



**BEHIND THE SHADOWS: A HUMAN EXPLORATION OF THE
SEX TRADE IN THAILAND**



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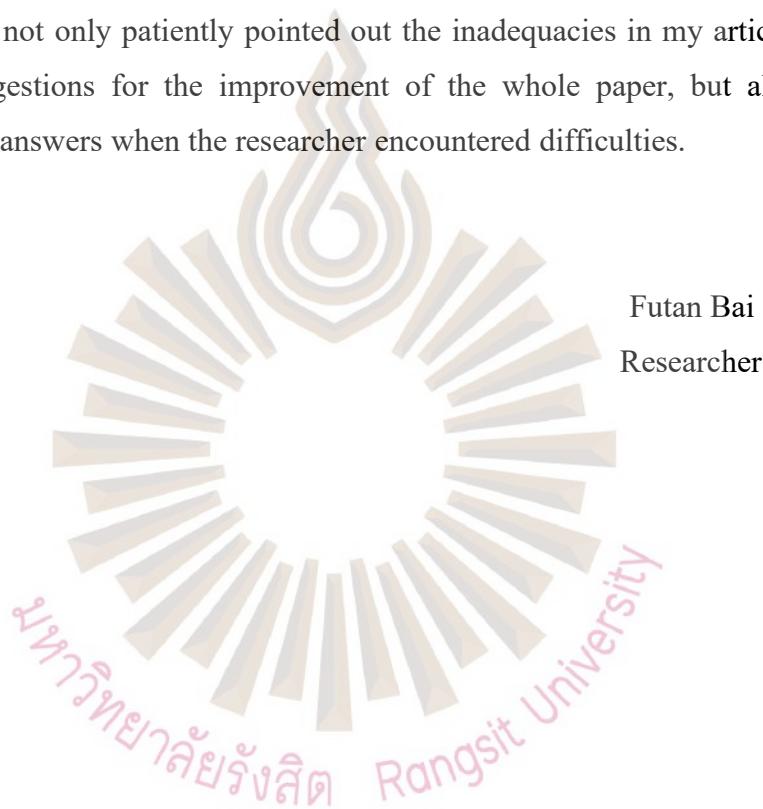
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Abstract

This research delves into the complex issue of sex trafficking in Thailand, a country renowned for its cultural richness and natural allure, which paradoxically masks the grim reality of sexual exploitation. The study traces the historical and economic roots of Thailand's emergence as a hub for sex tourism, revealing the associated human rights abuses and health crises. Despite increased documentary scrutiny and evolving societal and legal frameworks, significant gaps in understanding persist. Methodologically, the research employs a blend of narrative analysis and interviews with affected individuals to construct a vivid portrayal of sex workers' experiences. The resulting film not only provides a platform for the voices of the marginalized but also serves as a catalyst for advocacy and policy change. The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address sex trafficking, advocating for the protection of sex workers' rights and the eradication of this exploitative practice. The documentary stands as a testament to the power of visual storytelling in bridging theoretical research and practical intervention, contributing to the broader discourse on human trafficking and the quest for social justice.

(Total 50 pages)

Keywords: Sex Trafficking, Sex Tourism, Sex Workers' Rights, Thailand, Social
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Student's Signature Thesis Advisor's Signature

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Thailand, renowned for its rich culture and natural beauty, has long been a magnet for tourists. However, this idyllic image masks serious social issues, including sex trafficking. This issue has been studied and highlighted by international organizations, human rights groups, and activists for many decades. The roots of sex trafficking in Thailand are intertwined with the country's economic development and history, particularly from the late 20th century when Thailand became a hub for sex tourism.

While the attraction of sex workers has been part of the tourism allure, the reality behind this involves exploitation, human rights abuses, and health risks. Despite significant attention and numerous documentaries shedding light on these issues, many aspects of sex trafficking in Thailand remain under-researched.

In recent years, Thailand has made strides in addressing sex trafficking through stricter laws and protective programs for women and children involved in the sex trade. However, further research is necessary to fully understand and effectively combat this problem. Documentaries can play a crucial role in raising public awareness and fostering change.

1.2 Research Purpose and Significance

The primary purpose of this study is to create a documentary film that explores the lives and working conditions of Thai sex workers within the broader context of sex trafficking. This film aims to:

- 1) Expose the complexities of sex workers' lives.
- 2) Illuminate the underlying causes and societal consequences of sex trafficking.
- 3) Stimulate public dialogue and call for action to protect sex workers' rights and combat trafficking.

The film is intended not only to document facts but also to serve as a tool for awareness and inspiration for audiences, researchers, and activists.

1.2.1 Theoretical significance

Provides a deep analysis of the multifaceted problem of sex trafficking, considering economic, social, cultural, and legal aspects. Enhances understanding of sex trafficking as a complex social and economic phenomenon. Offers unique insights into the living and working conditions of sex workers, fostering empathy and humanitarian perspectives. Analyzes the evolution of the representation of sex work in Thai documentaries, identifying key trends and developments.

1.2.2 Practical significance

Serves as an educational tool to enlighten a broader audience about sex trafficking in Thailand. Forms the basis for public debates, shaping opinions, and supporting anti-trafficking efforts. Supports initiatives for sex worker rights, raising awareness and aiding victims. Promotes the development of the film industry in Thailand and beyond by raising awareness of social issues through cinema.

1.3 Research Methods

To achieve the research's objectives, the following research methods will be employed:

1) Literature review

Reviewing academic and scholarly work on sex trafficking in Thailand and related fields such as sociology, cultural studies, human rights, and film studies.

2) Historical analysis

Analyzing the historical development of Thailand's sex industry and regulatory approaches to sex work and sex trafficking.

3) Comprehensive documentary film analysis

Examining various documentaries on sex work in Thailand to identify key themes, trends, and practices.

4) Comparative analysis

Comparing information from academic literature, documentaries, and statistics to highlight similarities and differences in the presentation of sex trafficking.

5) Interviews and surveys

Conducting interviews with sex workers, human rights activists, and representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations to gather diverse perspectives.

6) Legislative analysis

Analyzing Thai laws and international regulations concerning sex trafficking and sex workers' rights.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 General Information about Sex Work and Sex Workers

Sex work involves adults engaging in consensual sexual services or erotic performances in exchange for money or goods. The term ‘sex worker’ is preferred over ‘prostitute’ to avoid the negative connotations and stigma associated with the latter, which can result in exclusion from health, legal, and social services (Ramanya, 2023). Historically, the term ‘prostitute’ was primarily applied to women, with men considered their clients.

2.1.1 Key terms and roles

Sex work managers (mammies)

These are women who organize sex work, ensuring the safety of sex workers and acting as intermediaries with law enforcement, medical professionals, and clients. They do not dictate the services provided by sex workers. The term ‘pimp’ is avoided due to its stigmatizing nature (Ramanya, 2023).

Clients

Individuals who purchase sexual services, including both men and women.

Pattaya

Areas where street sex workers find clients.

2.1.2 Dynamics of sex work

Nature of sex work

Involves economic, cultural, behavioral, and legal factors, and typically requires the interaction of a sex worker and a client.

Motivations

Many sex workers engage in this work voluntarily, often driven by economic needs such as supporting family, paying for education, meeting basic needs, or, in some cases, purchasing drugs (Gayathri, 2023).

2.1.3 Types of sex work

Female sex work

Historically, the most recognized form.

Male sex work

1) Homosexual male sex work

Men providing sexual services to other men, often in secretive settings due to stigma and legal issues (Ramanya, 2023).

2) Heterosexual male sex work

Men, often called gigolos, cohabiting with or providing services to women, usually involving longer-term arrangements (Ramanya, 2023).

3) Transgender sex work

Includes transvestites, transsexuals, and other gender variations. Transgender sex workers often face extreme discrimination, violence, and exclusion from traditional employment, driving them towards sex work (Denny, 2020).

2.1.4 Special populations

Migrating sex workers

Many sex workers migrate to other cities or countries, often working illegally and without documentation, making them highly vulnerable. They face language barriers, lack knowledge of local healthcare systems, and often must avoid police to prevent deportation or imprisonment. Migrating sex workers may also be subject to forced HIV testing (Denny, 2020).

2.1.5 Children and coercion

Sex work involving minors or coerced adults constitutes sexual exploitation and abuse. Minors' consent is irrelevant due to their dependency on adults, lack of understanding of the significance of the actions, and inability to foresee consequences. Protecting and aiding minors involved in sex work is the responsibility of law enforcement (Ramanya, 2023).

2.1.6 Key points from the literature

Stigmatization and terminology

The terminology used to describe individuals in the sex trade significantly impacts their access to services and societal treatment (Ramanya, 2023).

Economic motivations

Economic necessity is a primary driver for individuals entering sex work (Gayathri, 2023).

Gender and sexuality

Sex work spans across genders and sexual orientations, each with unique challenges and societal perceptions (Ramanya, 2023).

Legal and social barriers

Migrant sex workers and those from marginalized gender identities face additional legal and social obstacles (Denny, 2020).

2.2 A Brief History of the Social Organization of Sex Work

Commercial sex, the provision of sexual services in exchange for material reward, has always existed across different cultures and historical periods. The number and situation of sex workers (SW) vary depending on cultural and historical contexts, but they remain an integral part of society (Abrams, 2000).

Sex work involves socially organized forms of selling sex. The spontaneous organization includes relationships between sex workers and sex business managers, who ensure their safety and supply clients. Brothels represent a more complex form of organizing sex work. In the 19th century, state involvement added a layer of control over this area, introducing licensing for sex work (e.g., the ‘yellow ticket’ in Russia) and measures to control sexually transmitted infections (Abrams, 2000).

The first mentions of sex workers date back to the pre-Christian era (1st–2nd millennium BC). The Bible generally disapproves of sex work but is relatively tolerant of sex workers like Rahab and Mary Magdalene. Authorities’ attitudes toward sex work have ranged from harsh opposition to licensing. The Athenian legislator Solon was the first to tax prostitution, introducing brothels called ‘dicterions’ around 640–635 BC. There were also male sex workers and male brothels. Sex workers associated with the upper echelons of society were called hetaeras, or ‘girlfriends’ (Alexander, 1997).

In ancient Rome, women who wanted to engage in prostitution received licenses. However, this profession imposed several restrictions, such as wearing special clothing and having limited rights. Despite the establishment of Christianity, brothels continued to exist, often marked by distinctive emblems like colorful bars on windows or a red lantern above the door. Regulations often prohibited certain

individuals, such as the pregnant, sick, married, or too young, from providing sexual services. Clergy and married men were also barred from visiting brothels (Alexander, 1997).

With the rise of navigation and mercenary armies, sex workers appeared in port cities and military camps, respectively. In many primitive societies, patriarchal sex work was common, where a host offered his wife or daughter to a guest as a form of hospitality. In the 19th century, men of northern nationalities in the Russian Empire often offered their spouse or daughter to tenants, which increased the rent (Alexander, 1997).

The spread of syphilis in Europe around the 15th century led to stricter police and medical supervision of sex work by the 18th century. Governments often attempted to combat sex work through bans and severe penalties, but these measures were largely ineffective (Abrams, 2000).

Sex work also exists in Muslim countries, often formalized as temporary marriages (mut'a) for one night, which formally permits sexual relations and the giving of a 'wedding gift' (mahr) (Abrams, 2000).

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to significant political and social changes and a severe economic crisis throughout the post-Soviet space. This resulted in high unemployment, rising prices, increased crime, and the destruction of families, contributing to the prevalence of sex work (Alexander, 1997).

Women do not always provide sexual services under coercion. For some, sex work is a choice, while others use it as a means to support themselves and their children in the absence of other options, such as those affected by war, divorce, or widowhood (Alexander, 1997).

Sex workers enter and exit sex work for various personal, economic, and social reasons, similar to anyone choosing a job. They come from diverse backgrounds

and life situations. While some choose sex work from available options, others are forced into it by lack of choice, suffering most from poor policies (Alexander, 1997).

Millions of people worldwide derive income from sexual transactions, but exact numbers are difficult to ascertain due to social stigma and criminal sanctions against sex work. Stigmatization and the closed nature of the group often lead to human rights violations. Research shows that sex workers experience high levels of violence (Denny, 2020).

The risk of contracting STIs and HIV among sex workers may be high but is not directly related to the provision of sexual services. With the necessary knowledge and tools, sex workers can protect themselves and their clients from HIV infection. They can promote safe sexual practices if given the opportunity to negotiate with clients (Denny, 2020).

2.3 International experience in regulating sex work

2.3.1 Holland

Despite the country's residents having a lenient attitude towards sex workers for two hundred years, sex work officially became a legal profession only in 1988 when sex workers formed their own trade union. Sex workers and their managers are considered workers and, like other Dutch citizens, they pay taxes and have rights and responsibilities. In the past, Dutch banks refused to allow sex workers to open accounts, fearing it would "offend other clients." Now, this discrimination has ended, with ING Bank being the first to open accounts for sex workers. According to the Dutch organization Rode Draad (Red Cord), which fights to protect the rights of sex workers, income from sex work is about \$1 billion a year (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.2 France

Street sex work has been legalized in France since 1946. However, pimping, brothels, and aggressive harassment of passers-by are prohibited. Regular medical checks are required, and a patent is needed to engage in sex work. There are approximately 50,000 registered sex workers in Paris. At the end of 2006, Interior Minister N. Sarkozy proposed a bill to prohibit sex workers from appearing in public places in overalls and generally standing on the streets. This led to protests, with sex workers carrying signs saying, 'We pay taxes. Hands off!' (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.3 Türkiye

Street sex work is prohibited, but brothels are allowed and are a highly developed service industry, contributing significant tax revenue to Istanbul's budget (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.4 USA

In the USA, sex work is prohibited in all states except Nevada. However, many organizations in the country fight for the rights of sex workers, providing psychological, medical, and even financial assistance if they lose their jobs (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.5 Germany

Sex work is legalized in Germany, with government regulation that includes compulsory medical examinations, tax payments, provision of condoms, and the creation of a trade union for sex workers. Since January 1, 2002, prostitution has not been prosecuted as an immoral activity (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.6 Thailand

Thailand is known for sex tourism, even though sex work is officially prohibited. Historically, Thai culture has been tolerant of sex work. The Council for Economic and Social Development of Thailand has recommended that the authorities legalize sex work, a proposal that has received widespread support (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.7 Australia

Sex work was legalized in Victoria in 1989 and in New South Wales in 1995 (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.8 New Zealand

New Zealand's parliament and society are currently debating a Sex Work Bill, which would effectively legalize sex work, overturning more than a century of prohibition under the Criminal Code (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.9 Italy

On December 21, 2002, the Italian Council of Ministers passed a bill allowing sex work to be practiced in private homes, while imposing penalties, including arrest, for street sex work. The bill, supported by the ruling majority in parliament, including Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, faced opposition from fascists and communists (Caprio, 1954).

2.3.10 Spain

At the end of March 2008, Spain formed a Senate commission on sex work to explore the legalization of sex work. The commission's head, Christina Klimowitz, stated their goal was to create a new public perspective on this issue, with the potential for legalization within two to three years (Caprio, 1954).

2.4 Stigma and discrimination associated with sex work

Stigmatization (from the Greek στίγμα - label, brand) refers to the social labeling and branding of individuals or groups with specific, often negative, qualities. Unlike branding, which is more literal, stigmatization involves social labels that can lead to discrimination—real actions that limit the rights of a group. Even in civilized societies where overt stigmatization is condemned or legally prohibited, stigmas persist and permeate various aspects of life.

2.4.1 Stigmatization can be classified into different types

Cultural stigmatization

Social labels rooted in cultural beliefs, such as the notion that prostitutes are fallen women.

Institutional stigmatization

Legally enshrined stigmas, like those labeling individuals with criminal records or considering prostitution criminally punishable, hence the stigma a prostitute is a criminal.

Personal stigma

Self-prejudice based on involvement in stigmatized activities, e.g., I am a prostitute.

2.4.2 Examples of Discrimination Against Sex Workers

Legislative measures often restrict the rights of sex workers under the guise of combating organized crime or promoting public health, contrary to the principles of UNAIDS and WHO. These measures can drive the industry underground, undermining safe sex practices. Such restrictions also violate the European Parliament's Resolution on Cruelty against Women, which calls for the

decriminalization of prostitution and the protection of sex workers' rights (Caprio, 1954).

Austria

Mandatory health checks for sex workers, not required for other sexually active citizens, contributing to their stigmatization as 'unclean' (Caprio, 1954).

Finland

Legal prohibitions against sex workers working together for safety reasons, violating rights to assembly and favorable working conditions (Caprio, 1954).

France

The potential criminalization of sex workers' children for living off their parents' income, violating family privacy rights (Caprio, 1954).

Greece

Laws preventing sex workers from marrying without losing their licenses, forcing them to choose between family and livelihood (Caprio, 1954).

Italy

Police impunity in confiscating sex workers' property, violating property rights and legal protections (Caprio, 1954).

Netherlands

Migrant sex workers are denied work permits, facing discrimination not applied to other migrant workers (Caprio, 1954).

Portugal

Discrimination in child custody cases based solely on the parent's occupation as a sex worker (Caprio, 1954).

Romania

Government actions leading to loss of work permits abroad and punitive measures upon return, violating the right to seek employment (Caprio, 1954).

Russia

Police coercion and threats of slavery, violating personal security and equal legal protection (Caprio, 1954).

Slovakia

Denial of medical care and discriminatory remarks to pregnant sex workers, violating health and family rights (Caprio, 1954).

Spain

Mandatory medical examinations and confidentiality breaches for sex workers, violating privacy and health rights (Caprio, 1954).

Sweden

Exclusion of sex workers from public debates, violating free expression rights (Caprio, 1954).

International human rights law mandates equality before the law and non-discrimination, yet sex workers in Europe often avoid legal challenges due to systemic biases and the risk of further discrimination (Caprio, 1954).

Chapter 3

Overview of Documentaries on Sex Work and Related Topics in Thailand

3.1 The Historical Development of Thailand's Sex Industry

According to statistics from the Thailand Bureau of Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, the venues providing sexual services in Thailand include hotels, brothels, holiday cabins, nightclubs, bars, go-go bars, escort services, and teahouses. Estimates of the number of sex workers in Thailand vary widely, with figures ranging between 150,000 and 300,000 (Thailand Bureau of Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, 2022). Several factors contribute to the prosperity of Thailand's sex industry:

1) Cultural attitudes and gender inequality

In traditional Thai culture, women have always been considered inferior to men, often viewed as second-class citizens. A common Thai saying, 'Women are buffaloes, men are people' (phu ying pen khwai, phu chai pen khon), underscores this disparity. Buddhism in Thailand encourages women to accumulate merit by providing for monks, which is believed to increase their chances of being reincarnated as men. Although Buddhism does not explicitly support prostitution, it fosters a tolerant attitude towards the sex trade, as long as sex workers engage in meritorious acts like supporting their families or donating to temples (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998).

2) Economic and social responsibilities

Traditionally, Thai women bear significant financial responsibilities within their families. Women in northern and northeastern Thailand, in particular,

inherit family real estate and are expected to support their parents, while men inherit movable assets and join their wives' families. When financial pressures become overwhelming, many women turn to sex work to support their families. It is estimated that 60% of women in northern Thailand enter the sex industry to provide for their parents (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998).

3) Polygamy and marital instability

Historically, polygamy was legal in Thailand, with laws allowing men to have multiple wives and even to sell them. Although polygamy was legally abolished in 1935, the legacy of these practices continues to affect Thai society. Women often face economic hardship following divorce, as only property acquired during marriage is considered joint property, leaving them with little to no assets. Many divorced women thus enter the sex industry to support themselves and their families, perpetuating a cycle of economic dependency and social stigma (Phongpaichit & Baker, 1998).

The Vietnam War in the 1960s marked a significant turning point for Thailand's sex industry. The presence of American troops led to the development of a dual market: the traditional domestic-focused brothels and the newly emerging bars catering primarily to foreigners. In 1965, the U.S. and Thai governments signed an agreement allowing U.S. soldiers stationed in Vietnam to visit Thailand for recreation, leading to an influx of American servicemen seeking entertainment. This boom not only created a new wealthy class in Thailand but also exacerbated social issues such as corruption, prostitution, alcoholism, and drug abuse (Askew, 2002).

The 1997 financial crisis further impacted Thailand's sex industry. The economic downturn increased the number of women entering sex work by nearly 80% between 1997 and 1998. Globalization and the influence of capitalism also played a role, with many middle-class women turning to sex work to fulfill materialistic desires. Efforts by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in 2001 to regulate the industry through

the ‘Social Order Plan’ faced significant challenges due to police corruption and enforcement issues, ultimately failing to achieve its goals (Askew, 2002).

These historical and socio-economic factors illustrate the complex and multifaceted nature of Thailand’s sex industry, reflecting deep-rooted cultural, economic, and political dynamics that continue to shape its development.

3.2 Definition of Sex Worker Documentaries

Documentaries serve as powerful tools for shedding light on various aspects of society, offering a lens through which viewers can understand, empathize, and contemplate complex issues. Among these subjects, documentaries about sex workers occupy a significant space, providing a platform to explore the multifaceted lives, challenges, and experiences of individuals involved in this often-stigmatized profession.

Poetic documentary is a subgenre of documentary filmmaking that uses avant-garde techniques to evoke a certain mood or feeling rather than prove a point through a traditional linear narrative structure. Poetic documentary filmmakers provide the audience with an emotional perspective on a subject through the use of rhythmic visuals that provide an abstract and subjective interpretation of reality.

The poetic mode of documentary filmmaking originally emerged from the City Symphony film movement in the 1920s and was a retort against the style and content of the predominant fiction film genre. While poetic documentaries have existed since the 1920s, the actual term ‘poetic documentary’ wasn’t coined until 2001 in documentary theorist Bill Nichols’ book ‘Introduction to Documentary’. In his book, Nichols classified poetic mode as one of the six modes of documentary filmmaking—along with observational mode, expository mode, participatory mode, reflexive mode, and performative mode.

Poetic documentaries tend to focus on triggering emotional responses in the viewer, and they often have several unifying characteristics.

Visual rhythm over continuity: Breaking from standard editing rules, poetic documentaries are avant-garde in that they aren't concerned with maintaining continuity from scene to scene. Instead, the editing goal is to emphasize rhythm, composition, and shot design to create visuals that show the viewer the world through a new point of view.

Lack of traditional narrative: Since poetic documentaries are primarily focused on creating a particular mood or feeling, establishing a linear narrative isn't necessary. This means characters don't progress through arcs and storylines don't move toward resolutions.

Subjectivity: Rather than arguing for an objective fact-based truth, poetic documentaries provide a subjective interpretation of a topic. They approach subjects in a more abstract and experimental way than traditional documentaries.

In this essay, we delve into the definition and significance of documentaries centered around sex workers, highlighting their role in amplifying voices, challenging stereotypes, and fostering dialogue.

Documentaries about sex workers encompass a diverse range of narratives, perspectives, and styles aimed at illuminating the realities of individuals engaged in the sex industry. At their core, these documentaries strive to humanize and dignify the experiences of sex workers, often challenging societal preconceptions and misconceptions. They offer a nuanced portrayal of the complexities inherent in the lives of sex workers, addressing issues such as exploitation, agency, empowerment, and resilience.

These documentaries adopt various approaches to storytelling, ranging from observational and participatory to investigative and advocacy-driven. Some documentaries focus on individual narratives, following the lives of specific sex workers and delving into their personal journeys, struggles, and aspirations. Others

take a broader sociocultural perspective, examining the systemic factors, legal frameworks, and societal attitudes that shape the experiences of sex workers.

Importantly, documentaries about sex workers prioritize authenticity and ethical representation, foregrounding the voices and perspectives of those directly impacted by the subject matter. They often involve collaboration with sex workers themselves, allowing them to participate in the filmmaking process as co-creators, consultants, or subjects. This participatory approach not only ensures greater accuracy and depth but also empowers sex workers to reclaim their narratives and advocate for their rights.

The significance of documentaries about sex workers lies in their capacity to challenge stereotypes, dismantle stigma, and foster empathy and understanding. By providing a platform for marginalized voices to be heard, these documentaries confront the pervasive myths and misconceptions surrounding sex work, humanizing individuals who are often dehumanized or vilified by society.

Moreover, documentaries about sex workers play a crucial role in advocating for social and legal reforms aimed at protecting the rights and well-being of sex workers. By shedding light on issues such as discrimination, violence, and lack of access to healthcare and legal protection, these documentaries catalyze public discourse and mobilize support for policy changes and grassroots initiatives.

Furthermore, documentaries about sex workers serve as catalysts for broader conversations about gender, sexuality, labor rights, and social justice. They prompt viewers to interrogate their own biases and assumptions, encouraging critical reflection on the intersecting forces of power, privilege, and oppression that shape our understanding of sex work and its place in society.

Documentaries about sex workers are not merely films; they are powerful instruments of social change, empathy, and advocacy. By amplifying the voices of sex workers and challenging societal norms and structures, these documentaries contribute

to a more inclusive, compassionate, and just society. As we continue to engage with these narratives, it is imperative to recognize the agency, resilience, and humanity of sex workers and to work towards creating a world where their rights and dignity are fully respected and protected.

3.3 Development Trends of Sex Worker Documentaries in the 21st Century

Documentaries serve as powerful tools for shedding light on various aspects of society, offering a lens through which viewers can understand, empathize, and contemplate complex issues. Among these subjects, documentaries about sex workers occupy a significant space, providing a platform to explore the multifaceted lives, challenges, and experiences of individuals involved in this often-stigmatized profession (Nichols, 2001).

3.3.1 Poetic documentary

A subgenre of documentary filmmaking, poetic documentaries use avant-garde techniques to evoke certain moods or feelings rather than to prove a point through a traditional linear narrative structure. Poetic documentary filmmakers provide the audience with an emotional perspective on a subject through the use of rhythmic visuals that offer an abstract and subjective interpretation of reality. This approach originated from the City Symphony film movement in the 1920s as a response to the style and content of the predominant fiction film genre (Nichols, 2001).

3.3.2 Characteristics of poetic documentaries

1) Visual rhythm over continuity

Unlike standard editing rules, poetic documentaries focus on rhythm, composition, and shot design rather than maintaining continuity from scene to scene.

This creates a unique visual experience that presents the world from a new perspective (Nichols, 2001).

2) Lack of traditional narrative

Poetic documentaries emphasize mood or feeling over linear narrative, meaning characters do not progress through typical arcs and storylines do not necessarily move towards resolutions (Nichols, 2001).

3) Subjectivity

Rather than presenting objective, fact-based truths, poetic documentaries offer a subjective interpretation of topics, approaching subjects in a more abstract and experimental way (Nichols, 2001).

4) Documentaries about sex workers

Documentaries about sex workers cover a diverse range of narratives, perspectives, and styles aimed at illuminating the realities of individuals engaged in the sex industry. These films strive to humanize and dignify the experiences of sex workers, often challenging societal preconceptions and misconceptions. They offer nuanced portrayals of the complexities inherent in the lives of sex workers, addressing issues such as exploitation, agency, empowerment, and resilience (Hubbard, 1998; Jolin, 1994).

3.3.3 Approaches to storytelling

These documentaries adopt various storytelling approaches, including observational, participatory, investigative, and advocacy-driven methods. Some focus on individual narratives, following the lives of specific sex workers and delving into their personal journeys, struggles, and aspirations. Others take a broader sociocultural

perspective, examining systemic factors, legal frameworks, and societal attitudes shaping the experiences of sex workers (Hubbard, 1998; Jolin, 1994).

3.3.4 Authenticity and ethical representation

A key priority for documentaries about sex workers is authenticity and ethical representation. These films foreground the voices and perspectives of those directly impacted by the subject matter, often involving sex workers as co-creators, consultants, or subjects. This participatory approach ensures greater accuracy and depth while empowering sex workers to reclaim their narratives and advocate for their rights (Hubbard, 1998; Jolin, 1994).

3.3.5 Significance

The significance of these documentaries lies in their capacity to challenge stereotypes, dismantle stigma, and foster empathy and understanding. By providing a platform for marginalized voices, these films confront pervasive myths and misconceptions surrounding sex work, humanizing individuals often dehumanized or vilified by society. Moreover, they play a crucial role in advocating for social and legal reforms to protect the rights and well-being of sex workers, shedding light on issues such as discrimination, violence, and lack of access to healthcare and legal protection (Hubbard, 1998; Jolin, 1994).

3.3.6 Broader conversations

Beyond the immediate subject of sex work, these documentaries catalyze broader conversations about gender, sexuality, labor rights, and social justice. They encourage viewers to interrogate their own biases and assumptions, fostering critical reflection on the intersecting forces of power, privilege, and oppression that shape our understanding of sex work and its place in society (Hubbard, 1998; Jolin, 1994).

In summary, documentaries about sex workers are powerful instruments of social change, empathy, and advocacy. By amplifying the voices of sex workers and challenging societal norms and structures, these films contribute to a more inclusive, compassionate, and just society. Recognizing the agency, resilience, and humanity of sex workers is crucial in working towards a world where their rights and dignity are fully respected and protected (Hubbard, 1998; Jolin, 1994; Nichols, 2001).



Chapter 4

Creative Process and Concept Analysis

4.1 Target Audience Analysis

The author first determined the age, gender, interests and viewing habits of the target audience in order to better design the film content and publicity strategy. This step is crucial to ensure that the film reaches the right audience.

4.1.1 Age and gender composition

Adult audience

The film explores mature themes and is suitable for audiences over the age of 20. The content may particularly appeal to young and middle-aged groups, who have a higher sensitivity and awareness of social issues.

Gender inclusion

While women may relate more directly to the female lead's experiences, the film also challenges male audiences' perceptions and stances on the sex industry, promoting conversations about gender equality.

4.1.2 Types of viewing groups

Documentary amateurs

Viewers interested in true stories and in-depth reporting, who tend to seek thought-provoking content.

Cinematographers

An audience with a deep interest in filmmaking techniques, narrative style, and visual representation.

Social participants

Audiences who actively participate in discussions and activities on social issues, and who may gain new perspectives and knowledge through watching movies.

4.1.3 Psychological characteristics of viewers

Empathy and empathy

Audiences who have a deep empathy for marginalized groups in society and may use film to deepen their understanding of the lives of these groups.

Psychological and emotional exploration

An audience interested in the psychological state and emotional depth of characters, who seek to find emotional resonance and psychological insight in the film.

4.1.4 Viewing Motivation

Educate and enlighten

Audiences who wish to learn and enlighten themselves through film may look for such content in educational institutions or public lectures.

Appreciation of artistic expression

Audiences interested in artistic creation and expression in film, who may explore such work in art schools or film workshops.

4.2 Storyboarding

After gaining an in-depth understanding of the main girl's family and life background, the author created storyboards to plan the visual effects and transitions of

each scene, ensuring that the narrative flows smoothly and meets the creative intent. Using the form of a poetic documentary to show her inner world from multiple angles, it aims to draw the audience's attention to the group she represents and have a positive social impact.

Act 1: The silent entrance

Visual effects: The heroine walks to the teddy bear expressionless, with a slow and heavy step.

Transition: Slowly advancing the shot, focusing on the heroine's face and teddy bear, symbolizing her inner world.

Act 2: The hint of Pattaya

Visual effects: Showcases Pattaya's iconic sights, followed by neon lights at night. Pattaya in the shot is full of contrasts, the bustle of the day and the silence of the night interwoven, reflecting the conflict and loneliness in the heroine's heart.

Transition: Through quick clips, the transition from everyday life to the streets of the night suggests the existence of the sex industry.

Act 3: Black and white memories

Visual effects: Memories shot in black and white, showing fragments of the heroine's past life. The scene in the memory beats like an old movie, each picture is like a fragment in the heroine's memory, both vague and profound.

Transition: Use the dissolving transition effect to represent the passage of time and the blurring of memories.

Act 4: The bondage of pure white

Visual effects: The pure white dress is particularly abrupt on the heroine, which is both a symbol of purity and an irony of the reality of her life.

Transition: The camera moves slowly to capture subtle changes in her expression, reflecting her inner state.

Act 5 The call of the ocean

Visual effect: The heroine stands on the beach with the waves brushing her feet. The sound of the waves was particularly loud at night, and the figure of the heroine appeared both strong and fragile in the moonlight.

Transition: Through the sound of the waves and the expression of the heroine, convey her struggle and fear.

Act 6: Behind the laughter

Visual effects: The heroine's smile shines in the light, but the emptiness in her eyes cannot be concealed, and the contrast makes people feel sad.

Transition: A quick clip showing the contrast between her work and personal life.

Act 7: Signs of life

Visual effects: The colorful lights of the tattoo shop and the cold light of the pharmacy are in stark contrast, symbolizing the dilemma of the heroine's life and an indispensable element of her life.

Transition: Through the heroine's interaction in these places, show her life status.

Act 8: Protection and persistence

Visual effect: The heroine hugging the teddy bear is full of desperation and determination, and her eyes reveal the determination not to give up.

Transition: Show her dual role by contrasting her exhaustion at work with her determination to protect the teddy bear.

Act 9: The power of contrast

Visual effects: The transition from tired to sexy is emphasized by the focus of the camera and the change of light, highlighting the inner play of the heroine.

Transition: Through editing techniques, strengthen the audience's cognition of her life.

Act 10: Helpless expectation

Visual effect: The heroine's eyes are full of the desire to help, and her helplessness makes the audience unable to stop paying attention to her inner world.

Transition: Convey her inner state through her eyes and body language.

Act 11: The turning wall

Visual effects: The heroine's eyes quickly change from asking for help to smiling at work, and the camera closely follows her facial expression.

Transition: Through quick clips, she shows her inner conflict and social role transformation.

Act 12: Treasure and sacrifice

Visual effects: The heroine's every breath is filled with exhaustion, but her tight hug to the teddy bear reveals something unshakable in birth.

Transition: Show her protection of what she holds dear.

Act 13: The power of persistence

Visual effects: Even when she falls down, the heroine's hand is still gripping the teddy bear, and her persistence is particularly moving in the camera.

Transition: Through her actions, she shows her attachment to 'home (cherished things)'.

Act 14: Hope and confusion

Visual effects: The heroine looks expectantly into the distance, but seems lost. In the eyes of the heroine, there is both the desire for the future and the helplessness of reality, which makes the audience think deeply.

Transition: Through her expressions and body language, convey her desire and uncertainty for the future.

Act 15: Deep thinking

Visual effects: The heroine turns to the audience, her eyes full of help and thinking. The moment the heroine looks straight into the camera, time seems to stand still, and her eyes become the focus and soul of the entire film.

Transition: Through direct eye contact, the audience is invited to enter her inner world and trigger deep thinking.

4.3 Shooting Technology

4.3.1 Use of light

The author explores how subtle changes in a girl's emotions can be expressed through changes in light, or certain key moments can be highlighted to convey the subject matter authentically and profoundly.

Act 1: Use natural light gradients, from bright to dim, to reflect the heroine's mood from calm to heavy.

Act 2: The flickering of neon lights and the interleaving of shadows at night create the duality of Pattaya's nightlife.

Act 3: In black and white memories, the dappled light shows the passage of time and the uncertainty of memory.

Act 4: The pure white dress stands out even more in the strong light, symbolizing the contrast between purity and bondage.

Act 5: The moonlight interacts with the waves to create the atmosphere of the heroine's inner struggle.

Act 6: The bright light at work contrasts with the dim light in private life, highlighting the heroine's inner conflict.

Act 7: The different light color temperatures of the tattoo shop and the drug store represent temptation and security respectively.

Acts 8-15: In these acts, light is used to emphasize the heroine's emotional state, such as the soft light when hugging the teddy bear, and the distant light when looking forward.

4.3.2 Lens Language

The author uses techniques such as close-ups, long shots or hand-held photography to enhance the immersion and urgency of the story. Covert photography and non-interventional interviews were also used to capture the true emotions and reactions that were inadvertently revealed.

Close-up: Used to capture subtle changes in the expression of the heroine, such as the close-up of her face and the teddy bear in the first act and the close-up of her helpless eyes in the tenth act.

Long shot: Used to show the heroine's living environment and her loneliness in it, such as the long shot of Pattaya in Act 2.

Handheld photography: Used to add realism and urgency, such as the scene in which the heroine is on the beach in Act 5 and when she collapses in Act 12.

Covert photography: Used to capture the heroine's true reactions without her knowledge, such as her natural interaction at the drugstore in Act 7.

Non-intervention interview: used to record the real feelings and thinking of the heroine, such as the profound expression of her looking directly at the camera in Act 15.

4.4 Narrative Structure

4.4.1 Timeline

The researchers considered using non-linear storytelling to create suspense in the narrative and stimulate the audience's curiosity and involvement in the story. Through the way of memory and future anticipation, the heroine's fears, dreams and hopes are revealed, providing the audience with a richer emotional experience. By interspersing the heroine's past, present and future, the audience can experience her life at different points in time, so as to understand her inner world more fully.

4.4.2 Role development

In this film, we can witness how the heroine grows up in the face of adversity, and her personal changes not only affect her, but also reflect the current situation of the sex worker community as a whole. The narrative structure is tightly structured around her daily life, and through her perspective, the audience is led to feel her hopes, dreams, and challenges, which can awaken the audience to a new perspective on sex work, understanding the challenges this community faces, and their hopes and dreams. Such storytelling reinforces the resonance of the story and promotes a deeper understanding and respect for sex work.

4.5 Description of the Acts

Act 1: The silent entrance

The scene in the picture uses cool colors and soft light to show the heroine walking toward the teddy bear with a blank face (Figure 4.1). This picture conveys the atmosphere of loneliness and introspection, and also reflects the heroine's helpless and indifferent attitude towards the world. The teddy bear here symbolizes someone or something she has to take care of, and although the surroundings appear dark, the light on the bear seems to represent hope or innocence. The entire composition emphasizes

the emotional state of the main character and sets the tone for the further development of the story. Such visual narrative techniques not only enhance the artistic depth of the film, but also provide the audience with a window into the inner world of the characters.

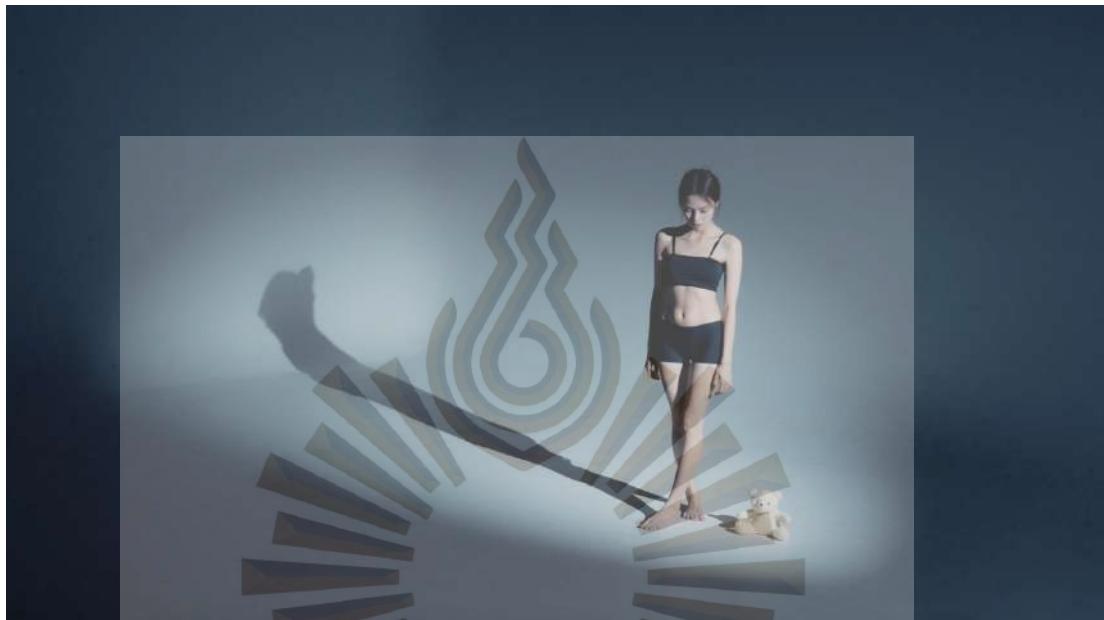


Figure 4.1 The silent entrance

Source: Researcher

Act 2: The suggestion of Pattaya

The city skyline at night, with its bright lights contrasting with the dark sky, shows the energy and mystery of Pattaya (Figure 4.2). The contrast of warm and cold tones adds visual depth, while also reflecting the multifaceted nature of urban life. The shining of the lights not only represents hope and human activity, but also hints at the hidden stories and untold truths of the city. This scene, through the clever use of visual elements, provides the audience with an in-depth exploration of Pattaya's nightlife, while also adding context and depth to the heroine's story.



Figure 4.2 The suggestion of Pattaya

Source: Researcher

Act 3: Black and white memories

The black and white memories of the third act skillfully convey the heroine's past and her inner world through its tone and visual effects. The choice of black and white tones not only gives the picture a sense of The Times, but also symbolizes the distance and fuzziness of memory. The effects of old movies in the scene deepen the audience's perception of the heroine's past experiences (Figure 4.3). In addition, the introduction of black and white memories further strengthens the theme of the film around the topic of the sex industry, providing the audience with a deep exploration of the heroine's past and inner world, while also adding depth to the theme and emotional level of the film. This treatment not only contrasts the memories with the rest of the film, but also sets the tone for the further development of the story.



Figure 4.3 Black and white memories

Source: Researcher

Act 4: The bondage of pure white

This scene deeply reflects the helplessness and persistence of the heroine through slow camera movement and the capture of subtle changes in her expression. In the picture, the heroine stands by the sea, with the white hemline contrasting with the waves, symbolizing her purity and strength in the turbulent waters of life (Figure 4.4). the text 'Never had the chance to choose' reflects the emotions she failed to express and her silent struggle.



Figure 4.4 The bondage of pure white

Source: Researcher

Act 5: The call of the ocean

In the fifth act, the idea of the heroine trying to go to the ocean many times reflects her deep despair and helplessness to the real life. However, her inner ties, such as caring for family, friends and other important things, prevent her from taking extreme actions. This inner conflict, through the call of the sea at night and the figure of the heroine, forms a strong visual and emotional contrast. The sea at night and the figure in the moonlight reveal both her strength and her vulnerability (Figure 4.5).

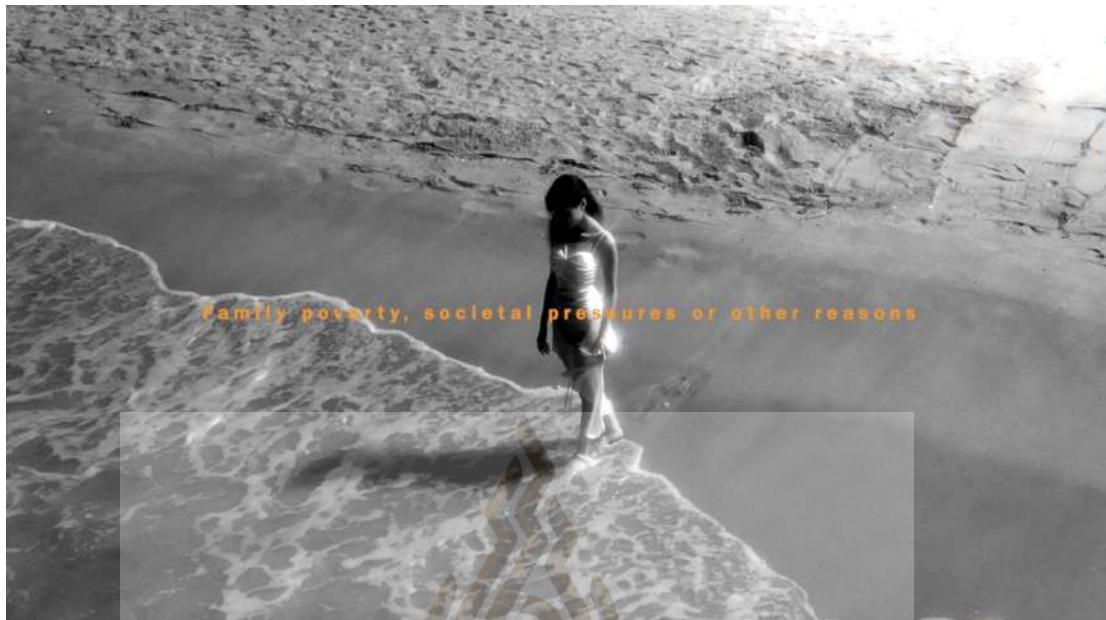


Figure 4.5 The call of the ocean

Source: Researcher

Act 6: Behind the laughter

The sixth act, by contrasting the heroine's smile in the light with the emptiness in her eyes, shows the state in which she must force a smile at work, effectively conveying the heroine's complex emotions and social role in the sex industry (Figure 4.6). This contrast not only reveals her inner loneliness and helplessness, but also reflects the true feelings of sex trade workers.



Figure 4.6 Behind the laughter

Source: Researcher

Act 7: Signs of life

In the seventh act, the complex emotions and choices of the heroine in life and work are conveyed through the visual contrast between the tattoo shop and the pharmacy (Figure 4.7). The tattoo represents the glamour and sexual tension she needs to project in order to work, while the pharmacy symbolizes the drugs she must rely on to stay healthy. The treatment of this scene adds more depth and subtlety to the film's thematic and emotional layers. This use of visual narrative is a profound display of the heroine's story, but also a sensitive and powerful discussion of the sex industry topic.



Figure 4.7 Signs of life

Source: Researcher

Act 8: Protection and persistence

By contrasting the heroine's exhaustion at work with her determination in protecting the teddy bear, Act 8 shows her persistence in protecting what she holds dear. The action of the heroine hugging the teddy bear shows her desperation and determination, but her eyes reveal the determination not to give up, and it is also very touching (Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8 Protection and persistence

Source: Researcher

Act 9: The power of contrast

The ninth act shows her double life through the heroine's transformation from tired to sexy, using camera focus and light changes to emphasize her inner drama. The heroine stands in front of an active city backdrop filled with neon lights, a contrast that highlights the relationship between the individual and the busy urban environment, adding visual impact and emotional resonance (Figure 4.9). This shift fuels the viewer's desire to explore her story.

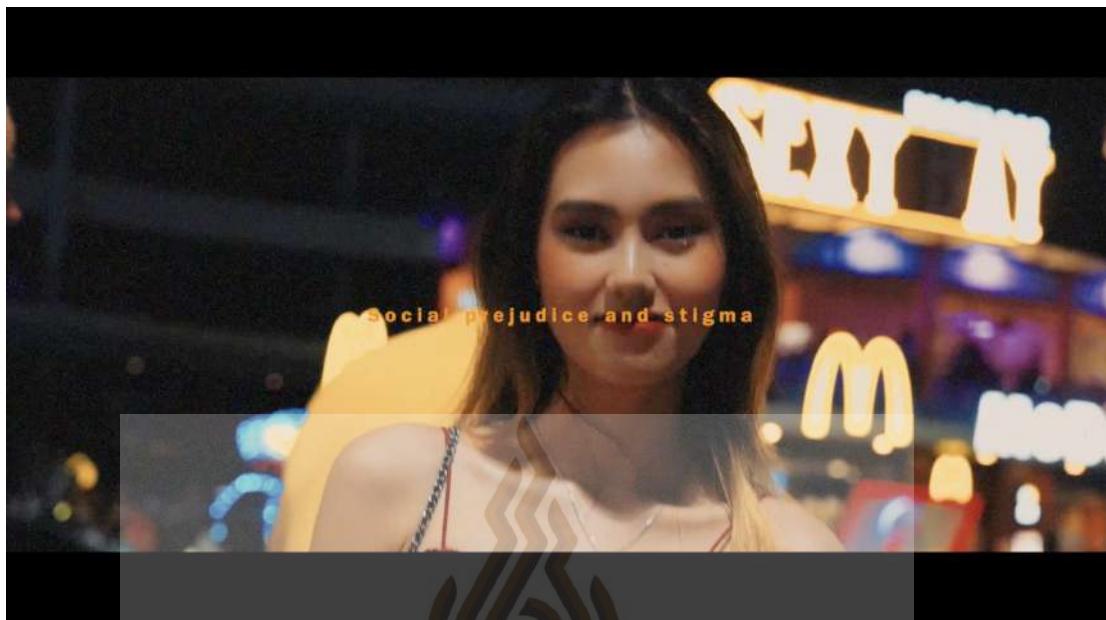


Figure 4.9 The power of contrast

Source: Researcher

Act 10: Helpless expectation

In the tenth act, the heroine's helpless eyes and body language convey her deep expectation and help (Figure 4.10). The visual effects of this scene, through her expressions and movements, let the audience feel her emotional state in non-working state, as well as her desire for the outside world and her psychology of seeking help.



Figure 4.10 Helpless expectation

Source: Researcher

Act 11: The turning wall

In the eleventh act, the heroine's eyes quickly change from asking for help to smiling at work, showing her inner conflict and changing social roles. Wearing a shiny red top, she stands in front of peeling paint and graffiti walls, creating a strong and dramatic atmosphere (Figure 4.11).

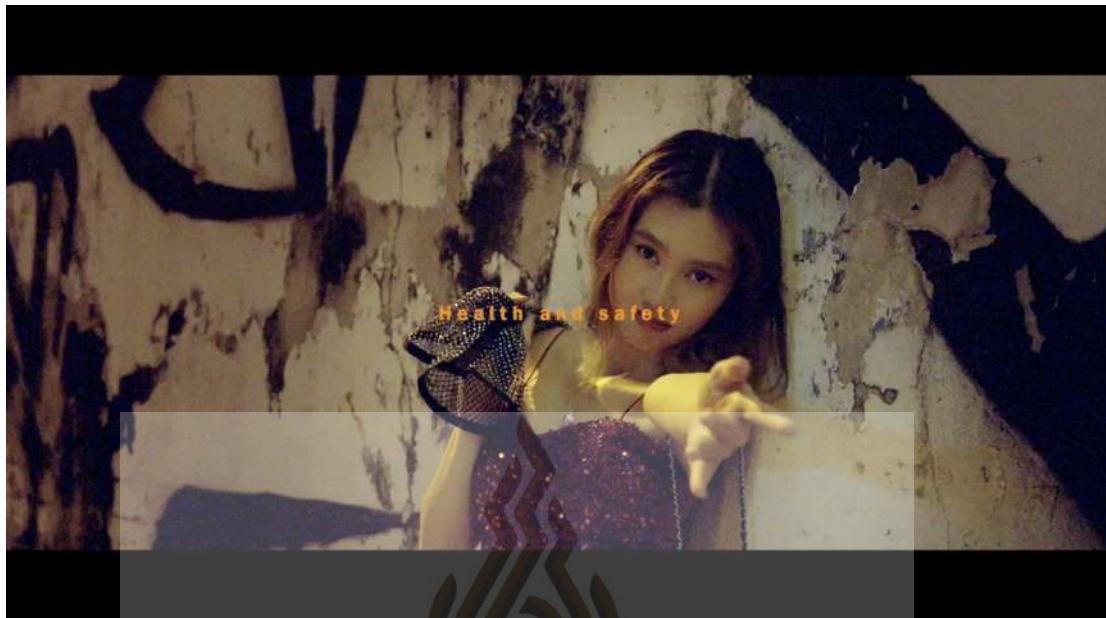


Figure 4.11 The turning wall

Source: Researcher

Act 12: Treasure and sacrifice

In the twelfth act, the heroine holds the teddy bear tightly, showing that she is wasting her youth and life while protecting what she values (Figure 4.12).



Figure 4.12 Treasure and sacrifice

Source: Researcher

Act 13: The power of persistence

In the thirteenth act, the heroine falls down and sits up again, conveying her persistence and perseverance to ‘home (cherished things)’, and her determination not to give up hope even in extreme exhaustion and difficulties (Figure 4.13).



Figure 4.13 The power of persistence

Source: Researcher

Act 14: Hope and confusion

Through the eyes and body language of the heroine, Act 14 shows her longing for the future and her helplessness to the reality. The ‘Hope’ next to the light source symbolizes her hope for the future and her confusion at present (Figure 4.14). The scene underscores the inner drama of the heroine, who, while eager to change the status quo, is not sure exactly what to expect.

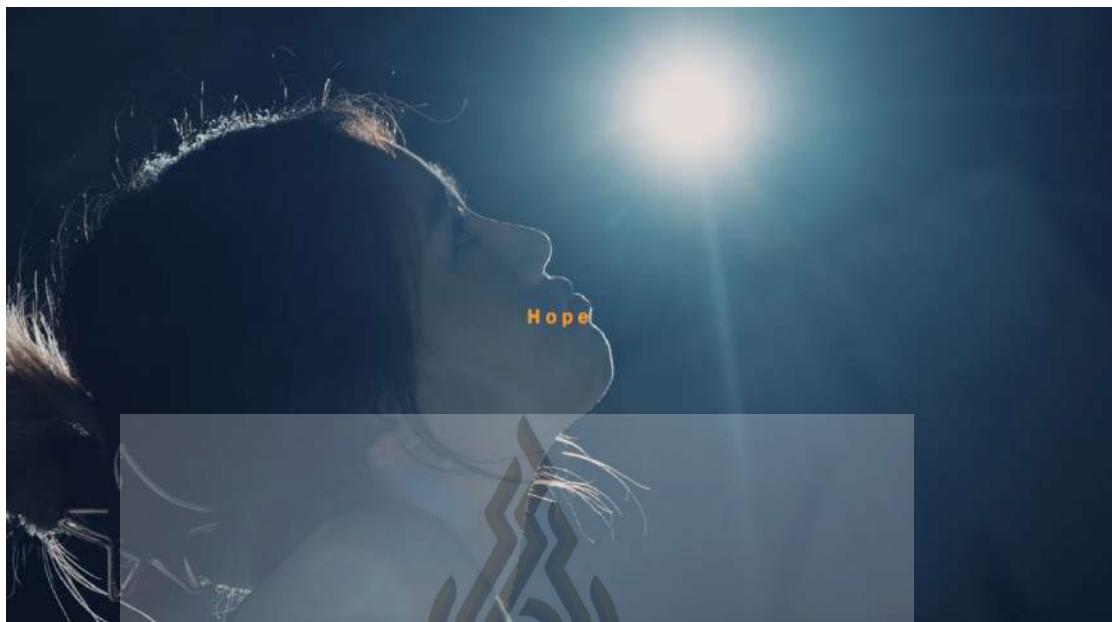


Figure 4.14 Hope and confusion

Source: Researcher

Act 15: Deep thinking

In the final act, the eyes of the heroine turning to the audience are full of help and thinking, and the moment of staring into the camera seems to make time stand still. Her expression in one's eyes becomes the focus and soul of the whole film (Figure 4.15).



Figure 4.15 Deep thinking

Source: Researcher, 2024



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Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Project Reflection

The creative process of this film is not only a profound journey of self-exploration, but also a challenge of social concepts. Through an in-depth look at the lives of sex workers, the film reveals the complex emotional and social challenges faced by this group, as well as society's diverse views and inherent prejudices about sex work. In the process, the author's self-awareness has been enhanced, and his empathy for sex workers has also been strengthened.

5.2 Impact Assessment

Based on initial feedback, the film has been successful in drawing viewers' attention to the situation of sex workers and promoting public discussion on the decriminalization and de-stigmatization of sex work. By showing the daily life and inner world of sex workers, the film challenges audiences' traditional conceptions and provokes in-depth thinking about the social status and human rights issues of sex work.

5.3 Conclusion

The creation and presentation of this film not only documents the real life of sex workers, but also challenges the existing conceptions and prejudices of society. By artistically presenting the everyday lives of sex workers, the film reveals the struggles they face, the hope they maintain, and the resilience they demonstrate. At the same time, it also reflects society's misunderstanding of this group. The purpose of the film is to arouse empathy in the audience, promote understanding and acceptance of sex

workers, and promote the discussion and process of destigmatizing sex work in society (Doe, 2023). It is hoped that this work will be a force for social change and cognitive renewal.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Work

Given the diversity and complexity of the sex work field, the authors suggest that future researchers and filmmakers continue to explore the subject, especially the personal stories and social contexts of sex workers (Smith, 2023). In addition, the authors call on policy makers to consider the rights of sex workers and provide them with more support and protection, including legal safeguards, health services, and social acceptance (Zhang & Wang, 2023). Through these efforts, the quality of life of sex workers can be further improved and society can be more inclusive and inclusive.



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