

Digital Scandals

From the Philippines to Viet Nam to Indonesia, stolen sexual digital shots of university students, artistes or politicians are multiplied by the hundreds and sold in the streets

Michael Tan in Manila
Philippine Daily Inquirer/ ANN
 Late last year I was commissioned by an international group, the Sexuality Policy Watch, to do a paper on Sexuality in a High Tech Age as part of a global exchange around Sexuality and Geopolitics. High-tech here meant digital technologies that include mobile phones, MP3 players, digital cameras and, foremost, the Internet.

I wish I had the space to discuss all the findings, which I presented at a conference in Ha Noi recently, but even several columns probably would not be adequate, given that there was just so much to look at.

I did want to share an interesting offshoot of the session where my paper was discussed and this was the proliferation of scandals dis-

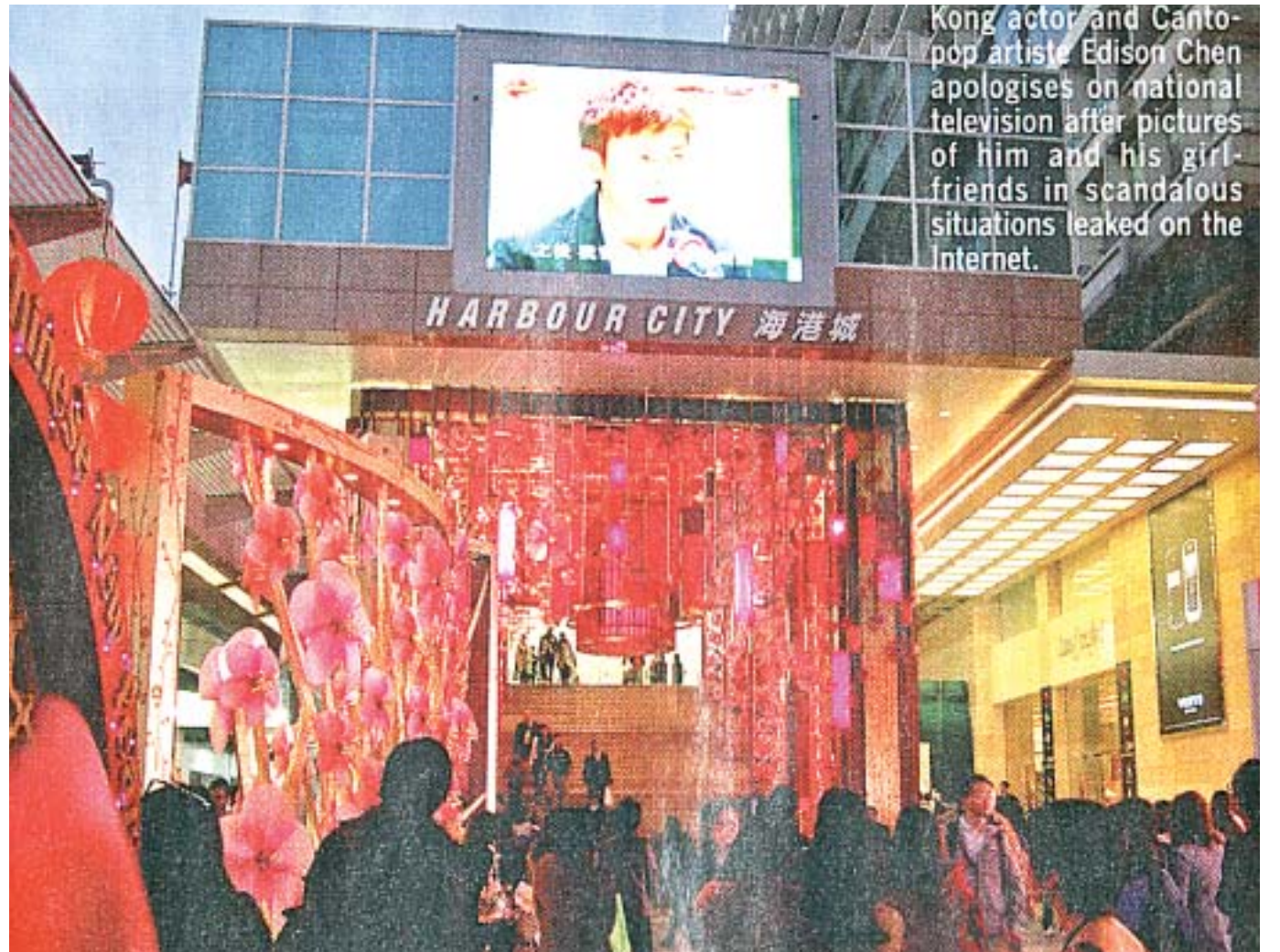
tributed through digital media, mainly VCDs and DVDs and uploaded files on the Internet. About two years ago, in another research on keywords used around sexuality, I wrote about how scandal appeared in so many titles of Filipino X-rated videos. I mentioned these scandalous videos again in my paper on digital technologies.

The titles generally refer to schools (e.g., De La Salle scandal, UP-University of the Philippines scandal) or to cities and provinces (e.g., Mandaluyong scandal, Dunaguete scandal, Panganga scandal). The videos are supposedly stolen digital shots of students in, well, scandalous situations, usually taken by the male partner who then reproduces the footage for the entire world.

The videos are sold all over the country for as low as 10 pesos (20 US cents) each, sometimes with several scandal films on one VCD or DVD. Lately, these scandal videos have even been converted into MP3 format and are loaded into cell phones, together with other X-rated materials, local and international.

Viet Nam, Indonesian scandals
 The scandals video took up only a few lines in my paper but took on new significance when another speaker in my panel, Vietnamese sociologist Knut Thu Hong, presented a case study around the theme of digital technologies. She chose to focus on, you guessed it, Vietnamese video scandals. She referred to the scandals by numbers (e.g., Scandal 1, Scandal 2), and I found out later those were the actual titles.

Hong talked about three videos involving popular young actresses whose trysts had been caught on digital



POSTER BOY: Hong Kong actor and Cantopop artiste Edison Chen apologises on national television after pictures of him and his girlfriend in scandalous situations leaked on the internet.

video (again, supposedly by boyfriends) and then distributed in the DVD black market and posted on the Internet. In the Philippines, there have been similar videos supposedly with local actors and actresses but these have generally been proven to have used look-alikes rather than the celebrities themselves, with nothing coming out of the alleged scandals except for a few gossip columns.

The Vietnamese celebrities didn't get off lightly, with the government actually intervening and arresting them. One was even sentenced to 18 months in a reeducation centre for sex workers. Two of the celebrities eventually migrated overseas, in effect becoming sexual refugees. Hong did mention that in one case, the celebrity was eventually able to come back into films and became even more popular.

Hong explained that the strong and harsh response of the Vietnamese government to these videos is tied to the way film stars are put up as role models in communist countries. In such countries, film stars are important in propaganda and public information campaigns, and need to keep a wholesome image. Appearing in an X-rated video which can now be disseminated widely because of digital technologies is therefore totally unacceptable.

In the open forum that followed, Dede Octomo, an Indonesian social scientist, mentioned that in Indonesia there is also a market for scandal videos, and like in the Philippines, these are associated with schools (e.g., UI Scandal, UI referring to the University of Indonesia), again with claims that the clandestine shots were of students.

Dede mentioned the videos in still another context, and this is the sexual conservatism of the upper classes, especially of intellectuals and people in universities, who want to project an image of gravity, of being serious and

determined to change the world, impart knowledge and all that. Sex? No, we don't have time for that and that includes crazy people like myself who spend so much time researching and preparing papers about sexuality.

Sorry if I'm straying, but Dede's point is that UP Scandal and UI Scandal videos are society's ways of poking fun at academic institutions, almost like, hey, stop pretending you're asexual. I did add here that they're not just parodies but hyperbole, showing students not just having sex but wild, wild sex.

There might be a similar logic to the scandals named after cities. At first I thought that maybe it was associated with cities known for their red-light districts, as in Sibic Scandal, but most of the other titles don't follow this logic.

So, could these city scandals be a way of saying that urbanism brings about more sex and more scandals? Maybe, but maybe not. Note that there are also scandal videos named after provinces, with titles like Surigo Scandal that have no rhyme or reason either. Perhaps there's nothing significant about the cities and provinces named. What's important is the word scandal, a marketing tool that panders to the voyeurism that drives the porno market. In fact, I've discovered that the scandal video discs are actually just rotated around at random, so a PIM (a Manila college) Scandal package might actually yield exactly the same video as one you get from a Zamboanga Scandal package.

Blackmail
 In this digital age, the rise of so many of these scandal films may actually be, paradoxically, a morality tool, warning people about the perils of the new technologies. Digital cameras are small, and easily hidden or camouflaged. Do you trust your boyfriend (or girlfriend's) cell phone with a built-in cam-

era ready to shoot?

The digital cameras are feared even more in relation to stigmatized encounters: premarital, extramarital, same-sex, paid sex, kinky sex. How sure are you that your boyfriend or girlfriend isn't planning to blackmail you later with stolen footage of such adventures? Ultimately, the lesson is simple: just don't do it.

The fears aren't unfounded. In 1986, a high-ranking member of the Indonesian political party Golkar had to resign after video copies circulated showing him cavorting with a dangdut dancer dangdut being a rather sensual dance accompanied by drums and other musical instruments that go dang dang, dit dit.

The Indonesian politician paid dearly for his digital dangdut indiscretion and had to resign. Could such a thing happen in the Philippines? I doubt it. All the Filipino politician would have to do is claim the subject is a look-alike. He might even win a few more votes for being so macho. Ay, but in the Philippines, digital scandals pale in comparison to real-world lapses, cops, I mean, scandals.



TV GUIDE



Every Saturday @ 8.30pm only on ETV

ITN	
A.M.	03.00 Peyen Peya Puwath
04.30	Station Opening
04.35	Pirith Deshanaya
04.42	Jayamangala Gaitha
04.46	Davase Silthuvili
05.00	Thakshilawa
06.00	ITN Puwath
06.15	Davase Paththara
06.55	Jeevithaya Jayaganna
07.00	Halthveni Peya
08.00	Peyen Peya Puwath
08.05	Pahan Dora Magazine
08.30	Sal Mal Yaya
09.00	Peyen Peya Puwath
09.05	Batti
10.00	Peyen Peya Puwath
10.05	Nimithra
11.00	Discussion
Noon	
12.00	Noon News
P.M.	
12.30	Tele Drama
01.00	Sinhala Film
02.00	Peyen Peya Puwath
02.03	Sinhala Film - Contd.
03.00	Peyen Peya Puwath
04.00	Sinhala Film - Contd.
04.05	Sabitha Sesathwa
04.30	Deduru Hendewa
05.00	Peyen Peya Puwath
05.03	Deduru Hendewa - Contd.
05.30	Lama Puwath
05.45	Theruwana Namadimu
05.50	Jaya Piritha
06.00	News - Tamil
06.30	ITN Sports World
07.00	News - Sinhala
07.30	Muthu Kirilli
08.00	Paba
08.30	Ithin Eela Passel
09.00	Api Api Wage
09.30	News - Sinhala
09.55	Biz News
10.00	News - English
10.10	Chat & Music
12.00	News - Sinhala
A.M.	
00.20	Pirith Deshanaya

SWARNAVAHINI	
A.M.	03.00 Avanka
06.00	Ehi Passiko
06.30	Mul Piliwa
07.00	Loka Sithiyama
07.30	Mobi Dick
08.00	Hello Sri Lanka
10.30	Channel D
11.00	Mahajana Sewaya Pinisai
Noon	
12.00	Live @ 12
P.M.	
12.30	Rasa Liya
01.00	Hada Rendil Peya
02.00	Anduru Sewanelli
03.00	Close of Transmission

ETV	
A.M.	06.00 Channel News Asia
06.00	Prime Time Morning
06.45	Debrief
06.55	Lanka Business Online
07.00	Channel News Asia
10.00	Telemarketing
10.30	Channel News Asia
P.M.	
12.30	Telemarketing
01.00	Etv Sound Gallery
02.00	Religious Program
04.30	Telemarketing
05.00	Channel News Asia
05.30	All
06.00	Channel News Asia
07.00	Etv Sound Gallery
07.45	Debrief
07.55	Lanka Business Online
08.01	Picket Fences
08.55	Lanka Business Online
09.01	The Bold & The Beautiful
09.45	Debrief
09.55	Lanka Business Online
10.01	Channel News Asia
10.55	Lanka Business Online
11.01	Etv Sound Gallery
12.00	End of Transmission

DERANA	
A.M.	12.30 Sathulu Wila
05.55	Station Opening
06.00	Cartoon
07.00	Derana Aruna
08.00	Saba Dawasak
08.30	Eka Dawasak Ude
10.00	Mix Songs
10.30	Teledrama
11.00	Sith Gimana Hala
P.M.	
12.00	Ada Derana
12.15	Sinhala Songs
01.30	Mix Songs
04.00	Dragon Tales
04.30	Cartoon
06.00	Mali Halhal
07.00	Roweththi with Rozanne
07.30	Miss Sri Lanka 2009
08.00	Ada Derana
08.30	Sarasa
09.00	Adaraniya Poornima
09.30	Sikurada Ra

CHANNEL EYE	
A.M.	01.30 Afternoon News
06.29	Station Opening
06.30	Talk for the Day
06.45	Cartoon Programme
07.00	Vasana Sampatha
07.15	Jayada
07.30	Nallelagalli Inru
08.00	Variety New Songs
08.30	Kalai Vanakkam
09.30	Udaya Dharshanam
11.00	Tele Drama (Tamil)
11.30	Kaimanam (Tamil)
P.M.	
12.00	Lunch Time Variety
01.00	Tamil Film
01.30	Tamil Film Contd.
04.00	Ulhayam (Tamil)
04.30	Salva Neethi (Tamil)
05.00	BBC (English)
06.00	Current Affairs (Tamil)
07.00	Songs (English)
07.15	News & Weather Report
07.45	Indian Premier League - 2009
11.15	Sampath Rekha
11.30	Development Lottery
11.45	News & Weather Report
12.10	Insight (English)
12.15	End of Transmission



Alf 5 on Etv

RUPAVAHINI	
A.M.	02.30 A Documentary
04.18	Station Opening
04.20	Hamaga to the Trijilo
04.30	Com & Karaniya Motta Sullta
04.30	Dharmadesanawa
05.00	G.C.E. (O/L) (Sinhala)
05.55	News
06.00	Dina Asiriya
06.05	Sivudesa
06.30	Pathihara Sirashala
06.55	News
07.00	Asadaraneeya
07.55	News
08.00	Nuga Sevana
08.55	News
09.00	Nuga Sevana
09.55	News
10.00	Nuga Sevana
10.55	News
11.00	Aluth Sri Lankawak
Noon	
12.00	Chandra Vinsathi
P.M.	
12.30	News
01.00	Hiru Vyana
01.55	News
02.00	Bogala Saundris
02.55	News
03.00	A Documentary
03.30	Opa Mageya
03.55	News
04.00	Nena Mihira
04.30	Rathriya Vee
04.55	News
05.00	Havasa Paya
05.55	Defence News
06.00	Sanggamana Kahavunu
06.30	Goni Gedara
06.45	Mihikatha Diruwu
07.00	The Mediator
07.27	Sihina Kumari
08.00	News
08.30	Pasubima
08.35	Hima Gira Naga
09.05	Yashorawaya
09.32	Movie Mix
10.00	Sampath Rekha
10.05	Development Lottery
10.10	News
10.27	Viyaparika Viththi
10.30	Movie Mix
M.N.	
12.00	End of Transmission



Jack & Jill on Etv

ART TV	
A.M.	01.57 State of Business (3 min)
06.30	World Business Today
07.00	The State of Business
07.15	Music +
06.30	World Business Today
07.00	The State of Business
07.15	Music +
07.30	Anderson Cooper 360
08.30	Eco Solutions
09.00	World Sport
09.30	Eco Solutions
09.57	State of Business (3 min)
10.00	Teleseen Marketing
10.30	CNN Today
10.57	State of Business (3 min)
11.00	Teleseen Marketing
11.30	CNN Today
11.57	State of Business (3 min)
Noon	
12.00	Teleseen Marketing
P.M.	
12.30	CNN Today
12.57	State of Business (3 min)
01.00	World Business Today
01.30	World News & CNN
02.00	The Best of Back Story
02.30	Larry King Live
03.30	World News
04.00	World Sport
04.30	Fireman Sam
04.57	State of Business (3 min)
05.00	Flipper and Lopaka
05.30	World News Asia
05.57	State of Business (3 min)
06.00	Teleseen Marketing
06.30	World Business Today
06.57	State of Business (3 min)
07.00	Music +
07.45	World News
08.15	The State of Business
08.30	ICC Cricket
08.57	State of Business (3 min)
09.00	Friday Movie
09.57	State of Business (3 min)
10.00	Movie (Contd.)
11.00	The State of Business
11.30	The Best of Back Story
M.N.	
12.00	Political Mann



Sabre tooth on ETV