Human Trafficking

the role of the Hospitality Industry in recognizing crimes against humanity

Rodney Westerlaken (rodney.westerlaken@nhlstenden.com 0000-0003-4581-836X
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Udayana University, Westerlaken foundation

The Research Question

The hospitality industry can play a significant role in recognizing and taking action against human trafficking. Hotels are being used for 'temporary storage' of people, for forced prostitution, or as a channel to distribute.
It is paramount to start at the basis of creating awareness and incorporating awareness campaigns into hospitality schools' curriculums worldwide.
This research will focus on the signs that someone might be trafficked in hotels. How to recognize a trafficked person and what to do?
The preliminary research question of this research is
'what are the recognizable indicators for human trafficking in hospitality environments?'

Prior research

Sarsikan (2015) mentions that human trafficking and child exploitation, in particular, are global problems. Gasienica (2020, p. vi) identified that 'the intersect of human trafficking, and the lodging industry are twofold:
1) victims staying at hotels during transportation and
2) sexual exploitation or activity occurring at hotels. Therefore, hotel employees must know how to recognize signs of human trafficking as signs vary from case to case'.

The International Labour Organisation (2022) identified that:
- in 2016, an estimated 40.3 million people were in modern slavery, including 24.9 million in forced labour and 15.4 million in forced marriage.
- it means there are 5.4 victims of modern slavery for every 1,000 people in the world.
- 1 in 4 victims of modern slavery are children.
- out of the 24.9 million people trapped in forced labour, 16 million people are exploited in the private sector such as domestic work, construction or agriculture; 4.8 million persons in forced sexual exploitation, and 4 million persons in forced labour imposed by state authorities.
-women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labour, accounting for 99% of victims in the commercial sex industry, and 58% in other sectors

Kragt (2020) identified a role for Front Office workers in hospitality to recognize and react to human trafficking in research focusing on the Dutch hospitality industry. Kragt mentions that the Human Trafficking prevention policy seems to be adequately implemented and training is provided. However, respondents have identified additional needs related to refresher training and its contents. The research of Gasienica (2020) identified that out of 118 respondents in the lodging industry, 52 (44%) answered that they were moderately aware of human trafficking. When asked how prevalent human trafficking is in the hospitality industry, 44 (38%) of 117 respondents answered moderately prevalent, followed by 43 (37%) of the respondents answering it was highly prevalent. Of 117 respondents, 71 (61%) answered that training on human trafficking would be highly beneficial in their current position.

Methodology

This research project will be student-based research based on random sampling in hospitality organisations worldwide. A quantitative instrument will be designed, which students can use to apply in their respective host companies.
With a high response rate over a long period of time, patterns classifying recognisable identifiers can be identified for regions, countries, and even hotels chains.
The instrument will inquire about identified cases of human trafficking, reactions, identifiers and suggestions to fight human trafficking within the hospitality industry and will use open and closed questions.

Conclusions

This research is still in its start-up phase, but the importance is high. As an educational institute focusing on the hospitality industry, HMS needs to face the truth about the dark side of the hospitality industry. With the goal to deliver competent students to the industry, students that are changemakers, we also need to make sure that these students understand the social issues that come with industry. Research is needed, and action needs to be taken.

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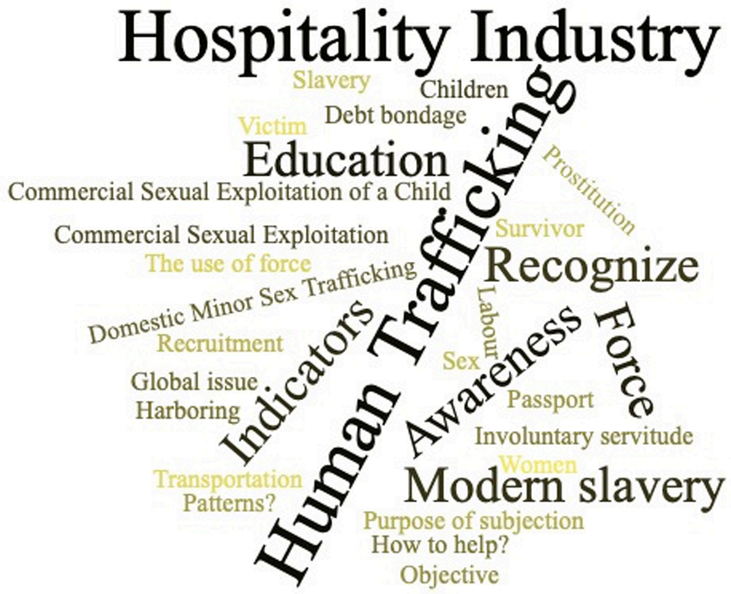
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