'upstream training' is exemplified by project work in which ITHE students have participated. Most recently, as part of the 'Geography of Sex Tourism' module, Ray Nolan (SHU) and Sergeant Katherine Wallis of South Yorkshire Police (SYP) collaborated in delivering a number of lectures to over seventy final year ITHE Management students. This included delivery of a formal 'Hotel Awareness Training Package to Prevent the Sexual Exploitation of Children', one of a number of measures within SYP's child protection 'Operation Makesafe' campaign. Following this, SHU students have been involved in translating the training package into a number of different languages and undertaken pilot evaluation work related to improving training delivery. These examples illustrate how students in relevant higher education subject areas can not only benefit but equally contribute to the fight against the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. There are further positive benefits resulting from this approach. A relatively high number of the students of these courses already work part-time with relevant organisations and have taken this training and knowledge into their workplace and discussed its key messages with their colleagues and managers. Student feedback also shows many students have learnt the value of industry professionals engaging with organisations such as NGOs, local authorities and law enforcement. This is not only in awareness raising but also in generating a 'more informed' intelligence picture and therefore contributing to stopping child sexual exploitation. Importantly, most international students often have not encountered such topics previously but have been keen to take this knowledge forward upon graduation and disseminate it within their profession in many different destinations.

Collectively, and perhaps more significantly in the long term, the inside approach of 'upstream training' will not only raise awareness of what can be done by the international tourism, hospitality and events industry, but perhaps de-stigmatise engaging with such a 'commercially sensitive' subject and facilitate a greater acceptance of prevention work within the industry. Thus, giving impetus to drive an international change in 'culture' where as an industry it is no longer seen as 'someone else's' job to take action to prevent the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

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Ray Nolan is currently a Senior Lecturer in the Business School at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK (<http://www.shu.ac.uk/>). Previously, he was Research & Development Manager at the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre developing partnerships and projects between public, private and voluntary sector bodies to combat human trafficking internationally. These roles are underpinned by over twenty years' collective experience working overseas in the international tourism industry and in human trafficking prevention. Along with management roles, this has included projects and programme management with commercial companies and non-government organisations in Europe, Southeast Asia, the Mediterranean-North Africa and North America. Specific areas of interest are in multi-organisational approaches and partnerships to prevent child trafficking and child sexual exploitation.

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