

What's on the menu?

It seems that approximately two-thirds of punters are primarily interested in sexual pleasure, while 16% just want a change of face, and presumably body. The remainder claim to want to let someone else do the work for a change, paying the prostitute to make all the moves; so found Professor Shan Naiguang of the Beijing Academy of Social Science during his research. Professor Shan also found demand was moving away from basic sexual intercourse to alternative practices.

Traditionally, in the absence of any other source of information about sex techniques, Chinese prostitutes have studied classic pornographic literature. The time-honoured approach is to adopt the style of the coquette. The secret lies in developing a come-hither look, hinting at sexual possibilities. There is an old saying along the lines of “One can be overcome by just a look”. The art of suggestion, then, is supposedly all it takes.

Once, during fieldwork in Sham Shui Po, I witnessed a plain-looking girl give a coy look to a young man bargaining with her colleagues. The coy look sealed the deal: he left the group and approached the plain girl who softly said, “This way”. She led him, hips swaying, key dangling from her finger, to her room.

The prostitutes I know all think coquetry is indeed a good trick to learn. It has worked for thousands of years by effectively exploiting the

male tendency to judge sexual attractiveness quickly and visually. However, this trick is losing its audience. Hong Kong prostitutes now find they will likely end up penniless, and kicked out of the whore house, if they rely simply on making themselves available as passive receptacles after a few flutters of the eyelashes.

When my parents were young, the same bar of soap would be used for washing clothes, hair, face, feet, and bathing. Nowadays, if the supermarket sold only one brand of soap, it would be evidence of a poor economy and high unemployment. To appease the consumer vanity that comes with affluence, manufacturers have learnt the appeal of offering choice. The basic ingredients may be similar, but they can be packaged as hair shampoo, shower gel, washing up liquid, laundry detergent, floor cleaner and so on. Hair products are further divided to suit greasy, normal or dry hair; they offer tangle resistance, UV protection, and treatments for dandruff, grey hair, split ends and falling hair. Choice becomes an expected part of consumerism. The consumer tendency to expect choice spreads to all commodities, including entertainment and sex.

Sex in the mass media takes the form of endless variations of erotic images, pornographic movies, magazines and novels, sex toys, live performances, internet sex and phone sex. Even cocktails have joke names like 'sex on the beach' and 'screaming orgasm'. This provides employment and profits for filmmakers, newspapers, photographers, printers, manufacturers of sex toys, prostitutes, novelists, and the list

goes on. Vested interests are constantly under pressure to develop and present new variations, to excite further demand and new audiences.

It was inevitable that sex comprising nothing more than a flirty look and an uninspired missionary interlude, with maybe a few standard variations, was one day going to lose its attraction among an increasingly aware, affluent and curious customer base.

Commercial sex, forever craving new fantasies, changes consumers' sexual tastes, and recruits otherwise conventional, straight, ordinary men and women into the multifaceted marketplace. Japanese pornographers have had a distinctive approach. They tend to separate sexual joy from the sexual organs. To pander to the Japanese male psyche, there is little if any attempt to suggest the humanity of the participants.

Japanese pornography tends to include the following themes:

- Originally noble characters are turned into worthless sluts who find their real joy only when they are bullied and debased.

- Couples and lovers are replaced with perverted or bestial relationships including such combinations as teacher and student, nurse and patient, housewife and postman, daughter and school friend, humans and various creatures such as dogs and farm animals, and variations of incest.

- Foreplay leads to consummation in a series of public places and situations.

- Objectification of the human body is achieved by the frequent use of plastic toys and sundry apparatus.

All these aspects have one thing in common: the tendency to portray embarrassing fantasies, often associated with shame and humiliation.

Hong Kong men also seem to have a need for a type of virtual sex. It has been observed that Hong Kong women, although economically independent, hold conservative attitudes towards sex compared to other urban women in Taiwan and mainland China. Three structural factors seem to explain this conservatism.

Firstly, primary and secondary education in Hong Kong is predominantly provided by Christian and Catholic schools, as well as a number of Buddhist schools. School leavers from such institutions will likely be further influenced by a family background imbued with Confucian values, which leads to a mindset concerning sex built on dual ideological rigidity. Traditional Taoist beliefs include notions of sex for procreation only, with little emphasis on pleasure. Indeed, Taoism teaches men to save their vital essences to retain their strength and vigour. These factors tend to produce sexually naive young men and women with little more than token sexual experience before marriage, which explains many of the subsequent behaviour patterns.

Secondly, most young people live with their families in crowded apartments and have few opportunities to pursue sexual freedom.

Thirdly, Hong Kong women are faced with a harshly competitive marketplace for men because Hong Kong men have abundant choices when seeking lovers, wives, mistresses and prostitutes in mainland China or other less-developed areas.

Hong Kong women tend to seek emotional security in serious relationships, and make use of traditional gender values to cultivate feelings of responsibility in men. In return, women are expected to behave in an inward, sexually innocent and passive manner.

Hong Kong men find little sexual release in dealing with these cold, passionless angels. The answer is Japanese-made pornography, which they inform with their own repressed, non-verbalised desires. This allows them to construct a composite woman who is an angel in social circumstances but turns into a sex-hungry whore in bed when subjected to the man's sexual skills. The same conservatism that produces cold angels also produces sexually ignorant and inept men. Many Hong Kong wives find sex uninteresting and exhausting because everything they know is learnt from their husbands.

The husbands reap what they sow. Putting little effort into communicating with their wives in order to develop satisfying sex, they become frustrated and seek compensation in commercial sex where they can buy a seemingly satisfactory response apparently lacking in their wives.

Apple Daily and *Oriental Daily* reported that a Japanese pornographic film company once sent Grade Four (hard-core) film stars and Japanese strippers to Mong Kok in Hong Kong, to promote their films to a dedicated audience. The venue was packed and the anonymous strippers drew almost as much adulation as would an established Hollywood movie star.

Hong Kong men find particular solace in Japanese porn that depicts quite ordinary males displaying typically modest endowments and women who appear to show only reluctant or passive compliance. This preference is confirmed by market stall vendors, who report that Japanese pornographic DVDs enjoy huge sales, not only because of their production quality but also because of their stylised approach and novel,

fashionable sexual practices. Despite the plot and language, most Japanese movies reinforce the same message: innocent, passive girls enjoy aggressive sex with savage men and are compliant in causing their own pain and humiliation.

Men watch sex movies at home only for the purpose of sexual pleasure, and usually for masturbation. Regular buyers of Japanese discs are normally male professionals between 35 and 50, maybe married, with a mortgage, living a stereotypical life. These men include husbands who make concessions to wives, single men with lovers to please, men with senior female colleagues, men who submit to female bosses, and men who may be humiliated by female customers, or even ridiculed by female clients. Watching pornographic movies with the theme of humiliating women is virtual revenge. However, having seen new ideas in these movies, how do these men achieve the actual experience? It would be unthinkable for them to approach their cold-angel wives or lovers.

The Hong Kong media have experienced a revolution in the promotion of sex information. During the last ten years, sex magazines such as *Salty Spongy Square*, *Wild Nights*, *Call Girl Directory*, *Sex Convenience Store* and *Pimp Guide* have flourished. Newspapers now hire professional pimps to edit columns giving readers information about sex establishments and their girls, their prices and sex tricks. One effect has been mushrooming interest in sexual techniques such as ‘three heavens of ice and fire’, ‘oil-soaked sparrow’, ‘dragon drill’, ‘dragon spitting pearls’,