



**CHILDSAFE.AI**  
PROTECTING KIDS ONLINE

# Beyond Backpage

Buying And Selling Sex In The United States  
One Year Later

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# Introduction

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## Executive Summary



On 6 April 2018, the United States Department of Justice [seized the dominant online commercial sex marketplace](#)

[Backpage](#). Five days later, the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) / Allow States and Victims To Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) was [signed into law](#). These twin events dramatically changed the online distribution layer serving the underground commercial sex economy (UCSE) in the United States, which in turn fuels sex trafficking across the country.

In the year since those events, the online distribution layer serving the UCSE in the United States is fragmented across dozens of websites. Similar to the phenomenon of dark web narcotics marketplaces following the seizure of the Silk Road, website categories serving both the supply and the demand sides of the UCSE are competing fiercely for market share. No single dominant player emerged in the past year. In some metropolitan areas supply and demand are starting to converge regionally, but popularity remains volatile and shifts quickly.

Measuring the size of either the UCSE and the sex trafficking economy is difficult. There are several signals that suggest in the past year that demand has fallen and supply might be

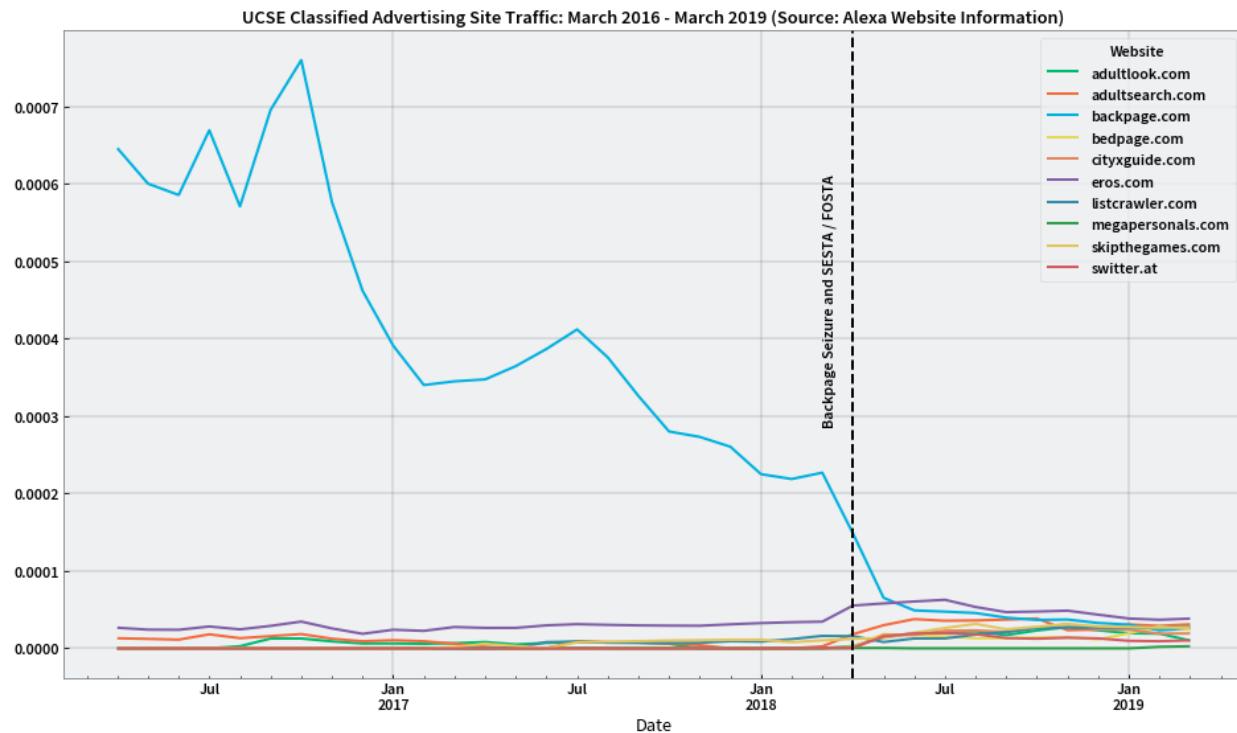
falling. These factors affect the economics of sex trafficking by reducing profitability while increasing the administrative effort to execute it.

It is unlikely that a classified advertising website will gain the dominant market share enjoyed by Backpage. However, demand-oriented online communities known as “hobby boards” and “sugar daddy” sites are showing growth in popularity. This suggests the possibility of a coming shift in how sex is bought and sold online.

This report briefly summarizes the immediate online disruption following April 2018, covers the resulting economic dynamics in three categories of online communities serving the UCSE and analyzes their import for sex trafficking in the United States.

## Key Findings

One year after the market disruption in April 2018, web traffic to advertising websites selling sex draw 5-8% of the unique visitors individually as Backpage did at its height in 2016.

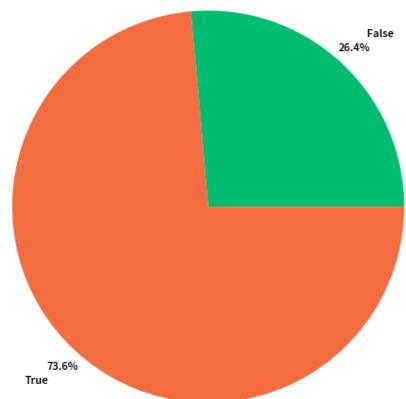


According to [Alexa Website Information](#), these websites showed rapid growth in the summer of 2018. Most websites have shown flat or declining growth since October 2018.

Spam and scam advertising is rife on these websites. Reviewing a sample of 465,000 advertisements from market leading advertising website, nearly three-quarters of the advertisements observed contained the same subject line, ad copy, images and phone number while being posted in more than ten cities in a single hour. Advertising the same provider in ten different cities in the same hour is unlikely to be legitimate.

This observation appears to be qualitatively supported by observations by both

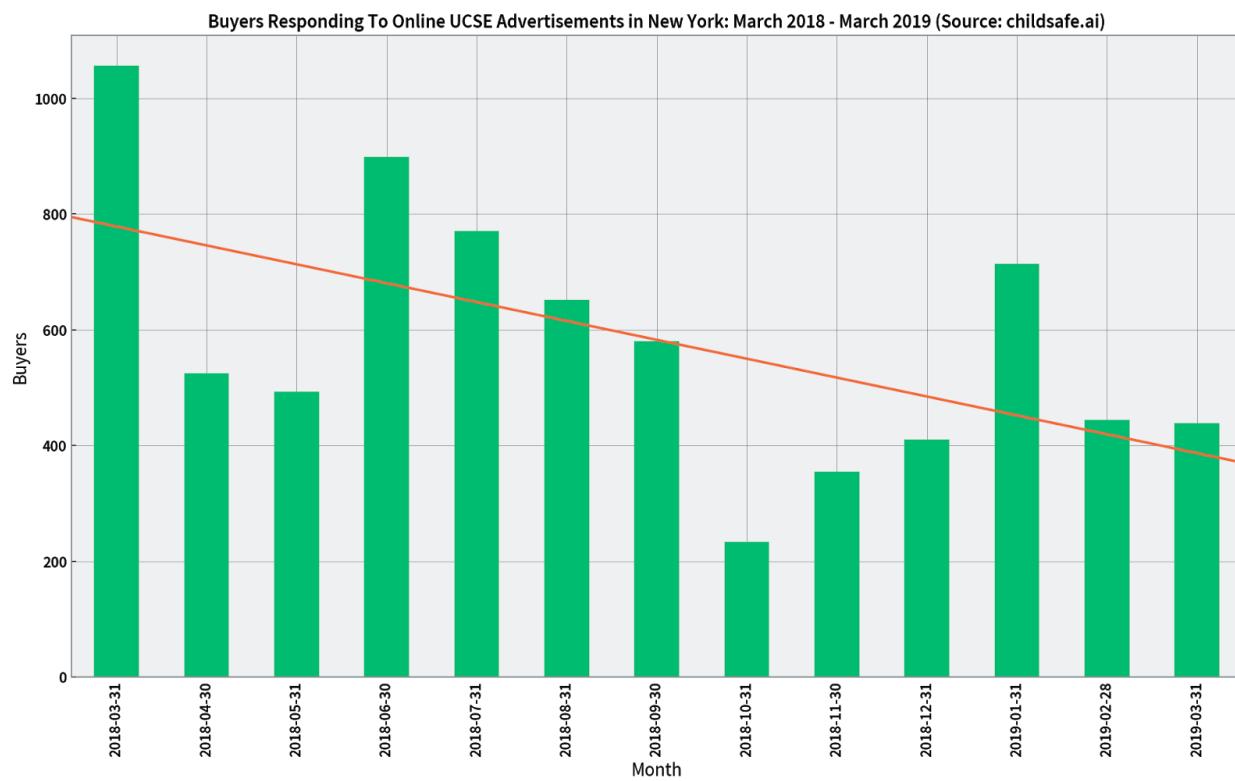
**UCSE Advertisements In More Than 10 Cities In Same Hour: Dec 2018 - Feb 2019 (Source: childsafe.ai)**



providers and buyers on these websites. Left observation comes from switter.at by self-identifying providers, right observations from TNA Board from self-identified buyers.

The left screenshot shows a post from 'switter.at' dated 01-06-2019 at 12:12 PM. The user says: "I miss backpage and Craigslist I can't believe something with the same amount of traffic has not come along yet". Below the post are engagement metrics: 10h, 1 reply, 2 likes, and 0 retweets. The right screenshot shows a post from 'TNA Board' dated 01-05-2019 at 08:44 PM. The user asks: "Re: what sites does everyone use these days?". They mention "CityXGuide" and note the main drawback is sifting through "GARBAGE" to find "DECENT" providers. The post includes a quote from another user: "It was clear that several other members share my feelings towards the need for some mid priced outer borough people would benefit from a Continuing Education course in service and attitude. Pair that with the shutdown of a centralized advertising avenue and censored review boards and my interest has gone from very interested and active to nil." The post also includes a link to a 2019 budget document.

In at least one major market in the United States, demand in the USCE is declining. Observations of buyers through childsafe.ai's Demand Deterrence Platform is trending down from February 2018 to March 2019. childsafe.ai observed a 58% year-over-year decline in buyers responding to advertisements in March 2019, despite posting twice as many ads.



Finally, buyers are complaining more frequently in more major markets around the United States about steep increases in prices. Starting in October 2018 and continuing to present, threads about price increases have grown in frequency with buyers suggesting as much as 2x-3x increases. These increases and difficulty using new websites are cited as reasons they will be buying less in 2019.

## TNA Board, New York - October 2018

10-28-2018, 11:04 AM #1

**Prices** 🌿🌿🌿

These prices are outta control. Everyone charging around \$400 or more.

Thankfully I havent Hobbied in three weeks and plan on hobbying very infrequent now. Hold strong fellas. Reward the Women who merit it. The ones who price themselves competitively and deserve to be seen again.

\* ▲ Report This Post    Reply    Reply With Quote    Multi-Quote

## TNA Board, New York - January 2019

Yesterday, 08:35 PM #3

**Re: Who else is retiring?**

I've been stuck with two less than satisfactory regulars for years now since it's so damned difficult to find reasonably priced  
BBGJ artists ever since Craigslist then Backpage folded. (Just about all the other independent girls I used to rotate through have moved on) A lot of entitled types ask for \$400 or more on Switter. And they're highly selective themselves, just like civilian dating. I would never "retire" however.

\* ▲ Report This Post    Reply    Reply With Quote    Multi-Quote

## TNA Board, Seattle - January 2019

01-06-2019, 08:38 PM #7

**Re: 2019 Budget 2.0**

I had commented on the previous thread. Im currently on a downward trend. For me prices are out of control, maybe Im not looking hard enough. Im not one to go in blind to the absence of details has killed my hobbying. I say my spending will go down but the reality is that it's been nearly non existent since the events of last year. Whatever, ill keep my money and spend it on something else.

\* ▲ Report This Post    Reply    Reply With Quote    Multi-Quote

## About The Author

**childsafe.ai** is the artificial intelligence platform protecting kids online. The New York based software startup deploys machine learning and active collection networks observing actors that buy and sell human beings from within the surface, deep and dark web marketplaces in which those transactions occur. For law enforcement, childsafe.ai delivers a Demand Deterrence Platform serving human trafficking units around the country to reduce the wealth flowing into their local human trafficking economies.

With tens of thousands buyers and sellers identified through its networks over a year of operation, the team actively monitors, graphs and models the online ecosystems fueling human trafficking.

## Analysis

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### Glossary

For this analysis, we'll define a few important terms.

- **Underground Commercial Sex Economy (UCSE)**  
The supply, distribution and demand markets for illegal prostitution in the United States.
- **Human Trafficking**  
Involuntary labor compelled by force, fraud or coercion including labor of individual

below the age of consent. Sex trafficking is the primary, but not the only, type of human trafficking in the UCSE.

- **Provider**

A person providing prostitution service representing the supply in the UCSE.

- **Buyer**

A person purchasing prostitution service representing the demand in the UCSE.

Buyers frequently self-identify as “hobbyists” or “mongers” and are referred in popular culture as “johns.”

- **Distributor**

A person connecting providers and buyers representing the distribution in the UCSE.

These can be both pimps and traffickers.

- **Operator**

An entity responsible for maintaining a website serving the UCSE and profiting from its operation.

- **Advertising Website**

An online marketplace representing the supply of the UCSE with a classified advertising model similar to Backpage. Providers post ads for \$5-50 with 4-8 photos, a title, three or four sentences of unstructured text and a unique identifier for contact like a phone number, email address or social media handle.

Examples include cityXguide, Megapersonals, Skip The Games, and Eros.

- **Advertising Aggregator**

An advertising website serving the UCSE that collects advertisements from a number of advertising websites and combines them into a single view for a metropolitan market.

- **Hobby Board**

An online forum or social network representing the demand of the UCSE with a buyer oriented community where buyers can rate and review providers. Buyers pay a monthly subscription between \$20-30 per month for full access to these reviews.

Examples include The Erotic Review, Erotic Monkey, RubMaps and TNA Board.

- **Sugar Daddy Site**

A social network serving the UCSE with a user experience similar to a dating website connecting men with women under an ongoing financial arrangement. Buyers purchase an internal currency to connect to providers and unlock photo albums they

upload. These sites frequently market themselves as an “alternative” to escorts. Examples include Seeking and Secret Benefits.

## Recap - Spring to Summer 2018

The twin events of the seizure of Backpage and SESTA / FOSTA becoming law in April 2018 caused dramatic upheaval in the online ecosystem of websites serving buyers and sellers in the UCSE in the United States.

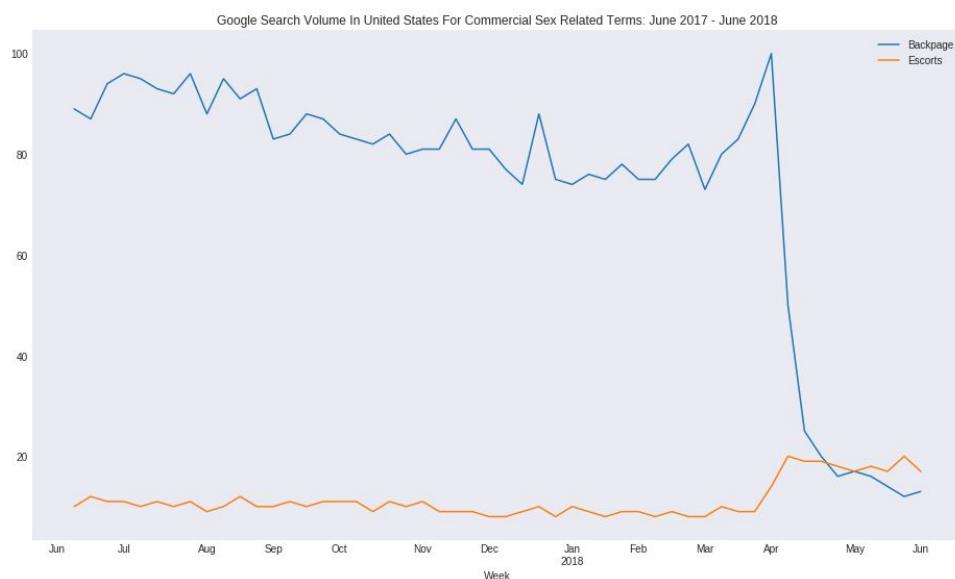
In April-May 2018, the following UCSE advertising websites shutdown:

- Backpage
- Humaniplex
- Escorts in College
- Escort Phone List
- Escorts.com
- CityVibe
- MassageTroll
- Nightshift
- My Scarlett Book

During the same period, the following online communities for buyers in the USCE shutdown or discontinued service in the United States:

- The Erotic Review
- Spahunters
- Erotic Monkey
- Rubmaps
- ECCIE

As a consequence, search volume for UCSE dropped ~90% in the months following April 2018.



Observed advertising volume from childsafe.ai dropped 87% in May 2018. Observed buyers in New York for the childsafe.ai Demand Deterrence Platform dropped 67% in May 2018<sup>1</sup>. Buyers indicated that the disruption significantly affected their ability to transact.

04-17-2018, 10:26 AM #162

Re: RIP Backpage

Fuck BP, not having access to any reviews fucks this whole thing up big-time! My entire process is jacked the fuck up!

My Reviews Alerts

My References (0)  
+ Vouch  
My TDL

Report This Post Reply Reply With Quote Multi-Quote

<sup>1</sup> Spectre, Rob. "FOSTA/SESTA: 3 Months Later: Sustained Drop In Demand, Market Dynamics, The New Normal." childsafe.ai, 8 July 2018.

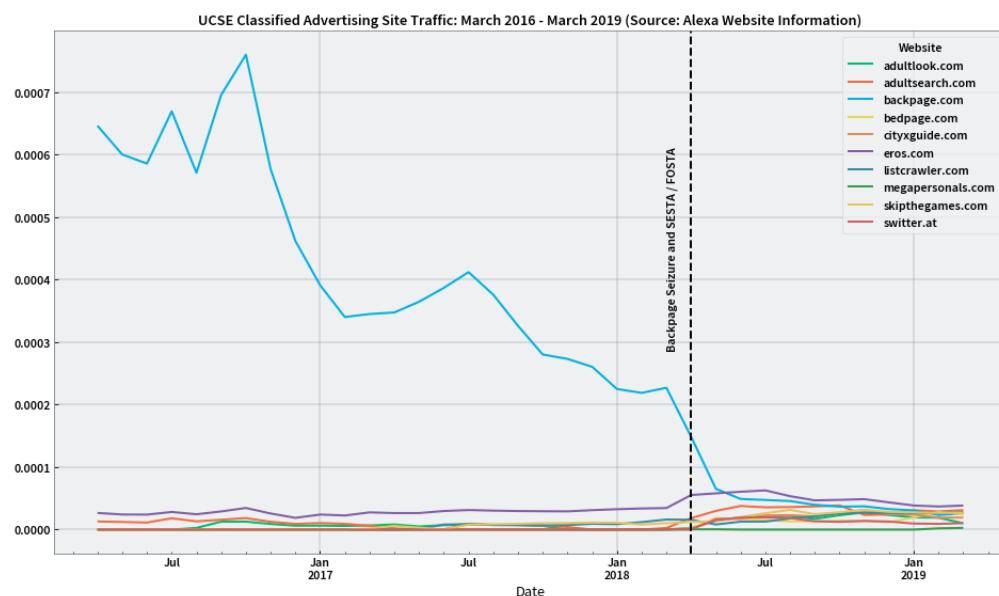
The online distribution layer for the UCSE entered a period of unprecedented volatility.

## Advertising

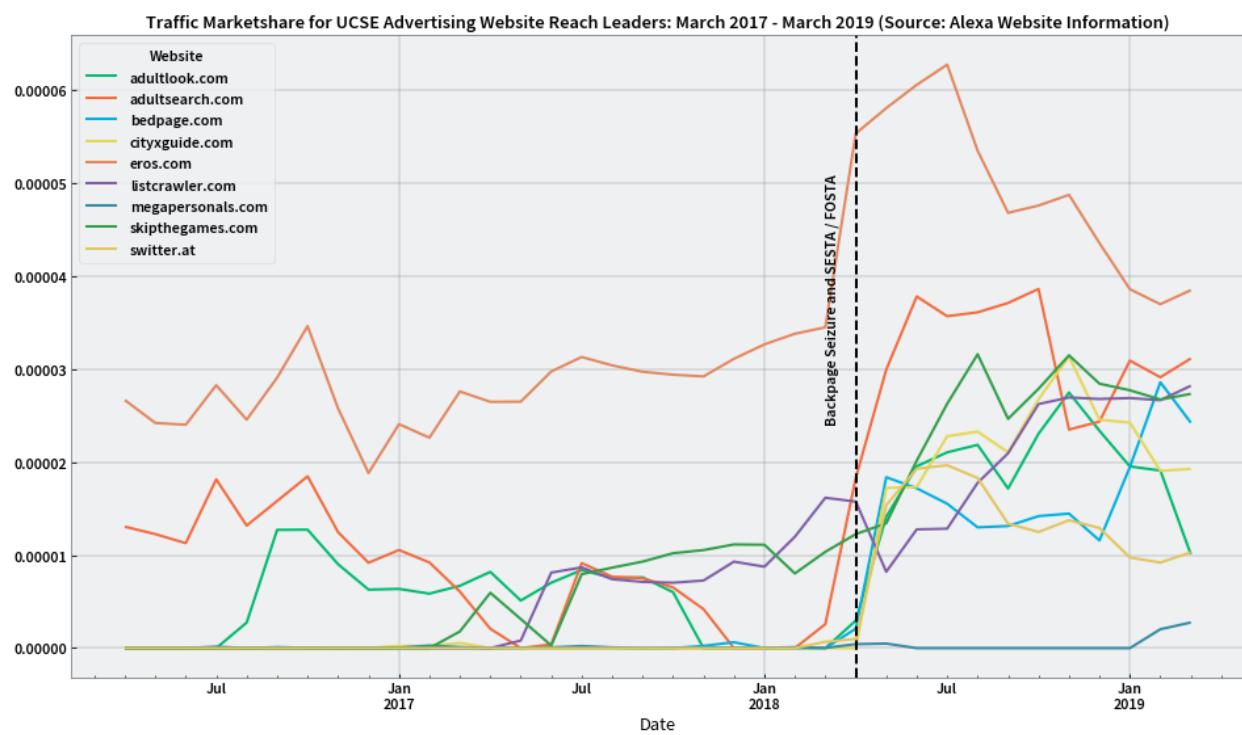
Following the initial market reaction to April 2018, advertising websites experienced the most significant volatility among the three product categories serving the UCSE. Weaker competition contemporaneous with Backpage joined a number of new websites in a Wild West scramble for the \$150 million in annual revenue Backpage left in the market.

In April 2019, advertising in the UCSE remains fragmented across dozens of websites that ebb and flow in popularity by region. Visitorship and demand vary wildly for these websites from city to city and market share won is tenuous under fierce competition. All suffer from frequent downtime in both web operation and processing payments as well as illegitimate ad volume.

As a result, the eight most popular advertising websites and most popular advertising aggregator reach between 5-8% of the audience Backpage commanded at its height in 2016.



Since October, eight of those nine demonstrated either flat or declining growth.

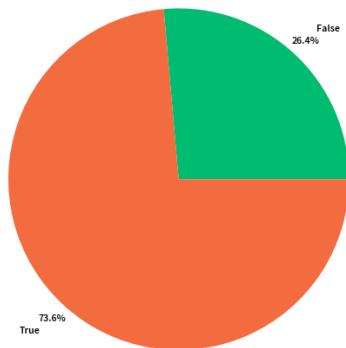


Three factors contributed to the stunted growth for these advertising sites.

## Spam and Scam Advertising

A year after it was seized, no advertising website has demonstrated the ability to match the quality of Backpage's advertising inventory. Providers, buyers and indeed the operators of the advertising websites themselves indicate the market is saturated with illegitimate advertising. This dynamic can be observed quantitatively and qualitatively.

UCSE Advertisements In More Than 10 Cities In Same Hour: Dec 2018 - Feb 2019 (Source: childsafe.ai)



Over the three months between December 2018 and February 2019, childsafe.ai collected a sample of over 465,000 advertisements from advertising websites leading the market.

In an effort to quantify likely spam advertising, a filter was applied to that sample identifying ads that contained the same subject line, the same ad copy, the same images and the same phone number that were posted in the same hour in more than ten cities.

73.6% of the advertisements collected fit that description. The exact same content posted in ten different cities at the same time is likely an automated post that does not represent a legitimate provider. Ads that fit this description often respond with spam advertising or scam offers.

The quantitative observation is supported by reactions online by buyers, providers and the operators of the sites themselves.

Buyers indicate that providers are harder to find as a result of the prevalence of spam advertising.

A screenshot of a forum post from 01-06-2019 at 12:12 PM. The post is numbered #4 and titled "Re: what sites does everyone use these days?". The original poster, "Originally Posted by [redacted]", writes: "since the demise of BP and CL, good sites are hard to come by. Eros is getting a little stale. the others like TNA seem to be less crowded. Slixa is good as long as it's updated.....any others for good quality providers that don't charge \$500 per hour?". A user replies: "LOL! Good luck with that one!" followed by "CityXGuide" is one of the most intriguing options to pop up on my radar last year. The main drawback is that you have to sift through a lot of GARBAGE to find one DECENT provider. 😊". The reply is highlighted with a red box. At the bottom, there are buttons for "Report This Post", "Reply", "Reply With Quote", and "Multi-Quote".

Referring to Bedpage - one of the current market leaders - this buyer indicated spam advertising over repeat visits.

The screenshot shows a forum post on Bedpage.com. The title is "Re: RIP Backpage". The post content is as follows:

Originally Posted by [redacted]  
Just went, it's better

"Better?"

STILL filled with REPETITIVE, b.s. ads. (smh...). 😞

At the bottom, there are buttons for "Report This Post", "Reply", "Reply With Quote", and "Multi-Quote".

The phenomenon appeared to start shortly after Backpage's seizure.

The screenshot shows a forum post on Bedpage.com. The title is "Re: Bedpage.com". The post content is as follows:

Originally Posted by [redacted]  
Been spam for a couple of weeks

Maybe my timeline is wrong but like 2/3 weeks ago it was like 60% real 40% spam.

Now it's like 92% spam

At the bottom, there are buttons for "Report This Post", "Reply", "Reply With Quote", and "Multi-Quote".

Another buyer comments having to train his eye to spot fake advertisements on a popular aggregator, Listcrawler.

02-28-2019, 08:09 AM #28

**Re: New sites after BP**

Originally Posted by Roxy6ty9 

*Ever since back page shut down, its been hard to find a website in southern oregon with a lot of traffic. So if your a hobbyist what sites do u browse through when your on this side of town??*

You can try listcrawler.com it has a lot of trash on it but you can usually tell which ads are BS and which aren't. Search for medford and see what comes up. Good luck.

My Reviews  
Alerts

My References (1)  
+ Vouch  
My TDL

Report This Post

Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

Buyers frequently comment how they miss Backpage.

08-17-2018, 10:52 AM #3

**Advertising Venues -Updates Anyone?**

These are all junk...  
What are you ladies posting to now???

Damn I miss backpage.com

Originally Posted by  

*Here a few sites with current advertising - one is "free".*

>> Adult Search : <http://gfeclub.com/alaska/anchorage-escorts/> Many of the ads are legit locals - cost unknown

>> Ad List 24 : <http://anchorage.adlist24.com/escorts> - legit ads, cost unknown

>> SkipTheGames : <http://alaska.skipthegames.com/female-advertisers/> clients=men FREE to advertise, mostly legit - but a LOT of heavy repeat ads

My Reviews  
Alerts

My References (0)  
+ Vouch  
My TDL

Report This Post

Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

The illegitimate advertising volume is not limited to benign duplication. There is a swelling volume of scam advertisements that try to phish banking credentials, steal identities or coerce the buyer into providing gift and stored value cards.

In a post in January 2019, one buyer in Boise offered a common description of these types of scams.

01-14-2019, 02:06 PM #1

**Could be a scam**

**Alert Type:** Warning  
**Gender:** Female  
**Name:** [REDACTED]  
**Phone Number:** [REDACTED]  
**Ad Link:** [http://boise.skipthegames.com/female-escorts/caucasian\\_w/so-are-you-looking-for-a-discr/833690238252](http://boise.skipthegames.com/female-escorts/caucasian_w/so-are-you-looking-for-a-discr/833690238252)  
**Age:** 27  
**Date of Meeting:** 01/14/2019

Just a buyer beware. I texted her, and after a few hours she text back. I asked if she was on any other boards. She claimed she was new but sent me a full paragraph of how to make contact. and it reads.

"My all inclusive (full service) donation rates are \$150 hh/ \$200 hr/ \$300 2 hr... Although the donation is a major thrill factor, no "hobby" is worth risking my future for as a 2L (second year law school student), I simply don't have time between school and clerking at my families law firm I simply do not have the time required and deserving of a monogamous relationship. For my safety and well-being my donations procedure in which I do not accept cash donations from any potential clientele/possible law enforcement, but rather require that you simply stop by any Walgreen's, CVS, 7 Eleven or any office supply store and purchase a OneVanilla or Vanilla Visa Gift Card and leave it with me as your donation after our session is complete as law enforcement will not donate in such a fashion... easy - peaseasy."

I told her that she would have no way in knowing how much I put on the card. **she then told me She would check the balance of the card after I loaded it.**

So lesson here is **if you give her the numbers to check the balance she has the means to take it off the card.** Be careful guys she is beautiful and will send you a pic holding up fingers and or dates as you request. Don't take the bait!!!!!! She is also in the local area, just be careful. If you do meet up with her and she is legit let me know, she has a good to be true menu.

Report This Post | Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

A provider responded to the buyer's post indicating that the scam advertisement was posted in multiple cities at the same time.

01-14-2019, 02:38 PM #2

**Re: Could be a scam**

Originally Posted by [packone69](#) ▾  
Just a buyer beware. I texted her, and after a few hours she text back. I asked if she was on any other boards. She claimed she was new but sent me a full paragraph of how to make contact. and it reads.

"My all inclusive (full service) donation rates are \$150 hh/ \$200 hr/ \$300 2 hr... Although the donation is a major thrill factor, no "hobby" is worth risking my future for as a 2L (second year law school student), I simply don't have time between school and clerking at my families law firm I simply do not have the time required and deserving of a monogamous relationship. For my safety and well-being my donations procedure in which I do not accept cash donations from any potential clientele/possible law enforcement, but rather require that you simply stop by any Walgreen's, CVS, 7 Eleven or any office supply store and purchase a OneVanilla or Vanilla Visa Gift Card and leave it with me as your donation after our session is complete as law enforcement will not donate in such a fashion... easy - peaseasy."

I told her that she would have no way in knowing how much I put on the card. **she then told me She would check the balance of the card after I loaded it.**

So lesson here is **if you give her the numbers to check the balance she has the means to take it off the card.** Be careful guys she is beautiful and will send you a pic holding up fingers and or dates as you request. Don't take the bait!!!!!! She is also in the local area, just be careful. If you do meet up with her and she is legit let me know, she has a good to be true menu.

Here pics are in many cities at once hon be careful!

Report This Post | Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

Providers and buyers from TNA Board - a leading hobby board - indicated a widespread phishing campaign in July 2018 attempting to convince users to reply with photographs of their government-issued ID.

07-01-2018, 12:46 PM #1

Error on the side of caution!!! Possible Tna email floating around.

If anyone should get an email saying its from [REDACTED] DO NOT respond back until you hear from [REDACTED] himself directly on tna!

There has been NO sticky posted and this email is being sent out to girls so please do not respond until confirms this on tna. I've not gotten a response and I've emailed him asking if this is true but until he should respond DONT respond back to whoever this is.

If I am wrong and this was sent from [REDACTED] then I'd rather be wrong than right and have ladies sending out their info of themselves to a scam artist or something.

**If I am wrong my apologies but just wait till [REDACTED] should make an announcement if this is true or not.**  
Thankyou!!

Dear members,

During the last few months, we have made multiple changes to our site due to recent changes to U.S. Law. We moved our servers to Sweden and converted all our email servers to Protonmail and we encourage our members to switch to Protonmail. During data transfer between servers, we deleted most of user data including verification data.

To continue using our platform, you must reply with government ID that clearly shows face, name and date of birth. You may wish to remove any other information. This is an urgent request and your account will be disabled for further use on our site if we do not receive this information in a timely manner.

Report This Post | Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

In January 2019, one provider tried to train buyers on how best to spot fake advertisements.

**Re: RIP Backpage**

Originally Posted by [REDACTED]  
"Better?"

STILL filled with REPETITIVE, b.s. ads. (smh...) 😞

These sites are there to make their money, so they don't care if cam girls or obscure fake ads are posted. They are getting paid, it's income.  
With the way things are for our community, these sites are also walking on a wire and don't know when LE will crackdown - or shut them down.  
So, they are not going to refuse money for ads [REDACTED] sure, there are lots of fake stuff, but also legit people posting.  
Like the old days of CL, you need to train your eye to the right ads --- it looks too good to be true, then is fake.  
People used to bash Backpage a lo, saying it was trash but, when it went down, everybody was lost and didn't know where to look.  
Same thing with TER...girls used to bash and complain about guys posting reviews about them, but once the site locked USA out, the same girls came out crying that they had no business and the guys contacting them where asking all these crude questions. Now they realize how important the reviews were, because it eliminated all the rated questions about services and rates.  
Now is Bedpage turn to be bashed...but, if goes dark like other sites, people will be lost again --- all former BP girls are on BedPage.  
we also get lots of mafai guys once our ads goes up --- we weed the bad ones out and concentrate on the good ones.  
You guys just need to do the same --- spend some time checking and weeding out the fakes and give business to the good ones.  
Repetitive ads has a science to the madness ---- sites do have guidelines on what we can post, so is easier to just copy/paste old ads or just renew them. Also, guys few more comfortable contacting girls if they have seen the same ads for a while.

Report This Post    Reply    Reply With Quote    Multi-Quote

**OFFICIAL Yesbackpage** @TheYesBackpage

Just a heads up folks... a few months ago [#yesbackapge](#) took action to cut way back on fake ads and spam posts. Months later we are again over-run with this garbage. Stating today we have taken steps to begin deleting posts and accounts from obvious spam posters and fakes.

5:10 PM - 10 Mar 2019

1 Retweet 6 Likes

1 1 6 1

Tweet your reply

**OFFICIAL Yesbackpage** @TheYesBackpage · Mar 10  
We are doing our best not to accidentally hit any of our REAL posters... but we are sure there will be a few caught up in the purge. Also, get ready for a lot of angry Indian and Bangladeshi shitters... they worked HARD to post all those fake ads!

Many operators of these advertising websites warn users that spam and scam advertising is rife while they attempt to address it.

An emerging advertising website YesBackpage indicated that they struggled multiple times over the past six months to stave off illegitimate advertising.

Skip The Games, a leading advertising website, displayed a banner warning about scams for nine months.

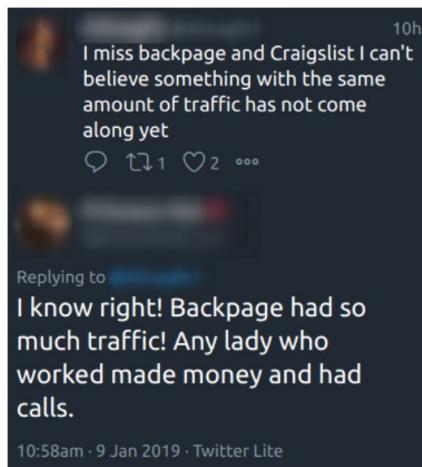
skipthegames.com

give you the best experience on our website. By continuing to browse this site you permit us to place cookies on your browser and agree to our use of cookies. Review our cookie policy  
[What are cookies?](#)

**Important :** We are seeing more scammers advertising. Do NOT use your cc for age, safety or identity verification sites. These are frauds. We are doing the best we can to stop these ads.  
Skipthegames.com DOES NOT RUN any kind of verification site for providers. These sites are scams.

This mixture of duplicate, fake, spam and scam advertising volume create turbid visibility into the supply in the UCSE, reducing the market's efficiency to connect supply and demand.

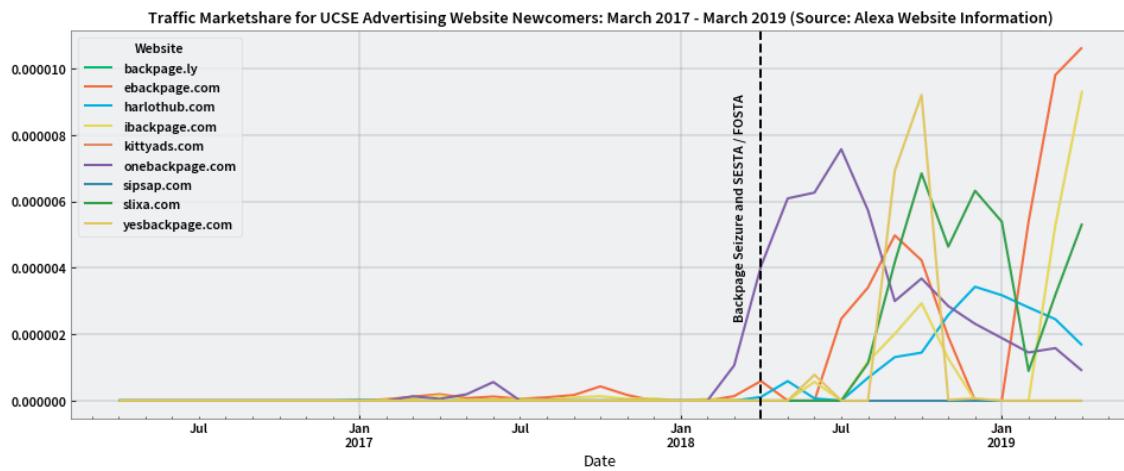
## Fierce Competition



The size of Backpage's supply and demand dwarfs current websites. Both providers (left) and buyers (below) acknowledge its unequaled market share.



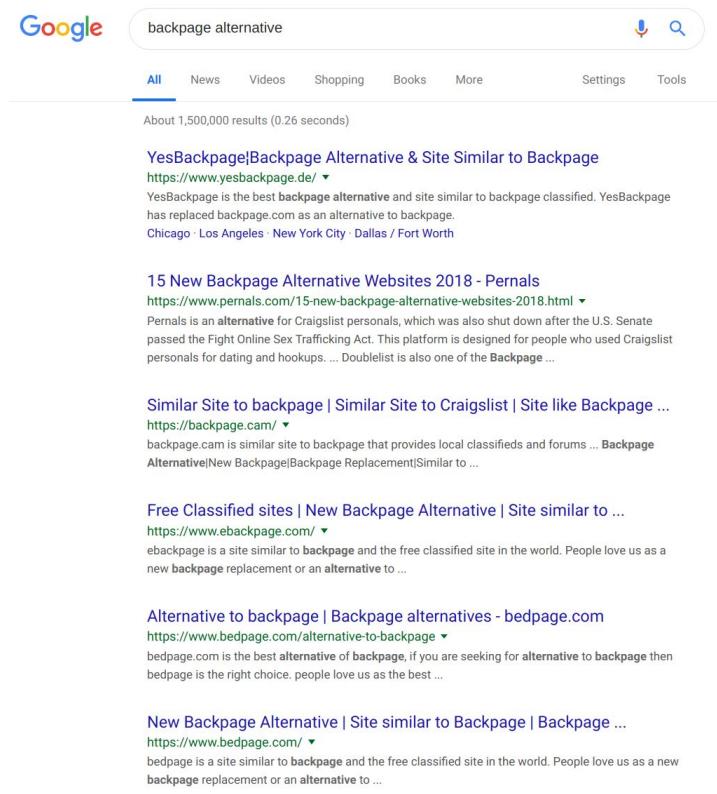
The vacuum left by Backpage invited more entrants into the space, now counting several dozen. Of these additional advertising websites and aggregators, nine are starting to approach audience sizes close to the market leading advertising websites.



These lower traffic websites compete with the likes of cityXguide, Megapersonals and Skip The Games with a combination of marketing strategies.

The most commonly used is Search Engine Optimization (SEO) trying to target former Backpage users. These sites often have Backpage in the name and imitate Backpage's design, though they are not connected to Backpage in any manner other than name.

Backpage.ly, OneBackpage, YesBackpage, eBackpage, iBackpage and others use a technique where phrases like “backpage alternative” and “new backpage” appear often in an effort to target search traffic from buyers that formerly used Backpage.



A screenshot of a Google search results page. The search query is "backpage alternative". The results include:

- YesBackpage|Backpage Alternative & Site Similar to Backpage**  
<https://www.yesbackpage.de/>  
YesBackpage is the best backpage alternative and site similar to backpage classified. YesBackpage has replaced backpage.com as an alternative to backpage.  
Chicago · Los Angeles · New York City · Dallas / Fort Worth
- 15 New Backpage Alternative Websites 2018 - Pernals**  
<https://www.pernals.com/15-new-backpage-alternative-websites-2018.html>  
Pernals is an alternative for Craigslist personals, which was also shut down after the U.S. Senate passed the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act. This platform is designed for people who used Craigslist personals for dating and hookups. ... Doublelist is also one of the Backpage ...
- Similar Site to backpage | Similar Site to Craigslist | Site like Backpage ...**  
<https://backpage.com/>  
backpage.com is similar site to backpage that provides local classifieds and forums ... Backpage Alternative|New Backpage|Backpage Replacement|Similar to ...
- Free Classified sites | New Backpage Alternative | Site similar to ...**  
<https://www.ebackpage.com/>  
ebackpage is a site similar to backpage and the free classified site in the world. People love us as a new backpage replacement or an alternative to ...
- Alternative to backpage | Backpage alternatives - bedpage.com**  
<https://www.bedpage.com/alternative-to-backpage>  
bedpage.com is the best alternative of backpage, if you are seeking for alternative to backpage then bedpage is the right choice. people love us as the best ...
- New Backpage Alternative | Site similar to Backpage | Backpage ...**  
<https://www.bedpage.com/>  
bedpage is a site similar to backpage and the free classified site in the world. People love us as a new backpage replacement or an alternative to ...



Another marketing technique used by advertising sites is the distribution of free advertising in exchange for mentions on social media services like Twitter and Instagram. Many of these new advertising websites will offer providers \$100-\$200 free credit towards future advertising for mentioning the site on social media and referring other providers.

· Feb 15  
#bedpage #postfreead #adforfree #AffiliateMarketing  
**bedpage** is new backpage start #affiliate programming so visit now and get credit for **free** \$100 VISIT NOW: [bedpage.com/affiliate\\_link...](http://bedpage.com/affiliate_link...)

Reply Retweet Like Share

Advertising websites will also solicit advertisers using competing websites directly. Using phone numbers posted in an advertisement on another website, sites like KittyAds and HarlotHub send offers via SMS offering discount rates. Some messages observed by the childsafe.ai Demand Deterrence Platform include:

- KittyAds.com - new BackPage. Post your ad for free /w this coupon: fs0q01
- If you are not posting on HarlotHub, you are missing out! Page 1 on Google nationwide and over 100,000 daily page views. Ads are free. Google us or visit now, <https://harlothub.nl>
- I'm sorry to bother you. We're AT YOUR DOOR, a website for adult entertainment. Please check us out at <http://atyourdoor.love>

27th Oct 2018 from TwitLonger

**warning to all escorts about police sting**

on wednesday oct 24 I was arrested in plano texas for solicitation in a sting. My driver was arrested and charged as well. with promoting prostitution and possesion.

When we were interviewed they accused him and me of trafficking girls. They had a log in they used to look in my bedpage and ebackpage accounts. They said bedpage and google give the police access and I actually watched them log in and out of my account.

bedpage is either hacked or it's a scam by them. They make us use google to log in and create accounts because the police have access and can see everything we do.

they showed me where I was posting from, the IP address, and they used that to see the hotel and wifi, they even knew that my phone I carry is not the phone I post from. They showed me a map of everywhere I had been in the past few days. It's like they bugged my phones through bedpage.

This is an invasion of privacy and my lawyer says he is gonna help sue me, but I am never logging in or using those sites again. bedpage has like 5 names anyway and the cops TOLD me they are helping them. ibackpage, newbackpage bedpage and ebackpage are all the same.

PLEASE help me tell everyone. Sexworkers are about to get screwed because of these pop up sites. Send this to every provider you can.

I am setting up a gofundme to help with legal fees and will post that soon, but we need to warn others about this.

Reply · Report Post

Disinformation is also a frequently used tool. One example from October 2018 involved a Twitter account spreading a false story about an arrest in Plano, Texas posing as a provider that claimed to advertise on a market leading advertising website Bedpage.

The story was shared widely in parts of UCSE participants on Twitter and was referenced by both providers and buyers when discussing

alternative advertising websites on hobby boards.

02-23-2019, 11:47 PM #18

**Re: New sites after BP**

I have read online at other sites of people being busted through Bedpage. Smallone would be correct as to why they would not want protonmail as a email. The big ones all cooperate with LE, and are centralized here in the USA. If I cant access through a VPN, I do not go.

My Reviews  
Alerts

My References (2)  
+ Vouch  
My TDL

Report This Post | Multi-Quote

Disinformation cuts both ways - YesBackpage has also been a target of false claims.

**bedpage\_official** since yesbackpage is down now you can post your free ads on ebackpage.com the best and everlasting alternative to backpage <https://www.ebackpage.com>

22w Reply

Follow

Replying to [\[REDACTED\]](#)

Due to some reason #yesbackpage is down. visit its sister site - [ebackpage.com](#)

9:36 AM - 26 Oct 2018

3 1 1 1 1

## Poor Payment Processing

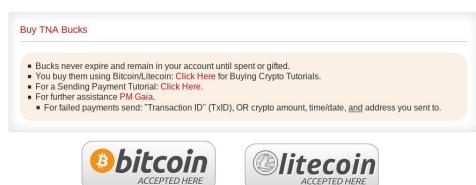
Finally, advertising websites are struggling to approach Backpage's level of revenue growth. Processing credit card payments is a significant hurdle for USCE advertising sites in 2019. Much of Backpage's operation focused on the financial gymnastics required to take credit cards for advertising. Constantly applying for new merchant accounts, changing billing descriptors, load balancing payments across accounts to keep fraud/chargeback rates under acceptable limits requires significant expertise and time.

Some websites like Eros and cityXguide with years of operation have a headstart over competitors in keeping revenue flowing, but their payment methods fail with higher frequency than Backpage.

### Why is my card Now getting declined

Eros declined my card, my website declined... Jesus they are just making it harder. It's never been declined. I just got a Flare X card hope that wont ve declined

Additionally, initiatives like Thomson Reuters Foundation's [Banks Alliance Against Trafficking](#) increased the frequency and fidelity of communication between counter-trafficking non-profits like the Polaris Project and financial institutions to identify money flows that bear trafficking risk. Website operators are finding merchant accounts, billing descriptors and shell company charters have a significantly shorter period of usability, interrupting their ability to process payments.



To compensate, advertising websites are attempting to use alternate forms of payment like cryptocurrency and gift / stored value cards. These are proving to be less popular with providers and buyers.

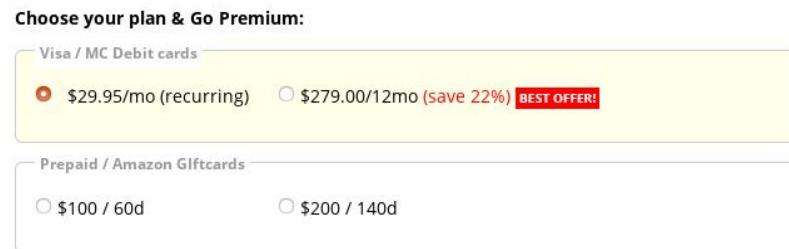
One provider trying to use a service called Preferred411 indicated that cryptocurrency is a non-starter.

### Will p411 allow credit card purchases in 2019

I am only able to extend 6 months with credit card at the moment. Have no idea how to use Bitcoin and would rather not write out a check for money order due to various reasons. It won't let me extend twice in a row for 6 months using credit. I haven't been keeping up with changes. But for those than know, will this still be possible with FOSTA,etc.

While gift cards are easier for users than cryptocurrency, services like Paygarden and Cardpool charge operators a steep markup on value. On Erotic Monkey, for example, a monthly subscription with a gift card costs 66% more than Visa or Mastercard.

Unreliable and inconsistent credit card payment options coupled with prohibitively expensive or difficult-to-use alternatives results in revenue growth that is slower and poorer than Backpage once enjoyed.



With the three factors of spam/scam advertising, fierce competition and poor payment processing, advertising websites face significant hurdles to claiming Backpage's formerly dominant position in the UCSE. It is unlikely 2019 will see a single dominant advertising website.

Should these market dynamics continue, it is unlikely the United States will see an advertising website grow to Backpage's level of influence.

## Hobby Boards

“The hobby” is euphemistic slang in the UCSE for purchasing commercial sex. Buyers “in the hobby” self-identify as “hobbyists” or “mongers.” “Hobby Boards” are online forums or social networks that orient around buyers reviewing the appearance and performance of providers and share information that affirm and facilitate further participation in the UCSE.

The most popular hobby board in the United States - The Erotic Review (TER) - closed access to US-based IP addresses and removed US-based content in May 2018. Launched in 1999, TER's user experience is the one most emulated by the hobby boards that are popular today.

Unlike advertising websites, hobby boards are not oriented around posts of providers, but rather reviews from buyers that are associated with profiles that providers have limited agency to affect or change. These sites are less classified advertising and more like social networks similar to Yelp catering to buyers of commercial sex.

Users pick a city and browse lists of providers sorted by recency of activity.

The screenshot shows the TER website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'My TER', 'Reviews', 'Messages', 'Discussion Boards', 'Site Reviews', 'Help', and a search icon. Below the navigation bar, there are several search and filter options: 'New Reviews', 'Search Reviews', 'More Searches ▾', 'Top 100 ▾', 'TER Plug-In', and 'Submit a Review'. The main content area is titled 'New Reviews' and displays a list of providers in Manhattan, NY, sorted by date. Each provider entry includes a thumbnail, name, rating, number of reviews, review time ago, and location. A 'Modify Search' button is located at the top right of the results table.

NAME	RATING	REVIEWED	CITY / LOCATION
NONE / Incall <span style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px;">NEW</span>	★★★★★ N/A	2 reviews 29 minutes ago	Fort Lee Fort Lee, NJ
Escort/Massage / Incall/Outcall	★★★★★ 7.8 (7.8/7.8)	22 reviews 32 minutes ago	New York City - Manhattan none
Escort / Incall/Outcall	★★★★★ 8.5 (8.5/8.6)	67 reviews 34 minutes ago	New York City - Manhattan Manhattan
Escort/Massage / Incall	★★★★★ 7.9 (8.2/7.6)	32 reviews 43 minutes ago	Stamford Stamford
Escort / Incall <span style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px;">NEW</span>	★★★★★ N/A	3 reviews 46 minutes ago	New York City - Manhattan NYC
Escort/S&M / Incall/Outcall	★★★★★ N/A	4 reviews an hour ago	New York City - Manhattan Midtown East

Provider profiles contain contact information and pricing information with detail that is often banned on advertising sites like rates and location.

Contact and pricing is followed by a graphic depiction of appearance that is only editable by buyers.

## Appearance

Build	Slender	Photo Accurate	Photos accurate
Ethnicity	Asian	Height	5'3" - 5'5"
Age	26 - 30	Transsexual	No
Eye Color	Brown	Breast Size	34-35
Hair Color	Red	Breast Cup	D
Hair Type	Straight	Breast Implants	Yes
Hair Length	Mid Back	Breast Appearance	Super Nice
Piercings	Don't Know	Tattoos	One
Pussy	Shaved		

Below appearance is a graphic menu of services.

## Services Offered

Massage	Yes - Nude	Female Condom	Don't Know
Sex	Yes	Massage Quality	Don't Know
Blow Job	Yes - Without Condom	S&M	Don't Know
Cum In Mouth	Yes - Spits It Out	Lick Pussy	Yes
Touch Pussy	Yes - On The Inside	Anal	Don't Know
Kiss	Yes - With Tongue	Will Bring Second Provider	Don't Know
Two Girl Action	Don't Know	Full, No-Rush Session	Yes
More Than One Guy At A Time	Don't Know	Rimming	Give & Receive - Yes
		Allow Film Or Picture	No
Multiple Pops Allowed	Yes		
Squirt	Don't Know		

The primary resource buyers look for on hobby boards are buyer-submitted reviews associated with these providers.

## Reviews (22)

DATE	MESSAGE	REVIEWER	APPEARANCE / PERFORMANCE	
Jul-2017 <span style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px;">NEW</span>	<a href="#">✉</a>		7 - Attractive / 8 - Went the extra mile	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
Jun-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		8 - Really Hot / 8 - Went the extra mile	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
Jun-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		8 - Really Hot / 8 - Went the extra mile	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
Jun-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		8 - Really Hot / 8 - Went the extra mile	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
Jun-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		9 - Model material / 9 - Forgot it was a service	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
May-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		6 - Nice / 6 - Nice Time	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
May-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		7 - Attractive / 6 - Nice Time	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
May-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		8 - Really Hot / 9 - Forgot it was a service	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
May-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		8 - Really Hot / 8 - Went the extra mile	<a href="#">&gt;</a>
Apr-2017	<a href="#">✉</a>		8 - Really Hot / 8 - Went the extra mile	<a href="#">&gt;</a>

The content of the reviews is the primary monetization method of hobby boards. Free users can see a small portion of the review describing how to effect the transaction.

**Review:** [REDACTED]

TER ID: [REDACTED]

Posted: July, 2016 by [REDACTED]

[✉ PM Reviewer](#) [➡ Report A Problem](#)

Appearance ↳ VIP only	Performance ↳ VIP only	Attitude ↳ VIP only	Atmosphere ↳ VIP only	Session Location Upper East Side
--------------------------	---------------------------	------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------------------

**General Details**

Easy to get in touch with, one call to schedule and a second on arrival at the corner.

This is an agency with multiple posts and often multiple providers in separate apartments. Their photos have the faces obscured, but they're always representative in how exactly who you are seeing.

The apartment is clean, setup for this purpose, and discreet.

Brooke is a lot of fun, very easygoing, good looking, and silly. She peeks out when opening the door and quickly gets naked once the door is shut.

Buyers that pay a monthly subscription fee gain access to graphic descriptions of the transaction.

**Review:** [REDACTED]

TER ID: [REDACTED]

Posted: July, 2017 by [REDACTED]

[✉ PM Reviewer](#) [➡ Report A Problem](#)

Appearance 7 - Attractive	Performance 8 - Went the extra mile	Attitude GFE	Atmosphere Very comfortable	Session Location manhattan
------------------------------	--	-----------------	--------------------------------	-------------------------------

**General Details**

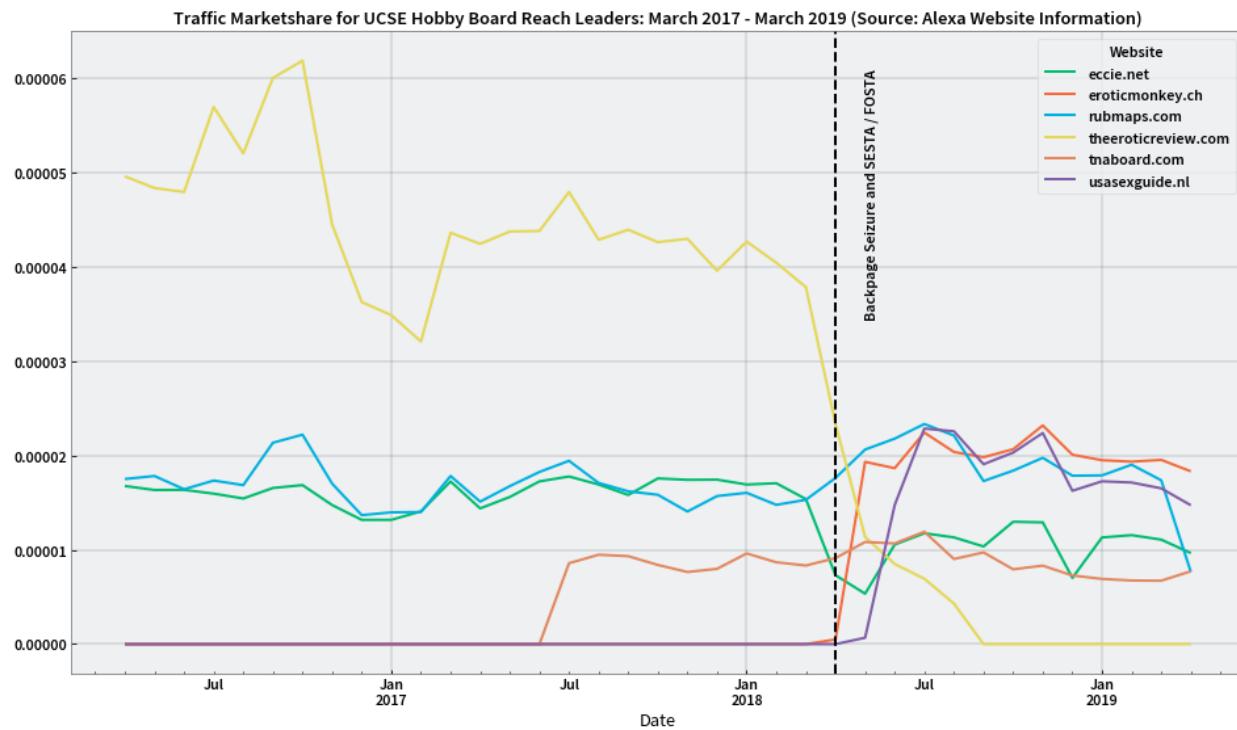
Easy set up, light screening. Was a little late but she didn't mind. Walked in and led to room. She was standing there looking smoking hot. Body is better than face but face is not bad at all. Skinny in a sexy way. Started with a shower and things went great soon after.

**The Juicy Details**

Started with shower. Not much english but it was OK. Only DFK sometimes, not a lot. Started with BBBJ for a REALLY LONG TIME. Loved it. Then 69, which was my first, and it was heaven. That was admittedly better than the sex, but sex was still good. I controlled positioning, wish she took a little more control. Finished how I wanted, with her on top. She was better than standard Asian but not 100% emotionally connected.

[🕒 Like](#)

Similar to the traffic patterns of the advertising websites, hobby boards are competing to claim the market share previously held by TER. The scale of TER's former reach, however, is much smaller with 9% of the overall traffic received by Backpage. The competitive field is also more narrow than advertising websites.



Immediately following Backpage's seizure and TER ceasing operation in the US, Erotic Monkey, RubMaps and ECCIE shut down citing SESTA / FOSTA as the motivation. All three would relaunch a few months later. Regionally popular TNA Board and USA Sex Guide grew in popularity as well, moving them solidly into contention for national market share.

The growth of the sites during the summer appears to have flattened out. The notable exception is RubMaps - a hobby board focused on Asian massage parlors - which saw a 56% drop in traffic from February 2019 to March 2019. This drop is likely a result of a significant law

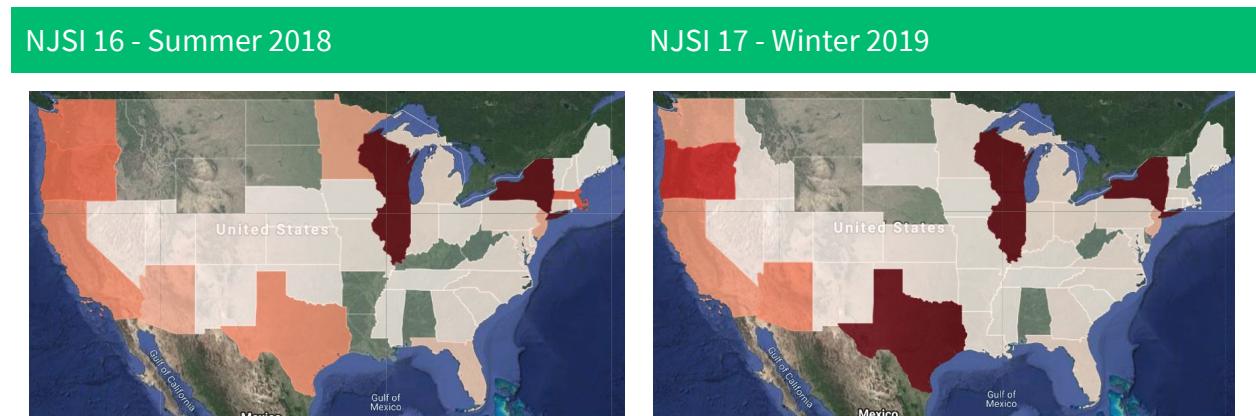
enforcement investigation of a massage parlor network in Florida that resulted in the arrest of 173 people, including New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft<sup>2</sup>.

Two dynamics are emerging in this part of the online distribution layer of the UCSE in the United States.

### Hobby Boards Produce More Demand

The childsafe.ai Demand Deterrence Platform powers the National Johns Suppression Initiative, a twice-yearly national operation of local law enforcement agencies, led by the Cook County Sheriff's Office, focusing on reducing the wealth flowing into their human trafficking economies<sup>3</sup>. Agencies participated from New York, Chicago, Portland, Seattle, Minneapolis, Boston, Houston, Fort Worth and others.

In both national operations, Wisconsin reached the second highest number of buyers through online advertising, lower only than New York. The law enforcement agency in that state focused their online counter-demand efforts exclusively on hobby boards.

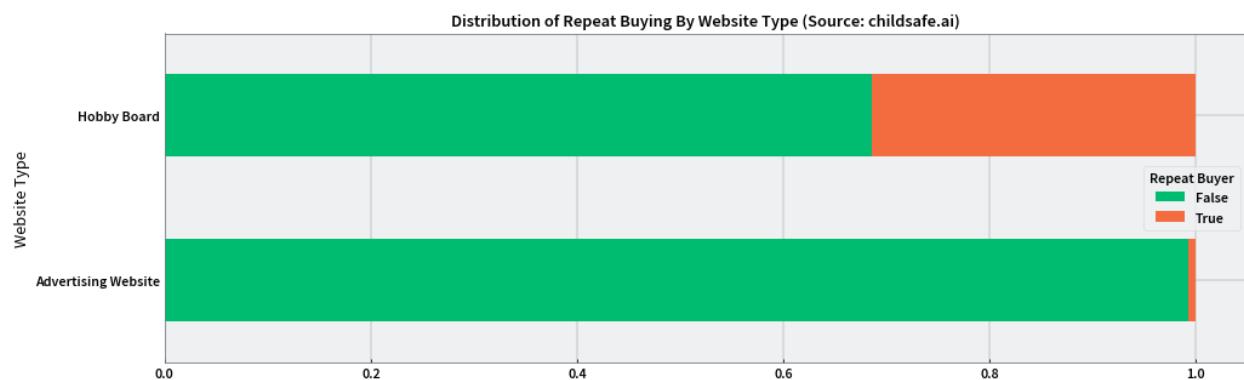


<sup>2</sup> Mazzei, Patricia, et. al. (2019, February 22). Patriots Owner Robert Kraft Charged in Florida Prostitution Investigation. *The New York Times*, Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>

<sup>3</sup> (2019, February 6). 390 Arrested In Nationwide Prostitution Sting. *The Chicago Sun-Times*, Retrieved from <https://chicago.suntimes.com/>

Where front page placement on an advertising in a major market will produce 30-40 buyer responses per day, front page placement on a hobby board can produce 50-60 buyer responses per day.

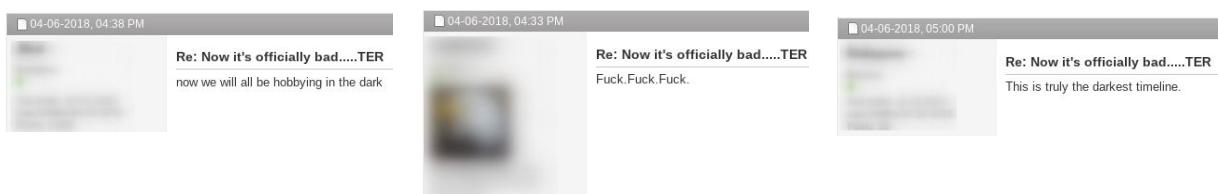
Those buyers are also more likely to attempt purchase again. Buyers that respond on hobby boards are 20 times more likely to be observed again than buyers who come from advertising websites.



Buyers from hobby boards appear to purchase with higher frequency and at higher price points than buyers from advertising websites. These buyers are likely the largest contributors of wealth to the UCSE and sex trafficking economies.

## Data Is Premium

In April 2018, when TER took down 1.4 million reviews in the United States, buyers immediately protested the loss of their reviews.



The following month Erotic Monkey and RubMaps relaunched, indicating that they moved the websites' operations to Europe. Buyers immediately took notice that Erotic Monkey now had the 1.4 million reviews that were formerly only found on TER. Erotic Monkey shortly thereafter ascended to become the most popular hobby board in the US while charging \$10 more for their monthly subscriptions than TER. While the most popular advertising website (Backpage) did not have a successor, the most popular hobby board (TER) did.

This dynamic deters new players from entering the space. Unlike ads on classifieds that value recency, hobby board reviews value reputation over time. All of these sites have operated in relative obscurity for years and even decades building up a back catalog of reviews.

Competition will likely continue to be lower for hobby boards relative to advertising websites as these moats will be difficult to cross for new actors.

## Sugar Daddy Websites

With increased public scrutiny and enforcement effort around advertising websites and hobby boards, a third product category serving the UCSE is emerging. “Sugar Daddy” websites characterize themselves in marketing to the surface web as dating services connecting “generous” men with “attractive” women.

The image shows two side-by-side screenshots of dating websites. On the left is the 'SECRET BENEFITS' website, which has a green header and features the text 'Where Generous Men meet Attractive Women.' Below this is a paragraph about millions of users finding relationships. At the bottom are two buttons: 'I'm a Man' (blue) and 'I'm a Woman' (pink). On the right is the 'SEEKING.COM' website, which has a grey header and features the text 'Relationships on Your Terms'. Below this is a paragraph about seeking mutually beneficial relationships. At the bottom is a button that says 'I'm a... Man or Woman' with three separate buttons: 'Man' (red), 'or' (grey), and 'Woman' (red).

SECRET BENEFITS

SEEKING.COM

Where Generous Men  
meet Attractive Women.

Millions of generous, mature men and attractive women are finding each other & starting honest relationships on Secret Benefits.

I'm a Man

I'm a Woman

Relationships on Your Terms

Where beautiful, successful people fuel mutually beneficial relationships

Signing up for Seeking is fast & free:

I'm a... Man or Woman

## WHAT'S YOUR PRICE



**Generous Members**  
Meet attractive people who otherwise may have been "out of your league."

Secure a first meeting more quickly than on other dating sites.

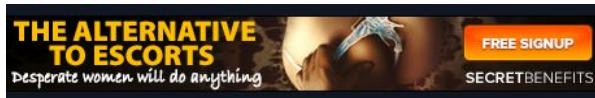


**Attractive Members**  
Get reimbursed for the time and effort it takes to prepare for a date.

Quickly meet interesting new people and go on fun dates!

However, their marketing on UCSE advertising websites and hobby boards show different messages.

## SECRET BENEFITS

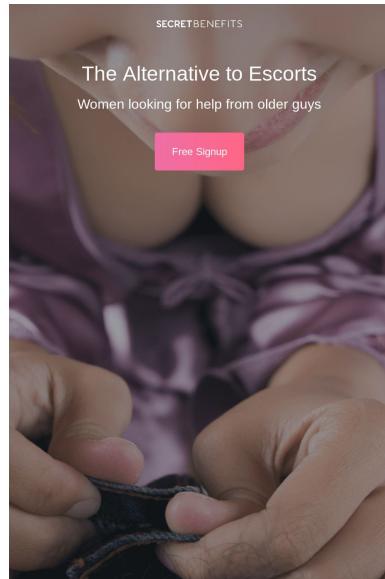


**SECRET**BENEFITS

### The Alternative to Escorts.

Young women looking for assistance from older guys.

[Free Signup](#)



In its earliest days of operation, Seeking.com put up billboards in Los Angeles and Phoenix.

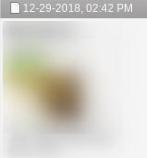


A provider on The Johns Report described Seeking.com's transactions<sup>4</sup>.

**Seeking Arrangement** : A lot of Johns are going this route, thinking they are meeting the girl next door, but really they are meeting professional escorts. It is really funny. I hate when guys say they hate escorts but use this service and the escorts just switch it up on them. It is annoying because most of the johns want more time. For example, if an escort wants 500 an hour, a Seeking Arrangement guy would want to eat and party, which may add up to 3 to 5 hours for 500...Whatever...same thing.

A buyer from TNA Board who claims to have used Seeking.com offers the demand perspective, describing the transaction with slang from the UCSE.

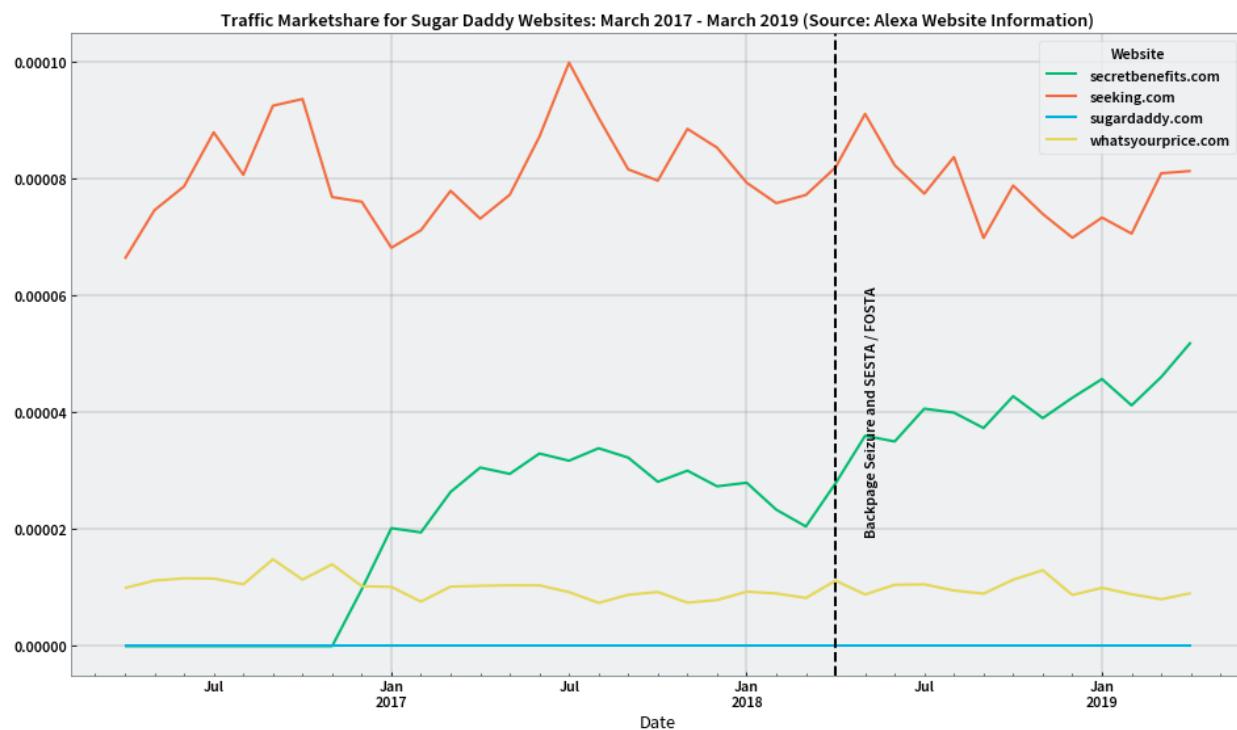
■ 12-29-2018, 02:42 PM #18

 <p>Re: Any experience with SecretBenefits.com?</p> <p>Re: Seeking Arrangement. If you can be ok with the fact that the girl is pretending to like you you'll do ok. I can't. Fucks with my ego too much. It's also more expensive than hobbying. The girls on SA will initially ask for a monthly allowance but it doesn't take long to negotiate a PPV (pay-per-visit) situation with them which if she's hot is normally north of \$400. On the plus side, GFE is generally considered the norm on SA.</p> <p>Hobbying works better for me because it's less time consuming and the expectations are laid out from the jump. Not always the case with sugar relationships.</p>
--

<sup>4</sup> Ford, Melissa. (2017, January 13) *Backpage Alternatives for Adult Section*.  
<https://thejohnsreport.com/thread/backpage-alternatives-for-adult-section/>

Unlike either advertising websites or hobby boards, sugar daddy websites adopt pay-per-contact monetization similar to dating websites. Buyers pay for each provider they contact and for additional premium content like private photographs.

While these websites are producing sex trafficking cases, their popularity does not appear to be growing significantly. Reach for the four leaders sits around the bottom tier of hobby board traffic or lower.



Buyers are indicating sugar daddy websites are also suffering from illegitimate posts.





It is difficult to gauge how significant a role sugar daddy websites play in the distribution of the UCSE and sex trafficking economies. While these websites do appear to be investing heavily in marketing, traffic growth does not seem to be following. Legitimate supply and demand appear to be in short supply in these marketplaces.

This will be a new market segment to watch that represents a recruiting threat for sex trafficking, but growth will likely remain slow in 2019.

## Price

Starting in October 2018, buyers in major markets nationwide began reporting steep increases in the hourly rate for commercial sex. Consistent increases of 2-3x in hourly rates are reported on a number of hobby boards.

This thread on TNA Board in New York received 34 replies in two hours.

Prices  
Started by [redacted], 10-28-2018 11:04 AM [1](#) [2](#)

Replies: 34  
Views: 977  
[redacted]  
Yesterday, 04:32 PM [\[redacted\]](#)

The thread began with a buyer indicating the most common rate was \$400 per hour. This is more than double the median rate observed in New York in February 2018.

10-28-2018, 11:04 AM #1

**Prices** 🚨⚠️⚠️

These prices are outta control. Everyone charging around \$400 or more.

Thankfully I haven't Hobbied in three weeks and plan on hobbying very infrequent now. Hold strong fellas. Reward the Women who merit it. The ones who price themselves competitively and deserve to be seen again.

Report This Post | Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

Another price thread started in New York on TNA Board in January complaining about recent price increases.

Yesterday, 04:32 PM #1

**Who else is retiring?**

So I see all these crazy upsells for basic white chicks at various agencies. Chicks you could probably pick up at bar for \$50 drinks. Anywho I'm done, it's been real. I'm tired of paying for overpriced pussy.

Another buyer chimed in citing the same price point.

Yesterday, 08:35 PM #3

**Re: Who else is retiring?**

I've been stuck with two less than satisfactory regulars for years now since it's so damned difficult to find reasonably priced BBBJ artists ever since Craigslist then Backpage folded. (Just about all the other independent girls I used to rotate through have moved on) A lot of entitled types ask for \$400 or more on Switter. And they're highly selective themselves, just like civilian dating. I would never "retire" however.

Join Date: 05-20-2007  
Last Online: 01-18-2019  
Posts: 693

Report This Post | Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

A buyer in Seattle in February indicated prices were “out of control” and deterring his buying.

01-06-2019, 08:38 PM #7

**Re: 2019 Budget 2.0**

I had commented on the previous thread. Im currently on a downward trend. For me prices are out of control, maybe Im not looking hard enough. Im not one to go in blind so the absence of details has killed my hobbying. I say my spending will go down but the reality is that it's been nearly non existent since the events of last year. Whatever, I'll keep my money and spend it on something else.

Report This Post | Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

In December, this buyer on ECCIE jokingly indicated he would like governmental intervention as a number of providers now exceed his price range.

12-05-2018, 03:54 AM #1

**I Love Free Enterprise...rant**

I love free enterprise, but I also hate it. Why can't the government dictate what a provider can charge so that I can afford to see anyone I want? Yes, I know I'm being stupid. It's just that I can't afford to see some of the ladies that I really want to see.

I'm not saying that these ladies are not worth what they are asking. In fact, some of the ladies I've seen in the past were worth \$1,000 an hour or more. Fortunately for me, they only charged \$200 an hour.

Sarcasm aside, I really do believe in free enterprise. If a lady has people standing in line for \$300, \$500 or \$1,000 an hour I believe that she should absolutely get what she is worth. Am I asking these ladies to lower their price for gentlemen like me? Absolutely not! I think they should get what they can while they can.

Some of my favorite providers have recently increased their rates beyond my budget. I am happy for them, I really am because they deserve it. I'm glad that that there are gentlemen out there that can afford to pay a lady what she is really worth, I just wish that I had their money.

Report This Post | Reply | Reply With Quote | Multi-Quote

Price increase indications continued through February.

An important consideration when observing buyers discussing price in online communities is that cost is a frequent friction point. Buyers haggle over price frequently and complain when there are fluctuations at their favorite establishments. Further, the social context of hobby boards is reputation - these buyers are trying to look good in front of other buyers. Hyperbole

is common and embellishment is expected in these forums. What buyers say on hobby boards can't be taken on face value.

That caveat in mind, the sustained frequency of the price complaints and their ubiquity across markets nationwide suggest an economic shift may be at play.

If hourly prices for commercial sex are indeed increasing at a significant rate, there are a few possible causes:

- The number of providers in the UCSE is declining. Reduction in supply is causing prices to rise.
- Increased distribution costs from advertising are passing through to the hourly rate. More marketing cost is increasing the price.
- Rates are being inflated through nationwide provider coordination. The hourly price is getting fixed.

With distribution undergoing unprecedented volatility in these economies, price fluctuations merit further investigation. Price will be an important economic indicator in 2019.

## Conclusions

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It is evident one year after the seizure of Backpage by the United States Department of Justice and the passage of SESTA / FOSTA into law, the online distribution layer for the underground commercial sex economy - and as a subset, the sex trafficking economy - remains significantly disrupted. A replacement for Backpage's former market share dominance did not emerge. Demand in the US for commercial sex is declining. Supply in the

US for commercial sex might be declining. New online modalities like hobby boards or sugar daddy websites are likely to overtake advertising in transaction volume in the short term. As a consequence of these and other factors, volatility in UCSE online will endure through 2019 and is likely to continue in the years following.

With a comprehensive survey of online market dynamics complete, the pressing question remains: what does this mean for sex trafficking?

## Implications for Sex Trafficking

Follow ▾

THE COST OF #FOSTA: I am doing my taxes. I am amazed I survived this year financially. It makes me very concerned about less blessed SWs.

FRIENDS, MY ADVERTISING COSTS INCREASED 860% FROM 2017 TO 2018.

LAST YEAR I SPENT \$10,400 ON ADVERTISING. #LetUsSurvive

3:20 PM - 2 Apr 2019

One economic effect of this fragmentation of distribution is an increase in the cost of customer acquisition. Finding demand online means placing more ads on more websites and soliciting more reviews from more buyers on more hobby boards.

A self-identified major market provider indicated in April 2019 (left) that advertising costs increased from \$1,209 in 2017 to \$10,400 in 2018.

Assuming the first three months of 2018 had similar advertising costs as 2017, this provider suggests the monthly advertising cost of one provider went from \$100 per month to \$1,271 per month. Also implied in this dynamic is additional administrative overhead of maintaining advertising accounts on a dozen advertising channels instead of one.

A 12x increase in the treasure and time required to market commercial sex alters the economics of sex trafficking dramatically. Startup costs are higher, monthly profits are lower and administrative hours are longer. Combined with a significant decrease in demand and an increased perception of risk, sex trafficking is a less attractive illicit business in 2019 than it was in 2018. However, these dynamics are insufficient to deter sex trafficking entirely.

In the Urban Institute's 2010 qualitative study, many convicted pimps and sex traffickers indicated that entry was attractive as it represented a lucrative business with less perceived risk and lower operational costs than selling drugs<sup>5</sup>. One pimp described illicit rapid acquisition of wealth as his primary motivation since his youth<sup>6</sup>:

I was always money-motivated. They'd be off breaking windows; I'd go inside and get the money. There was an ice cream truck parked on our block for a week. They stole the ice cream; I went for the cash box ... I liked to have money, so people would hang out with me. For me if we are going to do this, [I would ask,] "How are we going to make money off it?"

If sex trafficking is a crime committed in the pursuit of easy money, that money is less easy in 2019 than it was in 2018. But there is still a lot of money to be made.

Using the example above, \$1,300 per month in advertising is still 2-3x less than advertising for professional services with similar hourly rates like private attorneys, software developers, interior designers, or political consulting. Sales cycles are shorter, require less speculative work and the demand is more immune to economic downturns or seasonality, as one pimp opined<sup>7</sup> "One thing about prostitution—when you can't buy food, when you can't eat, there's one thing you can and will buy. It's like gold, platinum."

With rates running \$300-600 per hour, a month of advertising can be recouped in three or four appointments. While not as wildly lucrative as when a centralized, cheap advertising channel dominated the market, sex trafficking can still be lucrative and with clearly less marketing cost than a legal professional services business.

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<sup>5</sup> Dank, Meredith, et. al. National Institute of Justice, "Estimating the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in the U.S." September 20, 2016, from NIJ.gov:  
<http://nij.gov/topics/crime/human-trafficking/pages/estimating-underground-commercial-sex-economy.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> Dank, 143.

<sup>7</sup> Dank, 210.

## Threats To Fragmentation

Finally, the threat of a distribution service rising to Backpage's share of the market remains real. While the current websites competing in the UCSE are unlikely to become dominant as the dynamics exist currently, a well capitalized actor with significant financial infrastructure could change that by consolidating the market and building out the personnel and infrastructure needed to stem illegitimate advertising volume.

Were a single entity to purchase the operations of a significant percentage of these websites and consolidate their customer bases, a majority holder of the UCSE advertising volume could be established quickly. That revenue base combined with significant investment in dozens of screening headcount and improved access to the Western payment system through ownership in a financial institution, payment processor or remittance company could produce a dominant website in the market. Both supply and demand would reward that dominance with transaction flow, rapidly propelling such a business to a marketshare close to Backpage.



The primary deterrent to such an actor is perception of criminal risk. Since April 2018, the market has observed one website seizure - adlist24 - by law enforcement. That site's operators brought up the service again shortly thereafter under a new top-level domain. Through a new Twitter account, the operators said, “We

are very sorry for inconvenience [sic] created with the domain seizure” and offered free credit to advertisers to return.



**AdList24.io** @AdList24\_.io · Jan 26



Hi Dear Customer!

We are very sorry for inconvenience created with the domain seizure.

We are back on a new domain [adlist24.io](#) with new features and upgrades.

You will have free credits on signup as an excuse, hopefully you will join us again.

#adlist24



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Many of the websites currently serving the UCSE operate with a similar disregard for criminal liability. Unlike Backpage's veneer of legitimacy with banned keywords in advertising and other marketing categories like used cars, bicycles and furniture, nearly all the current websites overtly advertise commercial sex. These observed behaviors suggest the current operators have a low perception of risk.

A well capitalized actor assessing the risk of market entry might gauge a single website seizure per year as low enough to merit the reward of dominating this lucrative market.

Without an increased perception of risk for the website operators themselves, the door to this market is open to another dominant force like Backpage, particularly if it leverages a social network type user experience similar to those offered by hobby boards.

Volatile markets change with lightning speed - this market is shifting in weeks not years. For organizations seeking to reduce sex trafficking around the world, continued monitoring and analysis of the online distribution layer fueling the UCSE will be critical.

Constant change is the only absolutely certain conclusion about this economy.