

# Ping pong in Phuket: the intersections of tourism, porn and the future

Michelle Stella Mars, Ian Seymour Yeoman and Una McMahon-Beattie

## Abstract

**Purpose** – Sex tourism is well documented in the literature, but what about porn tourism? Whether it is a Ping Pong show in Phuket or the Banana show in Amsterdam, porn and tourism have an encounter and gaze no different from the Mona Lisa in the Louvre or magnificent views of New Zealand's Southern Alps. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper explores the intersections of tourism, porn and the future as a conceptual framework.

**Findings** – Four intersections are derived from the conceptual framework. Intersection 1, the Future of Tourism, portrays the evolution of tourism and explores its technological future. Intersection 2, Porn in Tourism, distinguishes between soft- and hard-core porn tourism. Intersection 3, Portraying Porn as a Future Dimension, delves into futurism, science fiction and fantasy. The fourth intersection, the Future Gaze, conveys the thrust of the paper by exploring how technological advancement blends with authenticity and reality. Thus the porn tourist seeks both the visual and the visceral pleasures of desire. The paper concludes with four future gazes of porn tourism, *The Allure of Porn*, *The Porn Bubble*, *Porn as Liminal Experience* and *Hardcore*.

**Originality/value** – The originality of this paper is that this is the first paper to systematically examine porn tourism beyond sex tourism overlaying with a futures dimension. Porn tourists actively seek to experience both visual and visceral pleasures. Tourism and pornography both begin with the gaze. The gaze is an integral component of futures thinking. Technology is changing us, making us smarter, driving our thirst for liminal experiences. Like the transition from silent movies to talking pictures the porn tourism experience of the future is likely to involve more of the bodily senses.

**Keywords** Technology, Futures, Fantasy, Porn, Science fiction, Sex tourism

**Paper type** Research paper

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## Introduction

Whether it is Ping Pong in Phuket or the Banana Show in Amsterdam the viewing of sex shows in tourism is part of life for some. Ping Pong is a form of staged entertainment that takes place in strip clubs where women use their pelvic muscles to either hold, eject or blow objects from the vaginal cavity with ping pong balls being the most usual object (Kelley, 2015). This is an activity, mostly watched by men, where porn intersects with tourism. Fundamentally it is a form of gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011). This paper is not about Ping Pong nor Phuket but the intersections of tourism, porn and the future.

Sex tourism is well documented in the literature and studied, researched and published in a range of books and research journals (Bandyopadhyay, 2013; Clift and Carter, 2000; Ryan and Hall, 2001; Yeoman and Mars, 2012). Broadly defined, sex tourism is where sexual activity is the main purpose of travel (Clift and Carter, 2000). Sex is often portrayed in tourism as romance, love and relationships and it can be social, bought, incidental, forced or romanticised. As a concept it is fluid, contested or liminal (Yeoman and Mars, 2012). However, if you add pornography to this mix, the concept is under researched, avoided or misunderstood (Carr, 2016).

If pornography is defined as the portrayal of sexual subject matter for the purpose of sexual arousal (Hester, 2014) then tourism can be seen at the heart of that representation. For example, it can be

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seen in the image or gaze of tourism (Urry and Larsen, 2011) as portrayed in the Las Vegas slogan, "Whatever happens in Vegas stay's in Vegas" (Yeoman, 2008) or the gaze of scantily clad bar girls of Phuket (Clift and Carter, 2000). Pornography and tourism have many forms. They encompass the culture of adult entertainment expos and business events (Comella, 2013), libidinal fantasy and the imagine of the sex industry in South East Asia (McDowall and Choi, 2010), the legality and practice of prostitution (Barry, 1996), sex as a destination (Yeoman, 2008; Yeoman, 2012a), and the Museum of Old and New in Tasmania where porn and erotica are a controversial but major tourism attraction (Walsh, 2014). In a more liberal society where tourists travel further, are now more educated, are seeking new experiences and are open minded we see a greater sexual presence in tourism.

Urry and Larsen (2011) argue that we gaze at what we encounter. When we go on holiday, we admire the view or appreciate a cultural experience. Gazing refers to the "discursive determinations of socially constructed seeing or scopic regimes" and it concerns "how we are able to see, what we are allowed to see or made to see and how we see the seeing" (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 2). From a tourism perspective, gazing at particular sights is conditioned by personal experiences and memories and framed by rules and styles as well as circulating images and texts of places. Tourism marketing is a gaze. For example, Yeoman *et al.* (2005) argue that the history of Scottish tourism is captured through a series of gazes, portraying the romanticism of the Highlands of Scotland or the lure of a New Zealand paradise through the brand 100 per cent pure (Yeoman *et al.*, 2015). In terms of sex, Schauer (2005) researched websites claiming to specialise in providing pornography for heterosexual women, as a vehicle to examine the nascent "gaze" and visual parameters of heterosexual female sexuality, whereas Schultz (1995) has researched the dominance of the male gaze on females in pornographic magazines and films.

But what is the future of tourism and porn? Yeoman and Mars (2012) portray Amsterdam's red light district in 2050 with android robots who are clean of sexual transmitted diseases, not smuggled in from Eastern Europe and forced into slavery, with the city council controlling the prices and operations. Their portrait of the future lies in the domain of science fiction and is portrayed using a scenario that could occur. This is the classic "what if" conundrum of futures research. Indeed, there are many other ways to examine the future, whether it is predictive, prognosis, dystopias or visions (Bergman *et al.*, 2010). The future is full of uncertainties and trends but what is important is to make sense of the many phenomena. This paper uses a conceptual framework to explain the intersections of porn, travel and the future in order to bring clarity and understanding to what might be.

## Conceptual frameworks

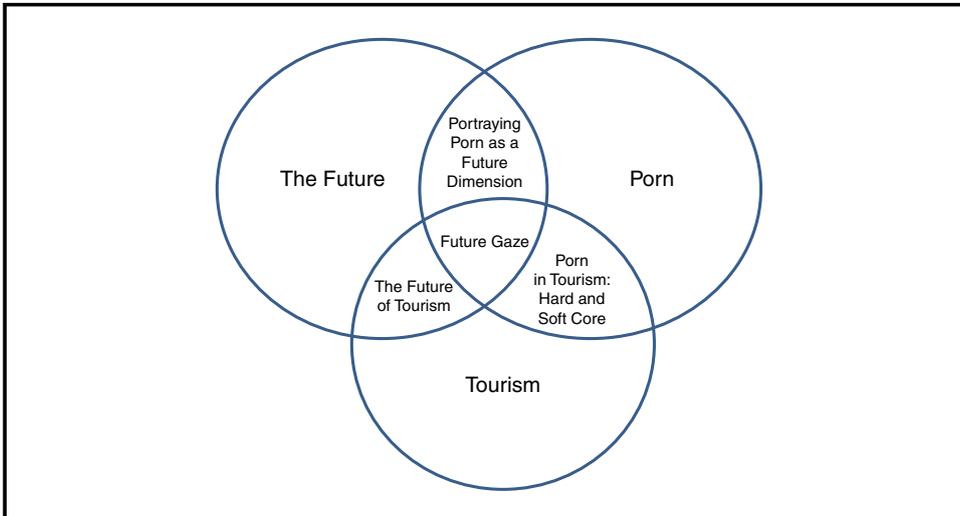
According to Pearce (2012), conceptual frameworks are used in various ways and in different forms but are, nonetheless, purposeful in addressing emerging, fragmented or broad themes. They identify and bind knowledge and form a framework to help researchers understand a particular phenomenon and thus make explanatory claims (Bergman *et al.*, 2010). Essentially, conceptual frameworks are concepts explained in diagrammatical form and indicating relationships through connections. Further, according to Nye and Berado (1981, p. xxvi as cited in Pearce, 2012, p. 13) conceptual frameworks are, "not intended to be theories, but devices to map, categorize and communicate the diverse efforts of family researchers, practitioners and would be theorists".

One way to portray overlying concepts in research is the use of Venn diagrams. They have been used to explore the overlaps between geography and tourism (Faulkner, 1998), commonality and special interest tourism (Wright, 1993), forms of service and tourism operations (Fennell and Eagles, 1996) and to distinguish risky sex behaviour in sexual activity of the adult population (Bancroft, 2000). Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework for this paper, focussing on the intersections of The Future of Tourism, Porn in Tourism, Portraying Porn as a Future Dimension and The Future of Porn Tourism which will be discussed in the proceeding sections.

### *The future*

Looking into the future is not new. In the Renaissance, people started speculating probable typical futures, but the enlightened felt that they could rule the environment and foresee the future (Postma, 2014). Robert Boyle, the seventeenth century scientist imagined many modern

**Figure 1** The future of porn and travel: consumption and gaze perspective



day phenomena including flight, medical interventions to prolong life, Kevlar body armour, underwater exploration and GPS (Henderson, 2010). The work of Boyle and other scientists of the Renaissance demonstrate the ways in imagination and the innovations we create in one era may affect the future in complex ways. However, we see these things with the benefit of hindsight, while the future itself is difficult to grasp in today's globalised, hyper connected and exponential society. Thinking about the future, however, helps us to create awareness of the complexity of change, connections, new horizons and paradigms. Fundamentally it brings consciousness to the unknown and strengthens our capacity to anticipate change, grasp exciting opportunities, cope with potential threats and deal with uncertainties. It helps us to consider different alternatives, to develop a vision of the future, and to manage activities to anticipate or to create it. Thinking about the future has always been a part of human culture (e.g. soothsayers, prophets and utopians), however, it has only been in the last four or five decades that it has produced the academic research field known as future studies (Yeoman, 2012a).

Gazing, the use of pictures or other visualisation techniques is an essential feature of futures studies and scenario planning (Yeoman, 2012a). For example, Tress and Tress (2003) used a range of visualisation techniques to portray the future of Denmark's landscapes. Checkland (1981) used cartoon style diagrams to represent future problem states and Yeoman (2012a) has reflected upon the use of visualisation techniques in scenario planning and students learning experiences of using posters, video, memes and magazine covers to the portray future scenarios. Bussey (2010) portrayed futures gazes of the geophilosophical nature of western societies focussing on power, structure and terror as integral gazes, whereas Bender (2012) takes a critical gaze of the environment as a system, using stories and pictures to portray the future.

As no one can predict the exact future, the future is usually portrayed as a series of alternatives (Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2014; Bell, 1997). Alternative futures within the categories of "what can or could be" (the possible), "what is likely to be" (probable) and what ought to be (the preferable). This approach to forms of the future from an ontological perspective is extended by Bergman *et al.* (2010) through truth and explanatory claims thus rendering a future matrix of prediction, prognosis, science fiction and utopia/dystopia. However, several authors portray a single future within the domain of preferred futures. Yeoman *et al.* (2015) portray a vision of New Zealand tourism based upon an Eco Paradise and Hurley's (2015) Utopia vision of Agritourism in 2115. Both these forms of future project an image or vision of the future in order to action the future. Thus, this paper adopts a single future's perspective within the realms of Bergman's *et al.* (2010) claims of the future in which futurists take an explanatory claim of occurrence through explaining the concepts, issues and implications. In the porn tourism future discussed here porn tourism emerges both as an integral aspect of sex tourism and a major driver of consumption in its own right.

Porn derived from the Greek *porni* (“prostitute”) and *graphein* (“to write”), porn was originally defined as any work of art or literature depicting the life of prostitutes or harlots (Williams, 1989). In Victorian times it encompassed any display of nudity or the body. Indeed the terms nudity, erotica, pornography, soft-core and hard-core signify different things in different cultures and at different points in history. The first hint of sexual content on film, a short encounter known as *May Irwin Kiss* (1896), is by today’s standards an innocuous exchange between two consenting adults none-the-less it caused an uproar in its day (Atkinson, 2005).

Pornography is a concept that is difficult to define. Justice Potter Stewart famously refused to define pornography in the US Supreme Court’s (1964) ruling on obscenity, by simply stating that, “we know it when we see it”. However, “the knowing” is a personal experience (Bergman *et al.*, 2010). In recognition of this Justice Potter could not offer a singular definition that would make sense in a legal sense. However, in saying, “we know it when we see it” he references a general social level of acceptability while at the same time giving leeway for personal interpretation.

Sexual activity and excitement are culturally and socially constructed and defined (Hyde, 1964). Within a particular culture or subculture one person’s inconsequential image is another’s obscenity and even for the same person what counts as obscene in one context may not in another. Like pornography itself porn tourism attracts and solicits a wide variety of people attracted to ideas and images imbued with multiple and contingent meanings.

Porn tourism can be located within the wider framework of sex tourism. Sex tourism is primarily theorised in conjunction with its interactions with the commercial sex industry, often negatively and in conjunction with low levels of social morality (Carr, 2016). Sex tourism attracts people in search of physical sexual experience. Porn tourists, as a point of difference, can be defined as a subset of sex tourists in that they are primarily in search of titillation, sexualised context and novel visual and visceral pleasures. Perusing nude images in an art gallery may be porn tourism for some, while others want to observe hard-core images such as onsite sex, fisting, or water sports (urination) and other practices that may be illegal in their country of origin. This brings us back to an analysis of why it was so hard for Justice Potter Stewart to define porn. Williams (2004) analysis of pornography as organs, acts, bodies and pleasures that have literally been kept off-scene and out of sight then bought on scene or into the public purview is illuminating here. People have strong, complex, multiple and often contradictory reactions to porn (Attwood, 2005; Albury, 2009).

Mars’ (2007) research on the consumption of porn revealed that people who are uncomfortable with porn but want to know are caught in a dilemma. Is it okay to look? What if I get turned on by something I think is abhorrent? Will I become a porn user? The popular internet idiom “what is seen cannot be unseen” are illustrative of this phenomena. The line from *Clerks II*, where watching the donkey porn show Becky exclaims, “I’m disgusted and repulsed and [...] and I can’t look away” describes this complexity well as does Stewie’s reaction on *Family Guy* to Brian showing him *2 Girls 1 Cup*. At first he’s disgusted, “oh they’re eating what?” Then he keeps watching “[...] Stewie and Becky’s reactions can be read as a complex interplay between the abject, the morally objectionable and the sexually stimulating”.

Is soft-core more socially acceptable because it is less likely to fascinate and arouse? Certainly explicit visual images gain a wider social audience if they are regarded as art rather than porn. The legacy of Cartesian dualism, the idea of a mind/body split drives the art/porn division. However, in his book *Art/Porn: A History of Seeing and Touching*, Dennis (2007) reveals how, from fondling statues in Antiquity to point-and-click internet pornography, the worlds of art and pornography are much closer than we think.

Considerable work has been done on the affective aspects of porn using samples drawn from psychology and psychotherapy. This, in conjunction with the feminist pornography debates of the 1980s and 1990s has reinforced the idea of porn as misogynist and problematic. However, attitudes are changing. A large scale systematic review of literature related to sexual behaviour revealed that young women’s use of pornography is often associated with empowerment through consumerism and performance (Hendry *et al.*, 2013). This finding is reinforced in Comella’s (2014) analysis of the porn industry where women and their wallets are driving much of the discourse and growth in today’s market. In addition, more recent work on the use of porn in couple relationships has shown that use of pornography improves the quality of women’s sexual

experience in terms of both increased desire and sexual satisfaction (Hald and Malamuth, 2008; Daneback and Mansson, 2014; Poulson *et al.*, 2013). The democratisation of consumption via the internet enables women's consumption (Yeoman and Mars, 2012) and while women still consume less pornography than men they are clearly enjoying what they see.

Estimates of the size of the online porn market vary but we do know it is large. Rule 34 of the internet states that, "If it exists, there is porn of it: No exceptions", thereby signifying the ubiquitous nature of internet porn. Data analytics also inform us that people spend longer on a porn site than they do on other sites. According to Barss (2010) twentieth century technology, from the peep show and the VCR, to the architecture of the internet, have been driven by pornography's quest for novelty, anonymity and ease of access. Indeed, ever increasing interactivity and accessibility are changing the genre. Big Data analytics are now used to inform producers of rapidly changing consumer tastes, geographical consumption rates including time of day and seasonality and optimal quality in relation to device capacity and much more (Barss, 2010). Big Data is giving us better information about porn stars themselves and driving our consumption habits through increasingly targeted marketing (Yeoman, 2012a). John Millward, for example, has synthesised his analysis of 10,000 porn stars into a simple infographic revealing popular consumer tastes and preferences (Millward, 2013). Like the pursuit of the designer vagina, itself based on representations of reconstituted labia and vaginoplasties, such information both reflects and constructs realities (Mars and Douche, 2007).

### **Tourism**

Tourism is a large and complex phenomenon. It can be regarded as a significant social and economic activity, a business, an industry and a source of environmental and social change. The terms tourism and travel are often used interchangeably. Tourism is defined as:

The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to an activity remunerated from within the place visited. The use of this broad concept makes it possible to identify tourism between countries as well within a country. Tourism refers to all activities of visitors, including tourists (overnight visitors) and same day visitors (Page, 2014, p. 14).

Tourism is not a new concept; it has historical roots, since the beginning of time people have travelled from place to place. What is changing has been the development of the leisure society as a consequence of increased wealth and the creation of large markets of middle class consumers which has made access to tourism more affordable and desirable. As society has become more urban, employers started to give employees paid holidays and governments created public holidays. Businesses emerged to cater for this new leisure time. Technological developments such as trains, cars and aircrafts meant tourists could travel further. Places started to emerge as tourist destinations in their own right that is, Scarborough, Monte Carlo or the Highland of Scotland. Consumption of sexual services is also not a new phenomenon. Sex and tourism have always combined, whether it is the red light district of Amsterdam or seedy sights and shows of Phuket (Yeoman, 2008). However, it is Las Vegas which is the hedonistic tourist destination of the USA, a Disneyland fantasy destination for adults, where anything can happen, where anything goes, and where wives will never find out. Its naughty, raunchy marketing slogan, "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas", represents the sinful side of tourism. It is about sex and sin, not authenticity, green pastures and great mountain views. Vegas is a destination that offers the opposite of ethical consumption, caring for the planet and worrying about climate change. It is about conspicuous consumption and lavishness rather than communities and humanity. So why, when so many policymakers talk about the "greening of tourism", is Vegas so successful? The answer is simply sex and sin. Vegas is a sinful city where tourists take a vacation for adult, undiluted erotica (Yeoman, 2008).

### **Intersection 1: the future of tourism**

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (as cited in Yeoman, 2012a) 25 million tourists took an international holiday in 1950 whereas in 2014 that figure has reached 1.2 billion and is forecasted to grow to 4.1 billion international arrivals by 2050 with an economic value of US\$4.7 billion. This transformational growth is derived from the rebalancing of the world

economy centred on the middle classes from Asia. Today, the G20 countries represent 85 per cent of the global economy and this is expected to grow from US\$38.3 trillion in 2009 to US\$160 trillion in 2050, averaging 3.5 per cent annual growth rate. However, 60 per cent of this growth will come from emerging economies (Yeoman, 2012a). Against this growth, resource constraints are an issue, for example, rising food prices, failure to deal with environmental trends, issues with access to water and the inevitability of no oil. If there is no snow in the French Alps, there will not be any ski holidays, or if California desertification continues, wine tourism in the region will be no more. All of these resource constraint issues lead to change, capacity constraint and environmental issues (Yeoman, 2012a). This growth of tourism is also a representation of social, cultural, economic and political value of tourism in the world today. Like porn, tourism is no longer a specialist consumer product. As Smith (2003, p. 9) writes:

Tourism is as central part of understanding social (dis-) organisation but also shows how it can no longer be bounded off as discrete activity, contained tidily at specific locations and occurring during set aside activity. As we see, tourism is now such a significant dimension to global social life that it can be no longer be conceived of as merely what happens as self-styled tourist sites and encounters involving tourists away from home.

Tourism's visual dimensions has been driven by Urry and Larson's *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (Urry and Larsen, 2011), as tourist behaviour can be explained as the pleurability of seeing or gazing upon the different and unusual as a contrast to the familiarity of everyday life. Tourism is conducted in precisely constructed and decoded semiotic fields. According to Smith (2003, p. 8):

Tourists were held to be collectors of views and gazes on the objects and landscapes that reference or symbolise something else, an essence. The Eiffel Tower references Frenchness; thatched cottages referenced Englishness and so on. The visual technologies [...] enabled replication, simulation, distortion and mixing to be possible on a new and unprecedented scale, also detached the signs from the things they referenced and there became objects of pleurability in their own right [...] Television becomes the clearest embodiment of the replacement of reality with representation. In this way [...] a postmodern world of virtual reality becomes possible and was increasingly a normative expectation of playfulness.

Advancing this technology theme Michio Kaku (2011) in the *Physics of the Future* demonstrates that by 2100 we will control computers via little brain sensors, and like magicians move objects with the power of mind. Artificial Intelligence will be dispersed throughout the environment and internet-enabled contact lens will allow us to access the world's information databases or conjure up any image we desire in the blink of an eye. Yeoman (2012a) argues with the development of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies allow tourists to navigate and interact with attractions and visuals. Today, AR allows tourists to overlay views through smart phones with information about attractions that enhance experiences. With the addition of graphics, gestural interfaces, sounds, smell and haptic technologies unreality is becoming reality and the natural world is becoming a liminal space. Thus as Smith (2003) proposes the tourist distance has shrunk because of technology, as VR becomes closer. Space has stopped becoming a barrier and immersion has become an everyday reality. The trend "Smart Boredom" (Yeoman, 2012a) has become mainstream as idle time now means we "surf" the internet, check our social status on Facebook or read the latest news report on CNN all via a smart device when we have a moment of doing nothing. Combined with the trend of "End of Adventure" tourist's pre plan holidays more easily today understanding online reviews via [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) or price comparison via [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com). They tend to know everything before they arrive (Yeoman, 2012a). But is not tourism about reality and a physical presence rather than a liminal space – not the *Star Trek Holodeck*? It is a space where tourists swim, climb, stroll, bungee jump, watch, smell, laugh, get drunk, relax and even have sex. Tourism is a place we are attracted too, where national marketing lures us with a sense of view and feeling, for example, the campaigns of Live it, VisitScotland, Incredible India or Uniquely Singapore. Fundamentally it's a physical space in which gazes are created to allure the tourist too or is it (Yeoman, 2008; Yeoman *et al.*, 2005)?

## Intersection 2: porn in tourism

Sex sells everything but at the same time it can cheapen the offering. This is certainly the case in academia where as we and others can testify, sexuality and porn are not popular or career

enhancing topics, nor are they easy to research (Carr, 2016; Andrews, 2007; Comella and Sender, 2013). Consequentially, sex as an object of study, especially sexual pleasure tends to be understudied and under theorised. Nonetheless porn studies has emerged as a field of study in academia (Williams, 1989, 2004) and a body of literature of sex tourism, from romantic adventures to the illicit consumption of bodies and acts exists (Bauer and McKercher, 2003; Lyons, 2014; Ryan and Hall, 2001).

As previously discussed while porn tourism is analogous to sex tourism it can also be considered as a thing in its own right. Porn is designed to elicit bodily sensations and both sex tourism and porn tourism are predicated on an experience that is both visual and visceral. However, for the sex tourist bodies and acts are the primary focus. For the porn tourist, the visual and voyeurism are the primary focus. The distinction then is largely a matter of the tourist's desire and intent. At an onsite sex party at [www.kink.com](http://www.kink.com), for example, the sex tourist might want to join in while the porn tourist watches from the sidelines. In Prague [www.bigsisterlive.com/](http://www.bigsisterlive.com/) is an onsite sex party in which tourists sexual performances are streamed live on the internet.

A sex tourist's travel plans are likely to include the consumption of both sex and porn and the physical spaces in which both sex tourism and porn tourism overlap but in the same space tourism realities are enacted in different ways. The tourist at [www.kink.com](http://www.kink.com) may have travelled to the venue to watch and then desire and intent may change as they become engaged in the performance. A porn tourist may travel to Sydney to watch the Mardi Gras parade, book in with [www.thenakedbarber.com](http://www.thenakedbarber.com) for some erotic grooming and visit a strip club. The same person may then visit an onsite sex venue, purchase professional sexual services and pick up at one of the many parties throughout the festival. For this person desire and intent have changed and they now become a sex tourist.

The porn tourist, like any other tourist arrives with his or her experience already in mind, consumes the event, object or act and leaves. According to Urry and Larsen (2011) the gaze is deterministic as over time the media, advertising the images generated by other tourists, generates a closed loop. This is part of the story. However, in the case of pornography many consensual acts, such as those that involve, fetish, urination, spanking and so on cannot be depicted in film because of censorship regulation. This means that while the acts in and of themselves are not illegal, on screen acts and practices are only hinted at or represented via tropes and signified via props.

The industry context in which contemporary understandings of pornography are produced has moved beyond consumption of static and moving images to technologised interactive encounters in real time and real life encounters packaged for resale. Haptic technology, for example, means we can experience real time sexual encounters via sex toys with others in different locations and sex tours allow tourists to play out their sexual fantasies in real time (Gezinski *et al.*, 2016). Porn tourism too has seen a proliferation of offerings, in the form of increasingly niche onsite sex events, such as the bi-annual fetish party *Wasteland* in Amsterdam, or *Mad Bear* week, an annual event for big men and their admirers in Madrid. Most participants travel with the intention of joining in but some, the porn tourists, are just there to look.

### ***Soft-core***

A distinguishing feature of porn tourism as opposed to sex tourism is its association with titillation, the idea or suggestion of a physical sexual encounter rather than the encounter itself. The demarcation between sex tourism and porn tourism is more pronounced in soft-core porn where genital contact is not shown. Soft core in porn studies is understudied, under-theorised and routinely belittled (Andrews, 2007). Despite the lack of attention soft-core receives it is an important revenue earner for the industry and continues to be a mainstay of the cable market (Weinbach, 2010).

Soft-core is often feminised and associated with erotic romance. Mars (2007) recalls when presenting a paper on the many and various kinds of porn women like at the World Sexological conference (2007), the first question from the audience was "if women where the subjects of the research why was the paper not about erotica?" While misogyny and unrealistic acts do drive

women away from pornography there is little support for the conflation of women with soft-core porn and “the conflation of women’s desire with erotica is one of many social conventions that continue to reinforce traditional power structures in which female sexuality is suppressed” (Mars, 2007, p. 1).

The consumption of live soft-core porn such as show-girls, burlesque, erotic festivals, nude beaches and naturalism has a long history in the travel industry. Some of these pornographic encounters are highly glamorized, for example, the Lido de Paris, Crazy Horse, Moulin Rouge and Las Vegas shows. Videos of these shows are widespread and even available on sites such as Facebook where sexual content is routinely censored. These out of the ordinary sexualised encounters provide the tourist the opportunity to move into a liminal space experiencing things they would not or could not experience at home. They are generally regarded as somewhat acceptable, being seen as more art than porn.

Getting nude at the beach is much more acceptable than getting naked on the dance floor. From thongs to lists of the sexiest beaches we can find inspiration for soft-core porn experiences on the Travel Channel. While some people may find the idea of nudity to be titillating, nudists/naturists consider being naked healthful rather than sexual. “Nakations”, as in “put a little naked in your next vacation”, may be trending in tourism, but this type of soft-core tourism has a long and established history particularly in warmer climates such as southern Europe and North America (Razzouk and Seltz, 2003). Britain’s King Edward VIII and his future wife, Wallis Simpson skinny dipped in Croatia in 1936 and the destination continues to attract nude visitors. Mountaineer Sir Edmund Hilary was certainly a naturalist and is also rumoured to have been enamoured of the healthful properties of the sun while Benjamin Franklin famously took an air bath (Gensel, 2005).

Soft-core provides a liminal space where people who would perhaps be shy of hard-core can come for a sexualised experience without being tainted. Nude art is not necessarily pornographic and naturalism or nudism is not necessarily about sex or sexual encounters. Nudity does, however, denote a freedom of the body and the possibility of looking but not touching. While nudity is not inherently sexual, nudism like art again can be tastefully equated with the softer side of porn. Nudists are quick to point out that there is nothing sleazy or sexual about taking your clothes off in the open. Voyeurism and other scandalous behaviours are strictly forbidden to the point that when pictures of nudists appeared in *Deja Vu Showgirls* a soft-core porn magazine the nudists threatened to sue the publication (Sandler, 2010) nonetheless, the link between the sensual and the sexual remains for some.

### *Hard-core*

While soft-core porn travel takes place in many countries around the world, hard-core porn travel tends to be destination specific. The pornography industry is a highly regulated industry. In most countries what is permissible in terms of porn is limited and in some countries it is regulated to the point that all porn is illegal. Even in countries where porn is legal particular acts and desires outside of the mainstream, such as BDSM, bondage and golden showers, are often tightly regulated (Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC), 2012; Stardust, 2014).

In Australia fetishes such as body piercing, application of substances such as candle wax, golden showers, bondage, spanking or fisting, violence and abusive language are banned (ALRC, 2012; Donnan and Magowan, 2009). New Zealand tends to follow a similar formula to the UK and Australia with a legislative focus on material that is of a degrading or dehumanising or demeaning nature. Particular sexual acts may be referred to via gestures and postures and camera angles but cannot be enacted. In Australia and the US fisting, for example, is often referenced via the insertion of four fingers of each hand. If a thumb is inserted then the producers risk a censorship ban. In practice most porn producers will not depict fisting as distributors will not accept films with this content (Stardust, 2014).

Destinations are also bound by various local, state and federal laws. Venues and other public displays of pornography are regulated and particular destinations and events are equated with different geographical spaces; ping pong balls and Bangkok, sex-workers in shop windows in Amsterdam, the Rio Carnival, and tours of the porn industry in California. Porn tourists travel to locations to see things they could not otherwise see.

### Intersection 3: portraying porn as a future dimension

Online pornography is “any form of written or pictorial presentation that either is obscene or has as its sole function the sexual arousal of the beholder” (Franczyk *et al.*, 2014, p. 192). It is part of everyday life and fundamental part of the internet. Out of 82 per cent of American students exposed to online pornography, almost 69 per cent claim that exposure was unintended, whereas amongst minors (10-17) 42 per cent of Americans claim to have been exposed to online pornography. Totally, 98 per cent of Polish youth considered pornography to be easily accessible and young Swedes believed avoiding exposure was almost impossible (Franczyk *et al.*, 2014). Whatever the social norms or laws of a country, pornography is widely and freely available on the internet whether it is adult only, bestiality or child pornography (Seigfried-Spellar and Rogers, 2013). Why? Fundamentally, all because of the advancement of technology.

Throughout history love of technology has inspired art. Futurism, for example, is an Italian artistic and social movement of the early twentieth century which emphasised speed, technology, youth and violence based upon the futurism manifesto. Osashevsky (2015, p. 2) notes:

We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed.  
A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes [...] is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.

As Berghaus (2009) argues in *Futurism and the Technological Imagination* the futurism movement intertwines with technophilia as it is the machine and the pace of change that technology created that revolutionised Italy's economic and political system to create a modern country. Futurism writer H.G. Wells writings about “Antipations”, championed the great mechanical and scientific progress transforming society (Sterling, 2012). With a dystopian rhetorical underpinning, H.G. Wells writings underplayed the dark forces of technology and science and the impact on a human society. The portrayal of science fiction in a futurism paradigm is captured in the adventures of *Flash Gordon*, a Yale polo player who with companions rescues the planet Earth from Ming the Merciless. His companion Dr Hans Zarkow who invents a spaceship for Flash Gordon's intergalactic travels. As Brosnan (1978) argues in *Future Tense: The Cinema of Science Fiction*, Flash Gordon symbolises Italian futurism with a focus on speed, science and technology to save the world with a strong flavour of boyhood American bravo.

Science fiction is a broad genre of fiction that often involves speculations based on current science or technology (Yeoman, 2012a). Science fiction differs from fantasy in that, within the context of the story, its imaginary elements are largely possible with scientifically established or postulated laws of nature. According to Gavin (2009) science fiction is already shaping our daily existence as we are becoming more cyborg and reality and unreality are becoming blurred given the advancement of technology. The portrayal of science fiction and sexuality is discussed in a special issue of *Science Fiction Studies*. Vint (2009) argues in *Fucking Machines: A Tirade*, that porn is often portrayed four ways in science fiction. First, as an industrial commodity and sex reproduction in the form of creating and making of a mate that is, Mary Shelley *Frankenstein* (1818) to the fantasy women of Villers de Isle-Adam's robotic L'Eve Future (1886). Second, as guilt free sex organs and organsmatrons of *Barbarella* (1968) and the portrayal of sexual desired body beautiful creatives in *Westworld* (1973/2016). Third, as technology reveals a universe of love heroines that heroes fall in love with, for example, the Effoi are in H.G. Wells (1895) the *Time Machine*. Fourth, as mediating technologies in vision constitute a sexual economy in films like *Peeping Tom* (1960) and *A Snake of June* (2002). Bergman *et al.* (2010) argue that science fiction is a portrayal of the future fundamentally using technology as the central feature to explain the impossible. Yeoman and Mars (2012) in the paper *Robots, Men and Sex Tourism* portray Amsterdam's red light district in 2050 where prostitutes are android sex workers who are clean of sexually transmitted infections. The city council has direct control over them controlling prices, hours of operations and sexual services. Yeoman and Mars' (2012) sex tourism scenario uses science fiction to portray the future through explaining evidence-based driving forces of how that future could come through the convergence of forces of sexually transmitted diseases, technological singularity, paying for sex, men's desire for body beautiful and our emotional connection to robots. The portraying of a series of circumstances is at the centre of their paper, with its classic use of “what if” (Heijden *et al.*, 2005) from the scenario planning literature to bring the unthinkable to the consciousness of the reader.

#### Intersection 4: future gaze

This future is technologised. Technology continues to enable porn. The camera, photography and film, central to both tourism and pornography have been joined by a proliferation of technologies that enable experience in real time. Both hard-core and soft-core options proliferate. Haptic technologies, teledildonics, ubiquitous computers and neural interfaces feature strongly. Attitudes to sex and porn are no longer theorised solely in terms of repressive morality and health and relationship benefits have been comprehensively documented (Albury, 2009; Rissel *et al.*, 2016). The healing powers of sex are well known in Chinese medicine and starting to be investigated and proven in western medicine (Lindau, and Gavrilova, 2010; Wilms, 2010; Winn, 2005). A proliferation of networked online sexual sub-cultures and alternative porn and real-time offerings exist and intertwine in what Henry Jenkins (2006) calls “convergence culture” and others call “assemblages of social engagement with media” the lines between producer, consumer and fan have blurred (Driscoll and Gregg, 2011). How has this “convergence” or “assemblage” this melding of the virtual and the real, this conflation of producer and consumer, come to be in the field of porn tourism?

The consumption of glamorous images through the gaze is a mainstay of the porn industry. Porn moved on from stag films and magazines to increasingly interactive and comprehensive offerings. In this market place magazines like, the rubber fetish magazine *Marquis*, diversified from the magazine, to design and manufacture of clothing, to offering a dressing, make-up and photo shoot experience with the owner. Patrons became models, models became patrons and in a cross-promotion with other industry members via business to consumer and business to business shows and events built and sustained the rubber fetish market. Artists like Kylie Minogue, Lady GaGa and Katy Perry glamorised the once marginalised lifestyle choice and rubber and a glimpse of fetish life made its way to the mainstream. Berlin and London continue to commercialise their sexualised offerings, shows, events and fashion, securing their place as the premier destinations for BDSM and fetish. A highly visual, glamorised, sexualised, specialised sexual fetish made its way to the mainstream and became a mainstay of the travel industry.

Porn travel involves onsite consumption of experience via the gaze. In the future the mainstream converges with (alternative) Alt.sex sites. In the early twenty-first century Hatsune Miku (Yeoman, 2012a), a hologram rose to fame becoming the biggest pop star in Japan. Fans flocked to her real life concerts. Sexualised merchandising became a mainstay of the Miku industry and soft-core individualised encounters could be procured on a strictly limited basis. Miku’s rise to fame as a porn-star is not surprising in a culture where “hentai”, sexualised animated porn, is a mainstay of the porn industry. However, her career signified the convergence of “hentai”, which often depicts acts that might be violent or degrading or strange in real life, with art and erotica, the softer more mainstream side of porn.

The need for authenticity, connection and realism facilitated by technology is nowhere more starkly illustrated than in the realm of the virtual partner. By the 2010s, in Japan, the girlfriend experience was even more popular than the porn star experience (Takahashi, 2013). Decline in the incidence of relationships occurred across in the developed world and particularly in Japan to the point that the seaside village of *Atami*, once a romantic destination, partnered with a gaming company, Konami Digital Entertainment, to build a virtual girlfriend device. Once in the town, the device calls up different versions of the girl in the game and photographs can be taken on location including dressed in a kimono in the bedroom. Staff in the town are trained to cater for the virtual girlfriend. This specialised travel experience extends to the hard-core market and interconnects with the doll and robot market.

Options for new experience, outside of the mainstream heterosexual market are also expanding. Gender and sexuality are no longer fixed and stable categories instead we see a proliferation of identity categories freedom and contingencies in regard to bodies and acts. Participatory taste cultures emerge offering niche and specialised content (Attwood, 2005). *When Hard Love and How to Fuck in High Heels* came out in 2001 its novelty earned it a “Porn Oscar” in the Adult Video News awards for best girl on girl scene. Overtime porn sites morphed into more than just straight content and the money shot, offering viewers experiences designed to cross-promote the site, its talent, products, services and events.

Today the butch-femme strap-on scene that won the film its acclaim is more common place and a proliferation of Queer porn involving a range of sexualities, genders and practices can be readily viewed and purchased. *Feeding Dick Savvy* (2015), for example, features a gay man involved in a range of pansexual scenes from foot fetishes to, cruising, to sex with a trans man, to BDSM and latex trans woman strap-on sex.

To keep pace with rapidly changing technological options and to keep in touch with the competition, porn sites have an array of devices at their disposal to engage the viewer. The primary objective remains enticing viewers to participate via subscription. Even here, there are numerous options for viewers to choose in order to access the content they desire. The proliferation of offering continues. Pay per view converges with the real via online hook up applications. Adult dating sites and apps are increasingly expansive in terms of content, engaging more widely and deeply with their customers. Others adopt a different approach which is to be very specific and narrow in their positioning, seeking to attract and cater for customers with specific tastes. For example, in the gay male market sites like [www.gaymatchmaker.com](http://www.gaymatchmaker.com), features an aging demographic and caters widely for all, these have been gradually superseded by apps such as Grindr (gay and bisexual male hook-up app) and Recon (gay male fetish hook-up app) due to their convenience and ease of use, providing immediate results for the users. Initial steps in the heterosexual world to try and follow these apps initially met with minimal success. This failure was perceived to be a consequence of different dating rituals in the hetero world and also concerns about personal privacy. The developers of Grindr initially launched a heterosexual app called Blendr (<https://m.blendr.com>), but it did not receive anywhere near the same level of use as the gay app. In 2012 Tinder ([www.gotinder.com/](http://www.gotinder.com/)) was launched, initially as a US college-based meet-up app but quickly found an audience in the wider community. It was arguably the first hetero-oriented app to capture a mass market with over ten million daily users worldwide, primarily amongst the 18-30-year-old demographic. According to the website *Kink and Code* (2014) these sites now offer haptic hook ups and interactions with technologised others.

People travel to connect with virtual communities of interest in real-time. Destination travel and technology become increasingly intertwined. The flow of information via the internet, that began with sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram constantly increases. However, people still travel to destinations for experiences in the company of other like-minded people. The voyeurs, the curious, the people who just like to look come together in physical sites, museums, sex parks, events and experiences that attract the porn tourist.

Video killed the radio star and what will replace video as embodied recording technologies emerge? Gonzo, for example, a version of porn that is largely unscripted and relies on point of view shots. It can be enabled via Google Glasses and contact lenses and porn stars film and simultaneously watch themselves. As the technology evolves porn stars feelings are recorded and sold to consumers seeking an authentic porn star experience (Diaz, 2013). The added dimension of authenticity changes the industry. In the future actors who actually achieve pleasure replace those who act out their pleasures, in much the same way as the transition from silent movie to talking picture killed the careers of some actors.

## Concluding thoughts

Porn tourists actively seek to experience both visual and visceral pleasures. This paper has explored the intersections of porn, tourism and the future where technological advancement produces a liminal experience of reality, authenticity and immersion which results in those visual and visceral pleasures. Tourism and pornography both begin with the gaze. If the tourist is the collector of views or gazes so too is the consumer of porn. The gaze is also an integral component of futures thinking. We collect ideas, experiences and information and we visualise possible futures. Technology is changing us, making us smarter, driving our thirst for liminal experiences. In the future, the technologised gaze is increasingly interactive. We want to see and feel, we want sensory stimulation, less simulation, and we want more of the real. Tourism moves the consumer beyond a representation to an authentic experience, opening up the potential for new experience. Porn tourism offers the possibility of seeing the experience for real,

of maybe joining in, of seeing something we might not otherwise see, of being with others who share the same proclivities, of belonging in real time. Our tastes are changing being refined and honed. We can experience so much via technology but not the extra-dimension of the real, the experience of being there.

We like to look and we like to feel, the stirring in our loins is an integral component of the porn experience. Like the transition from silent movies to talking pictures the porn tourism experience of the future is likely to involve more of our bodily senses. We will want to see, hear feel, experience what is going on. It will be integrative, iterative and interactive a space where we share our emotional responses and bodily sensations, perhaps moving us beyond the what we currently know and understand as the gaze. Therefore we propose four forms of gaze for the future of porn tourism.

### ***Gaze 1: the allure of porn***

Tourism is alluring. It is the red lipstick of glossy imagines of tourism. Similar to food porn, which provides a degree of shock and devilness and mouth watering imaginarity (McBride, 2010). Tourists are offered temptation, an advertisement that includes half naked girls on the beach, airbrushed posters and pristine environments. These are the images of allure designed to excite the tourist into purchase. It is sexy, stylish and tempting. The iconic symbol of this allure is Las Vegas with its slogan "What happens in Vegas stay's in Vegas" (Yeoman, 2008) and its associated destination images and advertising.

### ***Gaze 2: the porn bubble***

Destination-based porn tourism is an immersive experience. The temptation is more than the advertising and includes the whole sensory experience of produce and place. It is the sense of here and now of sight, smell, touch and sound as the tourist wanders through the red light districts of Amsterdam (Yeoman, 2008). The bubble encompasses a sense of space and place, whether it is watching the Sydney Mardi Gra with its proximal sexuality, the rainbow colours and exposed flesh. The tourist is immersed in the experience, a sort of bubble or intra gaze in which tourists watch one another experiencing the parade. The porn bubble involves an element of voyeurism, of watching others "getting off" on an experience.

### ***Gaze 3: a porn liminal experience***

Liminal experience is an integral aspect of porn tourism. Liminality is accessed through difference. It exists on the margins of everyday, business as usual reality. Liminality demands spatial relocation, to experience it we need to move beyond our limits. The consumption of porn is a liminal experience, its power to arouse demands liminality. In today's world this is shaped by technology. When a once liminal experience moves from margin to centre, if for example, it becomes real or mundane it is no longer liminal. Narratives of desire often involve voyeurism, narcissism and fetishism, however, "as the mysteries of the object of desire are unveiled, desire evaporates" (Wickerson, 2014, p. 269). In this movement from liminal to mundane, porn loses its power to arouse. Porn's proliferation of offerings, from the depiction of mainstream to marginal practice is testimony to the fact that porn's power to arouse wears out. We want new and more. Over the course of history porn has moved from simple depictions of nudity to niche, hard-core representations of marginalised and rarefied sexual practice. Rituals in porn and porn tourism both reinforce and challenge traditional sexualised gender roles (Ryan and Martin, 2001). In the future of porn tourism we see normative sexual practice and gender roles coming undone. As consumers increasingly take charge of their own experiences via technological interfaces porn will become ever more iterative as real sex and virtual sex combine in immersive environments. Here, reality and fiction, blur.

### ***Gaze 4: hardcore***

The future of porn tourism is firmly located beyond HoloLens and current haptic and gestural technologies. As new technologies emerge emotion, desire and pleasure will become more

difficult to fake. Authenticity in the sexual experience will become more important and we will see the conflation of porn star and consumer as spectacle and spectator intertwine in real time. Porn of the future will draw from a multiplicity of virtual, amateur, and professional real time and recorded experiences. As the boundaries of experience are pushed and sexual practices move from margin to the mainstream, hardcore will get harder and porn tourism will continue to grow. Destinations, events, clubs, parties and communities become potential sites for the simultaneous consumption and production of porn. The porn star of the future is likely to be a composite of visual, visceral and emotional representation, rather than a singular person, cyborg, or non-human entity.

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