

Trace of Organized Crime: A Web-based Analysis on Sexual Services Advertised on the Internet

Abstract

In recent years, technologies such as the internet and smartphones have made the sex markets flourish in cyberspace. In Macau, sexual services advertised via the internet have been booming since 2005. Although private commercial sex trade is not illegal in Macau, manipulating prostitution is a serious crime.

Despite the sensitivity of the topic, the high mobility of migrant sex workers and disadvantages of the research methods traditionally used for investigating the sex industry, e.g., interviews with volunteers, also affect the efficiency and accuracy of research outcomes. To date, a landscape of internet-based sex industry and organized crimes behind it in Macau remain unclear, which triggers challenges for the regional HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases surveillance and the regulation of online sex trade.

By taking advantage of web-based research methods, the current project aims to generate original empirical data and provide a better understanding of the online sex market in Macau. In particular, by intergrading text mining and image analysis on advertisement posts, the study shows possible trace of organized crimes, and attempts to contribute to the regional health and safety protection for sex workers in the greater bay area.