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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

ORIGIN AND OCCUPATION OF KTV GIRLS IN SINGAPORE



Picture 1: A KTV Bar in Joo Chiat Road (Singapore)

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Little research has been done on KTV and Karaoke bars (shortly named KTV bars in this research proposal) in Asia although they are present in high numbers in most Asian countries. In Asia, KTV bars can be found either in middle to lower class shopping centres or middle class hotels where they are often integrated in the hotel. However, there is also a certain amount of KTV bars that obviously caters clients at the high end, and some of them may even be located in ***** hotels like the *Tianlun Dynasty* in Beijing.

Singapore is no exemption to this, and visits in some middle class shopping centres like the *Parklane Shopping Mall* reveal an accumulation of several KTV bars in one building. Sometimes, these KTV bars cater for a certain nationality. Near the hotel *Le Meridien*, many KTV bars cater exclusively for Japanese clients. Sometimes, and this is also typical for Asia, KTV rooms are located inside bigger nightclubs or discotheques like the *Empire Club* in McKenzie Road. Entering an establishment like the *Empire Club*, one faces dozens of women waiting for customers whom they would accompany to the respective KTV rooms in the establishment. These girls are named *KTV Girls* in this research proposal.

The aim of this research proposal is to gain knowledge about their origin (nationality) and the nature of their occupation since little is known about it, and there are basically no literature published about this topic. Interviews with Chinese colleagues and friends point out that they would go to KTV bars with friends in mixed groups (both genders) to sing and have “clean” fun. Clearly, major Karaoke bars, like the *Cashbox* in Shanghai, cater this type of clientele. However, [1][2][3] point out that KTV bars often also provide indirect prostitution. This is in accordance with findings of the author [4] and with the physical appearance and clothing style of KTV girls [5]. When the author visited several KTV bars in Beijing pretending to be interested in renting a room, he was always presented a selection of KTV girls in revealing clothes that gave raise to the assumption that there may be more than just “singing” in the KTV bar.

Some tentative conversations with KTV girls in Singapore disclosed that many of them cannot speak English properly, and that they speak Mandarin only. This leads to the suspicion that many of them came from China in order to work in KTV bars in Singapore.

The purpose of this research proposal is to accumulate data about the KTV girls who work in Singapore. The research proposal is therefore a *Descriptive Research*.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to gain knowledge about the nationality and the occupation of KTV girls in Singapore. The research is done as a *survey* among the KTV girls in various KTV bars and shall answer the following questions:

1. Which nationalities do the girls have?
2. How did they come to Singapore if they are non-Singaporeans? Did they come by themselves or did they come through the help of an agency?
3. Which were the qualifications that led to their employment or to their choice in case that an agency was involved?
4. How much money do they earn and which system applies for their payment? Are they paid a fixed salary or do they earn commission from sold drinks, etc.?
5. Do the girls work only in one KTV bar or do they work in several KTV bars?
6. Are the KTV girls engaged in sexual activities which are based on remuneration? If yes, are condoms used during the sexual encounters?

7. Did the job in a KTV bar correspond to what the KTV girls imagined it would be before they started their work?

By answering these questions, a clearer picture can be drawn about KTV girls in Singapore, their origin and their occupation.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Important knowledge can be derived from the findings of this research proposal. First of all, the research can show where the girls are originally from. If they are from abroad, questions arise on how they obtain their visa for Singapore since it is normally difficult to obtain working permits in Singapore. If agencies are involved, this research could hint whether or not it is appropriate to research deeper in the field of these agencies to clarify whether some kind of women traffickers supply KTV girls from abroad to Singapore and whether these activities occur on a legal basis. The research could also indicate whether some girls are lured to Singapore on false premises like it is reported in [6] in the case of other Asian countries.

Furthermore, if the research finds out that the KTV girls are engaged in a kind of sexual services, it could reveal whether this indirect kind of prostitution poses a danger to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) thus posing a danger to the customers and therefore eventually to Singaporean public health.

Therefore, this research proposal is a valuable asset in political decision-making for the Singaporean government and legislative.

Further findings of the research could highlight whether certain client nationalities like Japanese request a certain nationality of KTV girls or whether there are any other correlations related to the customers like preferences, etc.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research is designed as a questionnaire in Mandarin and English language which is used by an interviewer to interview KTV girls. It is currently not clear whether the owners of the KTV bars will cooperate with the researchers or whether they will be hostile versus the research. If the owners of the KTV bars allow the survey to be done, an interviewer will interview the KTV girls, preferably just after the opening of the KTV bar when there is not much business going on.

If the KTV bar owners are reluctant or hostile to the research, other methods of interviewing the girls have to be elaborated.

The survey questionnaire shall provide absolute anonymity for the interviewed KTV girls. No names shall be recorded, and the name of the KTV bar shall only be used in order to mark whether a certain KTV bar has been investigated or not.

LITERATURE

- [1] Chinese University of Hong Kong: Sex Workers. <http://ihome.cuhk.edu.hk/~b102103/cpp/doc/repswc.pdf>
- [2] Government of Hong Kong: Mapping High Risk Sexual Behaviours. <http://www.info.gov.hk/aids/assr/contents/ch3c.htm>
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- [4] Rüeck, Gabriel: Reisebericht Hué. <http://www.rueeck.de/Reise/Thailand-Vietnam/HTML-Code/hue.html>
- [5] Rüeck, Gabriel: KTV-Mädchen in Ubon Ratchathani. <http://www.rueeck.de/Foto/Leute/gross/THA-Karaoke.jpg>
- [6] Browne, Louise: Sex Slaves – The trafficking of women in Asia. Virago Books. ISBN: 1-86049-903-1.