Technology mediated sex work:

Fluidity, networking & regulation in the United Kingdom

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Introduction and research methods

Whilst there has been no comprehensive research attempting to quantify the size and growth of the online sector of the UK sex industry, certain studies have undertaken small-scale analyses of particular websites advertising sexual services to present estimates of different groups of sex workers advertising online (Pitcher 2014; Smith and Kingston 2015). The currently available mapping and research data suggests that online sex work is the largest sector of the commercial sex industry in the UK (Sanders et al. 2018) and is a major and developing market globally, with internet and digital technology having reshaped the sex industry (Jones 2015). Yet it is a sector which has been less explored by researchers compared to street or brothel-based sex work.

This chapter draws on findings from a three-year participatory action research project, Beyond the Gaze (hereafter, BtG), which has used mixed methods to explore the working practices, safety and regulation of online sex markets in the UK. BtG has utilised a broad definition of internet facilitated sex work:

> Sex workers based on their own, or in collectives, or working through an agency, who use the Internet to market or sell sexual services either directly through in-person services, such as interacting with clients in person through escorting, erotic massage, BDSM[1] or through online indirect services including online interactions like web camming. (Sanders et al. 2017, 15)

This definition purposefully distinguishes between those who work as escorts and /or BDSM specialists providing services to their clients in person (direct services) but who use the internet for advertising and marketing and sex workers who provide technology-mediated indirect services, like webcamming[2], phone sex chat[3] or instant message[4].

Internet Sex Work, the book based on BtG's findings (Sanders et al. 2018), details the landscape of internet-based sex work in the UK with a focus on the micro-practices of sex work online, new sex markets that have emerged and how these markets are organised. The book examines new forms of crimes against sex workers facilitated by the online environment, the safety strategies utilised by online workers and the legal regulation of the sector. In this chapter, we focus on illustrating how the internet has created new marketing strategies and shaped work patterns, particularly enabling flexible work with a high degree of mobility and fluidity over time, space, and job roles. We explore how sex workers are using virtual spaces, social media and other online platforms and applications to establish and cement professional and peer support networks, some based around safety but equally around collegiate or social chat as well as advocacy and activism. We will conclude by overviewing how the governance of sex work, particularly through policing, currently intersects with the online sex work world in the UK. Drawing on data from extensive interviews with police from across fifteen UK police forces, we overview how UK policing is in its infancy in terms of engaging with online markets and accessing the extensive information about the commercial sex industry that feature on website platforms. Yet sex trafficking and modern slavery[5] is the current focus within UK policing with respect to online commercial sex work markets, leading us to reflect on the extent to which police services address other crimes against sex workers and harms that exist online as identified by online sex workers.

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, BtG's overall aim was to understand how the internet has shaped sex work, including the working practices in internet-based sex markets within the broader processes of UK regulation and policing. BtG was a three-year project which commenced in September 2015, with fieldwork and data collection taking place between December 2015 and March 2017 and dissemination and impact activity taking place between September 2017 to September 2018. A participatory action research project with sex workers forming part of the research team, BtG used a mixed methods approach with key methodological strands comprising desk research to map online spaces where sex workers market and/or provide services, semi-structured interviews with sixty-two sex workers of all genders who use the internet for their work, semi-structured interviews with fifty-six police representatives from police services across the UK, and twenty-one individuals, including managers, webmasters, or moderators of online advertising platforms/ forums/safety schemes for sex workers, plus other experts on online regulation of commercial sexual services. Three online surveys were carried out: the first with 641 internet-based sex workers, the second with 1,323 customers of sex workers using the internet, and the third with 49 projects providing support to online sex workers.

These sex worker and the customer surveys are the largest of their kind to be carried out to date in the UK and reveal the characteristics and regulation of contemporary sex work, particularly for independent escorts and webcammers. Ethical approval was obtained for the study and measures put in place to protect the anonymity of all participants and enable informed consent. Here we draw on data from the sex worker and police interviews, which at the time of writing constitute the most comprehensive study of UK policing of online commercial sex work markets, and also data from the sex worker survey. Amongst the respondents, nearly three-quarters (73.5%; n=469) were female; 19.4% (n=124) were male; 3% (n=19) were transgender, with transwomen in the majority (n=17); 2.9% (n=18) were non-binary or intersex. Over half

of respondents were aged between 25 and 44, 36.8% (n=236) were 25-34, 26.5% (n=170) were 35-44, 20.4% (n=131) were 18-24, only one respondent was under 18; 11.1% (n=71) were 45-54 and 4.7% (n=30) were 55 or over. The majority of respondents (87.2%, n=559) were white; 5% (n=32) were of mixed ethnicity; 2.7% (n=17) were Asian/Asian British and the same number Black/Black British. Nearly 15% (n=94) of respondents were of non-UK nationality.

Fluidity and postmodern online sex work

internet-based sex markets have become pervasive (Sanders 2005, 2008), facilitated by computer-mediated communication through email, chat-rooms, social media forums and web-based advertising. As Ray (2007a) and others have noted, the internet has had a substantial impact on the way in which independent sex workers, as well as escort agencies and sometimes massage parlours, advertise their services. Research about how the internet is used within commercial sex transactions and marketing illustrates that digital technology has not only changed how sex workers and clients communicate with one another, but also their social relationships, with the development of 'cyber communities' of both sex workers and customers (Sharp and Earle 2003; Walby 2012; Pitcher 2015). Cooper (2017) has noted the liminality of contemporary sex work spaces in terms of both its ambiguous legal status— with aspects of legality and illegality— and its occupation, often simultaneously, of physical and virtual space, particularly for online sex work. One of the characteristics of online sex work further highlighted by BtG is its fluid, liminal, and mobile nature. The majority of sex workers who took part in the BTG survey (96% n=615) worked in independent indoor sectors as independent sex workers/escorts, webcam workers, or providers of sexual massage or BDSM services.

Many provided different forms of direct and indirect online sex work, moving between sectors according to need with flexibility facilitated by the internet. Nearly three-fifths of

independent sex workers/escorts undertook some other form of sex work, particularly BDSM (27.8%; n=132), webcamming (26.8%; n=127) and phone sex work (23.4%; n=111). There was a substantial overlap between webcam and phone workers, with 59.8% (n=152) of webcam workers also undertaking phone sex work. Half (n=127) also worked in independent sex work/escorting. Other sex work jobs included adult film, modelling agency work, brothel work, exotic dance, and street sex work. The maximum number of sectors worked in was nine, with the average (mean) number of sectors being two. Yet it was still more common for respondents to work in only one sector, as was the case for 41.7% of respondents (n=267), particularly those based in independent sex work/escorting.

Online and digital technology has facilitated more mobile and flexible forms of sex work. Some survey respondents were highly mobile, moving geographically for work to provide services in different parts of the country. Some described how they travelled for work regularly, either to day appointments across their region of residence and/or to other regions, or staying in hotels or renting a property for work in the UK or other countries for a longer period. Such 'touring' has been further facilitated by the internet's enabling sex workers to update their profile to include temporary locations, access marketing sites with national and international reach, and make appointments. Some people worked for bursts of time rather than on a regular basis. Sanders et al. (2018) described how certain simple functionality of online advertising platform and profiles enable this fluid interaction with the customer base, giving individuals more choice over when and where they work. Levels of control over their businesses were high given that a minority of sex workers in the BtG pay a third party to assist them in any aspect of their work, with the exception of advertising platforms paid to market profiles. Working conditions were largely considered to be enhanced due to the possibilities offered by digital technologies.

Sanders et al. (2016) illustrated fluidity across sectors of the labour market for online sex workers in their survey of 240 online sex workers, among whom 45% did sex work alongside another job and 13% were current students. What we know about the demographics of work patterns also helps explain the increasingly fluid nature of sex work. Sex work is often not always the primary mode of work, and is often undertaken on a part time or sporadic basis, with sex workers using the features of digital technology, particularly advertising, to manage their time and labour. Just over one third (37%) of BtG interview participants combined sex work with employment in other areas of the labour market or with study, although 63% of interview participants reported that sex work was their only job. 34% worked in other labour sectors ranging from health and social care (n=5) to administration/clerical (n=4), some working in more than one, and six were students.

Sanders et al. (2018) found that, for many online sex workers, online technology had provided greater control over their working conditions and an increased ability to develop their own businesses and brand online. In the BtG sex worker survey 89.4% (n=573) agreed or strongly agreed that the internet enabled sex workers to decide where to work, or when to work and 89.4% (n=573) agreed that it allowed sex workers to work independently without having to rely on third parties (89.4%; n=573). Yet some of the disadvantages of online sex worker included the increased number of hours spent managing their business online, the unpredictability of earnings as well as stigma and privacy issues, including the potential for crimes such as doxing and the misuse of information. We now turn to the marketing strategies utilised by online sex workers in the UK.

Online spaces and marketing strategies

Long gone are the days when sex workers relied on advertisements in the personal or classified columns of newspapers, contact magazines, cards in telephone boxes or other locations in lieu of making initial contacts with customers on street, bars, hotels, lorry parks or other physical locations. A key impact of online and digital technology on sex work over the last twenty years is the emergence of new online spaces and digital mobile communication technology which sex workers can use to advertise, screen customer and arrange face-to-face or technologically meditated exchange of services (see Cunningham et al. 2017). Most of the previous research on how sex workers advertise on the internet has been primarily based on content analysis of platforms and advertisements (Kumar et al. 2017; Lee-Gonyea et al 2009; Castle and Lee 2008; Pruitt 2005; Phua and Caras 2008; Capiola et al 2014). Tyler's (2014, 2015) is one of the few studies to combine content analysis with qualitative interviews with sex workers who advertise online, in this case by focussing on male sex workers in London. Audacia Ray, a U.S. writer and sex work activist, writing in 2007 notes that for independent sex workers "the internet has opened up a vast new world of opportunity in which different marketing styles can be tried out cheaply and easily—and changed immediately if they fail." (2007b: 46).

Our quantitative and qualitative data confirmed that there have emerged a wide range of online spaces which internet-based sex workers in the UK use to facilitate and market commercial sexual services. BtG has created a typology of twelve categories which capture such current spaces (Sanders et al 2018; Cunningham et al 2017). Across these varied online platforms, websites, and applications different business models are adapted which shape how sex workers engage with these different technologies and spaces. Here we briefly discuss five of these to illustrate the diversity and the varied marketing strategies sex workers use.

Multi-service adult entertainment platforms are websites offering a range of different sex work services within the one site. Platform 1, the market-leading website in the UK, is an example of this model and was used in different ways by the vast majority of both BtG interview and survey participants. Platform 1 is a key market leader for the vast majority of UK sex workers, especially cisgender female sex workers). Our survey results show that 93.4% (n=436) of cis-female sex workers use Platform 1 to offer all kinds of services. Male sex workers use Platform 1 much less often[6] (33%, n=41) yet transmen (100%, n=2), transwomen (88.2%, n=15), and non-binary people (76.5%, n=13) in our survey also appear to use Platform 1 in consistent numbers— although the number of respondents to the BtG survey in these gender categories was so low that no firm conclusions can be drawn on the practices of these groups of sex workers.

Escort directories/advertising platforms are third party websites that allow sex workers who offer in-person direct sex work to create profiles to advertise their services. Some are international, others focus on the national level, and still others operate at a more local level. Some charge a fee whilst others offer free profile advertising. Whilst some carry advertisements for sex workers of all genders, there was gender stratification and some were targeted at specific segments of the customer market: e.g. customers or female sex workers, customers of gay or bisexual male escorts and customers of transgender sex workers. For example, 15.6% (n=100) of our survey sample advertised on one particular site branded as for gay and bisexual escorts, which is one of the more popular sites for male sex workers advertising for male customers.

Another method utilised by some online sex workers for advertising involves an individual website where independent sex workers market themselves. This website is created and managed by the sex workers themselves or by web designers/IT specialists on their behalf. Just under a third (28.9%, n=185) of those who responded to our survey stated that they had

their own website. Only four respondents who exclusively provided technology-mediated indirect services had their own website, suggesting that personal websites are predominantly used by those offering in-person services whether that be escorting, BDSM or massage, either solely or in combination with other services. In terms of the advantages of having a personal website, some sex workers spoke about how this freed them from having to rely on escort advertising sites, especially those that dominate the market, which meant they did not have to pay regular fees to those or deal with any technical or administrative problems which they felt could be encountered. As well as reducing overall reliance on other forms of escort advertising many of the interview participants talked about how advertising via their own website gave them more freedom to express themselves and be clear about the services they offer, as Kay, who provides escort services, noted:

> So, the two, there's two main benefits to having a website, really. One is that Platform 1 has lots of rules and regulations about what you can say and what you can't say, so I wanted my own site so that I could put exactly what I needed to put on it.

It was also clear from interviews with sex workers who operated their own personal websites that being able to develop strong 'branding' was a key advantage and reason for their site. Twenty-five-year old Amber, who provides escort, massage, BDSM, and other services, talked about how her website enabled her to take advantage of her 'niche' and allowed her to 'differentiate [her]self' in a crowded market. Thirty-eight-year-old Liam, who provides erotic massage services, felt that creating a strong brand through his personal website proved lucrative in terms of attracting clients that were specifically interested in the type of service he offered:

What I've found is that people who come through my website are people who are directly interested in the service that I offer…Whereas people who came through much more generic websites, like Platform 18 or Platform 21 will often say, "And can you also do this? Can you also do that? Can you give me this? Can you give me that? I want this, I want it next time." Whereas now I get, I would say, pretty much the clients that I want to see. You know, I've created a product that – and a business that is now – is now attracting the people that I want to attract.

The ability to more clearly and directly brand their service through a personal website was seen as a major benefit for those who had one.

Dating and hook-up platforms were another space where services could be advertised and contact made with customers (Ljungberg 2017). These formed into two categories: a minority with designated commercial advertising spaces where sex workers can advertise their services openly and a majority which have policies prohibiting advertising for paid sex yet still feature such advertisements. Use of dating and hook up sites in this way was more common amongst male sex workers in the BtG study, indeed use of dating sites to sell sex has been addressed in previous work by Tyler (2015) who charts the changing ways in which male sex workers advertise their services since the advent of the internet. Tyler noted that men who used dating sites to sell sex often do this opportunistically rather than setting out necessarily to build a business as a sex worker. This was reflected among some of our participants. Some respondents did not use any paid sex work advertising sites because of the expense involved and advertised exclusively on free platforms, including dating sites and classified sites.

Classified advertising platforms are online advertising spaces/forums that allow individuals to post user-generated advertisements for a range of goods and services. Some classified sites permit sex work advertising and have dedicated and separate space for these

while others prohibit it altogether. The use of signs and codes was also evident in the covert use of classified sites by male sex workers. For male sex workers, advertising themselves as a masseur was identified as a key strategy for subverting the restrictive rules on classified sites prohibiting adult advertising. Talking about his advertising on a classified site that forbids adult advertising Mac observed that he "advertised as body massage, so that way people think they're getting a whatsit and then you'll always get contacted and asked how much do you charge – and then when you turn up to the job they don't even want a body massage." Twenty-seven years old Ruz, who provides escort services, echoes this when he describes how on classified sites he is "saying like 'masseur' but everybody knows anyway when they like message me. They always ask for extra and it's always included of course."

It was rare in our interviews with female sex workers for them to discuss covert use of dating and classified sites to advertise sexual services in the same way as male sex workers did. Platform 33, a classified site that forbids adult advertising, was used by 21% (n=26) of the cisgender male sex workers who responded to our survey but just 4.5% (n=21) of the cisgender female sex workers. Classified sites that permit open adult advertising were, however, used more by female sex workers, although in relatively low numbers according to the results of our survey. For example, just 15.6% (n=73) of women who responded to our survey used Platform 32, a key UK-based classified site that permits adult advertising. There were also mixed opinions on the effectiveness of this advertising source among female sex workers. Fifty-three-year old Jill, who provides escort, webcamming and other services, said that Platform 32 was the most important advertising source for her and she got more business from that site than any of the others. Lavy and Helen, both migrant sex workers, used Platform 32 as their only source of advertising and were satisfied with the level of business it brought them, yet this was a classified site which had a specific section for escorts which had been developed by the company and no covert presence was required. Other sex workers were more critical of

classified sites and felt that they produced a lot of time wasters and 'low quality' clients because, as thirty-seven-year old Eloise, who provides escort and erotic massage services, says, "they're not really genuine guys looking for punt, but they're on there looking for a new car or a washing machine and then they think, oh, I'll just go in adult section that's on there and piss about, you know what I mean?"

The reasons sex workers gave in qualitative interviews for adopting different marketing strategies were varied and decisions on how to engage with the internet were influenced by a range of factors. These included practical considerations like financial outlay and privacy concerns but the study findings also show how structural factors such as migration status and educational background may also impact choices and decisions. A range of sex workers use social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to market themselves and their services and to network with customers and peers and it is to this networking with other sex workers which we now turn.

Networking, peer support and advocacy

Online spaces have become vital for connectivity enabling sex workers to network and access peer support and advocacy. In the survey of sex workers, 61% of respondents (n=391) strongly agreed, and a further 19.7% (n=126) tended to agree that the internet gave them access to such networks and support. When survey participants were asked about the main websites or online platforms they used for advice or support those identified by the highest proportion of respondents were sex worker forums. There are a number of forums utilised by sex workers for advice about how to make best use of specific online advertising platforms but where wider peer advice can be accessed. One particular forum was most frequently identified in our survey when respondents were asked which online sources they use to access advice 45.7% (n=211)

of respondents said they used. Several sex worker-led forums have been established by UK sex workers to facilitate peer information-sharing and support. Sex workers can register, read threads that relate to issues they are interested in, and post requests for advice. The second online platform most identified for advice by 39% (n=180) of respondents was one of the longest established and was the second most popular source identified by women in our survey (45.7%, n=165). A forum more recently established, specifically for UK-based gay and bisexual male escorts and masseurs, was the most popular form of support for male sex workers in our survey by over a third (39.3%, n=24). The type of sex work job individuals performed shapes forum use and in open ended survey data and interviews respondents identified forums they utilised which were specifically for workers performing certain jobs, such as erotic dancers, webcammers, and BDSM providers.

Forums play an important role in fulling the advice and support needs of a considerable section of internet-based sex workers but use varies, with some workers using them regularly and others only more occasionally. The safety benefits of forum membership include information-sharing about customers, warnings and access to safety buddies. Other main benefits identified with respect to forum participation included combating the isolation of lone working, getting practical information from peers, a space to socialise with colleagues and a sense of community, plus providing a particularly useful resource for 'newbies' with little experience of sex work. Some sex workers choose not to participate in forums due to concerns about privacy and anonymity, a view that tensions and conflicts between sex workers could take place in these spaces, or because they already had information and support they required.

In our survey 34% (n=157) said they used Twitter and 16.2% (n=75) used Facebook for advice and support. A key trend amongst online sex workers is the use of social media platforms and free messaging apps, such as Whatsapp, to form private groups for professional networking, support and sharing safety information. These groups varied in size: some had a

large membership and geographical reach, others were smaller and localised or were formed by small groups of close colleagues or friends working in the sector. These closed online networks provided many of the same benefits of the established sex worker forums, including reducing the isolation experienced by independent lone workers. Some responded saw these networks as more personalised spaces which gave the option for smaller networks to form. Whilst we cannot explore in any depth here, an important finding was that increased online connectivity between sex workers has continued to enable sex worker activism (Ray 2007a), with online platforms being utilised creatively by sex workers in the UK as a vehicle for advocacy and activism around sex worker rights and as a tool for collective and individual voices (Sanders et al 2018).

Policing online sex work

Existing research on the policing of sex work has focused on the policing of sectors of the sex industry that have visible locations such as brothel-based sex work and street sex work (Feis-Bryce 2018) In the UK context, BtG was the first national study to focus specifically on the policing of internet-enabled sex work (Sanders et al. 2018). One key finding was the majority of police participants were aware that sex markets had undergone changes in the past decade, but detailed knowledge of the nature and extent of these changes and of developments in internet-based sex work was variable. Many police service areas identified their work on the policing of online commercial sex markets as in its infancy. Two key reasons were identified for this: that the policing of sex markets had historically been focused on more visible aspects of sex work, such as street-based work, often responsive to complaints or concerns raised, and also that a lack of resources limited the development of policing in this sector. Overwhelmingly

policing of online markets to date focused on female sex work and few police mentioned male sex work.

The two main ways that police services were engaging with online markets were in relation to their responses to sex trafficking and wider public protection agenda. The majority of police activities in relation to online platforms, which had or were taking place, were doing so within the sex trafficking policing portfolio. During the period BtG fieldwork was taking place sex trafficking emerged as a priority for national government with a number of initiatives to identify victims of trafficking coordinated by national policing entities specifically the National Crime Agency taking place, these involved forces throughout the UK. This meant that within local force areas a higher priority was being placed on policing modern slavery of all forms, including slavery within the sex industry. Generally, there was less awareness of the independent/voluntary nature of much online sex work and, with the focus on sex trafficking made salient issues of labour protections and the safety of those sex working of their own volition a lower priority. Thus, for example, online intelligence-related searches and 'mappings' carried out by some police were primarily focused on issues related to safeguarding against sex trafficking, with assumptions sometimes made that migrant sex workers are by definition victims of trafficking. This picture may be contrasted with the voices of migrant sex workers interviewed for the BtG study, many of whom presented a diversity of reasons for engaging with sex work that were quite similar to those presented by UK nationals participating in the research.[7]

Moreover, police activities targeting sex trafficking and exploitation could impact the working practices of consensual sex workers and could have implications for their safety and privacy. A primary element of activities in relation to monitoring sex markets was the identification of certain indicators of vulnerability and exploitation. There was some consciousness amongst officers that certain indicators used by police officers to identify

trafficking or sexual exploitation which were used by police officers might also identify sex workers who were not trafficked or otherwise exploited, although this was not the intention of specialist teams. The potential implications of police actions related to sex trafficking also involving those working of their own volition include disruption of sex workers' business as well as stigmatisation and potential threats to their safety if they are forced to work differently or to move from their current premises because their privacy has been compromised or due to increased reluctance to trust and report crime to the police.

Within this wider public protection agenda, some police consider online sex work specifically within the remit of policing 'vulnerability' (Brown and Sanders 2017), and safeguarding work some police identified that amongst online sex workers were those who experienced a number or vulnerabilities. This could include sex workers whose involvement in sex work meant that they were targeted by a range of individuals aiming to exploit and harm sex workers, making made them a 'vulnerable' group, for some forces this did include targeted violent and other crimes against sex workers. Community development and liaison work with the online sex work community was less common, with few police services involved in targeted initiatives to build trust in the police amongst online sex workers, including encourage and increase the level of reporting of crime amongst people working this sector to the police. Only a minority of police referred to specific cases of crimes against online sex workers, including digitally facilitated crimes such as online abuse, harassment and abuse, that had been reported to them and investigated.

The large majority of police officers were of the view that crimes against internet-based sex work were under-reported to them, which was confirmed by findings from the sex worker survey (Sanders et al. 2017). Only a minority of police pointed to approaches in which they had ongoing community development work with sex workers and projects to build trust to better facilitate reporting of crime or exploitation. Proactive work with the online sector beyond

the sex trafficking agenda was rare, although one police service[8] stood out in terms of such work and this had been enabled by a government grant to develop policing in the online sector under a safeguarding approach which had a focus on developing more trusting and confidence in the police amongst sex workers to increase reporting of crime through specialist police liaison officers and work with local support projects.

Police interview participants acknowledged inconsistencies in the interpretation of laws relating to sex work and noted that a key concern was to ensure greater safety and protection for sex workers. There were mixed views about how sex work should be regulated, but there was general agreement amongst police interviewees that sex workers' safety and protection should be paramount. Only a small number of police participants felt there should be more stringent regulation of websites advertising sexual services. Others felt this could reduce cooperation between sex workers, police and websites, make it more difficult to identify and investigate those who exploit sex workers such as organised crime groups, driving the sector underground and possibly onto the dark net, making it even more challenging for police forces. Yet several police felt online advertising platforms should be more proactive in measures to safeguard against exploitation, trafficking and slavery. One of the issues raised by all groups of research participants including police officers was the way in which the UK laws relating to managing or assisting in the management of a brothel and 'controlling prostitution for gain' can be enforced in ways which may impact negatively on sex workers based collectively. The majority of officers identified the need for a more strategic approach to sex work which does not penalise sex workers or involve activities which make the sex industry even more hidden and hard-to-reach, creating a context in which levels of confidence in the police and reporting are more likely to increase.

Conclusion

In the UK and globally, online and digital technology has transformed the sex industry. Sanders et al (2018) have illustrated how, amongst other things, these technologies have created new forms of advertising/marketing for adult services, new forms of commercial erotic labour, new business models for sex workers and third parties involved in the sex industry and new tools for sex workers to utilise as part of their safety repertories. At the same time, the move online has created vehicles for digitally enabled forms of abuse and violence against sex workers, accordingly presenting new challenges for policing and wider regulation.

In this chapter we have described how new forms of sexual commerce, online sex work spaces, marketing strategies, working practices, professional networking, and peer support have emerged during the last decade in the UK. These have been shaped by online and digital technologies. Future technological innovation, alongside other changing socio-political dynamics, will continue to reshape sex work in the UK and globally where markets will merge, flourish, diverge and change in a very fast-paced technologically-oriented point in capitalism. Sanders et al. (2018) capture the dynamic nature of contemporary internet-based sex work, such that:

> developments will already be underway which morph and change the way the online sex industry operates, both from internal technology features to other statutory changes in policing, methods of regulation and even perhaps legal changes. Therefore, the digital sex markets are always in a state of flux, responding to the market, influenced by the political landscape and exploited by those intent on causing harm as well as by the ingenuity and creativeness of the 'tech savvy' sex workers who create new business spaces and opportunities within the shifting online terrain. (Sanders, et al, 2018 pp 163)

We are eager to see what happens to the organisation of the sex industry in the next decade as new forms of technology, possibly ones that we have yet to imagine, alter the terrain of commercial sexual services, sexual behaviour and consumerism.

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[1] Bondage, Domination, Sado Masochism- some sex workers are specialist providers of BDSM services working as for example Dominatrices, submissives or other specialist roles. Note some of these can be provided in person and also indirectly mediated by digital technology.

[2] In webcamming the models perform shows, often but not always including nudity or sexual content, in front of their webcams, which are then streamed to customers watching on their own personal devices (computers/tablets/phones).

[3] Phone sex chat is not an innovation of the digital age but we classify it as a form of indirect Internet-based sex work because it has also evolved with technological innovations.

[4] Instant messaging involves sex workers providing a text chat service to customers. It operates like text messaging where the sex worker and customer communicate via typed messages on their personal devices. Some adult platforms facilitate instant messaging and allow the sex worker and customer to receive messages from each other without having to share any contact information as the messages are sent through a facility on the website. Instant messaging is charged by the messages received from the sex worker and there are character limits per message.

[5] 'Modern slavery' was a policy priority for the UK government at the time of our research fieldwork and this was reflected in policing priorities and roles for example most police service areas had named strategic leads for modern slavery. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 encompasses all modern slavery offences in the UK including slavery, servitude, forced

labour and human trafficking. It makes reference to specific law on trafficking for sexual exploitation, introduced in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.   In this chapter though we use the term sex trafficking to refer to trafficking for sexual exploitation and wider 'slavery' offences in the context of commercial sex. We have done this because this chapter is part of an international volume which includes contributions from people working across many different linguistic and cultural contexts and this term is the most salient.

[6] Platform 16 was found to be the market leading website for male sex workers with 76.6% (n=96) of cis male survey respondents using this site.

[7] Although it should be acknowledged that the survey and interviews may only have reached a small number of migrant workers and not those who may have experienced trafficking or modern slavery, who are harder to reach.

[8] Within the United Kingdom context England and Wales together are split into forty three separate areas for policing, referred to commonly as forces, constabulary's or services. In addition for the whole of the UK there are two further services, Police Service of Northern Ireland and Police Scotland. In this chapter we are using the term police services.