

Punters and punting: Language, sexuality and online sex work

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Online forums and communities grant individuals opportunities to take part in a group with shared goals and interests. This can involve the sharing of experiences (Attard & Coulson, 2012), accessing social support (Mazzoni & Cicognani, 2014) and advice (Sinha, Porter & Wilson, 2018). Until recently, however, comparatively little research with an interdisciplinary lens has focussed on the use of forums that discuss less mainstream behaviours considered taboo, such as sex work. From a forum devoted to the discussion of sex work between those who pay for sex (punters) and sex workers a corpus of 255,891 posts (16,472,006 words) was collected. A latent Dirichlet allocation analysis revealed several potential themes discussed by the forum members, including stories and experiences surrounding punting, preferences for clothing and sexual acts and wider philosophical or meta discussion related to sexuality and sex work such as professionalism, acceptable/unacceptable misogyny and sex work as a consumerist interaction. In addition to the exploration of these theme, the results are discussed in relation to previous research that utilized a more traditional psychological approach. The benefits to a more interdisciplinary approach are considered, as well as differences in how punters and sex workers discuss the same issues within the forum.

References

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