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Ethical Issues in Sport Hunting Tourism Economies: Investigating Stereotypes, Sustainability, and Inclusion in Western Canada's Hunting Industry

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Title: Ethical Issues in Sport Hunting Tourism Economies: Investigating Stereotypes, Sustainability, and Inclusion in Western Canada's Hunting Industry

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Abstract:

As one of the most profitable forms of tourism in western Canada, hunting wildlife has been an integral part of the region's history and economy. Over the last three years, there has been an increase in the popularity of sport hunting, which has led to much debate and controversy. This research project aimed to add to these conversations by discussing the core ethical practices that are imperative to the sport and the growth of hunting as a tourism activity from the perspective of avid hunters. The goal was to analyse conversations with local hunters as a way to better understand three key hunting industry issues: stereotyping, sustainability, and inclusion in the context of growing the hunting tourism sector. An examination was completed of the history of the sport, the sustainability of land and animal resources, and the effects of hunting tourism on both the environment and local economies. Although some research was found pertaining to the motivational factors that entice hunters to participate in the sport and their attitudes towards hunting tourism, there appeared to be a lack of effort to create a holistic view on the key ethical issues of hunting economies. There was a gap in knowledge regarding modern hunters' views on the stereotyping of hunters created by media and the exclusion of local huntsmen from both the sport and decision making processes within the industry. More specifically, there was a lack of any particular method to acknowledge local hunters' input on these issues in western Canada. The objective of this project was to investigate ethical hunting practices and how they are integral to the successful development of sport hunting and conservation economies in western Canada. Primary research, in the form of semi-structured interviews, was used as the principal investigative method. Interviews were conducted with hunters who are active participants in sport hunting in western Canada. The hunters who were interviewed debunked stereotypes by revealing the reasons behind their love for the sport, which differ from what the media depicts. It was also observed that these men believe they are among the best conservationists, as the preservation of both land and animals is imperative to the longevity and growth of the sport. They viewed hunting as a sustainable activity, as they believe that, with a combination of local inclusion, fair tag allotment, and proper funding for conservation efforts, hunting can continue to grow without a detrimental impact to the environment or the animal populations. It was evident from the conversations that hunters feel strongly that the inclusion of resident hunters in the decision-making process is necessary to avoid retaliation and create holistic practices when increasing hunting tourism. It was revealed that integrating these opinions would arguably lead to the successful development of sport hunting and tourism economies within western Canada. These findings, including a discussion on current literature, investigative tools, and the implications for other hunting economies, will contribute to the Critical Tourism Studies conference in the form of a presentation within the critical leisure topic area.