

Sex revenue is the  
core support of



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Sex Tourism in Thailand As we enter a new millennium the post-colonial nations in the world are still searching for ways to compete in an increasingly globalized, consumption driven economic environment. Many developing countries have speculated that Tourism is an effective catalyst for development as well as increased international understanding. Thailand, who has embraced tourism as the key to its modernization strategy, has been hailed by many as a paradigm for success. Over the past twenty years Thailand has enjoyed one of the fastest economic growth rates of any developing country.

This rapid progress has allowed Thailand to emerge as an economic leader in the Third world. The \$4 billion a year in tourism revenue is the core support of the Thai economy (Bishop, p. VI). Thai officials have attributed the success of the tourism industry to the many attractions located in various parts of the country as well as the uniqueness of the Thai people — their friendliness and hospitality (Bishop, p. 67). However the Thai government has failed to recognize the contributions of sex tourism which is estimated to generate about \$1.5 billion every year, according to Professor Krikiat Phiapatserithan of Thammasat University (World congress, regional profiles, p.

3). Thailand's failure to recognize the sex tourism is reflective of the discourse used by the worldwide tourism industry to analyze the industry's success. From the standpoint of the tourism industry the success of tourism is directly related only to economic factors, anything else is seen as unnecessary. It is in the best interest of tourism corporations and the countries that are dependent on tourism to discourage the circulation of information regarding any of the potential negative effects related to

tourism. The censorship of information by these entities has caused much of the general public to be ignorant of the adverse consequences of the mass tourist industry in Thailand. The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the sex tourism, using Thailand as the basis of my investigation. I will begin by shedding light on the complex social and economic factors that has formed the modern sex industry of Thailand.

Then I will link the damaging effects to the Thailand's cultural values and quality of life to the emergence of child sex tourism, which in recent years has emerged as a significant contributor of tourist revenue. Subsequently I will give examples of how deliberate manipulations of information by the Thai government and the tourism industry is responsible for the spread of inaccurate images relating to sex tourism. Then I will attempt to link the manipulation of information to tourists behaviors and attitudes as well as Thai government policy. In conclusion I will give the future outlook for sex tourism in Thailand. Historical, Social and Economic Roots: Vietnam is believed by many to be the beginning of the creation of a large-scale sex industry in Thailand.

During the Vietnam War Thailand was a popular destination for rest and relaxation for American servicemen. To meet the demands of American soldiers, who were eager to pay for a temporary sexual partner, new brothels and go-go bars sprang up almost overnight. Following the war the Thai government took an active stance in promoting the growth of the tourist industry in the hope that it would contribute to the modernization process. The half-a-million prostitutes left over from the war were seen as a commodity that could be actively exploited in exchange for the influx of

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much needed foreign currency. Sex tours from Japan brought many free spending Japanese that significantly aided to the rapid growth of tourism. Tourist arrivals jumped from one million in 1973 to five million in 1990. During this time the Thai government made no attempts to curb the growth of prostitution.

In fact they adopted measures that encouraged its growth. Deputy Prime Minister Boonchoo Rojanasathian urged the national conference of provincial governors to encourage certain entertainment, which might be viewed as disgusting and embarrassing because they are related to sexual pleasures (Jubilee, p. 3). The result of this speech was the relaxation of regulations regarding the operation of bars. Eventually the growth of Thailand's tourist industry succeeded in creating rapid economic growth, and modernization. However, Thailand has become so