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Title: “Webcam-sex services in the adult entertainment industry: sociological, economic and legal aspects”

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I. Introduction

Attempting to assess and understand the phenomenon of webcam-sex services being provided via the Internet, one has to take into account not only the pure invasion of the Net facilities in our daily routine, but also the new means of socialization which have recently emerged and which are based, among others, on web-interactivity.

From the point of avoiding loneliness and sexual rejection to the end of sexually satisfying oneself, using the web pages to find a solution on sexually related issues is as common as surfing the Net itself. The reasons of such a navigation vary from behavioural difficulty to corporal disability and from psychological deficiencies to mere curiosity that becomes addictive.

The factor of addiction brings up a series of consequences such as the financial exhaustion of the user of the services, his social isolation and, even more detrimental psychological effects, such as aggressiveness or depression, let alone the moral, sentimental and religious conflicts between the family members. On the other hand, the providers of the abovementioned services, in other words the “online models”, also suffer from a variety of problems referring to their dignity status, their physical safety, their personal data protection and their economic reward that is not equal to the price they have to pay due to their sexual exploitation.

Apart from the aforementioned aspects, the financial motivation of the creators and the webmasters who run that business is of great importance. Gaining funds not only from the site advertisements and the visiting traffic of the page but also-and mainly- from the sexual acts which the virtual models perform in front of their web cameras, the sites’ owners leave for the online workers a payment which is minimum in comparison to the huge profit made.

Furthermore, ineffective protection is provided to the net performers of sexual services in relation to the acknowledgment of the binding contractual preconditions between them and the webmasters, their right to protect their privacy and prevent the dissemination of their personal data (image, name, address, sexual preferences e.t.c.) or their payment rights. In addition, the models’ sexual exploitation is often the result of blackmailing and human trafficking or is usually the beginning of child pornography for those of them that are not of legal age.

Besides that, bearing in mind the fact that the services are bought from the customers through online transactions which, occasionally, do not guarantee neither the safety of the data transferred nor the clearance of the contracts between webmasters and customers, it becomes necessary for all the interested parties to follow specific rules and codes of conduct in order to interact safely in that particular environment.

II. The online paid-sex industry as a social, economic and legal phenomenon

A. The webcam-sex culture and its commercialization

From the early 1990s, when the Internet started to gradually invading in all houses, till today, when the access to the Net and the world of instant information has

become everyone's right and a common good protected by constitutional and civil law, the use of computers has spread radically. The growth of e-commerce, online banking, e-government or e-learning proves, *inter alia*, that the World Wide Web provides an alternative means of contracting and communicating with each other, thus facilitating our daily lives by saving time and money. However, this general trend has also affected the ways in which we socialize, especially supported by the new technologies that bring us close in real time, such as 3G mobile phones, i-Pads, live video conferencing, streaming video, peer to peer servers, file sharing programs and bulletin or message boards. As a result, our priority is to interact through gadgets than to physically contact with the ones we care or love, transforming, in that way, our personal time into a "sms-texting", a "real-time synchronous communication, i.e. chat" or a "webcam-chat" schedule.

In that sense, social network sites such as Facebook or Twitter indicate how the globalization of instant sharing of ideas and feelings has shaped a Net culture and has replaced face-to-face conversation. Having thousands of "friends" or "followers" is the result of simply clicking the "like" button and has nothing to do with mutual "in the flesh" exchange of arguments and sentiments. Creating romances is also an "application" provided by the most popular social sites, which allow their members to "meet each other" online by using their web cameras or their Internet telephony devices. In that level of interaction, sexual activity based on sexual provocation of erotic acts or speech comes up to complete the puzzle of online socialization.

As a logical consequence, looking for a sexual partner to play with is the secret desire of many Net surfers and that is the feeling of which the webmasters have taken advantage so as to create a whole industry of virtual sexual services provided via the Internet. Giving their customer the ability to choose among hundreds of models the one that fulfills his standards without taking him out of his home and without asking him to reveal his real name, the owners of the online sex sites have moved one step further in comparison to the past by minimizing the time and the effort needed to make money. Thanks to the use of advanced technology devices supported by experienced staff and to the willingness of their models to gain as much as they can through the performance of all kinds of sexual acts on camera, the modern "pimps" have established a quite profitable industry which is regarded as supreme in comparison to the rest of the alternatives the adult entertainment world has to offer (porn movies, phone sex, peep shows) due to the instant face-to-face satisfaction it guarantees. Undoubtedly, online-sex sites prevail because they offer anonymity, instant gratification and choice, continents unavailable in an offline store.¹

B. Sexual services provided online or in person: similarities and differences

Trying to find and evaluate the existing common places between traditional and modern provision of sexual services, we have to bear in mind the sociological, financial and legal parameters on behalf of the provider, the performer and the receiver of those services. Those services are part of a general industry called "adult entertainment" which consists, among others, of lapdance in strip clubs, adult magazines, sex shops, porn films, pay-tv, video on demand, sex toys, sex clubs, gay bathhouse, darkroom and so on. The common point of the above activities is the non-contact interaction between the viewer and the performer.²

Besides, many argue that, being an online sex-model does not differ at all from being a prostitute, as it is based on the same practice: the performer promotes her

appearance to attract the customer and, while being paid with credits that the latter has already bought to pass time with her, she obeys to his instructions by imitating sexual intercourse.

Moreover, in the past, the person who facilitated the prostitute's work was the so called "pimp", who provided her with a shelter, brought her in contact with the clients and protected her from other "pimps" and, as a payback, he possessed her physically (sometimes and emotionally) and gained the maximum of her profits, method which many webmasters follow nowadays as well.

In addition, the customer, pushed by psychological or corporal frustration, attempts to relieve from his sexual stress, satisfy his inner fantasies or confirm his sexual ego by imposing on the paid performer various sexual behaviors, in the same way a brothel client behaves to the whore. Furthermore, given that buying and selling sex is a social phenomenon as old as the human race which today takes place in the online society, the similarities in the psychological and physical effects on the performers- traditional or modern- are many: setting aside the cases in which the online models are victims of trafficking and are captivated in hotel rooms given solely food and water or being blackmailed that their online recorded shows will be disseminated to their origin countries, the main similarity is the scheme "customer"- "performer", the complex of the conducts flowing from it- varying from phrasal abuse or simple irony to pure humiliation of the performer- and the effect which those conducts cause to the latter (e.g. low self-esteem, lack of dignity, depression), in the same way the traditional street prostitute had to deal with the social degradation and rejection.

Additionally, a large number of people involved in the production of the online work such as the studio's designers, the tech experts in charge who maintain the online system's integrity and develop the site with new applications, the site owner's translators, order processors, accountants and legal advisors, not only remind us the customary mermaid of the brothel who kept it clean and tidy, the cashier who was responsible for the payment in advance, the "pimp" who exploited the prostitute and guaranteed for the safety of the place, but also indicate the economic significance of this particular industry for a great quantity of participants.³

However, independently of the aforementioned resemblances, the online paid sex is distinguished from the real world prostitution mainly in relation to the physical contact factor. "They may abuse our bodies but they will never own our souls" is an urban legend held by the traditional prostitutes to indicate the distinction between their corporal and mental maltreatment. Altered by the online-sex models, the aforesaid opinion goes further to state that, since there is no physical contact between the "customer" and the "performer", no prostitution occurs and no harm is caused on the latter.

From a moral point of view and setting aside statements of Net models who declare that working online has caused them serious body injuries and psychosomatic damage as well,⁴ the above argument is an alibi both for the performers and the customers. In other words, the models try to consider themselves as freewill workers and not as prostitutes and the customers seek to believe they do nothing more than just buying services without cheating their spouses.

The physical contact criterion is also an excuse for the legislative authorities to postpone any effort on forming an international core code of rules referring to the functional regime of online paid services, based on the reason that, since there is no

bodily intercourse or abuse, no danger of crime exists neither any employment comes to pass. Nevertheless, an overview of the contracts between performers and webmasters proves the existence of an “employer”-“employee” relationship as their conditions, referring to matters such as payment, broadcast schedule or compensation rights, are set in favor of the site owners and reflect their dominant position towards the models.

Undoubtedly, leaving behind the moral principles and talking in economic terms, online paid-sex services form a rather profitable business market founded on the structure of selling and buying sexual fantasies through the promotion of real women’s bodies. No matter how vague the intention of the customer is, it is unambiguous that the bodily appearance and the eagerness of the models on reducing their self-respect values is an objective financial standard able to maximize the profit made, just like in the old years. As a result, when everything is translated into money, it becomes obvious that greediness for earnings leads the whole business to laboral and ethical exploitation and allows for illegal activity such as captivity, human trafficking, child pornography, data blackmailing or even homicide.

C. Function, categories and cost of services provided: a pricey online ecstasy

Intending to comprehend how online sex services have become so gainful, one has to understand their function and estimate the variety and the price of the fantasies sold through the Net. By clicking a site’s domain name or even a phrase such as “webcam sex” on a search machine, the “customer” finds himself in front of thousands of sites promising to fulfill his wildest desires. Entering one of them, he is first being asked to register as a member in order to gain all the privileges of the member, such as the ability to chat free with the models and get their attention. Becoming a member usually presupposes filling a form of personal information, not necessarily true, and creating a nickname which distinguishes each member from the rest.

However, being a member and not just a visitor does not allow the customer to isolate the model. In order to do so, he has to buy credits, that is to say, charge his credit card or bill his phone number with an amount of money that he will use in order to buy time for the model’s show. The more credits one buys, the most time he can spend with a model privately and, in that logic, a member can become “premiere” or “golden” by spending, for example, more than 200\$ everyday in the site. The reward for the “golden” members is often the unlimited access to the site’s nude galleries, an extra-time offer during the model’s show e.t.c. Furthermore, once a member finds his favorite model, he is given the choice to join the model’s fan club by buying an (in advance paid) 1, 2 or 3 month membership in a discount price. As a return, he is permitted to access all the naked photos of the model or watch all the model’s recorded shows performed either for him or for other surfers or even communicate privately with the model by sending her e-mail or scanned personal photos or by commenting on her personal diary’s naughty notes.

Evidently, regardless of the reason one visits those sites, they have been constructed in such a way so as to convince the visitor to consume (spend money) as much and fast as he can in order to stay alone with the model and satisfy his sexual instincts. Following the basic principles of management, the web pages’ designers tickle the visitor’s inner nature by bombarding him with images of perfect bodied women “ready for everything” or by offering him a free-trial visit, thus manipulating him till he considers the entire procedure as necessary part of his daily life.

Those sites' owners often adopt techniques of cyber-highjacking to misdirect or trap the Net surfers in their sites: "page jacking", which is the directing of the user to a porn site by using false key-word-descriptions so that the search engine promotes a link to that site, or "mouse-trapping", which occurs when the porn site's designers disable browser commands such as "back" or "close" so that the random viewers cannot leave the porn site, point out the economic importance of that business.⁵ Given that this kind of sites are broadcasting on a 24h/7d basis throughout the Web, it is easy to guess the commercial size of many of them and the vast amount of money transferred electronically every day.

As for the communication part, the usual case is the one-to-one interaction, which contains general chat (some typical dialogues begin like that: "hey, you look awesome today and I feel so lonely here, will you keep me company"? – "sure, honey, I am all yours here...") that, sooner or later, turns out to dirty sexist speech (e.g. – "I wanna see you totally naked there, getting dirty for me, I wanna make you mine..."- "Go on, babe, be my guest in my private room and lemme become the woman of your dreams...") and ends up with a show that starts when the customer clicks the "private show" button and terminates automatically when the credits (time bought) finish, regardless of the complete satisfaction of the customer. Apart from simply watching the model performing under his instructions, the customer can also- being additionally charged- show himself to the model by connecting his own web camera to the site in an effort to simulate real sex. Nevertheless, in an attempt to avoid loss of customers, the webcam-sex sites offer their members cheaper solutions such as group shows or happy-hour shows where the member lacks of the advantage of interacting privately with the model and merely watches the show without even publicly commenting on the performance.

Another factor to be considered is the technological architecture of that business. Although the sites' owners affirm that everyone can turn into an online sex model while working independently in his own house, in practice this becomes problematic due to technical and economic obstacles as the model, often desperate for cash, needs to invest an adequate amount of money on advanced technological devices (cameras, studio equipment, fast Internet connection, sophisticated antivirus and billing software) in order to broadcast properly and cost-effectively.⁶ Thus, as a more convenient solution, the model moves on to work in a rented studio which is usually placed in a hotel and consists of separate rooms designed and equipped for the needs of broadcasting. In both cases, a central web server and a developed connection network is required to allow broadcasting through the web site and sustain the site's functionality in all levels, from page structure to transactions and from technical support to customer service. This fundamental web server, owned by a webmaster-either an individual or a company-, provides the model with a unique password which permits the latter to log in the site and perform.

The residence of that server lays usually in "tax heaven" countries such as Nauru, Belize or The British Virgin Islands, confirming in that way the struggle of the webmasters for avoiding heavy taxation. Apparently, a model working autonomously remains a theoretical possibility due to the infrastructure considered necessary for a successful corporation. Therefore, even if she works from her own house living-room, the model always retains her ability to broadcast on the webmaster's permission to use his server instead of a fee, thus becoming the weak party in the relationship established for that reason.

Referring to the categories of the shows made, except for the female models who offer one-to-one shows, there is a wide range of performance combinations according to the demand: from one or more couples who have sex separately or in a group to homosexual (gays or lesbians) or transsexual performers or single men, it is clear that the performers and the spectators of the shows belong to both genders and have diverse sexual preferences. Moreover, categories of models more specific than the usual ones (“blondes”, “brunettes”, “tattooed”, “pierced”, “skinny”, “tanned”, “Asian”, “Afro”, “shaggy”, “glasses”, “classy”, “next-door girl” e.t.c.) such as “dominant”, “roleplay”, “bondage-sado-mazochist”, “pregnant”, “granny”, “teen (just eighteen)”, “feet-worship”, “golden shower”, “oral fixation”, “food play”, “smoking”, “drunk” and so on prove, apart from the commonplace that the human soul is an abyss full of fetishes and delinquent conducts, that the online models, in their chase of maximum and fast profit, declare ready to do almost everything in front of their cameras, underestimating the risk they run in personal and social level. The models can be nearly of any (legal) age, from “eigh”teens to grandmothers. They can also be of any marital status, from single to divorced, engaged or even “married but cheating” persons.

The true country of their origin or the country from where they actually broadcast is rarely published, not only for reasons of money laundering but also because their work is often the result of slavery and captivity and not of self-rule. Still, they can be of any race or educational status; even their appearance may sometimes differ from the characteristic type of the fit beautiful woman (or man) stereotype, as it depends on each viewer’s impulse to look for his passion object.

To accomplish their mission, which consists in satisfying the customer and make him a long-term member of their fan club and a persistent viewer of their shows, the models make use of a variety of products. Attempting to become attractive and naughty, eccentric and cute, they wear outfit which scandalizes their viewers (see-through body forms, fetish shoes, all sorts of dresses such as “schoolgirl skirt”, “secretary suit”, “police uniform”, “doctor robe”) and are keen on playing with all kinds of erotic objects (dildos, handcuffs, chains) aiming at their customer’s filthiest fantasies. The massive number of the abovementioned products verifies the close relationship between the adult entertainment-erotica industry and the online-sex business, as a recycling of money normally takes place: the model buys erotic objects and clothes and feeds, in that way, the porn market which, after that, tempts the Internet user to enter the sex-show sites. It often happens for a porn movies’ producer to be, at the same time, manufacturer of erotic objects and webmaster of webcam-sex sites where he advertises his products and services, hence making the most of the revenue and establishing a dominant position in the relevant market that leads to oligopoly.⁷

Furthermore, aside from the above analyzed functional and category factors, the economics of the online-sex business are also important. Once a customer is interested in buying sexual pleasure, he has to prepare himself for a respectable expense depending, of course, on the intensity of his visits, the time he wants to devote to his satisfaction and the frequency of his virtual intercourses. For the occasional visitor of the site, who has inevitably become a member following the aforementioned procedure in order to be able to privately interact with any model, a ten-minute private session with a performer can cost from 25 to 70\$ (20 to 60 euros), as the charge per minute for a private show varies from 2,50 to 7,00\$, depending on the popularity, the beauty, the eagerness, the capacity

or the professionalism of the performer. Not an insignificant amount of money, especially when compared to the average daily income in Europe which equals to 50 euros! If the visitor avoids interacting and prefers simply watching a recorded show of his adored performer, he has to pay 1\$ per minute or 5\$ per view. What's more, since a regular site can occupy more than 300 models broadcasting at the same time via its server on a nonstop basis, it becomes evident that hundreds of thousands of dollars flow progressively from such an investment daily.

Making our paradigm more complicated, we can assume that the customer, focusing on gaining the maximum pleasure through interaction, decides to connect his web camera to his computer and ask the model to view him. This will cost him an additional fee of 2\$ per minute and the charge goes on if the visitor wants to become a member of his beloved model's fan club. In that case, he prepaays some 20-30\$ for a month's membership and, as a reward, he has a 10% discount every time he enters in a private session with his favorite model. For the frequent visitors, a "premier" membership is suggested based on the ability of the member to charge his credit card with unlimited amounts of money during the day. In that point, it is the addiction parameter that comes into light with all its psychological, social and financial aspects.

Giving the viewer the role of the consumer, we understand that both the performers and the webmasters capitalize on his obsession to buy virtual sex. The models tease his inner feelings, itch his libido and sell their personal time in a relatively affordable price while they target on making him come back again and again for more action. The site owners, on their behalf, by maintaining a high-quality technological level for their site and by using management tricks ("offers", "free trials", "access to nude photo galleries") to preserve their customers and attract even more, benefit both from the model's work and the viewer's bill, as they have an instant income per show by charging not only the model with a high fee as a payback for the ability to broadcast they provide her with, but also the viewer's credit card. For the webmasters, the models broadcasting via their server are pure gold, because their nude photos, their recorded shows, their (private, group, "happy-hour" discount) shows or even their free chat conversations are translated into credit card or phone billing or, simply, into profitable net traffic respectively, that is to say, into money. Comparing these earnings to the operational cost of those sites, which mainly consists on the maintenance of the site's technical reliability, the wealth produced is easily predicted.

D. Being exposed and hidden: causes and consequences

Examining the reasons for participating in such a scenario either as a performer or as a viewer, one has to take into consideration the economic, social, moral, mental and psychological background of each party.

The vast majority of the models are in desperate need of cash for a variety of reasons: from the students who are financing their education⁸ or the next-door housewives or the former well-paid secretaries who have the agony of paying their household's monthly expenses or their long-term mortgage to the ones used to live a luxurious life with the minimum effort or to the victims of trafficking who are forced to work in order to pay their debts to their "protectors", the common point is the frantic struggle for making the most of money through sexual exposure. In addition, apart from extreme poverty, the general lack of opportunity or serious underlying problems such as

drug addiction or post trauma (e.g. child sexual abuse)⁹ can lead to unhindered mistreatment.

Nevertheless, a decision on being paid for getting publicly naked on the Net could, theoretically, be obstructed by hesitation caused by religious or moral principles which vary from society to society. The self-esteem and the preservation of social dignity could also act as psychological barriers to unrestricted humiliation. However, it seems that the impact of easy and instant profit on the model's consideration is huge.

Having left behind any ethical doubt, the model focuses on performing her show in the most lucrative way. Having a "positive attitude" towards the viewer is very important if she wants to gain his attention and keep his interest warm. Additionally, she has to remain calm when confronting a stalker who harasses her with dirty words or threats and makes her feel dumb and degraded. When it comes to harassment, being self-confident helps her tolerate such behaviors.

Nonetheless, the mere procedure of paid online sex reflects the objectification of women. Putting to one side the effect on "real world" women, who often feel unable to compete with the "ideally-bodied and ready for all" paid models,¹⁰ we realize that being constantly called names such as "bitch" and "slut", being asked to perform shameless and harmful sexual acts and being hassled by site perverted visitors who insist on begging to view nudity for free, ends up to emotional abuse of the performers. As a defense, the models become snobbish or, assuming that "in the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes", they implement a "micro-celebrity" conduct.¹¹

Likewise, because of the fact that a beautiful corporal condition builds a large fan club, many models undergo the anxiety of getting older¹² and the insecurity of getting extra weight or looking tired. As a consequence, similarly to the brilliant world of "haute-couture", syndromes like anorexia nervosa affect quite a few models. It is characteristic that some performers suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with severe symptoms such as emotional numbness, recurrent nightmares, flashbacks or suicidal ideation.¹³

Aside from the above, models have to put up with the distress of having their personal data and their shows disseminated through the Net in real time or in a recorded form. Although some sites offer the choice of blocking the broadcasting to a specific region (the model's city, state or country of origin),¹⁴ they proclaim non-responsible for the unauthorized distribution of model's image or video as a result of hacking or unlawful copyright infringement. Therefore, in practice, if a viewer records the private show of his adored model and then uploads it on a public site or forum, the results on the latter's condition will be injurious. In other cases, it is the site owner himself who publicizes his models' videos to popular porn sites for commercial and advertisement reasons without the models' consent.

Additionally, in a practical level, the models usually have to be patient with their payment procedure. No matter if they are considered by the webmasters as "independent workers", they are never being paid in real time, that is to say, right after their show has ended, but their payment is strictly controlled by and dependent on the site owners' will. In an ideal situation, a model is being paid through "paypal" system at the same day of her performances, but, in most of the cases, she has to wait for the 1st and the 16th of each month.¹⁵ What makes it more anxious is the right of the site owner to retain credits from

the model as a compensation for a customer's query. As a result, not knowing if, when and in what extent they will be paid, makes it a real torture for the models to work.

Moving on to the viewer's side, one realizes that a variety of reasons leads a Net surfer to look for paid online sex. Being away from home and his beloved person for some serious reason (e.g. as a soldier) or being physically or mentally handicapped, forms a category of customers who regard paid webcam-sex as the only exit from their social isolation. Moreover, the lack of social skills or the misogynistic attitudes¹⁶ pushes many netizens to search for the ideal female through the comfort of their bedroom's pc screen, hidden behind the anonymity and the sense of dominance the Internet provides them with. Problems in marital life caused by the erotic routine or by lack of communication, intense stress due to the multiplicity of daily obligations, lack of libido or sexual insecurity, are factors that play a significant role in the viewer's mood, who tries to upgrade his confidence by interacting online with stunning women. Mere curiosity, mainly met in younger users, is another parameter, rather dangerous when leading to confusion between real and online sexuality.

Independently of the particular reason each viewer chooses to buy online-sex, all a sex-site's visitors run the same risk of being addicted to that sexual routine. In psychological level, the viewer tends to end up into a "porn creep",¹⁷ namely a person who becomes unable to get an erection under circumstances that do not involve looking at porn. In a worse scenario, the viewer automatically gets sexually excited or prepares for having an orgasm solely in the thought of interacting online, in the same way the famous dogs of Pavlov got hungry and ready to eat when they listened to a characteristic sound. In addition, the "buy and sell" structure of the sites gives the viewer the false impression of dominance over the model: for him, what matters is what can be owned, and this "grabbing" conduct¹⁸ leads him, at least, to impolite comments on the model's appearance or attitude. For the more sophisticated viewer, the above structure also proves that all this interaction is fake as it is based on money, and this conclusion often causes a feeling of depression and lack of self-respect.

As for the social impact, many state that getting used to paid online-sex makes the viewers aggressive and disrespectful towards the women, though others consider this way of sexual satisfaction as a relaxing drug which reduces sexual assaults. Concerning the family life, and in spite of any moral or religious opinion that camming equals to cheating, "webcheating" can be a mindtrap, as the viewer chooses to spend all his energy and money on satisfying himself instead of showing real and active interest for the current issues of his family.

Additionally, with reference to the financial factor, paid webcam-sex can be disastrous, especially when done repeatedly. The more a viewer is teased by the model, the greedier he gets for some hot action. Striking a fair balance between daily actual needs and virtual satisfaction is almost impossible for the addicted viewer, who consciously sacrifices his savings for the sake of imaginary stimulation, thus leading himself to economic collapse. The existence of special clinics for the treatment of people addicted to porn and webcam sex (similarly to those addicted to gambling, alcohol or drugs) signifies the multiple dimensions of the phenomenon under examination.¹⁹

In a conclusion, paid webcam-sex results in mutual exploitation both for the performer and the viewer: the first gets publicly exposed and abused as a body and as a personality and takes full advantage of the latter's psychological deficiency while selling

her beauty; the latter, relying on his dominant position as a customer, humiliates the performer in a hopeless effort to gain confidence and simulate actual feelings and senses into “virtuality”. The result is nothing more than a mere commercial relationship promoted as a pure ecstasy for the needs of adult entertainment trade.

E. Interacting online: legal aspects and risks

The participation in online webcam sex has a legal aspect for both the viewer and the performer. The first, above all, is considered as a consumer, thus being granted the right to ask for a refund if he is not satisfied by the technical quality of the show or the way the sexual acts are performed. If compensated, the tokens (credits) are held back from the model’s payment. Moreover, given that by buying credits, the consumer gives away his credit card data, he has the right to be compensated by the site owner if any revealing of those data takes place and leads to a financial damage.

Nevertheless, as for the viewer’s sensitive data, i.e. his sexual preferences or his favorite models, the webmasters declare that they reserve the right to collect those data by using cookies in order to create the customer’s profile and achieve in maximum pleasing him.²⁰ The risk taken by the viewer is being harassed by spam or pop-ups sent by the sex-site as a way of pressure for consumption.

Furthermore, he is being warned by the webmaster that, by showing himself to the model during the private session through his webcam, he accepts the possibility of being recorded. He is also warned of the non-responsibility of the site for any damage caused to him by viruses contained in the site’s files (nude images or recorded shows). In addition, the site owner warns the customer that his personal data will be revealed to the legal authorities and he will be prosecuted if he commits a crime such as cyber-terrorism, hacking, financial fraud or copyright infringement of the site’s content (e.g. by copying the nude photos or the recorded shows or by recording the models on real time and distributing their performance instead of using it for non-commercial purpose). He is also warned that his account will be suspended or terminated if his conduct towards the models becomes insulting through the use of hate speech, racist comments, life threats e.t.c.²¹ It is also important that, in some cases, paid webcam-sex, as well as “cheat-chatting”, is a reason for divorce as it constitutes cheating in the meaning of law. We leave for the end the danger of access to the sex-site by minors (i.e., the viewer’s children) if no content filtering or parental control is applied.

As for the performer, the situation is relatively more complicated. The model enters an agreement which the site owner tends to proclaim as “broadcasting agreement for independent models” and which is based on the principle that, between the site and the model, there is no relationship of agency, employment, joint or collaborative venture or partnership of any kind.²² In that sense, it is stated that the site agrees to pay the model according to rates imposed by the site as full compensation for the license rights and other rights granted to the site by the model. In the best aspect, the model gains 30% of the credits spent by the viewer. The aforesaid agreement begins when the model completes and e-mails an online application with her personal data to the site and when she certifies a “release” in which she allows the site to “use her appearance” and grants and assigns the site all rights, title, interest and copyrights associated with her appearance. With the same “release”, the model discharges the site from any claim she may have due to violation of her right of privacy or publicity and states that all the information given to the site is true. After posting or e-mailing under a digital signature

her personal documentation (original identification card, name, gender and face) to the site, she is granted access to the site in order to broadcast.

In addition, the model, though regarded as an “independent performer”, is obliged to obey to strict rules in order to avoid being refused access to the site. She assumes all risk of loss or harm arising through the use of the site. She should also keep her sound always on and be present on camera. She should never ask the members for money, beg them for entering private shows, log into customer’s accounts, hack member’s or site’s accounts, spam, communicate with the customer outside the site through email or in social network sites (Yahoo, MSN, Facebook), “fish” users from public chat sites or “split-cam” (broadcasting via another site at the same time). A code of conduct is also obligatory: a model should never sleep on cam, allow pets or children to appear on cam or satisfy their corporal needs (urine, fecal) on cam.

Furthermore, although the model should work “in good faith and in the best interest” of the webmaster, the latter declares non-responsible for risks such as recording, piracy, unauthorized dissemination or publicity of the model’s nude photos or shows. In addition, the model should keep confidential information, such as software, employees, customers, programming code or profitability, secret for a period of 10 years after the termination of her broadcast and is taxed in line with her country’s system. Any controversy arising from the agreement between the model and, for instance, an American webmaster, shall be settled exclusively and finally by binding arbitration in the webmaster’s State (e.g. Chicago, Illinois, California US) before one arbitrator selected by the American Arbitration Association in accordance with the commercial rules then existing.

Moreover, the porn industry has imposed a desire for “young flesh and blood”, the “Lolita ecoomy”, consisting on the exploitation of girls that just have become eighteen. This idea not only provokes the sexual instincts of the customers, but also creates a delinquent ideation on those girls about the utility of their beauty. As a result, many of them have already applied as cam-girls using their elder sister’s or cousin’s identification card, thus shaping a strange commercial child-pornography category.

Trafficking also feeds the webcam-sex industry. The Russian mafia tends to captivate the models in hotel rooms after providing them with drugs, promising them a better future in the civilized Europe and forcing them to work online and offline to pay for the issuing of their passport and ticket, although they never manage to travel. But even if they ever travel, this will come as a part of more trafficking.²³ For instance, according to a case of human smuggling and trafficking which was uncovered in Hawaii, USA, in 2000, Japanese women were trafficked into Hawaii (Honolulu) to make pornographic films and perform live on the Internet for audiences in Japan. As the Japanese law on pornography is quite restrictive, the traffickers used a server located in California to transmit there the live shows made in Hawaii and recorded by digital cameras, while the Japanese men, located in Japan, accessed the performance through the Californian server.²⁴

III. Final remarks

In a nutshell, it becomes palpable that, because the appearance of the performer, her chat conversation, her nude images and her recorded shows are all translated into money and their management belongs exclusively to the webmasters, the economic size

of the webcam-sex industry is enormous. Among 70.000 online-sex sites, millions of dollars are flowing everyday as a result of the mere buying and selling of virtual pleasure.

From the one side, the viewers find it easier to look for sexual fulfillment by clicking their button and buying time-credits than entering an actual relationship. On the other side, the models choose to be publicly exposed with the risk of having their sensitive data distributed worldwide instead of a low reward in comparison to the damage suffered. In the middle, the webmasters take advantage of both the aforesaid, investing on the firsts' social deficiencies or sexual delinquencies and the seconds' desperate call for money or a better life.

The risks taken for both parties are remarkable and the effects on their social, economic and personal life detrimental. However, as paid online-sex is another expression of virtual socialization which has marched into our daily life and has shaped our Net culture, living in "the world of the lonely orgasm" seems unavoidable. At least, we need to minimize the harassment made and the pain caused by behaving ourselves in any aspect of our social and private life. Following a human rights code of conduct and keeping an open eye on the possible crimes committed, we shall strike a fair balance between chasing pleasure or money and abusing ourselves or others.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_industry, visited 20-10-2011

² ibid [1]

³ ibid [1]

⁴ <http://camgirlnotes.15.forumer.com/index.php?showtopic=2575>, visited 23-10-2011

⁵ http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/new_tech.pdf, visited 05-11-2011

⁶ http://www.ehow.com/how_6465820_create-pay-cam-website.html, visited 14-11-2011 and <http://www.camgirl-advice.blogspot.com/>, visited 15-11-2011

⁷ ibid [5]

⁸ ibid [5]

⁹ ibid [1]

¹⁰ <http://camgirlnotes.15.forumer.com/index.php?showtopic=503>, visited 30-01-2012

¹¹ <http://www.terrinenft.net/diss/synopsis.php>, visited 02-02-2012

¹² ibid [4]

¹³ <http://www.mycamgirlsecrets.com/?zx=276eb1365c195618>, visited 07-02-2012

¹⁴ <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20090105215712AA8YSRY>, visited 10-02-2012

¹⁵ ibid [14]

¹⁶ ibid [5]

¹⁷ ibid [10]

¹⁸ ibid [11]

¹⁹ www.forum.noorclinic.com/0/web_cam_sex_11343.htm, visited 25-05-2012 and www.sexualrecovery.com/sexual-addiction.php, visited 31-05-2012

²⁰ <http://cams.com/go/page/privacy.html?>, visited 25-01-2012

²¹ http://cams.com/go/page/terms_of_use.html?, visited 25-01-2012

²² <http://camgirlnotes.15.forumer.com/index.php?showtopic=3165>, visited 24-01-2012

²³ <http://camgirlnotes.15.forumer.com/index.php?showtopic=499>, visited 27-01-2012 and <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2008/07/02/uk-britain-trafficking-idUKCOO24823620080702>, visited 27-01-2012

²⁴ ibid [5]