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HIV/AIDS AND TOURISM: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

By

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Tourism: Caribbean Interests

• Tourism is a major foreign exchange earner in the Caribbean.

• Source of employment and income for Caribbean people both directly through employment in the tourist industry and indirectly in areas including banking and farming.
Tourist Interests

• Source of pleasure.
• A destination that offers 'sun, sea, sand’
• Escape from the realities of everyday life.
• “Destinations that have a reputation for sex tourism of all kinds, some extremely undesirable and illegal” Butler & Jones (2001).
Impact and Sustainability

• An increasing amount of anecdotal work which makes the link between the spread of HIV/AIDS and growth of tourism.

• Areas that are mainly tourism dominated tend to have the highest rate of STDs, namely HIV/AIDS (Boxill, 2003).

• Is tourism a victim of its own success? Or is tourism creating the environment for high risk behaviour?
Missing Links

• Paucity of research into the links between tourism, sex tourism and HIV.
• Requires…serious study because we know that the infection rate for HIV/AIDS is on the increase across the region, including in Jamaica… (Boxill, 2003, pp. 9-10).
• Study seeks to address this gap in the literature.
Participants

- Participants included: people who work with HIV/AIDS at both the level of policy and as caregivers, people living with HIV/AIDS, people involved in the entertainment industry and the hotel industry as well as locals and tourists.
Techniques

- 34 in-depth interviews were conducted in Jamaica and 34 in The Bahamas.
- Field research methods were employed ranging in a continuum from observation to participant observation at various locations including: large resort hotels, nightclubs, on-the street (both cultures) and exotic clubs (Jamaica).
Key Results

• Topics from interviews and fieldwork organized by dominant themes:
  • Economic
  • Political
  • Social
  • Psychological
Economic

• Human resources response-
• “One little step and its not good enough.”
• Some managers have no education programme or policy to deal with HIV/AIDS employee.
• One manager -Programme and policy would just be a waste of time and money because HIV/AIDS is not a threat to the hotel and it makes no sense wasting resources.
Economics of Sex

• Where?
• Jamaica: Strip Clubs, Night Clubs, Hotels, Guesthouses, On Street
• Bahamas: Nightclubs, Hotels, Grand Bahama, On-Street Nassau
Economics haves and have nots

- Haves
- Wealthy Businessmen
- ‘Big Top’ Politicians local and foreign
- Older men
- Tourists

- Have Nots
- Foreign sex workers
- Unemployed or Underemployed locals
- Drug Addicts
- Young girls
The Haves

• “I mean I met a big top and shot guy. A big top is like big shot politician you know. He called on his cellphone said:"I'm at home" and he said to me say:” Well, come let me carry you somewhere.” We reach at the airport. Him carried a package and thing and he say I'm going to do something for the Prime Minister and I'm going to represent him in a country, in Cuba... and he carried me straight to the airport. I felt important, because I didn't have a passport ... We went to the conference and we just you know enjoyed ourselves.” - ‘Peter’
The Haves

— “And they (tourists) spend. They spend the money on you. They DO spend the money on you cause they want you and they...if you’re going out with them and you say to them “I don’t have any clothes” or stuff like that they will like carry you to ANY store and anything you want they will purchase it for you.” - ‘Peter’
“I mean one of my stripper girlfriends, I've had about three of 'em. I mean I would take them out to dinner, not often about once a week cause it costs money. I mean I'd buy them clothes and stuff you know... I tell them like once my money starts sort of start runnin low. I was just like you know what we had fun together I think we should go back to bein friends.... It's a completely different scene when you're with a stripper. Just cause of the work she does you know. And I mean, I'm, I'm not sure if my girlfriends are having sex with their clients when they were givin lap dances. I can't tell you, I wouldn't know. But just as long as what they do in the club keeps to themselves and they don't say anything to me, then I'm not gonna to get jealous”.-’Terrence’
The Have Nots

• “It's I think the chances a prostitute having AIDS would be alot higher than sort of like your average person, just cause of the sort of work that they do. Yeah but I mean it's up to them what they do. For some it's like the only way that they can make money. Cause some people they don't have like the necessary qualifications they need so. They just sort of see like sex as a way of makin money. Cause sex does make money. It really does.” - ‘Terrence’
• “Okay, to go out with you, they would pay you like, say I’m going to a club with him and I’m going to be around him, he have to treat me for drink and he have to pay me like a hundred fifty U.S. or two hundred U.S....if he’s going to sleep with me for that night, I’m going to go over, that is, that is full package. Full package is when you just sleep with him for the night and get up the next day. If you see him tomorrow, we, we don’t know each other...you’re lookin at like at that time (1997) you’re lookin at three hundred U.S. Some people go higher, depends on all the sexual activity. And they just like those things”. - ’Peter’
The Have Nots

• “Our risk groups are young girls and … I don't know if you've noticed it in your Caribbean countries, but I think we're all saying the same thing, that it's the young girls with the older men kind of thing and that’s what we work hard on and so our girls that are at risk are the younger girls.” - 'Angela'
Political: Government Response

• Jamaica: “It's a problem with funding for projects” - ‘Marla’

• Bahamas: “Failure to admit and to produce forums about the density of the problem in this country had to do with our tourism.” - ‘James’

• “It seems like persons attitude toward the HIV ward as not being the same as the general ward.”- Florence’
Government Response: Result

• The needs of infected are not being truly met.

• Education: Tourists oblivious to threat:
  • ’Kyle’ summarized the problem as being one of ‘naïve tourists’ holding an ‘everybody sleeping with everybody’ mentality. He added that these people are not using condoms.
• “Yes, some of them are willing to go with you with condoms, some of them don't.” - ‘Peter’

• Three US Farm Boys- They were looking for the ‘hottest places’. They said they were in search of girls with the aim of loosing their ‘virginity.’ When surveyed about their personal risk of contracting HIV, all rated themselves as having a very ‘low’ risk of getting the virus.
“I don't think that people really realize how serious this disease is you know. And then again too, everybody believes ... always believe that it will never happen to them. They're willing to take that chance, especially if you’re you know, sexually active.” - ‘Mark’
Social

- Culture-Caribbean
- "I'm not a risk." "I'm only sleepin with one person." All right. "I don't use protection." So you ask the question like "Are you sure that he's sleepin with you alone?" and now sometimes if you probe you hear that "No miss, him have a girlfriend or him have a baby mother from before."- ‘Marla’
Social

• “I think the issue is with the black man…the black man feels that he has to have skin to skin.” -‘Eva’

• “We have men who want to have sex with a virgin or young girls to cleanse.” -‘Angela’

• “Tourists come over and they want a Mandingo… and our men feel so egotistic, that somebody want them.” -‘Jane’
Social

• Cultural taboo against homosexuality:
• ”A lot of cases, especially a lot of the males...A lot of them deny too because of their pride and the stigma that's attached, that's still attached to HIV you know.” - ‘Florence’
Social

• Culture European

• American and European culture is heavily influenced by religions which "preach against 'fornication', and sexual intercourse outside of legal marriage, or 'adultery' (Chevannes, 2002: 490).

• Tourist destinations such as the Bahamas and Jamaica provide the perfect outlet for ‘guilty pleasures’.
Construction of the Fantasy

- Tourists generally do not become truly ‘adjusted’ to or have meaningful contact with the local culture into which they have descended (Triandis, 1994).

- The tourist lives in a reality that differs from that of locals.

- What they (tourists) experience is a social construction that is in part perpetuated by a tourist industry which targets the ‘interests’ of potential customers.
• “Most of the movies based upon island life in terms of tourism, they always portray some sexual intercourse going on. So you know I think people come with them expectations and they just want to live them out.” - ‘Mike’
• “And then they have that program where they call 'people to people' where they take people into peoples homes and so that's what happens.” –’James’
Psychological

• Social Identity: ‘We' didn't cause AIDS, 'they' (tourists, Haitians, Cubans, Jamaicans, drug addicts, prostitutes) caused it.

• “We have now a new influx of Haitians and most of them, Cubans and they, most of them are into a lot of deviant behaviour”…’Phil’.
“Do you think it's the tourist's bringing AIDS?”

‘Sheila’-” Well, I would think so. I would think so because here we have the main link. We never had it here. It had to come from abroad.”

“That's the biggest lie I ever heard...Then I remember once they said it was a Haitian disease, then it was a homosexual disease.... everybody here whom I'm aware of except for maybe one guy have all led a heterosexual life... There's no high incidence of importation of immigrants or illegal immigrants who caused, who are the cause of the disease.” - James
Psychological

- Just World-those who suffer (in this case PWA’s) tend to be seen as responsible with their fate and worthy of punishment.
  - Interviewer: “Are you afraid someone will do harm to your family?”
  - ‘Anna’: “YES. They say bad things and they talk a lot to everyone.”
  - Interviewer: “You've seen it happen to other people. What have you seen happen?”
  - ‘Anna’: “That they get KILLED and stuff”.

AIDS Stigma

• “I've said over and over, a lot of the deaths that I've seen, I don't honestly believe it is because of what is happening physically. I've seen more psychological deaths all right, than anything else.” - ‘Marla’

• “I don't know if they (family) could cope with it because they probably would be afraid.. I believe they're gonna change and behave different.” - ’David’
Psychological

• Drugs:
• “The drugs are easily accessible, they bring junket.. the drug dealers are better appreciated and more emulated than any of the other professionals”.- ‘James’
• “Yo man, I’m down in the Bahamas. Yo I know you got some of that good Bahamian weed guy.” “You know I want to get high.” And you know it’s sad because their just filling the stereotype, that everyone from the Bahamas, that everyone from the Caribbean, the only thing we know how to do is smoke weed or sell drugs or have sex”.- ’Mike’
• “I don't have a preference. I would prefer a girl who didn't use the drugs but if I find a girl pretty and she tell me that she's taken ecstasy in the past I'm not gonna judge her for it. I'm not gonna judge her. It doesn't make you a worse person if you take drugs.”- ‘Terrence’

• “People who use drugs exercise bad judgment... you wake up in the morning and not know who, how this person next to you got there.”- ‘James’
“I wasn't prepared to stay in Grand Bahama any longer after battling a drug addiction for twenty-two years...having an addiction and being HIV positive in Grand Bahama... I just couldn't take it anymore and I just continued to use, use, use, use, so I figured the best thing to do is to get out of Grand Bahama, you know. Grand Bahama is the drug town, if you wanna use drugs. Grand Bahama is it man, that's the place.” - ’Mark’
Drugs and HIV/AIDS

• “The first one was an epidemic of drug addiction and that was followed very closely by an epidemic of sexually transmitted infections following hot on the heels of this epidemic.. was an epidemic of HIV and AIDS.” - ‘Doc’
Implications

• “Western society is now based on free-market principles which mass-produce dislocation, and because dislocation is the precursor to addiction, addiction to drug use and to other substitute life styles within western society is not the pathological state of a few, but, to a greater or lesser degree, the general condition” (Alexander, 2000, p. 525).
Possible Implications and Recommendations

• Tourism serves as a means to satisfy the needs of a ‘junkie lifestyle’ promoted by globalization.

• A deadly consequence is the spread of HIV.

• Reevaluation of priorities away from total ‘addiction’ to the market - balance between economic and social needs.
“I’d say that being from a tourist-oriented nation, is a blessing and a curse- tourism that is. It’s a blessing because it provides the capital for our nation to do other things....It’s a curse though because it’s a fantasy. For the tourists, they’re looking for an entertainer... It I guess really creates a blur of what is fantasy from what is reality and it doesn’t allow you to live a normal life, because you’re always interacting with tourists.” - ‘Mike’
Future?

• “In 1984, (Orwell, 1948), people are controlled by inflicting pain. In *Brave New World* (Huxley, 1932), they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us, Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us “ Postman (1987, p. vii).

• Perhaps Huxley was right.