The Resistance and Negotiation on the Meaning of Nightlife Entertaining Girls

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Abstract

The major goal of this study is to analyze and explore a reconstruction of the meaning of nightlife entertaining girls, in response to their portrayal as a "not-good lady" by Thai society's myth. In this study, qualitative techniques were used in the data collection of twelve (12) key informants selected using snowball sampling. The inclusion criteria of prospective case studies participants are nightlife entertaining girls, 20-25 years of age, living and working around the five (5) lower northern provinces of Thailand (Phitsanulok, Phichit, Nakhon Sawan, Kamphangphet, and Sukhothai), who were willing to share their experiences for this study. The interpretative approach, content analysis, and data analysis techniques were employed in this research to understand the significance of peoples' experiences under their sociocultural context. The findings were then presented by utilizing the narrative technique.

The research found that the resistance and negotiation of meaning were demonstrations of survival skills in order to negotiate with Thai society's myth of patriarchy. Three significant patterns were revealed in this study: Firstly, the everyday resistance processes through exercising power over the body, especially having realized the charms of femininity-sex appeal and sexual lure were used to resist patriarchal power. Also, by taking advantage of the law's loopholes such that playing the role of a lover and dating is too difficult to classify into criminal charges of prostitution. Secondly, the reconstruction of self-identity where entertaining girls need not think of their job's negative image by considering themselves legal workers and that earning money for a living is more important. Lastly, having the ability to leverage their negotiation power to their clients through different forms of benefits, such as wages, tips, and gifts. Moreover, some of them maintain contracts with restaurants or pubs to bring in their clients – and with more money spent, more money is shared.

Keywords: Nightlife Entertaining Girls, Everyday Resistance, Reconstruction of Self-Identity, Negotiation of Power and Benefits, Myth

Introduction

Over the past six decades, Thailand initiated its first national economic and social development planning. This direction focused its development toward being an industrialized country with the crucial role of economic development and the growth of gross domestic product (GDP). This trend leads to the capitalist country's economic expansion and its contribution to generating employment in various industrial sectors. Consequently, the definition of "employment" may not fit for all, particularly with the employment types separated by sexual appropriateness where issues of gender inequality are crucial. Especially in Thai society, females working during the wee hours of the night were viewed with a set of negative beliefs about being in an inappropriate job.

Under the reign of King Rama V, the negative myths of prostitutes shifted from morally repulsive behavior to legal offense. In 1908, the Thai state launched the Contagious Disease Prevention Act concerning health issues, communicable diseases. This Act led to the registration of prostitute houses which allowed the government to tax and keep the places in order. Every brothel that paid taxes had to hang a green lantern at their front doors. Hence the prostitutes were called green-lantern women and prostitution is therefore illegal only if they did not pay taxes (Mattariganond, 1983).

However, throughout the reign of King Rama V-VII, the negative myths of prostitution remained in Thai society. Even though it is permitted to make registered prostitution a legal profession, but the law cannot overcome

social morality. The beliefs, values, and attitudes of most people in society toward prostitution are still morally negative. Therefore, most prostitutes were not willing to register because they did not want to be socially stigmatized (Anchalee, 2006, p. 147). In this case, the social moral values seemed to be a more concerning point than the legal status of the occupation.

Over the last three decades, Thai society has witnessed the transformation of the pattern and structure of the labor market. The widening gap of income between the rich and the poor, the urban and rural areas, and the changing status of stay-at-home housewives to working women. Female laborers concentrated in the service sectors, which are frequently regarded with sex-related jobs such as tour companies, hotels, nightclubs, bars, massage parlors, 'gentleman's clubs', and similar enterprises. This view explains how the myth of the word 'working girls' has existed and remained (Boonchalaksi & Guest, 1994, p. 1).

The 'boom of nightlife' industry in Thailand during the 1960s perpetuated this myth. The economic growth, in combination with the expansion of tourism and the increasing influence of western culture, resulted in the swelling of night-time entertainment venues like pubs, bars, and nightclubs. These businesses offered job opportunities for women. Petchdee's research disclosed that waitresses and night-time singers are examples of jobs that require female laborers to make places like restaurants and nightclubs more attractive to male tourists and nightclubbers (Petchdee, 2002).

Despite the legal status of these jobs and places, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, night-time entertainment venues have been viewed by many in Thai society as 'uncongenial places' or 'unpleasant places'. As a result, people who work in such places, especially women, have been depicted as 'bad people' who undermine the good morality of society (Aroonjit, 2012, pp. 5-7). This negative view applies to all the night-time jobs created later such as 'karaoke girls' (karaoke is a type of interactive entertainment in which an amateur singer sings along with recorded music). During the 1980s, karaoke became a very popular entertainment in Thai society and most night-time entertainment businesses incorporated karaoke to the services they offer. The roles of karaoke girls are to entertain (mostly) male customers while they are singing. The jobs in entertaining customers include but not limited to mixing their beverages, singing, and dancing with them. On most occasions, the jobs also include being touched, kissed and hugged by the customers with or without the girls' consent. The fact that the customers feel entitled to do inappropriate things to karaoke girls has actualized the myth, mentioned above, that all night time female workers are bad, involved in the industry providing sexual services, and are no different from prostitutes (Sophonkanaporn, 1988).

Kuanruthai Jangjumrus (2000) studied the myths of women working at night called "night-karaoke girls". Her research found out that social myth-making recognized night-karaoke girls an object in the sex industry (Jangjumrus, 2000, p. 1). This notion was also supported by Janjera Tatigate's (2001) research about the waitress: a prostitute's life in a restaurant. She asserted that becoming a prostitute – waitress resulted in the negative social myth and judgment as a prostitute (Tatigate, 2001, pp. 1-2). Moreover, the study of Umaporn Nukhiaw (2009) surrounding the myths of nightlife singing females mentioned that some people in Thai society negatively regarded these women's reputation and are considered a kind of "not-good lady" (Nukhiaw, 2009, p. 3).

Nowadays, a new career has evolved for night-time working women, the so-called "entertaining girls". Some of its qualifications and job descriptions include having good-looks and a pleasant personality to entertain, take care, prepare, and mix beverages of guests. Compensation is high at about 2,000-5,000 baht per night. Since these girls are freelance and are not necessarily tied up to work with only one restaurant or nightclub, they can go

anywhere as the client desires or they recommend. This new occupation for women, however, is still dominated under the myth of females oppressed during their night-time work, the same as with the past.

Nevertheless, even under Thai society's mythical phenomenon, nobody can be oppressed permanently. Despite the ambivalent definition of "night working", which entertaining girls struggled, this became the sense to which their experience precisely served them in resisting and re-acquiring their significance under a professional context.

Therefore, the major objectives of this study are to answer these key research questions: (1) How do nightlife entertaining girls understand the meaning of their careers? And (2) how do these girls resist or negotiate the meaning and respond to the negative myths of society? The researcher hopes that this study will be a part of the expanding scope of knowledge, understanding, and attitude formation about the "little people", such as the entertaining girls in our society. Living under the "myth" that separated the people between "angels" and "devils", these entertaining girls must endure the derogatory comments and manners people throw at them. This study shows that these girls do not surrender to the deprivation of humanity. However, they try to use distinct mechanisms in response to their dehumanization. Thus, the relativism of the meaning of "entertaining girls", as they demonstrate their resistance through the negotiation of meaning and employing flexible tactics to suit their sociocultural circumstance, especially when their dignity is discriminated against and dehumanized.

Research Objectives

This article aims to analyze and explore the resistance and negotiation patterns experienced by entertaining girls living and working under Thai's traditional myth.

Theoretical Framework

A world of meanings and definitions of things is not always straightforward. Instead, it seems to flow based on the differentials of power. As French philosopher Roland Barthes defined, "Myth" means a mode of signification, systems, regulations, and forms creating meaning by communicating with prejudice, cut, conceal, disguise, and distorted meaning of things. Hence, the acceptor of the meaning of thing must be accompanied by that of the so-called "falsely obvious" myth. This process depends on the conditions of the dominating power in obtaining approval from the broader society (Barthes, 1993, p. 11; Baeten, 1996, p. 95; Dant, 2003, p. 32; Moran, 2005, p. 12).

However, the myth process of meaning-creation generates a negative image and a representation of symbolic violence. An explanation of symbolic violence is described as a result of the understanding of power and signification as "an instrument of power and domination" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 15; Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 111; Bourdieu, 2005, p. 133). Its prime purpose is to create distortions of perception, misrecognition and reproduce unequal structures continually (Swartz, 1997, pp. 82-87; Jenkins, 2002, p. 109).

The interrelation between myth and symbolic violence is a power struggle. This ambivalence leads to the atmosphere of myth. On one hand, dominators need to keep up their power as long as possible. On the other hand, those dominated desire to change the distorted social structure, expressing their resistance through the negotiation of power and benefits.

Some examples of this crucially oppressive historical practices are witch-hunting in the Middle Ages of European history, Sati or Suttee in India (the Hindu's dogma that widows burn herself to death on her husband's

pyre), foot binding in China, genital mutilation in Africa, and psychological and surgical castrations in the USA and Europe (Daly, 1978; French, 1992).

Michel de Certeau's practice of everyday life concepts is one of the decisive and dominant resistance methods. This concept implicates the "Means" of the subalterns' use of timing and opportunities to usurp/ take advantage and negotiate power relations from the dominator. Such a concept has assisted unofficial "tactics", where the marginalized groups responded to the oppressing "strategy" of a ruler (de Certeau, 1984, pp. 29, 36, 56).

Moreover, James C. Scott, an American political scientist and anthropologist, illustrated these concepts of informal resistance, so-called "weapons of the weak" and "hidden transcripts". He mentioned that the resistance of the weak, to be officially formed, requires a must and complete eradication of the ruler's ideology. In contrast, the desire to dominate the ideology through the establishment of a ruling power may be used as an unofficial resistance weapon. Oppositions commonly utilize this method for the possibility of power-sharing (Scott, 1990, p. xii).

Therefore, the authors of this article focused on the resistance and negotiation of the meaning of nightlife entertaining girls. By considering and interpreting their informal resistances in the daily lives of negotiation of power and benefits, this theoretical framework will help show a new way of understanding the resistance of the weak and the negotiation of a meaning method.

Methods and Materials

The qualitative research techniques were used to collect data. The techniques include participant observation, informal interviews, and in-depth unstructured interviews. Twelve key informants were selected and interviewed using the snowball sampling method. The interpretive approach and content analysis were applied along with data analysis tools to understand about their life histories, the significance of experiences, and the struggling processes under the sociocultural context. The six major inclusion criteria set for this case study participants are that they must: 1) admit they are nightlife entertaining girls, 2) be 20-25 years of age, 3) work in night time entertaining business such as pubs, bars, or restaurants, 4) be freelancers, 5) live and work around five lower northern provinces of Thailand (Phitsanulok, Phichit, Nakhon Sawan, Kamphangphet, and Sukhothai), and 6) be willing to participate in this study.

Results

The results of this study are summarized into two major points and are detailed below:

1. The Power of Penis: The Myth of Patriarchy System

The Myth of Patriarchy refers to the interconnections among power, sexuality, and belief. Thus, the patriarchal ideology is a system of knowledge production formation. In South and Southeast Asian countries, the idea of Lingam (the Hindu phallic symbol of Shaivism) based on Brahmanism-Hinduism regard to this nature of philosophy influential in the foundation of political ideas of the region. Siva lingam played masculinity, which reflects the formation of the state and sovereignty when a new king ascends to the throne (Mus, 1933).

In the western world, the patriarchal notion increased its legitimacy during the reign of the British monarchy in the 17th century with its ideological roots based on the Christian faith. It is believed that the King inherited the same power from Adam, the first man who oversees his wife, Eve, and his children. Therefore, the King, endowed

with the greatest sexual prowess as related to Adam's model in his family, acts as the father of all citizens in a social institution (Filmer, 1991, pp. 2-10).

The notions above lead to the patriarchal idea in the sense of political power, in which the government plays masculinity's role. In this sense, the meaning of patriarchy referred to the rule of the father or the patriarch. In general, this word used to describe the social system ideology of characteristic of family explanation in which men hold power over and predominate in roles of the head of the family. Hence, referring to the rule of the father or the patriarch. In general, this word is used to describe and explain the characteristics of this social system and ideology where men hold power and predominate the roles of the family, as its head (Bhasin, 1994, p. 3).

Figure 1 (Left) The Lingam Stone Sculpture: My Son Sanctuary at the Archaeological Site,
UNESCO World Heritage Site, Quang Nam Province, Da Nang, Vietnam (Agefotostock, 2011)
From https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Linga_1_(My_Son).jpg#mw-jump-to-license
(Right) The Painting: The Rebuke of Adam and Eve, 1740, by Charles Joseph Natoire (Natoire, 1987)
From https://www.theeternalcircle.net/paintings/charles-joseph-natoire-the-rebuke-of-adam-and-eve/

The system of cultural traditions linked social ideology in the forms of myths. One of the assets of men is the belief that they are more superior than women. An example of this belief is evident in the terms and words used to refer to husbands in many countries. In South Asia, *pati,* in Bengali *swami,* in Oriya *swami,* in Urdu *shohar, khamind, pati and gulam.* These words, derived from animal husbandry, relate husband to a controller, domesticator, and words which mean *"lord"* or *"owner"* (Bhasin, 2014; Trivedi & Gajjar, 2017, p. 444). As a result, the social context of development for both men and women were altered in a way where their biological differences assigned their different roles. Rather, the social system played a major role as a doctrine defining what men and women are expected to do (Gilligan, 1982).

For Thai society, the patriarchal term is also used in the sense of the "Kingship Regime" since the Sukhothai period. In an inscription, the king was presented as the male's power, the so-called "father of the people". The king as "father" and the people as "his child" (Woodward, 2015, p. 194). The word penis is used in various ways to mean the greatness of males. For example, in the Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram era's (1938-1945) dictionary definition, the meaning of masculinity is assessed by sex, physiology, penis, and muscles of a "breeder" (Kawinraweekun, 2002, p. 110). Such as the word *"Ong-ka-chart"*, which refers to the male genital organ, this word contains Pali and Sanskrit languages. *"Ong-ka"* means "organ and self", and "chart" means "birth or origin of the state" (Office of the Royal Society, 2011). The word *"Chao-lok"*, often appearing even in newspapers, means the owner of the world.

Gender differences classification repeatedly appears under psychoanalysis through Freud's psychosexual stages of development. Highlighting phallic power, having a phallus resembles masculinity and the appreciation in penis, castration anxiety in boys, and the penis envy in girls. In this sense, the penis reveals a symbol of superiority and dominance (Colman, 2015, p. 566).

However, under patriarchy, an idea was conceived with a binary opposition completely distinguishing sex's male superiority and female inferiority. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", meaning being a woman does not carry naturally by birth. Rather, it happens by means of "feminization" under the process of social ideology and belief continually reproduced (de Beauvoir, 2011, pp. 17-18).

In capitalism, patriarchy leads to the problem of gender inequality – her productivity related to labor, production, ownership, and division of labour in the family. The husband, the bourgeoisie, owns all the family's property, and the wife is the proletariat having no possession, and her factors disregarded in the production. This myth designates power to husbands as the leader of the family and that wives must obey and follow them (Engels & Untermann, 1902, pp. 168, 281).

Moreover, also transpiring is the myth of having women exclusively do household chores. Under industrial capitalism, there are two categories of work; 1) work-outside-home, it is a man's job and considered productive because they receive wages, and 2) work-at-home, a woman's job considered nonproductive because of the absence of monetary returns. Capitalism tries to keep women working at home. However, it allows men to work full time in industrial factories without having to pay wages to those who supported them beyond working hours (Purisinsit, 2002, pp. 77-78).

The maintenance of personal property possession contributed to the myth of woman as a sexual object. When these properties are accumulated, men need to ensure that their assets are saved for their rightful heirs. The monogamy system assured men that the child born of the woman is his. Besides, for men to keep economic stability, she must provide sexual services to her husband and must look after his well-being in order to maintain a good relationship in the family (Weadock, 2004; Ziegler et al., 2014, pp. 4-8).

In addition, consumerism has emphasized women as sexual objects for males to respond to their sexual drives. Women are obliged to provide sexual services to men according to their needs and desires. Women's sexual activity outside marriage is generally considered a taboo. In contrast, society turns a blind eye to males' promiscuity (Martha Farrell Foundation, 2019, p. 18).

Furthermore, females are also redefined by sexiness as a product (sex), which may be traded for money (Santasombat, 1991, p. 84). By this, the possession of women as men's property is crucial. Thus, the male sexual drive is not only focused on the sexual intercourse Rather, it's about but also in the demonstration of his masculinity, power, and release of sexual desire over a woman (Walby, 1990, pp. 109-127).

In conclusion, the myths of patriarchy revolved around having a penis. It reflected the power of possession of women, both body and mind, all of which men can possess and buy. However, men fell into the trap they were digging themselves. While men are proud of his penis and appreciated with his mightiness, Simultaneously, the women are not stuck or consenting man's oppressions. Instead, she tries to find a gap to resist and negotiate in various forms. These forms are important tactics women used to respond and deal with each situation appropriately.

2. The Resistance and Negotiation on Meaning Process

2.1 The Everyday Resistances

There were two major types of everyday resistances, which emerged as follows:

Firstly, the power over the body. Thailand has traditionally been a patriarchal society. Women are perceived as men's sexual objects. Her physical beauty and the pleasures she brings are her essential weapons against men's weakness in sexual desire. Conversely, enabling her the opportunity to conceive power and expression are the female's physique, sexual attractiveness, and sex appeal. In this case, most clients think women are more attractive when they look hot and sexy. Meanwhile, almost all of the entertaining girls recognized that they have the power of femininity through their physical bodies. Three characteristics of using the body as power and tactic for luring clients had been revealed. In essence, these are 1) sharing sexy images on Facebook or Instagram, 2) sending suggestive photos to their clients, and 3) presenting a charming and pleasing personality for the clients through provocative dressing, openness in dirty talks and a not too modest attitude of preserving their purity to flaunt their sex appeal and desire. As Amm (pseudonym), a 23-year-old entertaining girl said about using the femininity tactic for enticing her clients that,

"I intend to choose my pictures with very revealing clothes and posted them on my Facebook and Instagram. Sometimes, when the job is calling, I will send my sexy photos for customers to choose from. By this, it helps me to get a lot of work. Most customers whom I don't know will choose me based on those photos."

Figure 2 An Example of Entertaining Girls' Images on Facebook (Catdumb, 2018)
From https://www.catdumb.com/entertain-girl-339/

This notion supported by B (pseudonym), a 20-year-old entertaining girl told her experience about the tactics in enticing men by dressing voluptuous clothing and a service mind,

"This little dress is important. Men let us go on a night trip. They want to admire the beautiful body. We have to choose clothes that will show a little bit of our body.... Another thing is the service mind; we must try to please them as much as we can. During conversations, I should be able to talk about everything, both general topics, and dirty jokes.... This method must be learned. Customers will be enamored with these, and if we continue to impress them, they will use our service again."

The second is by taking advantage of the gap in Section 4. of the Prostitution Prevention and Suppression Act B.E. 2539. The law stated that "prostitution" means the acceptance of sexual intercourse or any other act, or the commission of any other activities in order to gratify the sexual desire of another person in a promiscuous manner in return for money or any other benefits, irrespective of whether the person who accepts the

act and the person who commits the act are of the same sex or prostitution establishment means a place or an enterprise for prostitution or in which prostitution is allowed, and shall also include places used for soliciting or procuring another person for prostitution. In the case of law enforcement, there are many difficulties in its interpretation and operation. This article's author found out that the entertaining girls' activities are excluded from this Act's definition of prostitution, which is too complicated to distinguish what constitutes a prostitute. Additionally, it is also too difficult to regulate which types of night restaurants and pubs are associated with the business of prostitution.

Figure 3 An Example of the Entertainment Place and the Unique Characteristics of Entertaining Girls' Job – Laws are too Difficult to Enforce

Because of their unique job characteristics, the entertaining girls' behavior with their patrons can be classified as in the form of being on "date" as "lovers" or a "drinking partner". Additionally, the entertainment establishment has no direct authority over them and the police officers are hard-pressed to check the costumer's intention and their engagement in prostitution. As Ying (pseudonym), a 20-year-old entertaining girl said,

"I've never been checked. It's like a man talking to his girlfriend to eat and drink. Like going to sit, chat, flirt, serve and make them drinks, that's it. How can that be interpreted as a prostitution service?"

For the difficulty in inspection, Jack (pseudonym) and Big (pseudonym), a 42-year-old owner of a pub in Phitsanulok, mentioned that,

"The surveillance and checking are too difficult to impose. We cannot ask anyone about prostitution or being with a playmate; it's a privacy abuse... We can only refuse admission of youngsters who are under 20 years old, groups that do not carry ID cards and detecting the carrying of weapons into pubs, that's all."

In conclusion, working with male tourists and nightclubbers has created "awareness" or "changed the way of thinking" for nightlife entertaining girls in three major aspects; 1) working during night-time changed meaning to regular nightshift work-time to earn money for survival and living, 2) using the power of femininity through their physical bodies as weapons against men's weakness in sexual desire, and 3) taking advantage of the loophole of the law. Under Thai law, there is nothing wrong with a couple caring, drinking, and socializing. This notion of a "decent work" among nightlife entertaining girls reinforces their feelings of innocence but may be immoral.

2.2 The Reconstruction of Self – Identity

Where there is power, there is resistance. Consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power. As identity is also relativism, it occurs and flows according to time, space, and the socio-

cultural context, which contributes to the diversified sexual oppression between males and females. These factors lead to the struggle towards resistance and change, rather than yielding to its fixed identity (Foucault, 1978, p. 95).

This reconstructed self-identity is referred to as an attempt to create a new connotation of the entertaining girls, which involves the disengagement of mental self from the myth of using the body as a sexual commodity. The author describes this phenomenon as a resistance and negotiation mechanism to dehumanized myths.

This process began when the entertaining girls accepted the reality-as group of people working at night or working women. They contend that this job is similar to other employments of women in society, but just a bit different on its schedule of work compared to those of the educated and skilled. However, these girls have adopted the negative status nobody wants to be, especially with the myth-making society. Eventually, the entertaining girls reconstructed themselves as "workers", bringing forth these unusual jobs as opportunities to find ways of providing work by taking advantage of the situation. This new vocation creates value not only for themselves but also for their families' low financial status, being able to support financially. As Minnie (pseudonym), a 22-year-old entertaining girl recounted,

"It's just a job, a career, some people work as a teacher, some people work as a saleswoman, but I work as an employee, the clients hired me to entertain guests, mix drinks and serve beverages at a party... I also work for myself and my family like other people. But the nature of my job is just a kind of different, and most importantly, I didn't break the law."

On the issue directed to the role of the entertaining girls' job description, they have always seemed to enjoy making money more than surrendering to the social myth. As Jenny (pseudonym), a 22-year-old entertaining girl told that,

"I don't care about negative perspectives or disgrace. I just want to do my job; it's my business. I'm proud to be an entertaining girl because I can make money for myself, send money to help my family. If my parents are OK and happy, I don't care about anybody else."

In conclusion, nightlife entertaining girls realized the power of their bodies from having "awareness" and "changing their way of thinking" to counter the negative pressures against them and exposition of self-defense mechanism. By portraying a new woman different from her traditional image, for example, instead of displaying politeness and modesty, nightlife entertaining girls dare to exhibit seductive and sexually aggressive qualities. This strategy or tactic to present their alluring personality to customers generates power for themselves –as a sexual drive controller, obtaining economic benefits in many ways.

2.3 The Negotiation of Power and Benefits

Detailed below are two major forms of the negotiated power and benefits:

Firstly, the negotiated patriarchy of power through femininity as accorded by Thai society's patriarchal structure. The major myths based it on the traditional norms that men created to ensure their greater power over women, both in physical and mental conditions (Jackson & Cook, 2001, p. 287; Pongsapich, 2005, p. 4; Wongthet, 2006, p. 183).

However, this study revealed much of the entertaining girls' power over men operating in the form of "women's wiles or women's tricks" by buttering up, pretending, and luring male clients to fulfill what they want – for example, influencing clients to choose a more preferred restaurant or nightclub to go to, persuading them the

food and drinks to order, and sometimes taking-out food back to their home as well. More importantly, everything is free, supported and financed by men, who were supposedly more powerful than women. As Joy (pseudonym), a 20-year-old entertaining girl said that

"If they've got no idea, I suggest a restaurant or pub I want to go to, and they usually indulge. Naturally, I choose places that I'm familiar with. Usually, either these places are owned by my friend or my former clients. I love these places' friendly atmosphere as well as the discounts. Of course, the owner appreciates that I take clients to use their services. That's why I feel comfortable to go."

Secondly, the negotiation of benefits which takes into two forms, these are;

(1) The negotiation of benefits from the client in the form of wages and tips. The minimum wage is between 1,500 to 5,000 baht for 3-4 hours, plus tips. Approximately, an entertaining girl earns from 3,000-7,000 baht per night from wages and tips depending on the quality of her service and the client's satisfaction.

(2) The negotiation of benefits from restaurants or nightclubs in the form of shared money, discounts, and networking. By encouraging their clients to go to a restaurant or nightclub in which the entertaining girl has networks, financial benefits are shared between the referrer and the establishment. Moreover, their familiarity with each other often leads to increased employment opportunities, such as hiring them as one of the pubs' pretty girls, MC/ Emcee, and model in special events and occasions. As Gift (pseudonym), a 22-year-old entertaining girl affirmed.

"If I suggested and my clients go, some of these restaurants or pubs I recommended might give me 200-300 baht, and sometimes with a 10% discount. Mostly, it is for networking, both relationship and interests – especially in increasing moneymaking opportunities. With these connections, I'm even getting part-time jobs. If they need more people for some of their special events, they can easily recommend me for it."

Summing-up this part, the negotiation of power and benefits exploited the patriarchy's myth of male night-tourists' semblance of leadership by paying and supporting women. Under the myth of patriarchy, male clients treat nightlife entertaining girls as sexual objects but causing her to use certain powers to control or manage him to do as they wish. Additionally, they also negotiate to agree on the benefits she receives from the client – a hefty pay, tip, or gifts she wants to have. Furthermore, her ability to bring guests and customers enables her to negotiate benefits from restaurants or nightclubs such as special discounts, privileges, and cheers. Should entertaining girls prefer another place to go, they persuade former clients to visit their new workplace, increasing their income.

Figure 4 An Example of a Job Advertisement for Entertaining Girls (Soda Za, 2018)
From https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2064668133810090&set=ecnf.100008007690042&type=3&theater

Discussion

This article highlighted the resistance and negotiation of the meaning of entertaining girls. These girls were used as a case study to illustrate the power of Thai traditional myths to construct and embed a set of beliefs. Under Thai patriarchal social norms, myths were used as a strategy that limits the power of femininity. Engaged with power and sexuality, working at nighttime is prohibited for women who are expected to work within the confines of a house as a housewife, waiting and relying upon men regarded as the family leader. This myth of women were highlighted in this study.

However, this myth may also be used as a weapon for resistance and negotiation of meaning. Every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Survival tactics responded to the dominance and leadership of patriarchy's social structure; in this case, the entertaining girls exhibited the tactics of resistance and negotiation of meaning in the form of power of the weak. This study bared three significant unstraightforward oppositions.

Firstly, the ideological revolution. This reconstruction is not a traditional elimination; rather, it merely adjusts and takes advantage to benefit from the old myths. Self-awareness is crucial, noting the long-term oppression of most entertaining girls who are still living with these stereotypes, although some features of these definitions were already modified. They have realized their value and significance by reconstructing their self – identity from being housewives to working women. Since women have moved away from domestic chores to work outside, especially a night job, traditional borderline suppositions of night-working for women were challenged.

Secondly, the power of the weak's tactics in everyday resistances. On the one hand, masculinity is a representation of the power of strength. On the other hand, femininity is the representation of the power of beauty. The woman's beautiful body, sexuality, sexual behaviors, as well as her perverse manners of courteousness and complaisance are regarded as indispensable stratagems to combat patriarchy. Men's sexual desires exposed his weakness, which afforded women the negotiating power to get what they want. Moreover, survival skills taught these girls to use legal gaps to escape law detection and avoid social surveillance during their nightly trade.

Lastly, the negotiation of power and benefits. Because of self-awareness, traditional myths were reversed. The negative image replaced by a more favorable reputation of the power over the body transformed these adverse notions into working women's privileges. The earned wages and tips, which importantly helped support themselves and their family, replaced the negative undertones of "midnight girls". Under this adjusted world view, considering the benefits their family received against the gossips generated from society, myths about the males' dominant figure of the family were also challenged.

In addition, the advantage of being freelancers allows them to be more independent and unaffiliated with any establishments, has changed their roles from being "chosen" to "the chooser". This operation facilitates the increase of their negotiating power with various nightclubs for additional earnings. Being "the chooser" grants the entertaining girl's prestige and acceptance from various night-tourist services networks. This newfound capacity to independently increase income prospects undeniably empowers her human dignity.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Although myths are mechanisms produced to create meaning for human beings through metaphors, stories, and enclosing revelations (Duch, 2002, p. 37; Blumenberg, 2003, p. 41), this function reflects its close relationship

to the concept of power and tradition. These myths served as a dominating mechanism in creating an atmosphere of fear to make people aware and follow only consented behaviors.

However, this article suggested that myths are not only intended as a tool for oppression, as revealed in the interaction between power and resistance in the reconstructed meaning of entertaining girls. "Power is everywhere", its existence is universal and crucial. In challenging Thai society's patriarchy, myths give the entertaining girl's opportunity to reconstruct a new identity in this new space, time, and context. Sharing power and exploring the many opportunities and benefits that nobody has ever cared about or was not able to gather enough courage to challenge traditional beliefs.

Thus, myths viewed from the two sides of the coin have both constructive and destructive consequences. This possibility of a new mode of thinking or the critical change of worldview by questioning or challenging traditional myths may help open up supplementary definitions augmenting explanations of the complexities of the human being.

Towards a better understanding between the interaction of power and resistance, the authors suggested focusing on the myths' two sides – construction and destruction. Moreover, in disclosing hidden agendas behind myths, various forms of negative representations are needed to be reconsidered and challenged. Denotations that are obstructing people from exercising their independence should not only be considered obstacles but also opportunities for a better comprehension of the human being.

This paper brings forward three major recommendations; 1) Policy recommendations: The awareness of social phenomena and open-mindedness to understand the problems in a holistic manner could pave the way for governments to formulate appropriate social, economic, and tourism development policies in order to balance human dignity and progress. 2) Operating recommendations: Providing an open space or communication channel to showcase nightlife entertaining girls' special skills, talents, and knowledge for career development. This program may open up society's new perspectives and understanding about nightlife entertaining girls. 3) Research recommendations: The researchers recommend further studies expanding the sample group to those who are oppressed with society's myths and more extensively expand this subject matter's body of knowledge.

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