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### ***A darker side of hospitality.....***

When we think of the hospitality industry most of us think back on positive or happy experiences; having a meal out with the family; sharing a laugh with friends over a few drinks in a bar; relaxing on holiday and enjoying the luxury of room service or the spa; escaping our daily routines, if only briefly. Even when travelling on business, the experience of visiting different cities or countries and staying in hotels is often viewed as glamorous, particularly by those who do not travel regularly. Indeed we often sell this positive image of the industry to our prospective students.

However, there is a darker side for some who experience the hospitality industry and one that few of us are likely to acknowledge in our courses at present. These experiences are those faced by people who have been trafficked. Human trafficking is a major, global phenomenon and the hospitality industry has been identified as a facilitator or enabler of trafficking.

The ILO (2012) estimates that approximately 21 million people are trafficked globally, where women and people over 18 years of age represent the majority of victims. There are 3 main criteria that underpin human trafficking: movement, coercion and exploitation. Coercion can occur through violence, restriction on movement, bonded labour, withholding wages, retention of passports or identify documents and the threat of denunciation to authorities. Exploitation can be sexual or through slavery, forced or compulsory labour, domestic servitude or even organ removal. The ILO (2012) advises that 90% of trafficked victims are exploited in the private economy; 22% for sexual purposes and 68% through forced labour.

There are three main reasons why hospitality businesses are 'in the spotlight' regarding human trafficking. First, the growing reliance on recruitment agencies and agency labour increases the risk of hospitality business employing victims of trafficking. Although there are sound financial reasons for outsourcing recruitment and employment, the use of agency workers creates a 'distance' between employer and employee and makes it easier for workers to be exploited. Second, the global nature of the industry results in often complex and opaque supply chains where trafficking may be difficult to detect. Third, businesses such as hotels, bars, and nightclubs are often used, frequently unknowingly, as a vehicle for exploitation thereby enabling it to occur. As such, these hospitality businesses may benefit commercially from trafficking. For businesses knowingly or

unknowingly involved in trafficking therefore there are risks associated with brand reputation, exposure to criminality and the reputation of the industry as a whole.

While there is a growing global awareness of trafficking, many argue that current corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives have done little to tackle exploitation. There have been efforts made to implement initiatives for the prevention of child exploitation, however, there is still a need to tackle and eradicate other forms of trafficking and the violation of human rights within the hospitality industry. There are some notable hotel and tourism firms who have publicly committed to this cause by signing up to the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism and participating in initiatives such as the Youth Career Initiative. The International Tourism Partnership provides guidelines to use when checking and using recruitment agencies. Other guidelines on being aware of trafficking are offered by the AH&LA which also offers training courses related to child trafficking for a fee. There is however, a new research project Combat that seeks to go farther in the fight to eradicate human trafficking.

Combat is a European Commission funded project that aims to design and develop a preventive and remedial training toolkit that will offer unique, practical, step-by-step guidance for hospitality and tourism businesses to combat human trafficking. The project adopts a three-pronged approach to equip the industry with action-oriented policies and standards from an operations perspective, a law enforcement perspective and a victim's perspective. It also seeks to ensure that appropriate policies and strategies are developed to mitigate trafficking, create organisational environments that encourage reporting of trafficking incidents, and provide immediate victim support when a case is discovered. It aims to develop training tools for use at the strategic (corporate), management and operational levels within hospitality businesses. The training toolkits developed through the project will be available free of charge for hospitality organisations and educational institutions.

As educators, we seek to develop graduates as global citizens; citizens who are ethically minded and socially responsible. Perhaps the training tools developed through COMBAT should therefore be adopted for use in our curricula?



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**For more information on Combat, please visit <https://www.combatthb.wordpress.com/>**

or tweet us at <https://twitter.com/CombatTHB>

*With kind regards,*

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