Sex and the Sexual during People's Leisure and Tourism Experiences

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: PROVISION, MARKETING, AND CONSUMPTION OF SEX AND THE SEXUAL IN THE LEISURE AND TOURISM ENVIRONMENT

NEIL CARR AND YANIV PORIA

Introduction

Sex and the sexual, in all its diversity, is a constant feature of contemporary society both within and beyond the boundaries of a leisured context. Sex may be defined as an act that leads to physical sexual stimulation and includes a variety of penetrative and non-penetrative acts. These acts can be undertaken in a variety of locations and with a range of types of partners (either as couples or larger groups) or individually (Gini, 2006). Sexual, whilst obviously related to sex, is not directly a physical act. Rather, sexual refers to everything that, suggests, promises, and/or stimulates sex.

Today, a significant and diverse array of items and experiences designed for sexual purposes are available to the individual. These include, the sex and sexual services and products provided by the sex industry which incorporates brothels, individual prostitutes/sex workers, the sex film industry, sex magazines (including the infamous Playboy magazine and its less well known Playgirl counterpart), sex shops (both on-line and on the urban High Street), pole dancing venues, sex toys (including vibrators and blow-up dolls) and medication (such as Viagra) manufacturers. In addition to deliberately offering sex or overtly sexual products, indirect provision of products and experiences that offer sexual stimulation is widespread. Mainstream television broadcasts, movies, and video games are examples of this where they are not primarily focused on sex and/or the sexual but often include content of a sexual nature. Indeed, a variety of

studies have been undertaken that have identified the widespread nature of sex and sexual references in material shown on television (Gunter, 2002). Similarly widespread is the promise or at least suggestion of sex in a wide range of marketing campaigns (Stern, 1991). The diversity of the sex industry and the myriad ways in which sex and the sexual is utilised and portrayed throughout society means, according to Gini (2006: 180) that we live today in a "sex-saturated society." Consequently, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the consumption of and engagement in sex and the sexual has assumed a central place in contemporary societies. This encompasses everything from gazing at sexualized advertisements to the active search by people, individually and/or with partners/groups, for sexual stimulation and intimate contact.

Consumption of sexual items and experiences is commonly, though not necessarily exclusively, undertaken during leisure time. This consumption is enhanced through the common depiction in marketing campaigns of the holiday destination as a sexualised environment. Indeed, the use of sexual innuendo, erotic images, and the sexualized—most commonly female—body to 'promise' sex has been a common and widespread feature of tourism marketing campaigns (Cater & Clift, 2000; Ryan & Hall, 2001). Furthermore, McKercher and Bauer (2003) have noted that a wide variety of tourist destinations have promoted themselves based on associations with love, romance, and sex. Amongst such destinations, Paris is arguably the most famous. Infamous red-light districts such as in Amsterdam and London have also become a feature of these cities tourism and leisure industries and the images they sell (Oppermann, 1998).

The consumption of sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism environment incorporates everything from the direct consumption and pursuit of sexual encounters in holiday destinations such as Ibiza and Hedonism II and III in Jamaica to the utilization of bars and nightclubs as pick-up joints for the pursuit of casual sexual encounters. The beach is also used in a variety of sexualised ways, including voyeuristic ones, as is the hotel room which can be viewed as a miniature and more intimate version of the liminal space which the entire holiday destination represents. In addition to the consumption of sex and the sexual at sites in the leisure environment designed at least partially for this purpose, a variety of sites have been utilized in sexualized ways that they were never designed for. For example, as early as 1975 Humphreys noted the manner in which public conveniences in parks were used by gay men for casual sexual encounters.

At the point of consumption of leisure and tourism experiences the individual may also sexualize the experience and/or themselves through

their own actions and thoughts. This recognizes the personal agency of the individual in becoming a sexual being rather than existing as just a sexual object. Consequently, it is the actions and desires of the individual that drive the sexual nature and direction of the leisure and tourism experience though this may be influenced by the leisure and tourism sectors as well as marketing generated images of the sexual. This means that the sexual nature of the leisure and tourism experiences will always be open to negotiation and hence in a constant state of evolution as the behaviours of the individual influence the sexual images associated with specific environments and experiences. Support for the agency of the individual in the sexualisation of a leisure experience is provided by Collins (2006: 1) who asks the reader to:

> "Consider the large packs of men and women who roam, in circuit drinking mode, the huge number of pubs and bars of Newcastle, England (and of course many other towns and cities around the world). They are not only engaged in socialising and drinking, but are also instinctively aware that opportunities for sexual contact can be acquired through this route."

Despite all the apparent richness and diversity of the topic of sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism experience there has arguably been a relative dearth of publications on the topic. *Sex and the sexual during people's leisure and tourism experiences* provides an initial response to this critique. As such, the book is designed to highlight emerging work on sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism experience. Furthermore, the book is a call and potential map for further research that can fully capture and understand the rich diversity and complexity of sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism experience without being inhibited by a moral straightjacket.

Furthering understandings of sex and the sexual in tourism and leisure potentially offers a range of beneficial outcomes. Beyond the obvious addition to academic knowledge in tourism and leisure developing understandings of sex and the sexual in these fields offers a lens through which the wider social realm can be viewed. This allows links between social constructions of deviance and morality and their link to sex and the sexual to be explored. Such studies also highlight the mundane, and the role leisure and tourism play in it. The research highlighted in this book also has a variety of implications for the leisure and tourism industries both in terms of what they offer potential consumers and how they market their products and services.

The book begins by highlighting why sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism experience have been relatively understudied to date.

However, before this is examined it is important to briefly identify what is meant by 'leisure' and 'tourism' and the relation between these two phenomena within the context of this book. This is necessary as it is recognised that the material presented in the book may appeal to those outside of the field of leisure and tourism research who, consequently, may not be familiar with the rich debates that have shaped the definitions of these two terms.

The meaning of 'leisure' and 'tourism' and their interrelatedness

Defining 'leisure' has been an ongoing issue since the emergence of it as an academic field of study in the modern era. A common thread of most attempts to define leisure has been the establishment of commonalities between contemporary leisure and leisure as defined by philosophers in the Ancient Greek civilization such as Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato. The product of debates about the meaning of leisure has been the conceptualisation of it as a time, activity, and state of mind that is differentiated from 'work' in that it entails an activity that is relatively freely undertaken primarily for purposes of pleasure that is internally rewarding to the individual. This is not to say that pleasure can only be found in the leisure environment but that leisure is different, if not distinct, from non-leisure (i.e., 'work') experiences. In the latter we recognise that individual freedom is overtly curtailed by the employer and/or other agencies external to the individual. In contrast, in leisure whilst absolute freedom is impossible given the continued presence of socio-cultural norms and values that constrain behaviour and desires there exists a perception of freedom that is bolstered by the absence of overt externally imposed rules. This identifies the leisure environment, where leisure experiences are consumed and performed, as a liminal space where any rules that govern this environment are distinct from and less constraining than the rules associated with the non-leisure/work environment.

Consequently, the cornerstones of contemporary definitions of leisure are the concepts of perceived and relative freedom (Iso-Ahola, 1999; Neulinger, 1974; Roberts, 1978). Indeed, Godbey (2003: 5) has stated that "the important thing in defining an experience as leisure is that individuals believe that they are free or that they are controlling events rather than being controlled by events." This measure of freedom allows people to behave during their leisure experiences in a manner that would not necessarily be socially acceptable outside of a leisure setting. Within the context of sex and the sexual the implications of perceived, relative

freedom are, of course, significant as it suggests that during leisure people are more able to engage in sex and sexually related behaviours as well as different types and forms of sex than outside of leisure.

Tourism and leisure academics have often worked in isolation from one another with the result that concepts derived from work in one field of study have not always been utilised in the other (Harris, et al., 1987; Smith & Godbey, 1991). Despite this, it has been argued that there is a strong link between tourism and leisure (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Ryan & Glendon, 1998). A variety of links between tourism and leisure have been identified, including the suggestion that the socio-cultural influences that govern the nature of individual behaviour and desires cut across both leisure and tourism experiences even when individual observable behaviour may differ across the two (Carr, 2002a).

Based on the recognition of a link between tourism and leisure the former has been defined as leisure on the move (Shaw & Williams, 2002). Yet not all moments of a tourism experience may entail leisure. Rather, tourism experiences include timeframes in which leisure may occur. The duration of these timeframes is dependent on the nature of the individual tourism experience engaged in. Therefore, a 'tourist' may be someone who travels away from their home for at least one night, but not permanently, at least partially for leisure (i.e., non-work) purposes. One of the primary motivations for taking a holiday has been identified as 'escape'; the chance to break free of the socio-cultural bounds that govern their behaviour in their home environment. As such, the perception of freedom is central to both leisure and tourism experiences.

Within the framework of these definitions of leisure and tourism place becomes the feature that distinguishes these two social phenomena. Leisure is associated with the home environment (i.e., the locale in which the individual lives) and tourism with the holiday environment (i.e., a place located away from the home). The physical and socio-cultural distance between the home and holiday environments is potentially important as it may provide the opportunity for the loosening of social restraint and an associated increase in perceive personal freedom for the tourist compared to in the leisure environment (Carr, 2002b).

So where does sex and the sexual fit in

Despite the key role of sex and the sexual in the history of humanity there has, arguably been a dearth of publications on the topic. Indeed, Hawkes (2004: 1) has argued that sociology in particular has, "until relatively recently, ignored the two most fundamental aspects for

humankind – sex and death." This situation has arguably been mirrored in other social science/humanities disciplines. Sex and the sexual in the public arena appear to have been an especially taboo subject for general debate and academic study (Hubbard, 2002). Indeed, Tuan (1998: 50) has stated that "Sex is the ultimate private act. Ethnographers who do not hesitate to intrude upon the most intimate behaviours in the name of their science hesitate to observe and record the sex act." The relative lack of analysis of sex may be related to a traditional tendency to avoid talk of sex in general society as it is deemed a socially inappropriate topic for open discussion and by academics due to concerns about the ethical sensitivities of studies of sex and the sexual. Furthermore, academics may have avoided analysis of sex and the sexual due to problems associated with collecting accurate data on the subject. For example, Earle and Sharp (2007: 1) have stated that "men who pay for sex are less readily located and it has been difficult for researchers to find men willing to participate in social research." Additionally, the study of sex behaviour has been labelled a 'mundane' activity and as such it has been identified as being less prestigious and important for academic research (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Larsen, 2008).

With particular reference to leisure and tourism studies relatively little material has been published that has focused on issues of sex and/or the sexual[1]. This is problematic given the statement by Gini (2006: 173) that people have sex because "It feels good. It's fun. We like it, a lot! And so, we pursue it and do it, as often as possible. Sex is, arguably, humankind's most common and immediate form of pleasure and entertainment." While this clearly places sex within the remit of leisure it is important to recognise that this is not necessarily the case for all sex or everyone engaged in anything sexual. Whilst not disputing the fact that pleasure can be a significant component of sex, at least for those voluntarily engaged in it, and leisure Szasz (1968: 116) provides a suggestion of how socially constructed moral values may have split the two when stating that "When the Catholic Church invented the dogma of the Original Sin, the idea was to brand sexual pleasure as something shameful, filthy, abominable, so that anyone indulging in it should feel guilty and afraid of punishment."

Beyond the general avoidance of sex as a research topic within academic circles the dearth of such work in leisure studies may be related to a tendency within the discipline to focus on the central ground of 'conventional morality' (Rojek, 1999; Veal & Lynch, 2001); either

[1] Sexuality being a distinct issue concerned with sexual-orientation which has, in recent years, been extensively studied within leisure and tourism studies

avoiding discussion of morally questionable leisure activities or analysing them from a 'moral' perspective. A similar argument may be made to explain the relative lack of analysis of sex and the sexual in the tourism experience. As a consequence of the tendency in tourism and leisure studies to remain within the bounds of conventional morality there appears to have been a lack of transfer of potentially relevant research on sex and the sexual outside of leisure and tourism studies into the disciplines. For example, some work has been conducted on the use of sex in marketing that arguably has relevance for understanding the leisure and tourism experiences but this material has yet to be utilised within the fields of leisure and tourism studies.

Given the general conformity to conventional morality it is not surprising that the main foci of the limited amount of work that has been undertaken on sex within the leisure and tourism experience has dealt with the issue of morality. For example, some work has been undertaken looking at the sex trade in general and child sex tourism in particular from a conventional morality perspective within the context of tourism (e.g., Beddoe, et al, 2001). Although this moral perspective on sex is a worthy area of study it is only a small segment of the wide arena of sex in leisure and tourism. This view is reinforced by McKercher & Bauer (2003: 4), who have stated that whilst the focus on studies of sex tourism and child sex tourism has "helped raise awareness of legitimate issues, the commercialization of sex and tourism represents only a small portion of the total spectrum of tourism and human sexual relationships." Yet whilst a moral perspective may be of value it also potentially results in colonial style moralising and cultural blindness (Ryan & Hall, 2001). Outside of the conventional morality perspective sex, the sexual, and the sensual have been identified as motivators for travel but there are almost no studies that have focused exclusively on this subject. Indeed, even amongst studies of tourist motivation sex has often been disregarded.

Whatever the reason, the result of a lack of analysis of sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourist experience has been a limited and rather biased understanding of the complexity of the role sex and the sexual plays in the construction and nature of both leisure and tourism experiences and how this is influenced by and feeds back into the general society and non-leisure environments. This is particularly important as tourism and leisure (as well as sex and the sexual) play a significant role in our daily lives. This critique recognises the need for the boundaries of research on sex in the leisure and tourism environments to move beyond morally defined analyse to fully understand the place and nature of sex in leisure and tourism.

A general global trend towards social liberalisation may be responsible for a toning down of the established taboo on discussions and public displays of sex and the sexual. This trend has arguably led to previously hidden sexual desires and experiences being displayed more publicly than in the past (Ryder, 2006). As part of this process Cameron (2006: 17) has stated that "The Internet is helping to create an image where it is seen as a more everyday thing to express sexual fetishes, buy sexual 'toys', hire escorts, look at pornography, etc." Reducing taboos associated with sex and the sexual may have driven and been driven by social acceptance of sexual displays. An example of this process arguably includes the legalisation of prostitution in New Zealand in 2003. In addition, it is now becoming common to see sexually related products including edible body paints, condoms, and vibrators on the shelves of mainstream retailers such as Wal-Mart (Heinecken, 2007). There has also been a growth in the presence of adult entertainment shops on urban high streets that indicates an increasing social acceptance of expressions of sex and the sexual (Pattinson, 2004). The liberalisation of displays and discussion of sex and the sexual indicate the timely nature of investigations into sex in the tourism and leisure experiences. A reduction in taboos associated with displays and discussions of sex and the sexual may also have an effect on the role of sex in tourism and leisure experiences. This increases the need for research into sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism environments. Another reason for looking at sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism experience is a growing recognition that analysis of the mundane is not only important to developing understandings of tourism and leisure, but that everyday activities play an important role in leisure and tourism experiences (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Larsen, 2008).

Given its focus and cross-disciplinary nature this book should appeal to researchers and students across the humanities and social sciences both for the value of the research in its own right and the ability of it to be used as a lens through which to view the position of sex and the sexual in society in general as well as within the tourism and leisure experiences in particular. The material presented in the book should also be of interest to health scholars and psychologists concerned with sexual behaviour and health, with a particular focus on sexually transmitted diseases

Book Structure

The work displayed in this book cuts across a variety of academic disciplines bringing a diverse range of viewpoints and conceptualisations to the debate about sex in the leisure and tourism experience. This

diversity reflects the cross-disciplinary nature of analysis of leisure and tourism. The diversity of disciplinary viewpoints presented in the chapters of this book provides the foundation for the development of understandings of sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism experience that are uninhibited by artificial disciplinary boundaries. The chapters are broadly divided into two sections; the first of which examines the provision of and for sex in leisure and tourism experiences. The second section focuses on the experience of sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism environment. These research based chapters encompass a wide range of leisure and tourism experiences and geographical locales.

The first section of the book begins with a look at contemporary physical sex shops via the content of their websites. As the authors, Carr and Taylor, argue these outlets have traditionally been defined as a space dominated by the heterosexual male. This chapter shows how the research that has been undertaken on women-focused sex shops speaks from the perspective of the morally acceptable empowerment of women; conforming to the tendency of research on sex and the sexual to be situated within socially constructed conventional morality. Carr and Taylor's findings suggest that the sex shops of today are attempting to cater to a diverse range of sexualities and both genders, though the heterosexual male tends to be the primary focus of the majority of sex shops and relatively few women or homosexual focused shops exist. The next chapter, by Córdova-Plaza, talks about the gay sex trade and how it is negotiated within public. This negotiation requires the camouflaging of the trade whilst simultaneously advertising its products. As such this chapter is related to the work of Humphreys in 1975 on the 'tea room' trade that examined the casual gay sex experiences of men in public conveniences. The chapter also shows how socio-cultural norms and values govern the positioning of sex within the tourism experience. Discussion of this issue is continued in chapter 4, entitled 'Flying Tigers in a Dominican Tourist Town,' where the representation and positioning of women hosts in the tourist destination is studied. The chapter examines the sexualisation of the female body, the policing of it by socio-cultural norms and values, and the role of the individual women in these processes. Chapter 5 discusses the morally sensitive issue of child sex tourism and the problematic issue of law enforcement authorities' efforts to combat this phenomenon. It recognises how definitions of acceptability and deviance are constantly evolving and space specific which can be problematic when dealing with international tourists who transcend national legal boundaries. Interestingly, the chapter notes how regulations are "more often than not negotiated by and for adult men;" an issue that is clearly potentially problematic when it

is recognised that adult males are the main participants in child sex tourism.

The second section of the book, which focuses on experience of sex and the sexual in the leisure and tourism environment, begins by examining the sexual behaviour of women in the holiday experience. As such, chapter 6 marks a recognition of the sexual empowerment of women. The authors, Berdychevsky, et al., examine both the quantity and quality of sexual experiences from the perspective of their female participants and illustrate the diversity of these experiences. Chapter 7 focuses on the sexual encounters of gay men and identifies how the nature of the encounter is influenced by the space in which it occurs. Drawing on work based in Mexico the material presented in this chapter whilst distinct from that studied in chapter 3 complements, and is complemented by, the work highlighted in the latter. In contrast to chapters 6 and 7 the material presented in chapter 8 is clearly focused in the leisure environment rather than the tourism one. It also focuses on the sexual experiences of a group not previously studied in this section of the book; namely the lesbian population. The need for the work focused on lesbians is based not only on the significance of this population but also the relative neglect of lesbians to date by tourism and leisure academics compared to the gay male population (Hughes, 2006). The chapter maps, both temporally and spatially, the seeking of sexual experiences of lesbians across the urban landscape of Bloemfontein, South Africa. The final chapter in this section is based on the recognition of the growing significance of openly gay competitors and participants in sports. In particular, the chapter focuses on the gay football scene in the UK and the experiences and motivations of its participants. The chapter offers a lens to see how leisure and non-leisure experiences are interrelated and how identities developed in one can be utilised in the other.

The final chapter of the book provides a discussion of the main contributions to tourism and leisure research by the material presented in *Sex and the sexual during people's leisure and tourism experiences*. Following this discussion an attempt is made to provide a theoretical framework that conceptualises the roles sex and sexual desire play in tourism and leisure. Finally, the chapter examines potential new directions for research on sex in the tourism and leisure experience and methodological approaches to such studies. This includes recognition of ethical issues concerning research on sex that stress the need to avoid harming potential research participants whilst at the same time warning against the dangers of not undertaking research based on the perceived morality of the material to be studied.

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PART I:

PROVISION OF SEX AND THE SEXUAL IN THE LEISURE AND TOURISM EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER TWO

SEX SHOPS OF THE 21ST CENTURY: ARE 'YOU' BEING SERVED?

NEIL CARR AND STEVE TAYLOR

Introduction

A sex shop, for the purpose of this chapter has been defined as a shop with a physical location as opposed to one that exists exclusively on the Internet or as a mail-order entity. It stocks products that are mainly, though not necessarily exclusively, of a sexual nature. These products may include videos/DVD's, magazines/books, sex toys, lingerie, and sex pills/potions. Such shops may, but do not necessarily have to describe themselves as a sex/adult entertainment/erotica shop or give themselves a similar title. The definition of sex shops utilised in this chapter does not include establishments where sexual acts may be purchased or live acts of a sexual nature are on offer.

The sex industry has been widely labelled as deviant. Indeed, in polite society simply talking about sex has long been viewed as a taboo subject (Gini, 2006). Furthermore, within an academic context Ryder (2004: 1661) has claimed that "despite abandoning the view that adult entertainment is 'vice', recent work has continued to describe adult entertainment districts as part of a range of activities whose marginalisation in spaces reflects marginalisation in society." However, given the extent and scale of the sex industry it is not surprising to find that it has been extensively studied though the relatively recent nature of these studies contrasts with the age of the industry. In particular, sex industry research has been focused on prostitution and sex clubs (e.g., Hubbard, et al., 2008) and primarily concerned with urban zoning and regulation (e.g., Harcourt & Donovan, 2005; Papayanis, 2000; Tucker, 1997; West & Orr, 2007) and women's rights (e.g., Dworkin, 1985; Kempadoo, 1998; Strossen, 2000). In contrast, despite being a component of the global multi-billion sex industry, the sex

shop is a relatively under-researched topic. For example, as Malina and Schmidt (1997: 352) note "the emergence of the sex shop industry in Britain is largely undocumented in academic literature." Consequently, it is not surprising to find that there has been a dearth of research that has assessed the nature of the sex shop industry to determine the types of market it is catering to in contemporary society.

Despite this dearth it may be argued that, traditionally, sex shops have predominantly been a heterosexual male domain, especially outside of mega-urban centres. Such a view is supported by Heinecken (2007: 136) who stated "most local sex shops outside of centres like New York, Seattle or San Francisco still cater to mainly male clientele." Similarly, Malina and Schmidt (1997: 352-3) have defined sex shops as "businesses run by men for men, sex shops rarely consider women." Yet against this historic backdrop in recent years we have witnessed an increasing social acceptance of women, gays and lesbians in public leisure spaces and formerly hetero-male dominated leisure experiences and the provision for them in such spaces and experiences (Cohen & Taylor, 1992; Loftus, 2001; Mowlabocus, 2007). This changing pattern has, at least partially, been driven by a general liberalisation of societal views; particularly in western countries. In addition, these changes may be linked to the increasing economic power and independence of women (Nikunen, 2007) and recognition of the significance of the value of the gay community and its size which, for example, has been estimated at 10% of the overall population of the USA (Pritchard, et al., 1998). Indeed, Pritchard et al (1998: 275) have identified the gay population has having become the "latest target of mainstream marketers." In addition, the gay and lesbian population has been identified as a 'dream market' due to its higher than average disposable incomes and whilst it is seen as a relatively small market the increasing social acceptance of open displays of homosexuality may arguably be increasing the viability of businesses seeking to focus on it (Wardlow, 1996).

In addition, there is an increasing recognition of the sexuality of women in their own right rather than just as sexual objects for the heterosexual male gaze and social acceptance of their sexual needs and desires. This has arguably been at least partially driven by the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and influential magazines such as Cosmo and its sexual, female focused content. Indeed, as Nikunen (2007: 74) states, "the Cosmo brand has developed in tandem with cultural transformations in the rights, employment and education of women that have contributed to their increased independence, as well as increased interest toward their sexual power." This recognition of the sexuality of

women is epitomised by Cohen and Taylor's (1992: 124-5) claim that masturbation has:

> "lost its traditional masculine image. Just at [as] the yachting and golfing clubs have opened their doors to women members, so there are now books, magazines and apparatus available to female masturbators. To the list of technological aids available to hobbyists – the power drill, the electric lawn mower, the rotary cultivator – must now be added the vibrator. Everyone can now become a masturbator and most of us happily do."

This view has, of course, been popularised via the television sitcom Sex and the City and the highlighting of the vibrator known as the Rabbit on the show which arguably contributed to making it the most popular vibrator on the market (Attwood, 2005). Consequently, it has been suggested that "according to sexual critic and author Laura Kipnis, women have discovered the secret that men have known for a long time. Secret sex (sex outside the rules, risky sex) is alive, an adventure, and deliciously dangerous" (Gini, 2006: 174). All of these trends in the liberalisation of the leisure experience and society in general, and the recognition of the economic significance and sexuality of non-heterosexual male populations suggest the potential broadening of the target markets for sex shops.

Indeed, work has begun to emerge that has focused on the position of women as potential clients of sex shops, the creation of sex shops and sex-toy parties for women, and the use of the Internet by women for sexual stimulation (Leiblum, 2001; McCaughey & French, 2001). The sex industry has apparently recognised the sexual liberation of women and consequently begun to cater to this population. As a result we have seen the creation of products for the female market including warming lubricants, edible body paints, and condoms with vibrating rings by companies such as Durex who had traditionally focused on the male market (Heinecken, 2007). Similarly, the traditionally heterosexually focused pornographic film industry has begun to cater to women and non-heterosexual markets to the extent that female directors are now beginning to produce sexually explicit movies (Davies, 2008). It is not therefore surprising that "a number of women-oriented sex shops have also emerged in recent years, selling everything from vibrators and strap-on harnesses to floggers and anal beads" (Heinecken, 2007: 121).

Despite the emerging focus on the role of women as clients in sex shops little work has been undertaken that examines the provision for homosexuals in the sex shop environment despite claims about the increasing openness of modern societies that recognise the rights of the needs and desires of all groups, irrespective of sexual orientation.

Furthermore, the limited research to date focused on women as sex shop consumers has dealt exclusively with sex shops designed by women for women, ignoring traditional sex shops. Consequently, the aim of this chapter is to assess the nature of the contemporary sex shop and the extent to which it provides for heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals of both genders.

Method

In order to meet the aims of this research a content analysis of the websites of sex shops that have a physical outlet in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the UK, or the USA was undertaken. The decision to conduct the research via websites was based on practicality; it being unfeasible to visit the physical location of each sex shop and/or conduct a content analysis of material portrayed in a shop when physically visiting it. The research did not encompass sex shops that only exist within cyberspace as it was felt these would potentially be more specialised (i.e., focused on specific market segments) than their physical space counterparts. This, of course, would not allow full analysis of the extent to which sex shops cater to all sexualities and both genders. Furthermore, the lack of a physical entity means that web based sex shops are not subject to the same social and cultural influences as their physically based counterparts, at least not to the same extent, and hence may be identified as a separate segment of the sex industry. The focus on shops with a physical outlet also heightened the likelihood that these outlets would be legal in contrast to shops that only exist on the Internet whose legality may be questionable. This was important as it guaranteed researchers were not visiting websites that may break laws and/or university rules. Whilst the benefits of analysing the content of sex shop websites are significant it is important to recognise that these are online shops and a form of advertising and may not therefore fully represent the reality present in the physical shops with which they are associated. Despite this, the websites do clearly play a role in the impression management of the physical shops.

Initially, sex shops were identified in each country via a search of the Yellow Pages web site. The search terms utilised were: “sex shop,” “adult entertainment shop/store” and “adult novelty shop/store.” Concerns about the reliability of the Yellow Pages websites to identify sex shops meant that Google was also employed as a search engine, as was Yelp (a site where members of the public write reviews of a wide range of establishments) in the case of the USA. As Google routinely delivers hits numbering in the millions for each search, in order to ensure the research