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Sex Toys in the City- The Sex Toy Market vs. Profit, Culture and Education

Abigail M. Jobe

Portland State University

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Sex Toys in the City- The Sex Toy Market vs Profit, Culture and Education

Abigail Jobe

Research Question:

How has the social interpretation of sex toys, the development of feminist sex stores that emphasize education, and the growing profit-based sex toy market transformed the ideas and culture surrounding personal pleasure?



Methodology

The research method that I relied on for my project was observational research. I performed my research in two different ways to get the best general overview of the observations.

My method of observation and gathering data consisted of visiting four different sex stores in person and investigating their websites to cover the different layers of my research question.

The four stores included She Bop, Lovers, Mr. Peeps, and Fantasy for Adults.

Physical Research Observation Purpose:

- Investigate the engagement of customers with employees.
- Investigate aesthetics and the products showcased in the store.
- Investigate the population of the store.

Online Research Observation Purpose:

- Investigate the website aesthetic.
- Investigate the products featured on the websites.
- Investigate the social media featured on the websites.
- Investigate the price range of the products.

Layers of Research

Social Interpretations

- The first layer of my research investigates the social interpretations of sex toys and sex toy stores.
- I outline the background of these aspects in my literature review and additionally analyze them post-observation.
- Since sex and obtaining pleasure are still taboo topics, this layer is important to my investigation and potentially understanding how different sex stores appeal to the public.

Feminist Sex Stores

- The second layer of my research investigates feminist centered sex stores.
- *Vibrator Nation*, a book by Lynn Comella, observes how feminist sex stores were created because traditional stores were made for the male gaze and often were uncomfortable for women to shop in.
- The importance of this aspect of research helps draw the line between the different types of stores and why the difference exists.

Profit Centered Market

- The third layer of my research investigates the profit centered sex toy market.
- Since my research is in the Portland Metro area, which is integrated into a capitalist society, observation of the profit market was an important aspect to investigate.
- This part of my investigation also considered what products were sold in each location and how sex toys as luxury items may limit access to them.

Project Summary

- As I have been in the process of writing my thesis and working to conclude my research, I have used my observations, current literature, and analyzed the past research around similar topics.
- The purpose of this research is to analyze the three layers previously identified and showcase how new sex stores that are centered around feminism and education have transformed the world of pleasure for individuals who were previously not catered to.
- Additionally, I want to show how sex stores, based on how they present themselves, transform social interpretations while also working within a society that emphasizes profits to stay afloat.