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A Review of Prevention Efforts on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism (SECTT) in South East Asia: Role of World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

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Title: A Review of Prevention Efforts on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism (SECTT) in South East Asia: Role of World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

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Abstract:

This research methodology includes a history of SECTT, precedent studies and related documents, UNWTO related documents, and in-person interviews with key UNWTO officials, including members of the World Committee of Tourism Ethics and non-profit organization, End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual purposes (ECPAT) International.

While the growth in international tourism is assured, myriad ethical considerations remain unsolved. One in particular is the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (SECTT). Although there are precedent studies in connection with SECTT, the full picture of this phenomenon in Southeast Asia has not been fully explored.

For this reason, this research first illustrates the historical periodization of SECTT, followed by a side-by-side, chronological comparison of two key international entities that have battled this issue since 1990: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and ECPAT. In doing this parallel analysis, the findings demonstrate progression of SECTT, as well as UNWTO's and ECPAT's initiatives and gaps in tackling this issue over the years. Lastly, it provides recommendations on how the two organizations can better merge their initiatives to be more proactive in the fight against SECTT.

UNWTO promotes tourism for the potential economic benefits it provides, but also for the role it can play in promoting social and environmental aspects of development. UNWTO first learned about SECTT by former body of ECPAT in 1990, and the two entities decide to join efforts to tackle this problem. However, based on recent efforts, the collaboration between the two entities has dwindled and prioritization of SECTT differs between the two.

After studying the progression of SECTT from the 1960s to 2017, five stages were identified: (1) latency: mass tourism due to the increase of commercial flights; (2) surfacing: the problem attracts media attention; (3) enlightenment: the problem captures international attention, and prevention efforts increase; (4) hidden: niche tourism appears, allowing new ways to reach children and for the problem to expand silently; and (5) complication: due to the proliferation of technology, it becomes more challenging to identify the offender.

UNWTO's current initiative is to promote the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET). This code references child protection and tries to raise awareness by providing a unique platform for sharing best practices among all tourism stakeholders (government, private sector, media, and tourism industry). However, UNWTO has no authority to intervene in individual countries' law; therefore, GCET is implemented on a voluntary basis and holds no legal binding, whereas ECPAT drives much of the efforts toward combatting SECTT by working directly with governments and tourism stakeholders, applying the GCET on a practical level.

As SECTT continues to evolve, UNWTO's dissemination of GCET can be supported

by ECPAT. This can be done using ECPAT's voice on the ground, while UNWTO can continue to raise an awareness on the issues of SECTT to top government leaders, which could result in increasing measures against this issue. This research concludes with a recommendation for the UNWTO to increase its efforts of collaboration with grassroots initiatives like ECPAT to benefit the missions of both organizations.