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GENDER IDEOLOGIES ON
ADULT VIDEO-SHARING WEBSITES

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Abstract

Academics have argued for the democratic potential of new media within the field of sexuality and media culture, as these allow to challenge traditional norms of the culture industry. At the same time, a recent study has suggested that YouPorn, a popular adult video-sharing website enabling the consumption and production of user-generated pornography, maintains a conservative gender ideology. This thesis consists of a qualitative interpretative analysis on altogether 100 'amateur' videos from 5 mainstream adult video-sharing sites (20-20 each) in order to reveal and compare the underlying gender ideologies of these portals. As an attempt to contextualize the recent phenomenon of adult video-sharing sites and user-generated pornographic clips, the analysis includes not only video materials, but also characteristics of the platform, like the usage of key terms (categories and tags), along with the social networking aspects of the site. The results show that the most popular adult video-sharing sites dominantly remain within the hegemonic ideology of heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity. Only one site (XTube) has shown few attributes that – compared to the other sites – might be considered as attempts to challenge these traditional norms.

The analysis revealed further unexpected findings in connection with the interpretation of 'amateur', which labels different materials on each site. Almost half (45%) of the overall sample consisted of professionally produced materials which are most probably of commercial nature. This has also made the question of 'authenticity' a focal point, as commercially oriented sites seem more likely to remain the storehouses of mainstream pornographic footages which are created within the framework of the hegemonic gender ideology. On the other hand, platforms that promote personal accounts (as opposed to commercial ones) and provide an extensive feature set for social networking, are more likely to host 'authentic' user-generated pornography. However, the higher ratio of 'authentic' materials does not guarantee the presence of materials that transgress the boundaries of the traditional norms. In general, the findings of this research suggests that the previous binary oppositions of pornography (like amateur and professional, commercial and non-commercial, etc.) are no longer valid within the dynamic environment of new media, and are in need of reconceptualization in order to be able to theorize these new phenomena.

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1. Introduction

Pornography has been a remarkably prominent theme in the debate surrounding sexuality, gender and equality. It has been accused by feminists for representing a world of hegemonic masculinity in which women are sexually oppressed by men. This subordination reflects and reinforces unequal treatment in other realms of life, such as education and work. Later, with the widespread use of the internet, new media technologies have been recognized by many as having the potential to challenge traditional norms of the culture industry (Coopersmith, 1998; Costello & Kibby, 2001; Jacobs, 2004; Lehman, 2007).

Despite this alleged possibility, previous studies conducted on online pornography have concluded that these are mostly professional productions (Davenport, 2001; Heider & Harp, 2002; Mehta, 2001), and consequently represent a stereotypic product of the adult industry (Döring, 2009). However, a significant development has taken place in new media since the writing of these studies: the emergence and widespread use of Web 2.0 platforms.

Web 2.0 platforms foster user-contribution and interactivity, enabling literally anybody to participate and publish content worldwide. The phenomenon of user-generated content is one of the most prevalent and dominant characteristic of Web 2.0 platforms (OECD, 2007), for which an evident example is the immense popularity of the major video-sharing site, YouTube. Amongst other processes, these platforms are also responsible for the 'rise of the amateur' which has had serious impacts on the cultural industry as a whole, and has rewritten traditional forms of production-distribution with more dynamic processes.

This paper focuses on one specific type of 'amateurs': it scrutinizes adult video-sharing websites which facilitate the production and distribution of user-generated pornography, like for example YouPorn. The sites that enable this phenomenon of user-generated pornography (UGP) form a very important part of current web 2.0 developments, for which one obvious supporting argument is their widespread popularity: for example PornHub's global ranking is 79th according to Alexa (alexa.com, 2012), leaving sites like Amazon.co.uk behind. Throughout the last decades, sexually related online activities have become routine for a large segment of the Western world (Döring, 2009), and therefore these websites are not only an important part of the contemporary market of online pornography, but also of our understanding of the digital and physical materialization of sexuality and gender (Van Doorn, 2011).

However, due to the taboo-like nature of the topic of sexuality and pornography and also because of the recentness of the phenomenon, very little research has been conducted on them until now. This research aims to fill this gap and add to the body of study on new media, sexuality and gender. A starting point for this paper is a study by Van Doorn (2010), in which the analysis of 100 'amateur' videoclips of YouPorn led him to the conclusion that the site maintains a conservative gender ideology. The current study takes his work one step further, and aims to find out the underlying gender ideologies of not one, but five

popular adult video-sharing sites (Xvideos, Xhamster, PornHub, RedTube and XTube). As an attempt to contextualize the phenomenon of user-generated pornography, the present analysis included not only 'amateur' videos, but also characteristics of the platform, like the used key terms (categories and tags), along with the social networking aspects of the site. With this method, I hope to provide a meaningful overview of the dominant gender ideologies on the currently most popular adult video-sharing sites.

2. Theory and Previous Research

2.1. Sex and gender

> *"Sometime in the eighteenth century, sex as we know it was invented." (Laqueur, 1990, p. 149).*

Linda Williams, influential contemporary theorist of the pornographic film, argues that "[p]ornography as a genre wants to be about sex. On close inspection, however, it always proves to be more about gender." (1989, p. 268). Gender and sexuality are inevitably intertwined, and pornography, as a depiction of sexual activity or interaction cannot be understood without the concept of gender. In this section important concepts and developments from within the field of sex and gender studies are summarized.

Thinking about sexuality within the mental framework of Western civilization is constrained by several cultural axioms. Probably the most profound of these is the connotation of sex and sexuality being 'negative' and 'sinful' by nature, based on Christian-Jewish ideologies: this results in denying sexual diversity by putting heterosexual couples – meaning reproductive sex – on top of the 'sexual pyramid'. Another cornerstone is the belief of sexual essentialism according to which sexuality is an entity independent from society and has existed before civilized societies and thus is one major drive for the structure of societies (Rubin, 1993; Weeks, 1985). Sexual essentialism has been reinforced by scientific research and practice in the field of medicine, psychiatry and psychology, and from this perspective, gender – dividing individuals of society into the categories of 'men' and 'women' – is seen as a 'natural' consequence of the biological attributes of humans. The meanings of these terms seem also 'natural' to individuals within society because it is an essential part of understanding the world, like for example building up one's identity by 'being' either a man or a woman.

However, several scholars have attempted to break from the custom of taking these categories for granted and have argued that gender is not a biologically given characteristic, but a cultural product embedded within the practices of society, maintained through material practices (Connell, 2002; Foucault, 1978; Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Laqueur, 1990; Lorber, 1994; Ortner, 1981; Rubin, 1993; Van Doorn, 2010; Weeks, 1986). These academics of the second half of the 20th century reflect on and criticize the work of the earlier sexologists, like Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud. Sexology as a scientific discipline was born in 1885 with the publication of *Psychopathia Sexualis* by von Krafft-Ebing: this book interprets sexuality on a scientific basis, categorizing sexual behavior and thereby creating the classification for 'pathological' and 'deviant' forms of sexual desire and activity (Weeks, 1985). Needless to say, anything outside the 'normal' sexual desire of heterosexual men towards the 'opposing sex' was considered deviant, which was a logical consequence of societal structural changes throughout the 19th

century that had put amongst others reproduction as a central question to power (Foucault, 1978). It is also within these circumstances that homosexuality was 'discovered' and distinguished as a different sexual behavior and identity (Weeks, 1985).

Scholars of the last four decades argue that gender has to be recognized as a social construct, and as such, poses different questions and problems for academic research than it has before: this approach pays more attention to the context of the processes that contribute to the production and maintenance of gender. Important historical events which fostered this perspective were the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation movements of the 1960-1970s, which have called for a deeper understanding on the topic of sex, sexuality and gender in academic debate. These events can be seen as the historical 'take-off point' for contemporary gender research (Connell, 2002). It is then, in the 1970s, that the conceptual breakthrough is achieved by introducing the terminology to finally make a distinction between 'sex' as the biological, and 'gender' as the social differentiation.

Although Foucault, the French post-structural scholar, failed to theorize gender as such (Connell, 2002), his concept of disciplinary societies and docile bodies have served as ground for many gender theorists nevertheless. *History of Sexuality* (1978) has had a significant impact and served as starting point for questioning the essentialist perception: in this book Foucault claims that sexuality, and even desire, are not biological entities but notions that are determined by historical and societal context. The culturally established entity of sexuality enabled a new form of power over bodies and their pleasure, manifest not only by law but also by medicine, psychotherapy and sexology.

The importance of scientific discourse was again underlined by Laqueur (1990), who provided a detailed overview of anatomy and how these have been manifest of the construction of sex and gender. In his book, *Making sex: body and gender from the Greeks to Freud*, he argues that anything man says about the biological sex already includes a statement concerning gender. Thus, the body is the representation, and *not* the foundation of social gender. Drawing from documents from various eras he differentiates two models: in the 'one-sex' story, the female body is seen as an imperfect version of the male. This approach dominated until the end of the 18th century, when it was not replaced but challenged by understanding male and female in light of radical dimorphism: the transformations of European society, i.e. the end of class based society, called for reconceptualizing the notions surrounding body and gender. This paved the way for a concept where sexuality became the most important attribute of a person, with a specific object named 'the opposite sex'. Thus, the 'two-sex' concept was born, in which men and women are constructed as fundamentally different, and this "became the weapon of cultural and political struggle" (Laqueur, 1990, p. 207).

Another influential piece of work from the reconceptualizing attempt on gender has taken another perspective: Kessler and McKenna's *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* (1978) sets out to understand how this society of dichotomous sexes is constructed 'daily', and focus on the process coined as 'gender attribution'. They argue that throughout our daily lives, each and every person we meet is placed in

one of the two mutually exclusive gender categories: everybody is either a male or a female. Kessler and McKenna argue that the interactive process of gender attribution, practiced on a daily basis by the seemingly simple act of perceiving somebody either as male or female, is "the method by which we construct our world of two genders." (1978, p. 18). Interestingly, the actual genitals play little role in this process, as we expect the genitals to be according to the gender already assigned through clothing and secondary sexual characteristics.

The dichotomous perception of gender in the Western world is thus based on emphasizing the differences between men and women, ignoring the obvious similarities: both biologically and socially, they resemble each other much more than they resemble any other living creature on earth. Another key issue which seemed to verify the two-sex concept was that of sexual pleasure: the realization of the fact that the female orgasm is not vital for conception led to the seemingly obvious conclusion that women and men are different at their core which served as direct consequence and explanation towards their different role and assigned status in society (Laqueur, 1990). In the treasure hunt for the 'truth' about female sexual pleasure, Freud provides another milestone at the beginning of the 20th century by developing the idea that while young girls reach orgasm through the stimulation of the clitoris, as they grow up to be mature women, the clitoral orgasm is replaced by the vaginal orgasm. This statement, having no anatomical and physiological proof at that time at all, can only be understood in social terms: "For a woman to make the switch from clitoris to vagina is to accept the feminine social role that only she can fill." (Laqueur, 1990, p. 242). By 'disguising' a cultural narrative into the language of anatomy, Freud has pointed out the importance of how culture and society 'shape' the perception and interpretation of sex and bodies (Laqueur, 1990).

In the quest for understanding sexuality, women's pleasure is not the only subject at stake. According to Foucault (1978), sexuality has become an essential characteristic of our existence in the last few centuries and thus was in desperate need of constant definition. He argues that while Eastern civilizations have created *ars erotica*, where the sexual pleasure is accepted for its own sake, our Western culture has produced *scientia sexualis*, the science of sexuality in search for the 'truth' behind it all, produced by social institutions such as the Church, medicine and separate education. Christianity, by 'creating' sins of which the majority were of sexual nature, also created the 'society of confessing', which is a manifest of the power that resides within the relation of the Church and the individuals of society. The confessions about sinful deviant behavior were then categorized into pathological terms, behavioral disorders, and further legitimated (only limited aspects of) heterosexuality as the only norm.

To sum up, many scholars in the second half of the 20th century have taken a more complex, contextual approach in theorizing gender than the theories that build on the sexual essentialist perspective because they have recognized the processes and material practices in which gender ideologies are produced and maintained throughout our everyday lives. The feminist movement has not only tried to reveal these procedures but also fought for their deconstruction: they have argued that the currently dominant ideology of hegemonic masculinity in patriarchal societies oppresses women not only sexually but in their

opportunities for education and work. In democracies where theoretically everybody possesses equal rights and deserves to be treated alike, gender stereotypes about what men and women 'should' be like amounts to judging their capabilities, creating a division of labor that results in unequal chances and treatment. Cultural products, such as movies and videoclips, are generally representative of these power relations, as they are deeply embedded in the social and cultural context in which they are produced. Pornography, being probably the most explicit genre in depicting gender relations, has thus been a cornerstone in the debate surrounding gender and equality, which leads on to the next chapter of this paper.

2.2. Pornography

2.2.1. A short historical overview of pornography and its representation in mass communication technologies

From wall paintings through erotic vases in ancient Greece up to today's sex sites, pornographic representation has always been part of human culture and has been evolving alongside society. The innovations of mass production and communication play a significant role in this story: the rise of pornography is closely intertwined with the invention of the printing press in the 15th century (Coopersmith, 1998). Printing enabled not only to reach an extended audience but also facilitated access: the increased number and circulation resulted in lower costs, and the format of the material, being pamphlets, cards or books, were easily distributed and carried home by the consumers – thus, pornographic material and their audience grew steadily. The invention of still photography in the middle of the 19th century was another important milestone: an image offered greater realism, and also demolished literacy as a barrier for consuming. However, the probably most suitable medium for pornography was yet to come: in 1896, only two years after the birth of the first movie, the first pornographic film appeared (Coopersmith, 1998). Throughout the 20th century, television, and later the widespread use of the VHS, enabled the 'private' consumption of porn movies, in the comfort of the consumer's home. The emergence of new media technologies in the last few decades has resulted in an immense boost in the business of pornography: due to its medium-specific characteristics – anonymity, affordability and accessibility: identified as 'Triple A-Engine' by Cooper (1998) – the internet proved to be an extremely efficient and immensely popular medium for distributing and consuming pornographic content.

The evolution of communication technologies have transformed the nature of pornography and also the ways of its production and consumption: the format evolved from text through picture to video and the consumption became from public event to a private moment to the individual. Every communication technology ever invented by man "*has been almost immediately turned to the service of what the culture in which it was invented called 'pornography'* […]" (G.N. Gordon, 1996, as cited in Coopersmith, 1998, p. 96, italics in original). However, it is important to note here, that this is a 'two-way' process in which the

evolution of technology steering the production of pornography in a certain way is only one of the directions. The other one is the social shaping of technology (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006): the increasing demand for porn combined with the economic potential in the pornography business has resulted in pornography being a driving force behind technological development in order to fulfill the needs and also advance the possibilities of getting the product to the consumers (Barss, 2010; Coopersmith, 1998; Davenport, 2001). To name one recent example, the streaming quality of adult video-sharing websites, such as YouPorn, have become a crucial factor in order to be able to compete and be profitable in the rapidly growing market of online pornography, fostering the technical improvements required for sites for providing better streaming quality. This process is also true for other related technologies: for example Playboy, in order to prevent unauthorized use of its material, was one of the first customers of a digital watermarking system (Coopersmith, 1998).

The characteristic of pornography that enabled it to play such an influential role in the development of mass communication tools is its immense popularity, which makes it such a profitable business. The popularity has been proven time and time again by facts and figures: there are approx. 10.000 films per year produced by the porn industry compared to the 400 produced by Hollywood (Williams, 2004). Furthermore, the emergence of online porn has enabled the precise tracking of site visitors, which have proved the stable and steadily increasing number of audience from day one: the websites of Penthouse and Playboy each averaged between 620,000 and 802,000 visitors daily immediately after their launch in 1995, placing them amongst the ten most popular sites of the internet at that time (Coopersmith, 1998).

The popularity of pornography still proves problematic as it inevitably evokes the question of *who* is actually watching it. "Apparently all of us" as Linda Williams abruptly puts it (2004, p. 2) and this truth is hard to accept within the cultural framework of Western Christianity. The appeal of pornography to such a wide audience lies in its exact same essence that results in its immediate rejection from moral and ethical view and makes it also associated with low-cultural forms: it stimulates the body. Similar to horror and melodrama these materials aim at producing fright, fear or sexual arousal in the viewer, thus the collective notion of 'body genres' as coined by Williams (1991). Despite the fact that millions visit adult sites everyday while browsing the internet, consuming porn is to some extent still considered as a taboo, still banned and stigmatized as a deviant or low-class activity by society – although one wonders how that is possible when at the same time the mainstream media get more and more provocative when it comes to sexual representation.

2.2.2. Theorizing pornography

The technological developments of the last few decades have caused porn to rematerialize itself in several forms: from public porn movie screenings through the VHS up to today's online environment which offers endless possibilities of cyberporn. However, it is not only pornography that has been subject of

transformation: parallel, the media representation of sex and sexuality itself has also been undergoing significant shifts in this era. Within the realm of popular culture and commerce, for example in erotic literature, lingerie adverts or the marketing of sex toys, we witnessed a domestication of porn, where sexually explicit content became a possible a marker of distinction and taste (Juffer, 1998). As one major development, the line between pornographic and non-pornographic forms has become less clear. In the light of these (still) ongoing processes, it becomes clear that theorization on pornography was in need of reconceptualization. The academic discourse about pornography before the reconceptualization can be described by debates over the meanings and possible harmful effects of pornography. In the visual interpretation of pornography as a genre of film, the concepts of feminist film theories have attempted to reveal the unequal status of women and men through the analysis of their depiction. Mulvey (2006), drawing on a psychoanalytical background, argues that mainstream film has coded eroticism into the dominant patriarchal order: the point of view of the camera is the equivalent of the male gaze. In this relation, man is the 'active' observer and the female the 'passive' object of desire. The gaze itself objectifies the woman: thus, cinema as such constitutes of images of women, and addresses not them but men (Doane, 1982). Consequently, feminists have made pornography central to their cause, arguing that it is a manifest of sexism and the oppression of women in a hegemonic masculine society (Stern, 1982), and therefore sexual representations can and are to become subject of legislative regulation (Attwood, 2002).

Underlying these feminist arguments is one of the fundamental concepts of film aesthetics: image creating is an arbitrary process, where the creators decide upon not only the major motive that appears on the screen, but also about the composition and the framing – these are all tools that serve to create a specific aesthetic impression in the viewer (Kovács, 2009). These characteristics altogether guide the viewer in perceiving the image 'correctly' within the context of the film as intended by the director: for example a person will appear not only visually taller, but will also seem more powerful if shot from a lower camera position, because of the position of the viewer being lower and thereby necessarily forcing the spectator to 'look up' onto the figure on the screen. The arbitrary nature of the moving image is specifically true for fiction where the actual product is based on a script and the director's decisions, but even in documentaries, what we see is always (to some extent) the filmmakers' choice of view for showing the events which necessarily influence the positioning of the spectators of the recording (Kovács, 2009).

The paradigm shift in theorizing pornography identified by Attwood have steered away from these concepts and can broadly be interpreted as a move towards the contextualization of its subject (2002). Emerging fields of research within an academic context, like Women's Studies, Gay and Lesbian studies and Queer Theory, paved the way to refocus debates about sexual representation. A milestone in the academic recontextualization is Williams' book *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (1989), as it conducts "a close analysis of pornographic texts *as* texts" (Attwood, 2002, p. 92, italics in original). Collections such as *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power* (Gibson & Gibson, 1993) attempt to move beyond the porn-debate by readdressing its inadequacies. Juffer's (1998) examination of sexually explicit

texts available to the female audience in the USA is also part of a movement away from trying to answer the 'tired binary questions' whether for example pornographic texts have fixed meanings. A more recent book by Williams, *Porn Studies* (2004), continues on this path, collecting articles from several authors which all look at pornography as a cultural process, in its context and not as an isolated object.

Nevertheless, all debates around sexual representation underline the recognition of its significant role, as they take part in shaping the attitudes of consumers: a study from Albright (2008) has shown that male viewers of pornography become more critical of their partner's bodies as a result of accessing erotic images and film online. Thus, it is a possible scenario that a male 'gets used' to e.g. the fetishized female beauty idol of mainstream porn (blonde, big breasts, thin legs, etc.) which in the end can intervene in and can alter the offline sexual relationship of that particular male. This is however not an isolated phenomenon, as the domestication of sexually provocative images in all kinds of popular culture, like advertising and videoclips, add up to the increasing pressure on females to meet the expectations of the current beauty standards. This is also resonated by the increasing numbers of plastic surgery, which become more and more common and include a vast array of tools for improving the 'womanliness' of a woman by enhancing fetishized body parts such as breasts, or by replacing their hymens or even through vaginal tightening (Albright, 2008).

At the same time we also have to keep in mind, that pornography itself, being a cultural product, reflects cultural values. As a recent study has shown, the pornography of countries with greater gender equality contain more empowering representations of women whereas the pornography of less egalitarian countries have more disempowering representation of women (Arakawa, Flanders, & Hatfield, 2012). Although we have to note here that distinguishing pornography of certain countries becomes more and more problematic with online distribution, as through the internet it can cross national and cultural borders without difficulty and can make the identification of location difficult.

The emergence and widespread use of new media has had a significant influence on the porn industry and pornography itself and vice versa. It is important to realize here, that these processes are complex, and that the internet is not merely a new distribution channel for mainstream pornography, but it has facilitated new forms of production, distribution and reception (Döring, 2009). Parallel to the proliferation of commercial pornography, it has enabled individuals or users to share pornographic content via the web. According to Döring (2009), very few studies have investigated the types and characteristics of online pornography in a systematic way. One of these few is a study by Mehta (2001), who has systematically categorized and analyzed pornographic images posted on Usenet in 1995 and 1996. This and also other studies from the beginning of the new millennium (Davenport, 2001; Heider & Harp, 2002) have concluded that the majority of pornography available online (at that time) was professionally produced, and thus were a representation of a stereotypic product of the "socio-economic working conditions of the so-called 'adult industry'" (Döring, 2009, p. 1092). However, there has been a very important development in new media since the writing of these studies: the emergence and widespread use of Web 2.0 platforms.

2.3. Web 2.0: from online porn to user-generated pornography

2.3.1. User-generated content and Web 2.0

The internet has radically lowered the entry barrier not only for media consumption, but also for production, enabling the phenomenon of user-generated content (UGC). The history of user-generated content starts in the 1990s, with bulletin boards on portal sites. Since then, with the rise of web 2.0 platforms, it has evolved into an immense market, as top sites on the internet are based on the idea of hosting UGC: blog and microblog hosting sites like Tumblr, picture-sharing platforms like Flickr, social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook and video-sharing sites like YouTube and Vimeo are all part of the 2.0 revolution. Although already used earlier, the term Web 2.0 has been irreversibly placed into the discourse about new media by O'Reilly in his writing in 2005, where he collected and summarized the most important aspects and principles of these new platforms, such as network effects from user contributions being essential to market dominance in this era. A key to the success of these sites continues to be the content created, uploaded and shared by users.

Although media types constantly mix and boundaries blur on the internet, the definition for user-generated content as described by Vickery and Wunsch-Vincent (2007) can be summarized as follows:

- it refers to new media
- its content is made publicly available over the internet
- it reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and last but not least,
- it is created outside the professional routines and practices.

The requirement of production circumstances has also been emphasized by Daugherty, Eastin and Bright, who have argued that UGC is content produced rather by 'the general public' than by paid professionals (2008). This is enabled by the fact that web 2.0 platform provide easy-to-handle user-friendly applications for producing and distributing creative goods. The popularity and widespread use of computers, cell-phones and smartphones with built in cameras and the availability of free picture-, video- and audio-editing software has enabled literally anybody with an internet connection to join and share their creative digital materials online. Jenkins (2004) speaks of convergence, referring to the flow of content across media platforms, the cooperation between media industries and the migratory behavior of media audience. Within this *convergence culture,* media producers and consumers are not separate roles anymore: now there are participants who interact with each other along a new set of rules that are only being established throughout the process (Jenkins, 2006).

The idea of UGC content proves to be a success, as sites like YouTube and Facebook are accessed daily by millions. Its popularity has several reasons, first of all, compared to new media, traditional media like television and radio seem dull as they position the audience as a passive consumer. The internet has

enabled an active audience, who is not merely an observer of the endless media stream provided by professionals, as in the case of 'push' or 'hot' media, but has become an active searcher for content, who can also contribute to the content through uploading, sharing, liking, rating or commenting. This has enabled a kind of interactivity that was never possible before and this is why user-generated content is so appealing to the 'general public' who has been 'left out' of production for so long. Shao (2009) set out to identify the appeals of UGC according to the motivation of the user, by using a uses and gratification model which is concerned with how people use media to satisfy their needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). This approach is particularly suitable for the field of new media because it considers the audience not as a passive mass that is exposed to media, but as active consumers who make their own decision in how and which content they consume depending on their needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Shao (2009) identified three different but interdependent appeals of UGC showing that this phenomenon is enjoyed on several levels by several groups of people. He argued that consuming UGC serves as source for information or entertainment, whereas participation is motivated by social interaction and community development. The production of UGC is a form of self-expression and self-actualization, contributing to the overall identity-construction of the user.

Throughout history, each and every innovation of mass communication has been praised by some for facilitating positive changes in society, and feared and condemned by others, who believed the consequences of the technology to pose a threat for e.g. traditional values. It has not been any different in connection with new media: while Kellner (1995) welcomed technology that enables the participation of more and more people from the general public, saying that it could create a public sphere as described by Jürgen Habermas, at the same time the more recent rise of amateurism has been disapproved of by Keen (2007), who argued that the blurring of professional and amateur media content threatens the traditional role and value of media and creative institutions as it endorses plagiarism and piracy. Similar opposing trends can also be found in connection with the question of community, which has been present all along in communication research (Jankowski, 2006), and has not at all lost its relevance in connection with the virtual communities of the internet. On the contrary, it has become more complex, as the asynchronous nature of new media enables communities which – similarly to 'offline communities' – serve common social or cultural interests, but are not tied to a particular place or time, as Van Dijk has argued (1997), while at the same time Fernback and Thompson (1995) believed that online communities would contribute to the further fragmentation of the public sphere.

The sections until now have aimed to explain and summarize the general characteristics of Web 2.0 and user-generated content. These developments have affected every segment of the new medium, of which online pornography is no exception: the following sections deal with these developments within the field of online pornography.

2.3.2. Adult video-sharing sites and the rise of the amateur

As described earlier, Web 2.0 platforms facilitate the production of user-generated content. One of the most popular types of UGC is that of videos, available on video-sharing sites such as YouTube, DailyMotion or Vimeo. However, these major video sharing sites have limitations concerning the content that it allows for submission from its users: apart from copyright infringing materials, adult videos are not permitted according to their community guidelines (youtube.com, 2012a, dailymotion, 2012, vimeo.com, 2012). However, not surprisingly, there are similar platforms dedicated specifically to pornographic material: these are adult video-sharing websites, such as YouPorn or Xhamster.

Pornographic video-sharing sites form an important part of current and future Web 2.0 developments for several reasons. One of them being the closely intertwined nature of mass communication technologies and pornography, as I have already described earlier, combined with their tremendous popularity: Alexa's global ranking list of the 300 most visited sites includes 10 of these pornographic platforms, of which the first one, Xvideos, ranks an impressive 53, overtaking amongst others the website of CNN (alexa.com, 2012). Due to the immense traffic they attract, these sites play a significant role in the future developments of new media technologies, for example in advancing possibilities for better streaming qualities.

These platforms are also renegotiating the relations between media technology, sexuality and gender: by allowing individuals to share their private sexually explicit material, they contribute to the ever-growing diversity of online porn. These technologies enable the 'virtual' which plays an important role in the (digital and physical) materialization of gender and sexuality (Van Doorn, 2011). Instead of treating the virtual as unreal, virtuality should be approached as an integral part of reality, because gender and sexuality themselves can partly be interpreted as 'virtual' phenomena since "they are not concrete, materially existing entities but rather constitute a variety of events, affects, ideals and regulatory norms that are repeatedly actualized in material-discursive practices." (Van Doorn, 2011, p. 533).

Web 2.0 platforms enable the distribution of content which has been produced by 'anyone' and not just by the professional sphere – and this question of production within the field of online pornography inevitably evokes the terms representing the binary opposition of 'professional' versus 'amateur' content. Although the meaning of the term 'amateur' is taken for granted to some extent, it is interesting to look at the fact that it actually derives from a non-pornographic context, ironically it originating from the verb to love, which is 'amare' in Latin, and becomes 'amator' as a noun, meaning lover. Amateur refers either to a person engaging 'in a pursuit, especially a sport, on an unpaid basis' or to someone who is 'inept at a particular activity' (amateur, 2012). It can be also used as an adjective to describe these people, meaning either a non-professional e.g. athlete or doing something in an unskillful way. This ethimological background gives us two meanings which are different in tone, but are nevertheless intertwined phenomena, as it is plausible to assume that someone who runs as a hobby will not be as good of a runner

as someone who is doing it as his job. Turning back to the context of pornography, it seems problematic to distinguish which of these two meanings is more relevant, as probably both are important definers of the genre. Sergio Messina speaks of 'realcore', defining the representation of 'real people having real sex' as the general idea behind this trend, featuring characteristic features such as wobbly shots, low-fi presentation and the models generally acknowledging the presence of the camera by either addressing the viewer or by simply looking into the camera (Dery, 2007). However, it also has to be noted that the already problematic 'amateur' term has become even more complex in the field of pornography: due to its growing popularity, it has grown out to be a genre, a style which has been adopted by porn professionals. 'Mainstream' productions can mimic homemade performances by implementing the technical hallmarks of these low-quality productions – consisting of grainy, underexposed images, wobbly shots, unintentional background noises and low volume – making the distinction between 'amateur' and 'professional' unclear and vague (Paasonen, 2011). Convergence of new media and the specific Web 2.0 developments that foster the creation of UGC renegotiate the boundaries of our traditional concepts of content types and production-distribution processes. Categories are not rigid anymore: on the contrary, they are more and more blurred in the flexible environment of new media. Consequently, some scholars argue that the category of pornography needs reconsideration, "moving beyond dualistic conceptualizations such as the commercial and the noncommercial, the mainstream and the alternative, the professional and the amateur, the online and the offline" (Paasonen, 2010, p. 1309).

However, we have to recognize here, that the rise of the 'amateur' is not an isolated phenomenon: and concerns not only new media, and not only sexually explicit material. It has to be interpreted in a wider context of cultural trends: the rise of reality television, webcam culture, celebrity nudity and amateur porn are all part of a shift in general focus from public to private issues (Palmer, 2002). As Giles argues, the notion of participatory audience is key in this process: reality television programmes set out to depict the 'truth' through members of the public, who are considered to be 'real' or 'authentic' people (2002). Real people having real sex is part of the same fetishization of the real (Dery, 2007). Generally speaking, sexual representation are as available to the public as never before: Williams, coining the term of '*onscenity*' argues, that that was once considered *obscene* (literally translated from Latin: to be kept off-stage) has become now the main stage event (2004).

Accordingly with these developments, several academics have argued for the democratic potential of new media within the field of sexuality and media culture, as these allow to challenge traditional norms of the culture industry (Coopersmith, 1998; Costello & Kibby, 2001; Jacobs, 2004; Lehman, 2007). According to these scholars, these sites enable individuals to express diverse desires, thereby enabling the possibility of rewriting traditional gendered codes of sexuality. One evidence for that is the rising popularity of alternative porn sites: in her article about new sex taste cultures, Attwood (2007) analyzes two alt porn sites, Nerve and SuicideGirls. Both sites are participatory cultures which evolves around sex, where sexual display becomes an important part of the individuals' and the collective's self-definition. Most important

part of their identity is differentiating themselves from mainstream pornography by being 'tasteful' and more sophisticated in terms of what is sexually arousing material. Here, just like by non-sexual online communities, interactive tools like blogs, message boards and discussion groups serve to construct the users of the site into a virtual community, based on their sexual taste.

Of course, it is not only these niche alternative porn sites that enable the formation of communities. Several of the mainstream adult-video sharing websites include social features above the simple act of uploading a video: most commonly users can rate and comment on videos posted by others or can message each other, but in some cases, for example by Xhamster and Xtube, there are also detailed profile pages for each uploader (similar to social networking sites), and also discussion groups or personal blogs associated to users. These features serve the same purpose as on their non-pornographic counterparts such as YouTube: they foster interactivity and make consuming, contributing or producing more appealing to users, as described earlier by Shao (2009). Messina talks about 'tributes' in usenet groups, when describing the process when a user posts a picture, receives a request or a follow-up post of another user picturing himself or herself masturbating to the picture of the previous user (Dery, 2007). This tradition is currently also present on adult video-sharing websites, as they enable a similar kind of communication via commenting, messaging and posting – the only difference is the material, which in this case are videos not pictures.

Interestingly, due to the general assumption of porn consumers seeking exclusively – either through masturbation or through sexual fantasizing – sexual relief, is still considered a low-class activity, denouncing cyberporn in all its diversity systematically as low culture. Western culture, deeply rooted in Christianity, having domesticated sex in popular culture and mainstream media for marketing purposes, at the same time does not seem able to get rid of the prejudice of sexually explicit material which is directly aimed at the arousal and sexual satisfaction of the viewer being necessarily harmful. Studies which have dared to focus on the user's perspective in explaining motivational factors for using pornography show that the issue is actually more complex than that and distinguish several different factors including in-person exploration (Boies, 2002) just as well as the desire for building or maintaining relationships (Paul & Shim, 2008). This is very much enhanced by the social features provided by new media platforms, where the pornographic content shared by a user serves as self-expression and self-actualization, just like in the cases of non-pornographic platforms (Shao, 2009). In her writing about amateur pornographers, Jacobs says that physical arousal or masturbation is not necessarily the purpose of amateur pornography: it can trigger fulfilling reactions in audiences, giving amateur pornographers "an opportunity to interact with audiences and get immersed in changing feedback loops." (2004, p. 26).

However, the democratic potential that Web 2.0 platforms enable has been questioned in Van Doorn's study (2010): his analysis of 100 user-created videos labeled with the key word 'amateur' on *YouPorn*, a hallmark of adult video-sharing sites, led him to the conclusion that the site maintains a conservative gender ideology. The result of his research on other platforms, such as IRC and MySpace, summarized in his later article about the materialization of sexuality and gender in 'digital spaces', suggest

that 'the majority of contemporary users mobilize the socio-technical possibilities of these platforms to reinforce, rather than experiment with, established boundaries that designate the "'appropriate' place for bodies and technologies" (Van Doorn, 2011, p. 538). There are several possible explanations for that: it is possible, that the analyzed videos were 'fake amateur' videos: as mentioned earlier, professional producers can easily copy characteristics of 'real amateur' material and then label it as such, which in the end can not necessarily be differentiated.

To conclude, the phenomenon of user-generated pornography (UGP) itself has not yet really made it into academic discourse: available research is very limited. It is true though, that there has been an increased scholarly interest in the topic throughout the last few years but also in her review, Döring (2009) states that media-specific aspects of users' relationships with online pornography has been neglected until very recently, referring to amongst others the abovementioned Web 2.0 technologies which enable users to produce, share and comment on explicit materials. Additionally, of course we also have to keep in mind that the phenomenon of pornographic user-generated content is fairly new: YouPorn, being a pioneer of the genre was founded in 2006 (Van Doorn, 2010), thus no wonder that academia lags behind. These facts and the scientific gap identified by Döring and also the recentness of these sites further validates the topic of my research.

2.4. Porn jargon: categories and labels

In recent years, the method of discourse analysis has been widely taken up in the realm of social studies, which signals the recognition of the importance and the power of language. This critical approach originates from linguistics and psychology, and is closely connected to the work of post-structuralist scholars such as Foucault. Its main assumption is that language is not a neutral medium for communication, but is an active shaper of our perception of the world (Tonkiss, 1998). Although pornographic materials on adult video-sharing websites are mainly audiovisual formats, it is important to realize that these clips are only accessible through the key terms – such as categories, streams, tags, etc. – they are identified with on the platform of these sites. Therefore, in this section, concepts that recognize and underline the importance of (1) language usage and (2) categorization as significant ideological apparatuses in maintaining hegemonic gender ideologies in society are reviewed.

Words allow us to distinguish objects, people, abstract notions, etc., and also enable their categorization into a systematic order in our minds, congruent with societal structures. First, it is interesting to note here that languages themselves have 'gendered' aspects: nouns can have gender (like the German 'der' – masculine, 'die' – feminine, and 'das' – neutral), and referring to a person can already imply gender grammatically (like in English either 'he' or 'she'). However, the gender of nouns do not necessarily coincide in between languages (Connell, 2002, p. 8), and for example in Hungarian (the mother-tongue of the author) none of the afore mentioned characteristics can be found. Nevertheless, the fact that languages have the ability to express gender shows us the deeply embedded nature of these ideologies in our culture.

The significance of 'categorization' in structuring our thinking about sexuality is obvious: the dichotomous gender itself, as we know it, is often referred to as 'mutually exclusive gender categories', as used by Kessler & McKenna (1978). As mentioned earlier, Van Doorn (2010) conducted his study by entering 'amateur' in the search field of YouPorn, however, this expression is just one of the many keywords that are used on pornographic websites. Weeks (1986) argues that present sexuality can be described by 'speciation': by diversification of practices, subcultures and identities. According to Connell there is 'speciation' within heterosexuality as well, of which 'the developments of current heterosexual pornography is good example (2002, p. 92). Patterson explains the phenomenon in more detail: 'A subset of the cyberporn-industry is devoted to the categorization and classification of these images and websites; these websites present categories of images, laid out in tables, or allow 'key term' searches.' (2004, p. 106). He argues further that one of the main appeals of cyberporn is exactly this characteristic, that it allows images to be managed and categorized so readily for the user.

It is essential to look at the other side of the story as well, namely that of the user: online activities are generally goal-directed and in this respect necessarily reflect the user's experiential styles (Paul & Shim, 2008). Media consumption, specifically concerning the internet, is not accidental – on the contrary, it is planned and intended behavior (Paul & Shim, 2008). Contemporary online pornography reflects this by making specialized appeals: on first level by distinguishing 'straight' content from 'gay' content, and 'female' performers from 'male' performers. After the differentiation of heterosexual or homosexual and female or male, subcategories appear, fulfilling the desire of the (male) spectator in the form of tags and labels: materialized in terms like blondes, brunettes, redheads, blowjob and anal, male users can pick and choose the woman they please and watch them perform the sexual act they desire (Heider & Harp, 2002).

Heider and Harp (2002) emphasizes the importance of this categorization and claim that the discourses produced in online pornography reinforce traditional constructions of culture and society. According to their analysis conducted on pornographic sites, online porn is exclusively constructed for the gaze of the privileged 'white male' and that the usage of terms are a manifestation of the dominant western culture. Categories such as Asian, Black and Exotic convey meaning only because it signifies 'something', or 'something different' to be more precise: they are not 'expected', not 'normal' and thus need a label on top to be identified, understood and put into the adequate box – from the viewpoint of the 'western white male'. These terms allow the user not only to find desired content, but – equally (or even more) importantly – to avoid unwanted content, which might be of disgust to the visitor of the site and be such a 'turn-off' that the user leaves the site overall. The importance of the 'expected genitals' as mentioned by Kessler and McKenna (1978) becomes essential here: we assume somebody to have the 'adequate' reproductive organs corresponding to the person's gender identity and role. This very same scheme can be caught in the process of tags and labeling: for videos with certain tags like 'brunette', we expect the performer in the video not only to possess brown hair, but also a vagina – and not a penis. Thus, on online pornographic sites where users browse along these key terms, the clear and efficient categorizing and tagging methodology becomes

a crucial factor for the success and maintenance of these portals. Parallel with this, the media literacy and creativity of online porn consumers is challenged in keeping up with the newest vocabulary to find the most desired material, but the user is also involved as an active shaper of this process in the form of creating and using individual tags.

Pornographic formats have always been and still are dominantly visual: from pictures in magazines through VHS cassettes to online videos. However, there is one big difference between the new media forms of pornography*: it is readily available through search terms because it is categorized by the use of words* (Patterson, 2004). Of course, there are most probably different sections marked by various topics or themes in adult video-renting facilities, but these are far from being that user-friendly, efficient and at the same time as complex as online search engines enable them to be. The key terms are used as orientation for and by the users, they lead the way for them in finding the object of their desire. Hence, it is not only the actual material – the images, videos and depicted performances – that construct the way we think about pornography, sexuality and gender, but also the language of the interface, provided by the media technologies that enable these representations in the first place, that have a significant role in shaping our understanding. The construction and perception is inevitably intertwined with the used technology. Consequently, videos on adult video-sharing websites consist not only of the audiovisual pornographic material but of the words that surround it on the screen and have enabled the user to find and view that specific material. This current analysis takes this contextual setting into consideration, and includes therefore both mentioned materials, as it is explained in the next chapter on methodology.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to scrutinize major adult video-sharing websites in order to identify gender ideologies. Therefore, my leading research question is the following:

RQ1: What are the underlying gender ideologies of mainstream adult video-sharing websites?

This research builds on the study of Van Doorn (2010) in both theory and methodology. However, this study also differs significantly from his, as it implements further aspects in order to form a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of user-generated pornography. While Van Doorn (2010) conducted his study solely on the amateur videos uploaded to an adult-video sharing site, this study looks at these materials in their context within their online environment. Therefore, the research question is answered by analyzing different types of data: first of them being necessarily the user-generated pornographic videos distributed on adult-video sharing websites, and further on, the key terms – by which I am referring to the categories and tags – applied to the uploaded materials are also to be assessed (a detailed description of these notions is provided in the section about research design). Not only the uploaded UGP, but also these key terms, along with their functionality and their usage (since the procedure of applying these to UGP varies) are assumed to be representative of the dominant gender ideology of the site. The last dataset consists of the social networking aspects of the adult video-sharing websites, as these generally influence user-behavior on these platforms, and they have further important implications when scrutinizing user-generated content (to be discussed in more detail later).

In his study, Van Doorn came to the conclusion that user-generated pornographic videos on YouPorn, one of the most popular adult video-sharing sites, reinforce heteronormativity rather than question it (2010). However, there are also other similar sites on the web and they do not necessarily function in the same way or represent the same values – due to for example a different target audience. As a consequence, this paper is not a replication of his research: the analysis in this paper is extended to other sites and involve other elements, such as the use of tags and categories and social networking aspects of the adult video-sharing platform, as a basis for comparison in order to find the answer to my question. The main method employed is comparing different adult video-sharing sites in terms of gender ideology through the types of data mentioned above, answering the following subquestion:

RQ2: Is there a difference between mainstream adult video-sharing websites in terms of gender ideology?

My research involves the analysis of different types of materials, consequently different methods have to be used which consider both the nature of the content and the intentions of the study. The materials include

user-generated pornographic videos and the key terms (categories and tags) applied to them. Parallel to that, the functionality of the key terms are recorded as well, meaning the possibilities and constraints posed by the interface of the site, such as limiting the applicable number of categories or providing restrictions for submission into certain categories, etc. Finally, the social networking aspects of the site are reviewed which consist of the available features enabling interactive behavior in between users and the content of the site. The introductory part of this chapter provides an argumentation for the choice of qualitative methods, which is then followed by the detailed research design, including the detailed explanation of materials in the relevant sections of the chapter, each including both their collection methods and the processes for analysis.

The data listed above are of different nature and therefore need distinct methods, however, all used methods are to be within the qualitative realm for reasons that follow. First of all, since there has not yet been much research on adult video-sharing sites, the materials that are to be analyzed have not been extensively (or at all) covered by scholars. One could argue that these sites 'simply' form part of the Web 2.0 culture, a phenomenon that has already been discussed in academia. It is true that adult video-sharing sites that have dedicated itself to pornographic material are based indeed on the very same platform-type that forms the basis of every Web 2.0 service. However, it has to be recognized that this specific segment of Web 2.0 platforms have several differentiative attributes that need to be taken into consideration. The differences can easily be understood by a simple comparison in terms of content, audience and motives: while for example YouTube hosts (almost) any kind of content to anybody in the world, the goal of pornographic video-sharing sites is more specific, geared towards the sexual excitation or satisfaction of adult viewers, narrowing down the size of the target-audience and limiting down the amount of 'suitable' content.

Also, quantitative methods serve a better purpose when used as a tool for analyzing a more exhaustive dataset which has been gathered on a scientific ground that has already been sufficiently theorized and understood by scholars to give meaningful results. At the current stage of the research on user-generated pornography, it is desirable to approach these 'new' or 'different' materials with a method that is sensitive, allowing more freedom in interpreting the data in every detail – which is why qualitative methods have been chosen for analyzing all types of data that are involved in this study.

Furthermore, the characteristics of the different types of materials mentioned above serve as another argument for justifying the usage of qualitative methods: videos, as audiovisual material, along with website functionality and features, form a delicate set of data which need qualitative descriptive methods in order to be able to meaningfully interpret them. Also, considering the aims of this study in revealing gender ideologies, it has been decided that an interpretative qualitative approach serves as the best tool for gathering findings which allow to answer the research question.

Since the chosen data types differ significantly in their characteristics from one another, each of the analysis procedures requires detailed explanation. However, before delving into the details of the

methodology, the preliminary steps – required in order to identify the sources for the materials – are discussed.

3.1. Selecting sites for analysis

Alternative vs. mainstream

Since my study involves comparison of different adult video-sharing sites, the first step is to identify and argue for the selection of sites that provide material for the analysis. As pointed out earlier, several scholars have argued for the democratic potential of new media by enabling platforms for diverse sexual representations which can challenge traditional structures of gender (Attwood, 2007; Coopersmith, 1998; Costello & Kibby, 2001; Jacobs, 2004; Lehman, 2007), as it has been shown through the analysis of sites like Voyeurweb (Lehman, 2007), Nerve and SuicideGirls (Attwood, 2007). However, alternative pornography appears to be a niche market which exists through differentiating itself from mainstream porn, and is maintained through a specific user community which share the same taste or values (Attwood, 2007). In this sense, these sites usually form their own distinct subculture, with guidelines in both regulatory sense as well as in aesthetic terms concerning the behavior and contribution of its users, which of course limits also the number of those who are attracted by the site. Compared to the massive user-base of the 'conservative' YouPorn (Van Doorn, 2010), which is the 102th in the list of top global sites by Alexa, it is a fairly small audience that visit 'alternative' sites: although Voyeurweb ranks still an impressive 2464, Nerve and SuicideGirls are only 16074th and 12424th in the same global ranking (alexa.com, 2012). Here it is also important to note that Voyeurweb limits user contributions to sexually explicit pictures, and although the latter two sites contain pornographic videos, that is not necessarily the main focus of the site – it is only one among the many other features (e.g. blogging) that enable user interaction through sharing or commenting.

The results of these studies together suggest that although Web 2.0 platforms are capable of enabling the creation and distribution of alternative pornographic material that can challenge traditional gender roles, at the same time it seems that the most popular, mainstream adult videos-sharing sites are nevertheless less capable or less probable to host similar materials. At the same time we also have to keep in mind that YouPorn is only one of the major adult video-sharing websites, and research on other adult video-sharing platforms has not yet been conducted, consequently similar mainstream sites could show a different result in terms of gender ideologies. Thus, this paper's goal is to conduct this research on popular, English-language sites which target an international audience (to which a key component is 'worldwide' accessibility) and provide free content to users – for example YouPorn is an example that fulfills all these requirements. In that sense, I am not aiming to analyze the pornsites labeled as 'alternative' as mentioned above, but to find mainstream adult video-sharing sites which include the possibility of sharing UGP. Although I am aware of the fact that several sites incorporate paying features, such as access to 'VIP' content in return for a certain subscription fee, it is only the publicly available, free content created by users

of the site that are relevant for this study according to the focus of the research.

As a first step, Alexa's global ranking of sites (alexa.com, 2012) has been consulted to determine the most popular adult video-sharing sites. Those which appeared within the first 500 results (as Alexa provides the global ranking until this number) have been extracted from this list and have formed a list of 10 websites (Table 1):

Table 1. Most popular adult video-sharing sites according to Alexa's global ranking (alexa.com, 2012)

	adult video-sharing site	Alexa's global ranking
1	Xvideos	56
2	Xhamster	58
3	PornHub	79
4	YouPorn	102
5	RedTube	114
6	Xnxx	125
7	Tube8	139
8	YouJizz	232
9	HardSexTube	323
10	SpankWire	444

After visiting each of these websites, 4 of them have been identified to be part of the 'PornHub network' (referred to as such in the header of their homepage): PornHub, YouPorn, Tube8 and SpankWire. The network itself actually consists of 5 more (altogether 9) sites, all of which possess a different domain and a different layout, but do not necessarily differ in content: PornMD for example serves only as an aggregated search engine among the content of several other (not all) PornHub sites. Due to the fact that this network is responsible for the traffic of almost half of the 10 most visited adult video-sharing sites, it seems safe to conclude that the PornHub network is extremely popular among in this genre on a global level. As a conclusion, sites for comparison necessarily include at least one page from this network.

However, there are other factors which have to be considered: after assuring global popularity, the second step is to verify the presence of UGP. Since there are a lot of sites where users can only (or majorly) access promotional material from porn industry professionals, therefore the actual ability to upload and share videos is an essential criteria for the selected sites. This was verified empirically though the process of registering and creating a profile as a user on each site and checking whether the freely available features include uploading and sharing user-generated videos. Only one of the specified sites did not meet this criteria: on Xnxx, user registration and video upload is not available, therefore this site has been excluded from further analysis. (Furthermore, a preliminary analysis on the key terms extracted from these sites has also revealed that the content of Xnxx is identical to that of Xvideos – based on the fact that the exact same number of videos were found for specific tags and within specific categories.).

Since key terms form the second type of dataset in my analysis, their presence also needs

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verification. Within key terms, websites do not necessarily make use of categories and tags at the same time and may have different rules for the usage of these features. The use of the former is generally a more prevalent practice then the latter (as it is be explained under the section of categories and tags), therefore the criteria in connection with this here was the existence of only the categories, which has been verified on each of the aforementioned sites.

The 'authenticity' of UGP is another important factor for the analysis: this research sets out to find and analyze videos that has been created by 'real amateurs', featuring 'real' people, and not 'amateur porn stars'. Following the method of Van Doorn (2010), the videos for analysis are chosen if their category or their tags include the term 'amateur', consequently, as a preliminary step, the presence of the 'amateur' key term has also been checked. However, it is true that this does not ensure the actual 'authenticity': porn stars performing within the genre of amateur are also categorized as such. In order to solve this problem, various characteristics of the sites could be considered which may increase the probability of 'real' amateur content: for example it seems plausible to assume that sites which provide more interactive tools, especially features fostering different kinds, such as user-to-user and user-to-document interaction (McMillan, 2006) are more likely to contain more 'authentic' UGP. Although these assumptions do not serve as a guarantee for the quality of UGP, it has been decided to include this aspect in the selection for sites. This way the video sample may include both 'commercial' and 'real' amateur content, but there are no further precautionary steps that could be taken to increase the chance of authentic UGP. Adult video-sharing sites may differ in the 'quality' of their UGP on the scale of authenticity, which is then also a result of the analysis.

Taking practical matters into consideration, such as being able to analyze sufficient material from each website (procedure to be explained in the Data collection section) within the time and page limitations of this study and also to have sufficient sites to be able to compare them in a meaningful way, the final number of sites has been decided to be 5. The most obvious choice would be to analyze the 5 most popular sites of the previously identified list (Xvideos, Xhamster, PornHub, YouPorn and RedTube). However, due to the reasons mentioned above in connection with authenticity, it has been decided to eliminate YouPorn and include XTube, another site from the PornHub network, which, although less popular in terms of traffic (646th Alexa ranking), but is still the 13th most popular adult video-sharing site. As pointed earlier, the PornHub network seems to host several of the most popular pornographic video-sharing site internationally, but their pages vary in layout, content and traffic as well. The reason to exclude YouPorn was that after a preliminary analysis, it has shown similarities in several aspects with PornHub, such as layout, functionality and popularity as well. XTube has been chosen because of the prevalence of social features such as detailed user profiles, showing online availability of users, and the separate 'Social' tab on the menu, which include submenus like Blogs, Forums, Wiki, Local, Quiz, Polls and Gifts.

3.2. Data collection

As pointed out earlier, my research sets out to analyze two different types of data, there are different

procedures of data gathering and analyzing to be discussed. First, the dataset and analysis of user-generated pornographic videos on adult video-sharing sites is explained, followed by the description of the same components in connection with the key terms (categories and tags), and finally by describing the social networking aspects available on the sites.

3.2.1. User-generated pornographic videos

Since it was among the requirements of the content that has been chosen for analysis to be publicly and freely available online, therefore data collection should not pose any difficulties. The only hardship that might be encountered is the possible removal of videos by the user or by the site, or the change of URLs of the videos which might prevent the reviewing of the material. The availability of the sources used cannot be guaranteed in the future as the content of these sites are fairly dynamic. From the side of the author, this was solved by downloading the videos from the site by employing the 'download video' feature of the site when available, thereby having the original video file at hand any time. Unfortunately this does not provide a solution for future researchers interested in the used sources which are not available anymore online. These scholars may consult archiving sites such as www.web.archive.org, which enable browsing of earlier versions of various sites that have been archived by that provider.

Selecting the sample

The videos chosen for analysis are a random sample of altogether 100 user-generated pornographic videos, meaning 20 per site which are categorized (and/or tagged) as 'amateur' and therefore are most likely to be authentic user-generated pornography. The aim is to gather a randomized and yet current sample of UGP, and since most of the sites vary in their algorithm which is responsible for listing the results (videos can be sorted according to relevance, upload date, views, etc., but there is always a default result which is given to by the site without choosing any specific option), this is achieved by starting the selection of the random sample from the first result page after clicking on the 'amateur' category. Following the method of Van Doorn (2010), a number is specified for each site which serves as 'distance' between the search results that are selected for the random sample. Thus, on Xvideos every 5th, on Xhamster every 6th, on PornHub every 7th, on RedTube every 8th, and on XTube every 9th video result in the amateur category, up to gathering 20 of videos per site, are downloaded for analysis. Advertisements or 'sponsored' hits are often the top results: these are skipped as they represent commercial products. (In the case of Pornhub another option is available which is equally relevant in connection with the authenticity of the UGP-sample, and that is the possibility for searching for production types which is either 'homemade' or 'professional'. However, a preliminary analysis has shown that videos filed under 'homemade production' have no other specific characteristic than having the 'homemade' tag applied to them, which can obviously be – and is likely to be – applied in several cases to videos which are at the same time categorized as amateur. Furthermore, it is

subject to the decision to the uploader to apply certain terms or not, and the 'validity' of these are not officially verified, thus can be arbitrary and not necessarily reflective of the truth. Also, since 11 from the 20 videos chosen through the 'amateur' category included the 'homemade' tag, it was decided to leave the method intact and apply the same data gathering method for this site as well.) Due to the timeframe and scope of this research, the preferred duration of the videos have been set between 1:00-7:00 minutes, therefore videos below 1 minute or above 7 minutes were skipped and the generation of the random sample continued from that spot on as described earlier.

Analysis of the sample

As a result, the data sample of UGP consists of 20 amateur videos per site with duration between 1:00-7:00 minutes from the 5 most popular adult video-sharing sites, adding up to 100 videos in total. These materials are to be analyzed using interpretative qualitative content analysis, building on the framework of Van Doorn (2010) as his study analyzed similar material with similar intents, namely user-generated videos submitted on *YouPorn* to identify gender ideologies. He combined two different approaches: one of them being rooted in film studies, which takes the media text as a construct, and the other focusing on the 'homemade' nature of these videos, rooted in the performance studies tradition.

The method of analyzing amateur videos is complex, since it is by definition their essential characteristic that it has been created by non-professionals, which results in a major theoretical clash when it comes to film aesthetics compared to traditional, scripted materials. In case of fiction, or scripted materials for that matter, every aspect of the result is assumed to be arbitrary: the creators are granted of being fully aware and capable of using the tools for creating the desired impression in the viewer. On the other hand, in the case of non-professional videos, we cannot speak of the consciousness of the camera usage in the same way: although there is a certain level of awareness in the decision for camera-position and such, but this level of consciousness differs radically from fiction. Therefore, drawing on the work of Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001), Van Doorn (2010) adopted an approach that considers the intent of the producer of the text and the actual representation itself at the same time, as a solution to interpret these clips – which are so contradictory in terms of film aesthetics – meaningfully. However, Van Doorn (2010) does not mention another aspect which in my opinion is an important link in understanding amateur UGP: the essence of the amateur pornographic video lies in its authenticity or reality, as it is understood to depict 'real' people having 'real' sex – preferably in 'real' time, referring to the ideally unedited nature of the footage, which eventually makes the genre of the end-product being very closely related to documentary. This is especially true in the case of clips that adopt characteristics of the what could be called a 'voyeur aesthetic', in which the participants are literally not aware of being filmed (for example in the cases of hidden cameras or security camera recordings), thus the presence of the camera does not interfere in the actual happenings and depicts 'pure reality'. However, in numerous cases it is indeed (one of) the performer(s) shooting the footage of the participants, doing so on purpose, which eventually makes the

performance studies approach more relevant. Nevertheless, documentary is an inevitable part of 'real' amateur videos: although the depicted motives and participants may be the choice of the 'director', there are always elements of the end-product which have not been created as such by intention: hereby I am referring to the 'authentic' background in form of a home, with personal belongings being visible on the screen, or background noises such as television or traffic, or simply the few seconds at the end which are not part of the 'performance', like the wobbly images of a hand switching off the camera. These form all part of the actual video that has been published, and therefore their analysis needs to take all of these characteristics in consideration.

In order to analyze the videos by implementing all elements of the abovementioned approaches, several characteristics are to be recorded, following the themes outlined in the theory part: the shown images, along with its composition and framing are observed, completed with the intended and/or unintended impressions of the footage. Starting with the participants depicted in the video, along with characteristics such as gender or age, followed by the sexual and non-sexual activities they are involved in during the recording, such as intercourse, masturbation or undressing. Equally important focus of analysis is the camera usage, which covers several issues, due to reasons mentioned above: where is the camera and why, whom is it operated by, and what frames are chosen and why. Audiovisual quality also forms part of the assessment: these characteristics are important markers of the amateur-professional dichotomy, where the former usually includes unintended sounds, unfocused or underexposed shots, whereas the latter are usually of higher quality, since by definition the (professional) producers aim to create a product, with commercial purposes. The issue whether the footage is edited or not is similarly important in this genre, as the essence of amateur means 'raw', uncut footage, in contrast to after-edited, thereby 'less real', artificial commercial porn. Finally, due to the 'performance' nature of the clips, the relation of the participants to the camera also forms part of the analysis, noting down whether the participants are aware of and willing to be recorded, whether they acknowledge the camera and their treatment of the camera in generally (talking into the camera or ignoring it, etc.). Along with these data, the categories and tags applied to the video are also be recorded.

3.2.2. Key terms of adult video-sharing sites

Function and usage of key terms

My second type of data is that of key terms. The structure of adult video-sharing websites are similar to those of non-pornographic video-hosting sites in their general construction: there are thematic categories into which the videos are categorized as an orientational help for the user. Different sites may refer to these as 'streams' or 'channels', or not refer to them at all, but they can generally be described as a distinct panel on the homepage (or with a specifically dedicated menu for it on the homepage) - usually on the left-hand

side, but can also be the top of the bottom of the page - with (probably the most popular) key terms listed in alphabetical order, where clicking on any of the key terms results in the listing of videos within that particular category. While categories of YouTube consist of for example *Cars & Vehicles* or *Pets & Animals*, YouPorn has videos under labels like for example *Brunette* and *Latina*. Another important function, namely the use of tags is also present and functions in the same way, helping the surfing users find their content by additional labels which are relevant to the content of the video: while the YouTube video *Kitty Loves Doggie, Super Cute!* (youtube.com, 2012b) has tags such as: c*ute, kitty, love, dog,* etc., the PornHub video *Fucked by a friendly stranger* (pornhub.com, 2012b) was tagged with *amateur, blow-job, blowjobs, brunette,casualteensex.com, cumshot, cum-shot, etc.* These key terms are usually visible below the video as a listing, along with other information such as views, uploader, etc.

These key terms generally serve as an orientational basis for users in order to find the content they are browsing for. Although both categories and tags are subject to the decision of the user who is uploading the content, there is usually a very significant difference between the technical execution. Generally, the category or stream names are given on the interface of the site, thus the user has to choose from a limited vocabulary offered by the platform. In opposition to this, the expressions used as tags are usually the creations of the user uploading the content: applying of tags generally happens by typing comma or space separated words or symbols into a designated field. Although all categories can and are usually also used as tags, the number of tags generally exceed that of the readily-available categories, as my preliminary analysis has shown, but is also logical due to their functionality that has just been described. Since the applied tags are creations of individual users, they are inventions and reflections of the user on his or her own content – within or outside the classification and vernacular of porn. This way the meanings of the images are also produced by the community that consumes them (Attwood, 2007), enabling a more dynamic and self-reflective online environment which in turn is also increasingly representative of the user audience. However, sites differ in the usage and functioning of these features, therefore the revelation of these technical procedures forms also part of the analysis, as it is explained in the next section.

Analysis of key terms and their functionality

As we can see from the abovementioned examples, key terms used by YouPorn – but this is of course also the case with other adult video-sharing websites – can highlight or refer to various topics such as gender (the term *Brunette* refers to brown-haired women), bodily features (for example *Hairy*), ethnic background (*Latina*), the genre, production or quality of a video (*high definition* and *gonzo*), certain body parts (*ass* and *asshole*) and sexual activities (*anal sex* and *hard fucking*). Thus, an overview of the categories and tags applied to the videos of the random sample can be revealing about the general typification and ideology of sexually represented bodies and gender, as they are constituted on that specific site.

Along with the actual terms, the functionality of these features is investigated, first as a 'consumer' user, browsing among the content, during which the usage of tags and categories are to be recorded, by

answering questions like where and how these key terms can be found; whether they are prevalent features of the site – further on extended by other remarks depending on the characteristics of each site. As a second step, the upload procedure is scrutinized by registering to each site as a user, as the general requirement for uploading is registration. As a registered member, the upload process becomes transparent: stages, possibilities and other attributes such as 'required fields', etc., become visible and thus can be recorded. The application of categories and tags is usually part of the upload process, thus information on how categories and tags are added, how many can be added, or whether certain categories have a specific content requirement, can be recorded. These information are interpreted in regards to my research question, answering whether there are certain gender ideologies coming to the fore from the functionality and usage of key terms on adult video-sharing sites. Finally, the analysis of 5 different sites provides the basis for the comparative part of my results, in which the attributes mentioned above are interpreted and compared in regards to their implied gender ideologies.

3.2.3. Social networking aspects

As mentioned earlier, adult video-sharing sites, like any Web 2.0 platform, are generally capable of providing features that enable user-to-user and user-to-document communication (McMillan, 2006), via tools like commenting or rating. The range of these features varies by each site: while some limit their functionality to tagging and rating, others can have detailed profile pages and 'walls' to write on, like it is in the case of the extremely popular social networking site Facebook, eventually making the video-hosting platform similar to social networking sites or to UGC-hosting sites with a strong social aspect, like YouTube. Since these features foster the building of virtual communities, they can also forge activity and interactivity of users, which in the case of adult video-sharing sites could lead to users being more motivated to contribute to the site via uploading their material.

Therefore, the social networking features of the sites are to be noted down systematically by logging in as a registered user and browsing the site for all the relevant features. This includes checking profile pages for the connections which may be established between users (private messages, wall posts, chat, etc.), checking the uploaded videos and the interactive features connected to them (rating, commenting, sharing, etc.), and if available, browsing through the relevant areas of the sites - dedicated menus such as 'Blogs' or 'Community'. These pages and features are investigated in detail to describe the possibilities provided for interaction.

After collecting the information from the sites, the data are assessed and interpreted in relation to the previously analyzed materials and in relation to the research question: whether these social networking aspects show any pattern of identifiable gender ideologies. The individual sites are compared in terms of their social features, and along with the analyzed videos, possible connections between the uploaded materials and the social networking aspects are to be discussed.

4. Results

This chapter contains the results of the analysis conducted on the 5 previously identified adult video-sharing websites. As a first step, an individual review of the findings concerning each site is provided, divided into 3 sections, discussing first the video sample, followed by the key terms and their functionality, and finally the social networking aspects of the site. These results are followed by a comparative section in which differences and similarities between the individual sites are highlighted. Along with the comparison, the chapter closes by summarizing the findings and by drawing conclusions from the individual analyses and the comparative evaluation combined.

4.1. Xvideos

Video sample

The first site under scrutiny is the most popular adult-video sharing website according to its Alexa global ranking (56th): Xvideos. The footage of the 20 selected videos, adding up to altogether 1h:02m:30s in length, shows more similarities than differences. All clips are depictions of the sexual activities of women, either alone or with a man/several men. More than half of the videos (11 out of 20) implement the aesthetic of the 'gonzo' subgenre by including point-of-view shots filmed by the man who is sexually involved with the woman during the recording. As a visual consequence, women can usually be seen approximately the way the men see them, either upwards from the genitals (back or front) or via close-ups of different body parts: most frequently the butt, the penetrated vagina or the breasts. Similar trends can be found in terms of verbal interaction: it is generally men who are in charge, they talk more, either in their excitement or addressing the woman with instructions, while women are responsible for the majority of moans. On several occasions, actual conversations took place: in these cases it was always the man from behind the camera who initiates a discussion with the woman, whereby the cameraman merges his position with the future viewer of the recording.

Women are never behind the camera, therefore no shots can be seen from a female point of view, confirming Mulvey's theory of eroticism being coded into the dominant patriarchal order (2006). There are however two occurrences when it is the woman filming herself during masturbation, without the presence of any (nor male nor female) cameraman. Interestingly, even in these occasions, it is rather the view of a male spectator that is provided by the women themselves automatically: both videos which featured only one woman were filmed from an 'external' point of view, thus the camera not being in the hand of the performer but being put in a stationery position near to her. One of these clips, *Stunning babe with big tits toying pussy* (xvideos.com, 2012a), shows an interesting twist: although she is naked, she is wearing a pair of glasses – a cliché that has been theorized as a strong symbol by feminist film studies, as it contains the

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paradox of the object of desire, namely the woman, who ought to be desireful for the gaze of the male, obtaining intelligence and a gaze herself, and thereby in turn becoming less attractive to the male gaze (Doane, 1982). The woman in this particular video outlives this paradox by taking on a more aggressive and active role than the other female performers in the rest of the videos by constantly talking to the camera, addressing it as if it were a man with whom she is eventually having sex with. She also touches the device that is generally operated by men, the camera, to adjust the angle according to her position. Paradoxically, even here in this case, the camera is still 'unable' to take on her point of view: it eventually serves only as a tool to shape herself as an object of desire which is appealing or sexually exciting for the supposed male spectator and herself as well.

The fact of men dominating the camera results in them appearing much less on the screen. Exceptions are only videos which include more than one man and thus the camera was swapped around among them, allowing the third person to film the events from a wider frame size, as in for example *Trio cauderan* (xvideos.com, 2012b), with the end result showing the full body of all participants. Generally we do not see the face of men, or in fact anything else than their genitals, stomach and thighs – which is a logical consequence of the camera being equal to their gaze within those clips.

Considering the authenticity of UGP, the footages vary on a wide range, from 'real' amateur to 'commercial' amateur. For the former, videos show the general attributes of the 'amateur' as genre, meaning that the audiovisual quality is low, with background noises and underexposed settings, also including the blurry and wobbly vision of the camera as it is not operated by professionals – these allow to formulate the assumption that they have been taped by 'amateurs' in their homes. Also, the majority of them did not have a story or structure for that matter: in fact, the most common starting frame is the 'in medias res' close-up penetration of a woman from behind by a man or a woman performing fellatio – it gives the impression as if the camera has been hastily fetched and switched on due to a sudden (male) urge during sex, without any previous planning. This unscripted nature of the videos suggest 'unprofessionalism', and more of a spontaneous, 'natural' environment in which 'real' people have 'real' sex, similar to 'realcore' as described in Messina's interview by Dery (2007). The natural environment is also implicit in the 'random' or 'incidental' background: pictures of a regular home, ranging from bookshelves , bed-sheets, or furniture around the bed, occasionally to clothes on the floor, can all be part of these shots. Complementary to this are the unintended sounds, such as television, which can surprisingly often be heard in the background, or the noise of traffic from outside the window or even an instant messaging sound from a computer.

On the other side of the authenticity scale, several videos included website addresses or watermarks (text domains or logos), promising a longer or higher quality version on another site. It is not unequivocal what these appearing links imply, and what can be of help in such cases is the uploader's profile, as it could reveal more information on the nature of the user (whether it is a private or a commercial account), but interestingly, *this site does not show the uploader's name* (further implications on the social networking aspects are discussed later). The only available information for each video is the title,

the length, the tags of the video, along with a 'porn quality' percentage number, calculated from votes from users. However, in some cases it is clear that the content is professionally produced as it is in the case of *You'll fucking love this latina!* (xvideos.com, 2012c), where the clip not only closes with a high quality professional photograph taken from the female performer, saying 'FullHD video at PornDeep.com', but is also more structured: unlike the 'in medias res' nature of 'real amateur' clips, here there is somewhat of an exposition, showing the woman lying in bed still dressed up, being 'interviewed' by the cameraman for a minute before eventually moving on to the intercourse scene with an abrupt cut. Their conversation has an interesting self-reflexive moment:

Woman:	*'What are you doing with the camera again?'(annoyed)*
Cameraman:	*'I'm gonna mess around with the camera… the camera you know..* *that's what keeps the energy going around here, you know what I* *mean?'*
Woman:	*'All right then' (laughing)*
Cameraman:	*'I like to play with it. You look sexy on camera'*
Woman:	*'Thank you'* (xvideos.com, 2012c)

The roles they take on in this recording is a manifestation of the deeply embedded nature of gender stereotypes of the Western world, where the physical appearance and body of the woman serves as a source of pleasure for the male gaze. By capturing digitally reproduced images of the woman, she is even more objectified and therefore becomes even more desirable in the eyes of the camera/male cameraman.

Key terms and functionality

From this portal, the video sample was chosen by clicking on the 'amateur' button on the bottom of the screen. After closer inspection it became clear that the clicked button is 'officially' not a category, as this site utilizes the tags applied by users as such: through an unclear selection process, a panel of (probably the most used) tags appears as clickable buttons on the bottom of the homepage, similar to the channels or categories used on other sites. This panel is dedicated to a limited amount of popular tags and functions in the same way as categories or channels do on other sites (clicking on them loads relevant results), thus was not considered as posing a problem for further analysis. The word 'category' is actually used once during the upload procedure the user has to indicate whether the content is 'gay' or 'shemale', terms which eventually appear in the 'category' panel on the homepage, thus not creating a different level of categories but being equal to tags. During the upload process, only the method of tagging is employed in which the user can browse from the seemingly endless list of existing tags or even add new ones manually by typing them into the designated textbox. The designated field for adding tags allows to insert an enormous amount of characters, 2,606 altogether.

The lack of pre-established categories given by the site has important consequences in connection with the general structure and the development of the site: on Xvideos, the key terms applied by the users in the form of tags are the only form of navigation among the enormous amount of content. This way the users not only add to the audiovisual database of the hosting platform by uploading UGP, but they also add

to the structure of the site by creating new key term strings which may not have existed before and which from that moment on can be searched and added by other users, as it becomes part of the list of tags within the search option and also becomes part of the drop-down list of available tags during the procedure of upload. Eventually, it is not only the UGC, but also the meanings of these contents that are produced by the community that consumes them (Attwood, 2007). This 'bottom-up' structuring solution is a good example of Web 2.0 developments where the platform provides more freedom and agency to the users, for example by enabling to alter certain aspects of the interface. Within the mindset of Web 2.0, flexible platforms which follow the needs of the users are more likely to maintain their user-base or attract further traffic and become more successful.

The most used tags in the sample were *amateur, homemade* and *realamateur*, which are all related to the amateur genre. After these, the most frequent terms include *brunette, blowjob, hardcore, POV* and *milf* (an abbreviation for 'Mother I'd Like to Fuck', referring to older (30-50) women who, despite being past the ideal young age of the teens and twenties, are 'still' sexually attractive) – all of which are relevant from a male viewpoint, as they refer to the characteristics or performed acts of the featured women. The term POV (an abbreviation for point-of-view) itself is not gendered, but after watching all the videos, the conclusion can be drawn that POV in the end is gendered, as only male POV shots were found. The same gender-bias occurs with less used tags: they refer solely to women either through describing bodily characteristics, such as *busty* or *blonde*, or by naming specific sexual activities that necessarily imply the presence and visibility of women performing sexual acts, such as *deepthroat* or *pussyfucking.* This trend of key terms is encouraged by the site itself in the instructions appearing through the upload process, as it emphasizes to write extensive key terms 'including full girl names to get more views'.

Social networking aspects

Before discussing the social networking aspects of the site in detail, it needs to be noted that there has been a significant change in the site structure concerning the social features in the period when this research was conducted. Therefore, the following description concerns the initial state of the site which is then completed by discussing the new site along with the implications of the restructuring.

Although the site allows users the 'basic' features of registering and uploading, considering the overall site structure, social features are not prevalent. The homepage does not even have a register button, only a 'Login to access your favorites' link is visible on top, which makes it clear that the general benefit of being a registered member of the site is rather just the feature of adding favorites which allow quick access to desired content. User-to-document (McMillan, 2006) interaction is possible via commenting and voting a 'yes' or 'no' on a video – none of which require user registration: when commenting, an arbitrary username has to be typed in along with the actual text of the comment without further verification. There is no platform provided for user-to-user communication (McMillan, 2006) in general, as a consequence of the lack of (visible) user profiles: names provided by comments are not connected to a registration process and

thus are not identifiable members of the community. Furthermore, uploader information is also not available on any video: no user name and no upload date either, thus no possibility to retrieve further data or to contact the uploader in any form. The longer a video has been on the site, the more user-interaction is likely to happen, but comments are less used than the voting feature which requires a one-click effort. A forum is also provided, but it is actually hosted on Xnxx.com, confirming the result of the preliminary analysis that these sites are – if not identical, but at least – owned by the same company, and that on Xvideos, as an individual site, there is not much emphasis on social features.

The lack of social networking aspects has several implications, mostly on the interpretation of 'amateur', since the absence of uploader information makes the sources of the materials even less verifiable. Of course, a user profile does not necessarily contain valid information, but this platform – unlike others – does not provide any tool to differentiate between commercial or private user/content at all, as it does not identify uploaders. Paradoxically, instead of pre-established categories, only the method of tagging exists to organize content, which is very much a user-driven feature. Eventually, because of the emphasis on tagging, it is the user-to-system interaction that can be considered to be most prevalent from the interactivity types identified by McMillan (2006).

As mentioned before, the structure of the site was changed in the period of this research: the possibility of creating profiles has been introduced on April 3, 2012 in a tweet of the official Twitter account for Xvideos.com (http://twitter.com/#!/xvideoscom/status/187241683832942592). Now, in the top menu bar of the site, the 'Profiles' menu occupies a prominent third place, between 'Hits' and 'Tags'. These profiles include a picture and information about a user, such as age, location and uploaded videos, etc., and also creates a place similar to the 'wall' on Facebook, where users can post messages to each other and where the 'history' of the user is displayed (e.g. 'A is now friend with B' or 'A add 1 video in Latinas list'). Thus, user-to-user communication, which has not been possible before April 3, 2012, is now supported through the introduction of several interactive features, such as adding friends and writing on their walls. Private user-to-user messages are still not possible, but profiles provide personal contact information such as email. Also, commenting has been restricted as a privilege of registered users, thus comments of a member can be tracked. The privacy of profile information can be customized: the visibility of any content or activity, such as friend list or friend request, can be restricted, to for examples registered users, no one, etc. Interestingly, although the user profile can show the videos uploaded by that user, uploader names are still not visible on the video viewing pages. This way, even after the introduction of user profiles, assumptions concerning the connection between the uploader's profile and the 'authenticity' of the UGP cannot be established as they are not mutually linked.

4.2. xHamster

Video sample

The second site for analysis is only slightly behind the previous one in terms of traffic: xHamster ranks as 58th in Alexa's global ranking. The 20 videos included in the sample add up to altogether 1h:10m:56s in length. During the selection process, results appearing in the top row marked as sponsored links were skipped as they probably represent commercial content and therefore do not qualify for the aims of this study. All videos were the representations of the sexual activities of women, either alone or with a man (never more, only one). The major sexual topic in this sample is fellatio and masturbation: intercourse between a man and a woman appears in only 2 of the videos, both shot from a male POV. In the majority of the videos, performers of both gender appear (11), and in these, the most commonly performed sexual activity is a woman performing fellatio. The frames and shots build up accordingly: these 'blowjobs' are always filmed from the perspective of the man, following the aesthetics of the *gonzo* genre where the camera is approximately equal to the gaze of the male who is engaged in the sexual activity. The common usage of POV shots and the frequent depiction of fellatio has significant consequences on the differences between the visual representation of the two genders: due to the close-up of the fellatio that requires oral stimulation of the male genitals, men are visible only from thigh to stomach, with the most emphasis on their penis, while women are only visible from the breasts upwards, often dressed up, thus not revealing any other female body parts, like in the case of *Blowjob* (xhamster.com, 2012a). Consequently, the face of the man is never visible, but becomes the most significantly depicted body part of the woman.

Videos without the 'real' presence of a (camera)man (but not excluding virtual presence via sex-chat) establish a significantly different visual landscape, providing various views of the female body depending on the context. Several clips show a woman filming herself during masturbation, like *Masturbating at work (airport)* (xhamster.com, 2012b): these incidents include both closer shots of body parts and full-body portrays with a camera stabilized near the performer. As a general observation, the frame is not significantly changed during one clip when a woman is in charge. The filmed subjects acknowledge and react to the presence of the camera by occasionally looking into it and commenting on what they are doing. Other clips show a seductive striptease or skillful dance moves: in these cases the performing woman is very much aware of her visual representation and looks regularly into the camera/onto the screen to check on the 'result'. Numerous videos consist of a webcam recording of a woman who is engaged in a conversation of sexual nature through some kind of sex-chat site or application. Occasionally it is the recording of the actual computer screen, showing both participants of the ongoing conversation and the application interface as well, like in the case of *Chatroulette shy teen show boobs* (xhamster.com, 2012c). The constant awareness of being 'on screen' is here the most explicit, as the participants are watching their immediate digital reproduction simultaneously, and adjust their body

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position accordingly to 'fit' on the screen. Here the roles become more complicated: the participant is the object as an exhibitionist but also a subject as a voyeur in the same video at the same time, where the real-time reproduction becomes a third party in structuring the initial interaction (Van Doorn, 2010). As opposed to the POV clips filmed by men, these videos show more of the female body, often depicting it in 'full-size'.

Concerning the authenticity of UGP, all of the videos fulfill general 'requirements' that allows to assume their non-professional production. First of all, watermarks or other links – which are usually signs of a commercial purpose behind the product – were not visible in any clip. Furthermore, the 'low-quality' hallmark of 'real' amateur videos is conspicuous, especially in the cases of webcam recordings, as the average resolution of these is remarkably smaller than that of a handheld device, thus giving a less clear picture with occasionally slower or frozen images in between. Other low-quality characteristics occur due to night-vision settings and unprofessional camera handling: in the case of *Rachel blows* (xhamster.com, 2012d), the man gets so excited while receiving oral sex that in the moment of orgasm he loses control of the camera and films the wall in front of him, 'totally missing the facial' (referring to the ejaculation onto the woman's face) as one of the users complain in a comment. Parallel to the visual attributes, the audio-quality also follows the 'standards' of the amateur genre: background noises are frequent, like the bizarre airport announcements in *Masturbating at work (airport)* (xhamster.com, 2012b), but on several occasions there is no sound at all.

Key terms and functionality

The key terms on this site consist only of 'channels', which are equivalent to categories in their usage and functionality – the feature of tagging is not available. Consequently, the upload page – accessible after registering on the site – offers only a limited set (92) of key terms which have been pre-established by the site: further key terms cannot be added manually by users, every content has to be categorized into these given 'channels'. Additionally there are several further restrictions concerning the content: first, videos which include watermarks are forbidden if it is not uploaded by copyright owner. Second, the site allows a maximum of 3 channels to be applied to an uploaded video. The possible channels are listed and systematically categorized into 3 sections: 'Straight', 'Men' and 'Transsexual', and all 3 applied channels need to be within one of these sections. The meanings of these terms may seem obvious on first sight, but since for example the *Lesbians* channel, along with *Threesomes,* is both filed under 'Straight', it becomes clear that these sections are arbitrary. The universal gender icons provide explanation and guidance to the uploaders in categorizing their content in accordance with the sites intentions (Image 1.).

Image 1. Explanatory gender icons on Xhamster

According to this scheme, videos which depict either one female, a male and a female, or females,

are 'Straight' videos, whereas clips depicting a man and men are to be found under 'Men'. Considering the initial meaning of these terms, it seems that these distinctions have been made not by describing the actual content, but rather by defining the main audience: 'Straight' thereby referring to materials that can generally be considered to be of interest to a heterosexual male. Accordingly, the two other sections are constructed as complementary piles to cover all 'left-over' materials that is less popular among the main target audience of heterosexual males. Thus, 'Men' is an extended equivalent of gay, including also single man performances, despite of the actual sexual orientation of the participant, and 'Transsexuals' covers people who cannot be filed exclusively into either of the two genders. Each gender is also typified in colors according to the cultural norms of the Western world: the female icon is drawn with red, a warm sensual color, whereas its male counterpart is blue, revitalizing the pink-blue distinction known from childhood. Transsexuals, being somewhere 'in between', have a merged male-female icon in their merged color, purple. The dominant ideology is further exemplified by the distribution of the 92 channels: while there are 87 within the 'Straight' domain, the 'Men' section has only 3, and 'Transsexuals' only 2 different channels.

During the upload process, several channel names are underlined by a red dashed line: for these terms, additional explanation is provided in small textboxes which appear when hovering over them with the mouse. These serve mostly to explain expressions only used in the porn vernacular with which the users are not necessarily familiar with, such as 'BDSM' (bondage and discipline, sadism and masochism). However, in a few cases it concerns to emphasize the requirements of the materials that are to be submitted within that channel. Although it has already been made clear with the help of the pictograms discussed above what content is eligible for videos that are added to 'Straight' channels, when hovering over the word 'amateur', a textbox appears saying: 'This channel is dedicated for posting videos including amateur women, no men-only content is allowed'. Thus xHamster has a specific, customized definition for 'amateur' based on the gender of the depicted participants, thereby engendering the initially not gender-specific expression of 'amateur'. It names heterosexual males as their potential and main target audience, and alters anything from definitions to features to suit the desires of this group as much as possible. The general structure responsible for organizing the videos is therefore constructed from a male perspective. Although this might be the case on other adult video-sharing sites as well, on xHamster the interface itself is an explicit manifestation of this gender ideology which is based on males 'consuming' females in this 'ideal male sexual domain' (Heider & Harp, 2002). These requirements set for the amateur category has been met by the findings of the UGP sample: clips depicting only a man or men without the presence of a woman were not found.

Concerning the channels applied to the videos, *Amateur* – as a requirement for being in the sample – is included by each clip. The second most used channels were *Webcams* and *Blowjobs*, both of which were already identified throughout the video analysis as recurring motives: the former referring not only to the instrument of recording but to the general idea and aesthetics of sex-chatting, where a woman is recorded while sitting in front of a computer in sexually explicit clothing or sexually teasing behavior; the latter being

representative of the most frequently performed sexual activity, the fellatio. Further channels refer mostly to either ethnic backgrounds, like *Arab*, *Black* and *Ebony* and *French*, or cover the sexual acts mostly used in connection with women, like *Handjobs* or *Squirting*.

Social networking aspects

In general, the platform of xHamster has prevalent social networking aspects, which appears not only through the wide range of features and sophisticated tools provided for interactive user behavior, but is also reflected by the active user community: comments, ratings and 'wall posts' are used frequently among the members. Detailed information is accessible on the users: the extensive user profile consists not only of a profile picture and general information such as gender, but also further private information can be shared, such as education and drinking habits. Also the fact whether the user is online (if not, the date of the last activity) is displayed. Furthermore, a site-specific rank is applied to every user, based on their active engagement on the site, including statuses such as 'Newbie' or 'Porn Expert'. The profile also lists the content generated by that specific user, which can be videos, pictures or 'stories' (writings) as well. User-to-document interaction (McMillan, 2006) is well-developed: each of these content types also form a dedicated menu tab on the top row bar, and each of them can be browsed, allowing commenting , adding to favorites and rating any specific material. User-to-user communication (McMillan, 2006) is enabled through numerous features as well, from comments through adding as friends to subscribing to one's content. Content and user are mutually linked: by each user-generated content type, the creator's name is visible, serving as a link to the profile of the user which allows to build further contact among users via 'wall posts' or private messages. The wide range of features comes with a wide range of settings: the privacy of every part of the account can be customized to be visible for all, for registered users or for friends only, but private messages can even be filtered by gender, allowing to block undesired requests from e.g. transsexual couples.

In several cases users do not necessarily appear in their uploaded videos: they rather create collections by uploading their favorite materials, as it is probably the case with the user *sjaakier*, who is 35-year-old male according to his profile but has uploaded *Bathroom squirt* (xhamster.com, 2012e), a video of a masturbating woman filming herself that has been uploaded elsewhere as well (pornhub.com, 2012a) as also mentioned in a comment ('how many times is this going to be uploaded but still its a hot vid'). Nevertheless, concerning the issue of 'authenticity', xHamster has an intriguing initiative: it introduced a member verification system in which verified members get a stamp onto the profile saying 'REAL MEMBER – VERIFIED BY XHAMSTER'. The requirement for getting this stamp is providing a profile pictures on which the face is visible, along with the username and xHamster.com written somewhere (not digitally) (Image 2). This procedure is promoted by xHamster itself, saying that 'It would help you to find new friends and attract 10x times more attention from other users' (xhamster.com, 2012f).

Further social features include the separate menu of 'Live cams' where users can chat with models

real-time, similar to services provided by cam-to-cam sites such as LiveJasmin.com. 'Dating' also has its own menu tab, which is actually the database of the users that allows to search for partners in real life. Here, members can be browsed by various criteria, giving results on default by filling in the location automatically (probably calculated from the IP address).

Image 2. An example for an approved profile picture on Xhamster (xhamster.com, 2012f)

4.3. Pornhub

Video sample

Pornhub, the 79th site on Alexa's global ranking list, is the most popular platform of the same-named network which hosts amongst others also YouPorn, the video-sharing site that provided the materials for the mentioned study of Van Doorn (2010). The 20 selected clips are all between 5 and 7 minutes, and add up to a 1h:56m:38s long sample.

Several characteristics of the sample questions the authenticity of the UGP: it seems that the application of the 'Amateur' category is arbitrary, considering that a scene from Bo Derek's movie called *Bolero* (1984) forms part of the sample. Most conspicuously however, without any exception, all of the videos include watermarks and in numerous cases also titles at the end or at the beginning, promoting external sites. This may mean that these materials are professionally produced promotional materials of other adult sites distributed on free video-sharing websites to attract more traffic. Apart from the watermarks, there are numerous other attributes that presume professional production. The majority of the

videos is strongly edited: they do not only have numerous 'cuts', but they make use of several different scenes and angles, resembling the tools of scripted porn. Also, the majority of the videos (12) is filmed by a cameraman who is not involved in the scene and does not interact with the participants. In these recordings, the participants are actors: they pretend not to see the camera and play roles in a story. The camera is 'invisible': it serves solely to provide a seamless experience of a series of events which seemingly unfold in front of the viewer's eye independently of the camera – which equals the aim of mainstream fiction in general, into which scripted 'glossy' porn also belongs.

The similar length of the videos is due to a deeper structural similarity: the clips are constructed to consist of an exposition, a 'main event', and an end. The exposition may only be a shot lasting for 2 seconds of the couple dressed-up, kissing or talking, but may also consist of a whole scene for setting up a 'story', like in the case of *Fucked by a friendly stranger* (pornhub.com, 2012b) where the boy picks the girls up from the street and offers her a cup of tea in his home before eventually having sex with her. The 'middle' of the story is a showcase of sexual activities, consisting of changing sequences of oral sex and different sexual positions, which is followed by the compulsory end scene where the man ejaculates onto the face or the body of the woman.

It becomes clear that the 'amateur' quality of these videos lies not within their production circumstances – on the contrary, these are rather professional. Whether the performers are 'amateur' or not is beyond our knowledge: all that can be said that they are young (in their 20s) and generally attractive within today's standards (fairly muscular in the case of men and thin and without body-hair in the case of women), but their sexual performance seems less unrealistic (or professional) as mainstream pornography in general - although one could argue that due to the heavy editing, it is impossible to reconstruct the course of the original events. However, there is one place where the 'amateurness' can be located for sure: within the narratives of the 'everyday'. The situations are always very banal and simple: they depict 'everyday' scenes of 'everyday' people to which the 'everyday' viewer can easily relate to. Making out with the 'girl-next-door' is one of the main ideas behind amateur porn, not solely because of voyeuristic aspects but because it serves as a more realistic basis for identification, compared to the pornstars whose perfect bodies and outstanding sexual performance are a source of frustration for many. This can also be interpreted as another example of the general shift from public to private issues within the media (Palmer, 2002), where members of the public have become essential elements of media production (Giles, 2002). One of the companies provided a textual explanation for the phenomenon in the beginning of its video:

> *'In 1982 Homegrown Video began selling swinger sex party videos creating the first Amateur Porn Company. The faces of porn changed forever. In fact, you might even see faces you recognize… Imagine your hot neighbor getting fucked…'*
> (pornhub.com, 2012c)

The great majority (17) of the videos depicted a man and a woman having intercourse or oral sex. The aforementioned attributes however have a strong influence on the visual representation of these

activities: setting up the scene involves wider frames, depicting men and women in full size along with the surrounding area. The sexual activities are shown from various angles and frames, interchanging wider frames with close-ups of certain body parts such as the penetrated vagina. POV shots covering the perspective of the male participants occur both in gonzo style, staying in the same subjective camera position for the whole recording, but it is also inserted into clips which are otherwise filmed by a separate cameraman or from a camera-stand. However, these receive less attention: the external view of sexual acts dominate the visual representation in these videos.

The 3 remaining videos do not have male participants: two of them are very similar to the structure and format described above, but the participants are both female, and use sexual toys to please each other. The last one excludes any sexual activity and covers a different topic: the clip of *Crazy babes naked on public streets* (pornhub.com, 2012d) concentrates on exhibitionism and features various perfect-bodied women strolling around naked on the streets in high heels. The filming also captures the ongoing professional photo-shooting of the event and the astonished bypassers, who occasionally wave to the girl or timidly take a picture. Interestingly, this clip is probably not even age-restricted according to its content: the women are simply posing nude and walking around without referring to sexual activities, and still, it has been uploaded onto an adult video-sharing website. A possible explanation is that the female body in its mere appearance is a source of stimulus as the object of desire of the heterosexual male, whose gaze in the end dominates the visual scope of pornography, just like the whole world of cinema (Mulvey, 2006). As a contrast, male participants are almost never seen naked in non-sexual acts, as it would involve the image of a flaccid penis which is a non-desired picture in mainstream pornography (Lehman, 2007) – a not fully erect penis is extremely rare, visible only once in this sample, in the first few seconds of a 'blowjob' (pornhub.com, 2012e). The female body does not have sexually conspicuous binary statuses of sexual arousal (they can be observed only by more precise inspection of the genitals): in this sense, a woman is anytime 'ready for penetration' in the eyes of the spectator, enabling it to become a constant object of sexual desire.

Key terms and functionality

The key terms on Pornhub consist of categories and tags, both of which are listed below the video. A maximum of 3 categories can be applied per video, except for male homosexual videos: once the *Gay* category is added, no further terms can be applied (error message: 'Sorry, this category cannot be mixed with other selections'). 'Straight' and 'gay' content are therefore strictly separated: male homosexual videos are only accessible after clicking on the *Gay* category which results in entering the 'gay' area of the site (pornhub.com, 2012f). Consequently, the content of the initial homepage excludes the 'gay' subpage, but includes lesbian materials – a structure serving hegemonic masculinity by favoring the desire of the heterosexual male.

PornHub has a sophisticated additional feature concerning key terms: when ticking a box next to a category during the upload process, a relevant tag is *automatically* added by the interface into the

designated 'tags' field. Additionally, an enumeration of suggested tags appears as well, which can be added by simply clicking on them. The final choice of tags however is completely arbitrary: suggestions can be deleted, and any word can be typed in manually as well, according to the needs and taste of the user, up to 253 characters. In most cases the suggested tags are different spelling versions, synonyms, or expressions with a similar meaning, for example for 'Small Tits' the words 'petite', 'skinny', 'small breasts' and 'tiny-tits' appear. However, in other cases they reveal more about the interpretations of certain notions: for 'Amateur', the suggested tags are 'amatuer' (a frequent mistyping of the word), 'homemade', and 'real', suggesting that 'Amateur' videos are homemade and depict 'real' people. This complex procedure shows the intertwined nature of categories and tags, both serving the same purpose of indexing the endless amount of hosted materials into a systematic order, producing a logical network of pornographic content through the usage of key terms. According to the FAQ of the site (pornhub.com, 2012g), tags 'will make it easier for the community to find' the video as they will be 'referenced when users search the video collection.' Here Pornhub also states that they will soon introduce the feature of adding tags to a video that has been uploaded by someone else. The fact that the site considers such a strong social feature that would allow to make alterations to other users' UGP shows that social networking aspects form an important part of the site.

Concerning the key terms of the sample, evidently all videos are categorized as *Amateur*. The second absolute winning category is *Teen*, which has been applied to half (10) of the clips. All other less used terms are either being descriptive of female attributes like *Big Tits*, and *MILF*; or give information of the camera usage, as in *POV* which refers solely to the male perspective; or describe sexual activities, such as *Creampie*, the jargon for internal ejaculation, usually accompanied by the visual result of sperm coming out of the vagina. Even these latter expressions are descriptive upon the representation of women, thereby underlining the male gaze again in the form of key terms. The tags distribute accordingly: the most used categories are covered widely by several synonyms like 'amateur', 'amatuer', 'homemade' and 'teen', 'teenager', 'teens' and 'young' occur often. Tags follow the general idea of categories by describing the characteristics and sexual activities which involve the presence of a woman, such as 'brunette', 'small-tits', 'blowjob', 'creampie', 'pussy-eating'. Each video also includes a website as a tag (the same as the watermark), following the advice of the site which says that 'If the scene was first featured on a different, third party site, please credit that site by entering the site's name as a tag (eg: Brazzers.com)'. This eventually underlines that none of these videos is the original creations of a user, and is therefore not authentic UGP.

Social networking aspects

Pornhub provides a wide variety of social features to registered members, covering user-to-user, user-to-document and user-to-system interaction as well (McMillan, 2006). User profiles show general information such as profile picture, sex, relationship status, etc., and the videos viewed by the user, which is added by

default automatically to the profile by the site. Users can upload videos, photos and create blog posts, and comment on shared contents on the site. User-generated content of users can be browsed by type (except for blogs) and these are also visible on the profile of the user. Members can add friends, subscribe to others' content, send messages and block communication from any user. Every user also has their own 'wall' where others can post comments. The privacy of the UGC is set during the upload process where two options are available: recommended is the 'Public' option, making it accessibly to any visitor of the site, or 'Private', which limits the visibility to friends.

The menu has a 'Community' tab, which includes actually only one feature that is relevant and not available from other menu-points: browsing through members (only by name) via a dedicated search field. According to this page, the number of members is 2,598,307 as of May 4th, 2012. The menu also has 'Live sex' and 'Real sex' tab: the first redirects to the sex-cam application of Pornhub on a different domain (www.pornhubcam.com), and the latter loading not a fixed, but a location-based external dating site (in the Netherlands for example: www.4flirt.nl). These sites do not form part of the social networking aspects of Pornhub as none of these enable communication between the initial users of the site.

As mentioned above, probably all of the video sample has already been published on other sites and therefore they can necessarily not be 'authentic' UGP, created 'at home' by the users of the site. The uploaders of these materials might promote other websites: in several cases the clips are strongly edited and say 'see full version at …', and could aim at attracting new users by distributing such promotional materials. However, there is no official distinction for such commercial accounts and private ones, and none of the uploader names of these videos matched the appearing website, thus it is possible that the community of Pornhub rather creates collections of their favorite materials instead of creating their own. The created accounts could also have a commercial purpose, which would serve as an explanation also for the not fully filled in profiles and the low interactivity, as comments on the sample were rare.

4.4. RedTube

Video sample

The 20 videos of RedTube are altogether 1h:47m:56s long. Except for one lesbian clip, all materials depict sexual activities of male and female participants – there are no instances with only one performer. Thus, all videos have at least one female participant. The most common sexual activity of the performing heterosexual couples is fellatio, followed by sexual intercourse, but group-sex and orgies also occur.

Several attributes question the authenticity of the materials: the majority (15) of the clips include watermarks. These include 'plain' performances of fellatio and intercourse, but several are structured as whole stories into which the sexual activity is embedded, like in the case of *Sex for money is the only choice* (redtube.com, 2012a) in which a boy offers the body and sexual services of his girlfriend to their landlord because of not having enough money to pay the rent. The watermarked clips are probably professional

productions, each of them implementing 'amateurness' in a different way: some through the usage of POV shots (which has already been made popular through the gonzo genre in mainstream porn, but is still heavily associated with 'real amateur' performances due to the lack of a professional cameraman), while others tell stories about 'everyday' life, with seemingly less experienced or inexperienced participants. This is true for the video mentioned above, where this pattern is underlined by the watermark of 'SellYourGF.com', suggesting that the videos produced by that website evolve around a certain recurring narrative theme in which the boyfriend has to 'sell' his girlfriend due to e.g. financial problems.

Almost every video possesses elements of professional production, like high-quality recording, a structured narrative, a professional cameraman or watermarks. Interestingly, the 5 clips without a watermark, which could be expected as being more likely to represent authentic amateur performances, are also not unequivocally 'real' amateur videos: they are produced in high-quality, and although they lack narrative, the female participants are very 'aware' of their performance which focuses solely on the satisfaction of the male, and involves elements like exaggerated facial expressions and moans, characteristics that resemble glossy porn. Only one clip of the sample shows attributes that are generally associated with 'real' amateur productions which is *Latina makes a home call* (redtube.com, 2012b). This is a low-quality footage of a couple having sex, first from a stationery camera position, but the camera is then passed by the woman to the men on his request, who tries to provide various shots of their intercourse, resulting in under-exposed, wobbly close-ups, ending with the woman telling him to turn the camera off. At the same time, this video is watermarked, underlining again the unclear production-distribution processes of porn in Web 2.0 environments. The convergence and merging of boundaries is captured in other instances as well, like in the paradox expression of 'amateur-like' used in one of the titles. The video titled *Great amateur-like cumshot compilation* (redtube.com, 2012c) suggests that the clip is not amateur – which would necessarily make it professional within the established dual concepts. Although it might be a professional production, it nevertheless is 'like' amateur, which in this case clearly becomes a genre with certain characteristics that can easily be copied by the porn industry.

Several clips are edited, and include shots both from external cameramen and the male participants' point-of-view. More than half (11) of the videos are entirely or partially filmed from the male participant's POV – female POV shots are not included. In the instances of male POV, the most frequent themes are fellatio and intercourse. As a consequence of these various elements, the visual representation of the genders varies on a great range: POV performances consist mainly of the close-up of the penetration or fellatio. In the case of the latter, women can generally be seen upwards from the stomach whilst men are visible only from stomach to thigh, with the most emphasis on the erect penis. In case of external cameramen, the majority of shots show a wider frame into which the whole body of the participants fit.

Key terms and functionality

Taking both the consumer and uploader perspective into consideration, the usage of key terms on RedTube

is not transparent. Below each uploaded video, both categories and tags are listed, the latter always including the terms listed as categories as well, therefore being a more extensive list than the former. However, only the procedure of tagging is available during the upload process, which is constructed in a way that makes it actually more similar to categorizing: the uploader has to choose from a set of pre-established tags in form of a drop-down list – it is not possible to add new terms manually. These terms are not divided into sections and no additional information is provided on their meaning or the rules of application. A specific limit of the applicable number of tags is also not set. The site further on requests a title for the uploaded video, along with the indication whether it is 'public' (visible for everyone) or 'private' (visible to friends – a setting connected to the social networking features of the site). Interestingly however, another additional field is offered called 'Pornstars', which functions in the same way as the tags: it provides a drop-down list with all the available pornstar names. This specific field reveals further information about the usage of the site: a feature like this suggests that the platform expects users to upload professional clips with professional performers – which obviously do not qualify as authentic UGP. This raises further questions in connection with terms and conditions and copyright issues – a segment which is strongly related to user-generated content in general, but is outside the scope of this study and therefore is not discussed further. However, it is true that the majority of the sample (15) included watermarks, a fact that is possibly not entirely independent of the presence of such a feature.

Concerning the transparency of the key terms, it is clear that the consumer and uploader perspective does not match, as the uploaded video has categories which could not have been possibly selected by the user as they are not applicable in the upload process. As an experiment, a non-watermarked video gathered from another site –*Rachel blows* (xhamster.com, 2012d) – was uploaded, applying 5 tags that were relevant to the content ('POV', 'blowjob', 'caucasian', 'blonde', 'cum shot'). After a 3 day processing and approval period, the video that was published on the site (redtube.com, 2012d) lists 4 of the categories that have initially been added, but not in the order as they have been applied, and not in alphabetical order either. Further on, the tags consist not only of the original terms, but include also *additional ones* that are descriptive of the content (in this case 'oral sex' and 'couple'). Thus, it seems that after submission for upload, the key terms of the video go through an editorial process and do not appear the way the uploader has intended, but are altered – most probably according to the purpose of the site. From this experiment, the purpose seems to be to describe the videos as precisely as possible with the usage of these key terms, probably in order to achieve a systematic catalogue in which users can find the desired content efficiently. It is also possible that false or unrelated tags are removed within the same process – again an aspect that cannot be discussed within the framework of this study. Although not all possibilities have been covered, this one example already shows clearly that on RedTube, users are constrained in the usage of key terms on several levels. Not only do users have to choose only from pre-established tags, without being able to add further terms, but they are not in charge of fully selecting these either, because as seen from the example above, the final combination of categories and tags on the video

is only based on the initial contribution of the user, but can significantly differ from that.

Concerning the key terms of the sample, the *Amateur* category as a requirement for selection has been applied to all of the videos. The majority of the categories are formulated from the male's perspective, as they are descriptive of the characteristics of the female performer, like *Teens* and *Blonde,* or imply sexual activities performed by women, like *Blowjob.* Frequently used is also the term *POV*, which again refers only to shots that are filmed from the male's point of view, in accordance with the findings of the video sample. Similar patterns emerge from the most used tags: 'amateur' is followed by 'oral sex', referring solely to the act of fellatio, as also shown by the prominent frequency of the tag 'blowjob'. Further terms are 'couple', 'vaginal sex' and 'cum shot', all being descriptive of heterosexual interaction in this context. 'Blonde' and 'teens', again being descriptive mainly of the characteristics of the female performer. Interestingly, an astonishing number, more than half of the videos (12) have been tagged as 'caucasian', contradicting the privileged gaze of the Western white male in pornography as identified by Heider and Harp (2002). According to this idea, any attribute that differs from the Western norm is 'special' and is automatically labeled within the realm of online pornography, thus the existence of categories like *Black, Ebony, Asian,* etc. In this case however, the label objectifies an attribute *of* the white male, with a term for describing the Europid race. At the same time, other races are not even represented in the sample, thus the videos not labeled as 'caucasian' also depict 'caucasian' people. Possible explanation for this could be a non-Western target audience or uploader community, for whom this label differentiates 'something different', the other way round as described above. Again a topic that is outside of the scope of this study and can therefore not be discussed further within this paper.

Social networking aspects

After registration, the site includes the 'basic' features of user-to-document interaction (McMillan, 2006) like rating and commenting on videos. Users possess a profile with some personal data, and also their uploaded materials are visible, along with their friends and comments – the latter being somewhat similar to the 'wall' of Facebook. The spectrum of user-generated content is narrow, as it consists only of videos – no pictures, blogs or additional opportunities are offered. User-to-user interaction (McMillan, 2006) is also enabled through the possibility of 'adding a friend' and by being able to send messages between users. The 'Members' menupoint allows to browse between 253,323 users (redtube.com, 2012e), but the search is based on a limited set of criteria like gender and location, and does not allow sophisticated queries. Further points of the menu includes *Cam Sex* and *Fuck Dates* – both applications that do not enable communication between users but offers paying services through (probably) third party sites.

Overall, the social networking aspects of RedTube are not prevalent: it is limited mostly to the basic feature set of Web 2.0 platforms. However, user profiles are present, and these are also important concerning the authenticity of the materials since it identifies the uploader of the UGP. On several occasions the name of the uploader of the video is identical to the website appearing as watermark on the video, like

in the case of *Sex for money is the only choice* (redtube.com, 2012a), where the watermark and the uploader is both called 'SellYourGF'. The profile of 'SellYourGF' is referred to as a channel in the header of the page, and includes a link to the third-party site but no personal information like gender and age, as opposed to the profile of 'joe992', uploader of *Fingering my girlfriends smooth sexy pussy* (redtube.com, 2012f). It seems plausible to assume that these 'channels' are a way of distinguishing commercial accounts with commercial materials – although this is not made clear by the interface. Nevertheless, these clips have generally shown characteristics of professional production, and the profile of the uploader underlines the probability of these videos not being authentic UGP. Other videos included a RedTube logo and were also added by 'RedTube' – an uploader to which there is no profile linked and most probably represents the site itself – but again, the relation between the uploaders, watermarks and materials are not clear.

4.5. XTube

Video sample

The last site under scrutiny is member of the PornHub network, but is less popular in terms of traffic: while PornHub itself ranks as 79th, Xtube is 'only' 646th on Alexa's global ranking list, but nevertheless is still amongst the 15 most popular adult video sharing websites according to Alexa's list. The footage of the 20 clips from this site is 1h:08m:43s long.

A peculiar attribute of this site is a 'filtering' greeting screen, which serves not only the purpose of age-verification, but also prompts to choose the gender of the visitor and the gender that the visitor prefers (Image 3). On the 'I am' half of the screen, the offered categories are exclusive: it is either male, either female, but in the 'I like' section both options can be ticked. This process is a manifestation of what Kessler and McKenna (1978) call the process of gender attribution, in which everybody is necessarily has to be assigned either of the two categories in order to be perceived as a person by others. This preliminary examination of the guest of the site probably allows to show the preferred content and by that ensures to avoid unexpected sights which pose a potential threat in the form of sexually 'off-turning' materials that may indulge the visitor to leave. The default setting of these option are set on 'I am' male and 'I like female' – which in itself is already suggestive of the underlying gender ideology, as through this it becomes obvious that the site assumes heterosexual males to be their main target group. Already here, the 'two-sex narrative' as described by Laqueur (1990) can be observed, as the visualization of the 'truth' of sexual difference serves as source of sexual pleasure (Van Doorn, 2010, p. 424).

The video sample was created by entering the site with the default settings – as this was considered to produce the most 'general' sample, available as such to most of the visitors – and then by narrowing down the results by clicking on the 'Amateur' category. However, the real functions of these filters remain unclear, as the gender distribution and depicted sexual activities in the sample covers several topics that are generally considered to be outside the scope of heterosexual male interest, including single man

performances such as e.g. male masturbation. It is possible that these filters influence only the materials shown on the main page of the site, but further investigations have not been made as this issue is outside of the framework of this study.

Image 3. The preliminary filtering screen of XTube

The videos cover a wide range of sexual activities, from solitary masturbation through a couple having intercourse to organized orgies. However, the first category is the most frequent: in 8 videos out of the 20 there is only one performer, with an equal distribution among the male and female gender. These clips can depict 'general' masturbating sequences, such as a POV recording of a man, but there are numerous incidents where the performer is shown in less usual circumstances pleasing himself or herself with less usual techniques: for example in *wanna play a game?* (xtube.com, 2012a) the woman extracts several ping-pong balls from her vagina. In these 'less ordinary' clips, there is no orgasm that would mark the compulsory 'endpoint' of most pornographic clips: they seem to be rather glimpses into a person's private sphere, confessions on what the performer finds sexually arousing or attractive. In these instances it becomes clear that physical pleasure is not the sole purpose of amateur pornography: it provides an opportunity to interact with audiences and exchange feedback (Jacobs, 2004), in accordance with the motivational factors behind any type of UGC, including amongst others self-expression and self-actualization (Shao, 2009). Another interesting case is *FLAGRA! FUNKEIROS TREPANDO NO QUARTO* (xtube.com, 2012b), where the extremely low-quality footage features most probably a couple having sex seen through a narrow door-crack. The cameraman spies on them and literally hides away several times when the filmed participants hear something and look up. Here, the sexual act itself is hardly visible, and it is more about the voyeuristic aspect, the 'being caught' effect that makes it interesting, and makes it amateur and authentic at the same time, without the actual visibility of the sexual act.

Contradicting the previously mentioned confession-like nature of the videos depicting only one performer, in 7 out of 8 the face of the performer is not visible. Although they share their most intimate body parts and moments, they refuse to show the 'identifiable body part', the face, thereby staying in something of a 'visual anonymity'. From a technical point of view this is due to the fact that men usually use POV shots to record themselves, and at the same time, women choose frontal views of themselves or a close-up of erogenous zones or the genital area, but usually also exclude the face. Women never film from their perspective: they seem to follow the gaze of the viewer by providing 'external' shots of their performances, like in *free exib ass* (xtube.com, 2012c).

Although there is no explicit homosexuality depicted in the sample, there are however a few clips that cross the boundaries of generally depicted heterosexual activities. In *sucks ass* (xtube.com, 2012d), a woman licks the anus of a man, and in *18" ComboTorpedo Dildo with Plunger* (xtube.com, 2012e) a man inserts a dildo into his anus. Both of these videos are about the anus of a man and not a woman: the latter appears frequently, as it is 'just another alternative' for vaginal intercourse. However, in connection with a man, this body part is somewhat of a taboo in heterosexual pornography, as its homosexual connotations are too strong. Anal, or in fact any type of, penetration of the male body is generally associated to homosexuality – as a consequence, dildos as sexual toys are reserved for (being inserted into) women within the realm of heterosexuality. Therefore these two clips can be seen as interesting oddities, also considering the fact that these appeared in a sample that was created from the results after entering the site with the default settings of a heterosexual male.

As for the authenticity of the clips, the sample includes both 'real' amateur and professional videos, the latter being represented by only 4 videos that included watermarks out of the 20. 'Evidence' for authenticity (or for professionalism) can be located not only through identifying certain attributes of the audiovisual material but also due to the site-structure – this is discussed under the section dedicated to the social networking aspects of XTube. The videos with watermarks show obvious professionalism in their production: image resolution and lighting are adequate, and the shots are always filmed by an 'external' cameraman not involved in the filmed scene, giving various shots and frames of the activity. The majority of the videos are situated on the other end of the authenticity scale: the resolution of the recording is often extremely low and blurred, with camera movements that make it eventually hard to see or recognize anything, by for example turning the picture sideways or by not having enough light in the room. The audioquality of these clips follow a similar pattern (if there is any audio): discussions are hardly audible, and there is usually unintended noise in the background, like a static hissing sound or television. Another marker of 'real' amateur performances is the lack of narrative: there are no 'stories' into which the sexual activity is embedded. There are symbolic acts, as for example showing the dildo to the camera in the case of *18" ComboTorpedo Dildo with Plunger* (xtube.com, 2012e) as some kind of exposition before actually using it, which might be interpreted as a form of structuring the video, but it is rather the sexual activity that provides structure for the clip. Eventually, it is the process of the sexual activity that becomes the narrative

itself, with the self-reflexive moments of adjustments to fit the desired image on the screen.

At the same time, some users make an effort to create better quality content, and by that, to provide a more sophisticated product: in the case of *Pretty Pink Pussy* (xtube.com, 2012f), the footage is a strongly edited compilation with an additional audioline of extradiegetic music, containing also a proper title and watermarks promoting the XTube profile and the uploaded materials of this user. This is due to the possibility to become an 'earning' Amateur performer of the site, a topic discussed later in the social networking aspects.

Key terms and functionality

As a first step of the upload procedure, the user needs to indicate whether the video is 'Straight' or 'Gay' - data which has probably significance only in connection with the initial filtering screen options, as it is not displayed as such in the information section of the videos later on. A maximum of 3 categories may be added to each video, selected from a limited drop-down list. The available categories vary depending on the previous setting, but their division is arbitrary: for example the *Lesbian* and the *Bisexual* category are filed under 'Straight', suggesting that 'Straight' means materials that generally may be of interest to the heterosexual male consumer, the targetgroup of the site as already identified through the filtering screen. However, there is an overlap between these two – usually exclusive – sections: 'single man' related themes, such as male masturbation, are covered in both, though carefully differentiated through unidentical spelling of the word. For example *Jerk Off* being the 'Straight', and *Jerk-off* being the 'Gay' equivalent of the same category, thereby ensuring that materials 'do not mix' while a user is browsing. This allows the interface to provide a more sophisticated system that decides not only based on the depicted sexual activity but also implements the intention or sexual orientation of the performer, for example allowing a heterosexual male to upload a video of his masturbation into the 'Straight' category. Tags can also be added in the designated text field, up to 120 characters. An additional field, requires the 'Subject of this video', which aims solely to identify the gender and number of the participant(s) in the video, listing possible combinations of the genders in both singular and plural, for example 'Single Man', 'Men and Women' or 'Transsexuals'. The purpose of this feature is unclear, as these distinctions do not appear later on on the interface of the site. Privacy options include public and private, in the case of the latter, visitors can view the video if they provide the adequate PIN number. Further possible but not required data include description of the video and tags which can be typed in manually.

Concerning the key terms of the sample, the *Amateur* category – as a requirement – is applied to each video, followed in popularity by *Latina, Teens* and *Blowjob.* Other less used terms include both gendered and neutral words: some are descriptive of the woman body, like *Big Boobs,* and others are not revealing in connection with the gender of the performer, like for example *Toys* and *Fetish*. Interestingly however, non-heterosexual categories also appear, like *Bisexual* and *General Gay,* despite not being actually descriptive of the content of the video (the two videos categorized as *Bisexual* depict a male and a female

masturbation, and the one categorized as *General Gay* shows a scene of group sex where although several men are masturbating in the same room, they are interacting sexually only with the one woman that is present). This allows to assume that these categories have more freedom to it, and can be chosen either according to the expression of the sexual orientation of the uploader or the audience with whom the user wishes to share the material.

No pattern can be identified in the usage of the tags: repetition is rare, and peaks at a few general words ('amateur', 'ass', 'cum', etc.) being used by maximum 3 different videos. The list consists of popular terms of the porn vernacular, like 'pussy' and 'creampie', but also includes mistyped words along with a few non-English and seemingly made-up words. To sum up, the low amount of the tags does not allow to draw conclusions concerning gender ideologies, but it allows to formulate assumptions in connection with user-behavior and the overall usage habits of the site: tagging seems to be not the dominant form of orientation. Furthermore, the relatively limited number of categories (30 within 'Straight' and 32 within 'Gay') also underlines that key terms do not allow detailed covering of the depicted content. However, at the same time this small number of key terms are less constrained in terms of gender ideology, as they allow a more flexible and sophisticated expression of the user's interest and intention.

Social networking aspects

Becoming a registered member of the XTube community offers several social features and advantages to the user – first of all, being logged in seems to be the only way to get rid of the 'filtering' screen that always pops up on visiting the site as an unregistered user. The overall structure of the site shows prevalent affinity for fostering user-to-user and user-to-document interaction (McMillan, 2006): commenting is enabled on all user-created content, along with posting on the 'wall' of other users or sending private messages. Furthermore, a chat application is also implemented, allowing users to send and receive instant messages to each other, constructed in a similar fashion like on the popular social networking site, Facebook, as a small window on the bottom of the screen. User profiles are detailed and have several sections that can be filled in, starting from profile picture and gender up to description of 'turn-ons', 'turn-offs' and bodytype. Each user profile, and also any UGC shows, the online or offline status of the user – another sign for the dominant presence of user-to-user interactivity (McMillan, 2006), as this information is only relevant if users communicate synchronously, for example in a chat.

A dedicated 'Social' tab within the menu reveals further features that aim at fostering interactivity among users: it consists of an extensive list, including several distinct applications such as *Blogs*; *Groups* (where users can join into a conversation and share experiences or materials with each other), *Forums, Wiki* (an 'ensexlopedia' written and maintained by community members); *Local* (a pinboard for selling and buying objects and services), and more. A separate *Dating* menu allows also to search among users based on username, gender, age and location, allowing to find potential real-life sex partners amongst registered users.

Although the videos uploaded by users are freely available to any visitor, there are various other contents and features that are offered to registered members for money, including full length porn movies or private chatting with live sex-cam models. Similar to online virtual reality games like for example *Second Life*, users can upload money to their XTube account, enabling the comfort of not having to go through the buying process each time 'when all you want to do is check out some hot action! So do it before you get all excited' – as the site itself promotes this possibility (xtube.com, 2012g). Interestingly, at the same time it is also possible to earn money within the interface of the site by becoming an approved amateur (requiring steps like by providing the necessary documents and filling out a contract) which allows 'selling' the uploaded UGP to other users.

According to the site 32,663 members are online from the total 9,547,176 users (on May 17, 2012). The massive userbase along with the extensive amount of interactive features have enabled and active community: several features like for example comments, posts and polls seem to be used frequently by registered members. Another sign of the enormous traffic on the site is the excessive F.A.Q., with a browsable knowledgebase that provides quick answers and help for new users.

Furthermore, there are several other attributes of the site that enforce the social networking aspect by putting emphasis on (the authentic and personality) users. When viewing a video, information of the uploader is visible next to the videoplayer, showing for example whether the uploader is online or not. Also a description of the clip is displayed, provided by the uploader, usually describing circumstances or motivation for the recording, for example mentioning people who requested to perform that specific thing, similar to the 'tributes' in usenet groups as mentioned in Dery's interview with Messina (Dery, 2007). Suggested content is also listed, similar to the famous video-sharing site YouTube. However, by each video, there are two different lists generated: one of them by relevance, probably based on keywords and title, and the other, 'More from this user' shows further clips uploaded by that member. Also, the pagetitle of a video includes not only the site and the title of the video, but the name of the uploader as well, which therefore also appears in the filename if the video is downloaded from the site.

As mentioned earlier, the prevalent and sophisticated social networking aspect of Xtube has further relevance to the 'authenticity' of UGC. The site shows surprising consistency and transparency in connection with the source – the uploader – of the videos, as commercial and private accounts are strictly differentiated. Generally, the site lays significant emphasis on the users and their user contributions, and aims at providing 'authentic' content, which is explicitly stated in their terms of use which says 'videos must be made by you and not taken from another source or site' (xtube.com, 2012h). Web site address can only be shown if it is the link to the profile of the uploader – which is of course important for 'approved amateurs' in order to gain revenue. However, there were a few clips in the sample that include a watermark referring to an external site, but these were uploaded exclusively by *xtube_sponsor*. Although it is not stated so explicitly on the user profile of xtube_sponsor, it is clearly an account responsible for sharing promotional materials from third-party sides: first of all, the profile picture is the official Xtube logo, and

other characteristics of the profile also suggest the same pattern, as it does not have 'friends', but at the same time has 1000 uploaded videos, and a view count (measuring the times the uploaded videos have been viewed altogether) above 2 billion (xtube.com, 2012i). Apart from the profile picture, the profile is not filled in, also suggesting that it does not represent a person, but a different (commercial) entity. Interestingly however, only two aspects of personal information have been given: the gender, which is 'male', and marital status, set as 'single' – reinforcing the idea of pornography being an exclusive domain for the male, both in the roles of producer and consumer simultaneously.

4.6. Comparison of sites and summary of results

Video sample

The video sample of 5 sites, consisting of 20 videos per platform, adds up to 100 videos altogether with a total length of 7h:06m:43s. This comparative section discusses first the issue of authenticity, followed by the visual-structural characteristics of the videos. Finally, the observations concerning gender ideologies are elaborated.

Due to the aim of this study attempting to find and analyze 'real' UGP, the question of authenticity has been one of the central issues and eventually proved to be of great importance because the sites varied significantly in this respect. Furthermore, the variety in authenticity resulted in additional differences in other comparable aspects. As discussed earlier, the concept of 'amateur' in itself is problematic within the realm of pornography, and has become even more complex in Web 2.0 environments which promote interactivity and UGP, blurring the boundaries between professional and non-professional production. Although the usage and purpose of watermarks is unclear due to several reasons (the source or uploader of these videos is often unverifiable and sites have varying terms and conditions with regards to such material), they have nevertheless served as an efficient basis for the distinction of 'real amateur' and 'professional' content within the sample of the current study. All watermarked materials in this study are considered to be of professional origin and as a consequence, to be not authentic amateur UGP. This is because watermarked clips have shown several characteristics of professional production, starting with the participants: they limit the performers to the contemporary beauty idol. They depict muscular men and thin women with preferably big breasts, both of them being in their 20s, representing a far less wider range of people than in the case of authentic content. 'Real amateur' clips are not 'filtered' in this regard, and thus deviate from the general Western beauty standards by depicting for example older (40-50) or overweight participants, or simply excessive body hair – elements which are usually excluded from 'glossy' pornography.

These professional clips are of good audiovisual quality, and furthermore are often structured by a (minimal) narrative into which the sexual activity is embedded, either through a simple opening shot of a couple kissing with their clothes on, or through an actual storyline like in the case of *Fucked by a friendly stranger* (pornhub.com, 2012b) where the two participants meet on the streets before engaging in sexual

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activity in a flat. The scenes are filmed by an 'external' cameraman, providing various frames and angles of the acts which are edited along similar schemes and guidelines, resulting in something that might be called the 'professional amateur' format. This 'genre' aims to implement elements which are oppositional to each other at their core: they are rather close to commercial porn than to 'amateur' on the 'authenticity scale' (due to the characteristics listed above), but eventually the product is packaged in a way that aims to add a layer of 'amateurness' to it. This is obviously not done in the production circumstances, but either through the selection of participants who might not necessarily be porn professionals (but possess the main characteristics of the contemporary beauty idol), or through the narratives of 'everyday' people, aiming to depict 'real' people having 'real' sex in 'real' locations. At the same time, due to their heavily edited nature – switching from position to position with abrupt, simple cuts – it becomes clear that they serve as a showcase of various sexual positions, attempting to appeal to as many viewers as possible, which makes it again hard to interpret it as anything else but professional porn. In the end, the most probable explanation for the presence of such clips among the 'Amateur' category is the porn industries attempt to 'ride the wave' of the rise of the amateur by creating a new style or product. These are then uploaded to adult video-sharing sites and simply categorized and/or tagged as 'Amateur' by the uploader – since an authentication system that verifies the validity of the key terms added to the uploads does not necessarily exist. Even if it exists, like in the case of RedTube where the terms applied by the user are altered in the final product that becomes available on the site, verifying the 'amateurness' of a clip is an impossible task, as it is not a clearly defined and identifiable notion. Eventually, the 'amateur' term might become meaningless as authentic UGP is superseded by 'professional amateur' materials, as it is already the case on PornHub and RedTube. These elements could further on lead to the death of the amateur category as a whole, giving room for new styles and genres.

The sites can be ranked in terms of authenticity, as shown in Table 1. The least 'authentic' site from the selection is PornHub, as the sample gathered from this site consisted exclusively of watermarked third-party clips. After PornHub, the authenticity list continues with RedTube, Xvideos, followed by XTube, and finally closes with Xhamster having no watermarked clips at all. (However, it has to be noted here that although Xhamster's policy does not allow watermarked content to be uploaded, this of course does not mean that all clips available are necessarily authentic UGP.) In the overall picture this results in almost a half-half distribution, with slightly more authentic materials, 55% over 45% professional clips .

Table 1. Distribution of professional and 'authentic' content

site	watermarked (professional) clips	non-watermarked (authentic) clips	% of authentic material
PornHub	20	0	0%
RedTube	15	5	25%
Xvideos	6	14	70%
XTube	4	16	80%
Xhamster	0	20	100%
SUM	**45**	**55**	**55%**

On PornHub and RedTube, which featured mostly professional content, the similarity of these structured clips was also proven by the length of the clips which averaged at 6 minutes, as opposed to the average 3 minutes of the other sites, which eventually almost doubled the length of the sample compared to Xvideos (Table 2). (It is important to note here that it was a preliminary condition for videos to be between 1 and 7 minutes in length due to the scope of the study).

Table 2. Total lengths of the sampled videos ranked by site

site	length of sample
PornHub	1:56:38
RedTube	1:47:56
Xhamster	1:10:56
XTube	1:08:43
Xvideos	1:02:30
SUM	**7:06:43**

As opposed to professional productions, amateur performances usually do not have an external cameraman: the camera is either positioned statically close to the set or is held in the hand of a male participant. In the case of single woman performances, the camera is always positioned in an 'external' view, observing the woman or a body part of the woman, like in *free exib ass* (xtube.com, 2012c). POV shots are only used by men, and this results in an extremely distorted visual representation of both genders. Clips involving a heterosexual couple are often shown fully from the male POV, which in the case of intercourse results in the woman being visually equal to a penetrated vagina or butt, and pieces of the upper body, all tied together with clumsy and blurry camera movements. In the case of fellatio, the focus is of course in the face, like in *Blowjob* (xhamster.com, 2012a) (Image 2.), the woman's mouth being another ultimate source of pleasure – the occasions of cunnilingus, the oral pleasing of a woman, is negligible compared to the frequency of 'blowjobs'. In the cases of heterosexual activities, men are visible from stomach to thigh due to the POV, with the most emphasis on their erect penis, usually entering from the edge of the screen as it penetrates the rest of the screen which is filled up by a body part of the woman. Single male masturbation, which occurred only 4 times in the sample of XTube, is filmed exclusively from the male's perspective, giving a similar view of the body. The face or the full body of the male is only visible in real amateur clips that involve more than two participants which allows the camera to be passed around among the males, thereby

being able to provide a full external shot of another male member.

The external viewpoints of professional productions enables to show both male and female participants in full size, but this does not result in an equal position of the genders. It must not be forgotten that the chosen frames and angles always serve a purpose (Kovács, 2009), which in this case is to provide images appealing to the heterosexual male as it becomes clear from the interface of the sites. Occasionally, these clips implement POV shots which are again exclusively male, providing similar sequences to the 'realamateur' performances. Also, the camera often takes on frames in which the focus is visually on the woman, excluding for example the 'head' of the man in order to give a closer shot of the 'penetrated woman. The submissive status of women is also made explicit by the ending sequences of professional clips consisting of the 'cumshot', where the male ejaculates onto the woman, who serves as a mere object that serves for providing sexual pleasure, like in the case of *Fucked by a friendly stranger* (pornhub.com, 2012b).

Although there are several performances featuring only one woman who is obviously the one switching on the camera to film herself, it is nevertheless true for all of the adult video-sharing platforms analyzed in this study that it is *men* who dominate the camera: in any instance where a man and a woman, or more performers are present, it is never a female participant behind the recording device (by any production circumstances). In cases of 'external' cameramen, there is no information available on the gender of the person, but this data is irrelevant as the angles provided never take on the female participants' view. Furthermore, also in the 'single' performances of women filming themselves, it seems that the camera still functions in the same way: it is incapable of taking on the woman's perspective, and is always positioned in an 'external' spectator position, which is equal to or most close to that of the assumed heterosexual male spectator who is in the end watching the end-product on his computer-screen, as for example in *Stunning babe with big tits toying pussy* (xvideos.com, 2012a).

Concerning gender ideologies and sexuality, it can be concluded that the majority of the sample consisted of heterosexual video-materials (depicting vaginal sex, fellatio, anal sex between man and woman). These are represented from (and for) a male point of view, independently from the production circumstances. In the case of 'real amateur' performances, it was the male POV style filming that was mostly revealing of this ideology, and professional productions used frames and editing which in the end expressed similar values. The fact that POV shots are the privileges of the male participants creates unequal positions for the two genders, representative of the male-female relation in the 'real' world. The man is in charge, he makes the decisions and it is literally 'his world' that is depicted in which women serve one purpose: sexual pleasure – for him. Being in front of the camera turns the filmed women into the 'objects' of the male sexual desire, and eventually their role becomes the pleasure-giver for the dominant male. The purpose of women in these movies directed by men is eventually to be sexually attractive. Interestingly, women stay in this role also when they film themselves: female participants generally show a higher level of consciousness on their appearance, especially throughout the webcam-sessions that were frequent in the sample of Xhamster. The absolute exposure of women puts them into a subordinate and submissive

position, where they are anytime ready and willing to act as the desired sexual object and please the man. This is also underlined by the few clips that depict group sex: in these incidents there is usually one woman, who is literally 'passed around' by the male participants 'to enjoy'. Although it is usually the women who are responsible for the majority of expressing joy during these activities (through moaning or facial expressions), their actual pleasure is rarely the focus or the purpose – female orgasms usually occur only in solo masturbation clips.

Therefore, these videoclips maintain and confirm the unequal gender positions of hegemonic masculinity by subordinating the female to serve as the source of male sexual pleasure. Xvideos, Xhamster, PornHub and RedTube reinforce hegemonic masculinity by favoring contents that appeal to the target-consumer, namely the heterosexual male – which include heterosexual acts *and* female only acts, including lesbianism. The sample of XTube included numerous videos of single male masturbation, which would be impossible on Xhamster, as it is banned from the *Amateur* category. Interestingly, the sample of Xvideos, not having such constraints on the platform due to the lack of pre-established categories, did not include 'men-only' materials either. Thus, Xvideos, Xhamster, Pornhub and RedTube seem to remain not only within the scope of heteronormativity, but emphatically concentrate only on male consumers, necessarily resulting in an interface that reinforces the hegemonic masculine perspective. Hegemonic masculinity does not only mean the subordinate position of women, but also includes homophobia – thus the exclusion of homosexual materials. Although a single male masturbation cannot be considered as a homosexual act, it is nevertheless not desired pornographic content as the depiction of a man does (or should) not serve as a source for sexual pleasure (for men) within this ideology. Needless to say, it could be considered as such for heterosexual women, but their perspective does not form substantial part of mainstream pornography (if at all), as it aims serving desirable content for the heterosexual male.

Key terms and functionality

Evidently, the bulk of adult video-sharing websites consist of audiovisual materials. However, the identification of these materials happens through textual strings. Consequently, adult video-sharing websites necessarily become a systematic catalogue of pornographic content, which is readily available for the user (Patterson, 2004) through the function of categories and tags which create lists of content sorted along different attributes that the user might look for.

The sites differ significantly in the functionality of the key terms, which already becomes clear from the number of categories and tags applied to the analyzed video sample on each site, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Sum of key terms applied to the 20 video samples ranked per site

site	categories applied	tags applied	SUM
PornHub	60	272	332
RedTube	67	189	256
Xvideos	0	190	190
XTube	50	113	163
Xhamster	56	0	56
SUM	233	764	997

As we can see, Xvideos does not make use of categories, while Xhamster does not have tags. The number of categories is very similar on the sites which have this feature, and it is true in each case (where applicable) that the amount of tags exceeds that of the categories extensively, varying on a wider range than the categories. This is due to their opposing technology, categories being given on the interface of the site, and tags being arbitrary creations of the users – except for RedTube where both are given by the interface. Also, several sites have a limitation for the number of categories with a maximum of 3 to be applied to each video, whereas the applicable number of tags is much more. The amount of tags is constrained only in the amount of characters that can be filled into the designated field, which even in the lowest case (120 on XTube) exceeds the characters of 3 categories by far. PornHub has the most key terms altogether which can easily be explained by the unique system of the interface that suggests and automatically adds tags to the video based on the applied categories. Typing tags is a time consuming effort from the side of the uploader, therefore it is not surprising that an automated process gives more results in this matter. Xvideos, although not as automated as PornHub, but still offers a drop-down list to choose from, which again saves a lot of time of thinking and typing, which is probably why it came in as having the second most key terms.

It should also be noted that the ranking of sites in Table 1 and Table 3 is identical, meaning that the more professional productions in the sample, the more key terms are applied. This aligns with their purpose, as it shows us that accessibility is crucial from a commercial perspective, and more key terms means more potential appearances in search results, meaning more potential viewers. Thus, it is in the interest of professional producers to categorize and tag precisely – as opposed to 'real amateur' uploaders whose aims might be different, not necessarily concerned with potential traffic.

Adding key terms is constrained by several rules during the upload process on Xhamster and PornHub. In most cases the stake is the precise separation of 'straight' and 'gay' content – the former referring not to the sexual orientation of the participant but to materials potentially of interest to 'straight' men, including depiction of lesbians. 'Gay', meaning only male homosexual materials, are strictly filed as such in order to literally be able to 'hide it' from the heterosexual male target group, like the 'gay' subsite on PornHub. Furthermore, on Xhamster, materials depicting only male participant(s) is *not permitted* within the 'Amateur' category, thereby creating a heavy gender-bias again in favor of heterosexual males. XTube necessarily shows some similarities structure-wise to PornHub, as they are both part of the PornHub

network, but in the end differs greatly in the overall picture. The site has a preliminary filter screen for gender preferences with the default setting of male being attracted to female, which in itself can be interpreted as being a very straightforward description of the dominant visitor-group and the according gender ideologies that apply for the site. However, the settings can be changed, and although the sex of the visitor can only be either of the two genders, the preferred sex can be both, thereby enabling a wider spectrum which consists not only of the heterosexual-homosexual binary opposition, but also includes areas 'in between', like bisexuality. The constraints on RedTube are different and exceptional: the applicable key terms are limited and cannot be extended, and furthermore they are revised after upload and edited without approval of the user. The presence of such an editorial process reveals that key terms are crucial elements of adult video-sharing sites not only in guiding the users along the content, but possibly also for example in creating and maintaining 'the image' of the site.

Xvideos, is the most 'liberal' in connection with the functionality of key terms by not offering pre-established categories for the uploader. By relying only on the tags provided by users as orientational basis for visitors, and offering only these to the uploader to browse from, it is not a top-down, but a bottom-up structure that maintains the catalogue-system. This way the user-community participates not only by sharing audiovisual materials, but also produces meanings of these along the tags they apply (Attwood, 2007) and also forms the landscape of the site through this process of user-to-system interactivity (McMillan, 2006). At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the selection of tags that are shown as categories on the homepage of Xvideos is not clear: they are not the most popular ones and therefore have necessarily undergone some editorial process by those in charge of the site.

In the end, the result is not necessarily as different as the interfaces or features would suggest. Although the sites differ significantly in the functionality and usage of key terms as described above, they are quite similar in the used key terms themselves. The most applied categories per site are listed in Table 4 (Xvideos has been excluded as it does not have the feature of categories). After *Amateur* which has been applied to all of the videos, the most commonly used words are descriptive of female characteristics or body parts, like *Big Tits* or *Latina*. Eventually also the surprisingly prominent term of *Teen(s)* belongs into this group, as it most probably refers to the young age of the participating woman, emphasizing the Western beauty standard of young women on the verge of legal sexuality, along with the special value of being 'amateur' or inexperienced, or maybe even a virgin. Other expressions describe sexual activities involving the depiction of a woman, like *Blowjob*, and *POV* referring the male perspective of the recordings.

Table 4. Most frequent categories of the video samples

site	category	times applied	% (frequency in the sample of the site)
Xhamster	Amateur	20	100%
	Webcams	5	25%
	Blowjobs	4	20%
PornHub	Amateur	20	100%
	Teen	9	45%
	Big Tits	5	25%
RedTube	amateur	20	100%
	teens	9	45%
	blowjob	6	30%
	POV	6	30%
XTube	Amateur	20	100%
	Teens	5	25%
	Latina	5	25%

Table 5. Most frequent tags of the video samples

site	tag	times applied	% (frequency in the sample of the site)
Xvideos	amateur	15	75%
	homemade	13	65%
	realamateur	11	55%
	brunette	5	25%
	blowjob	5	25%
PornHub	amateur	13	65%
	homemade	12	60%
	brunette	10	50%
	big-tits	10	50%
	teen	8	40%
RedTube	amateur	20	100%
	oral sex	16	80%
	blowjob	16	80%
	couple	14	70%
	cum shot	13	65%
XTube	amateur	3	15%
	pussy	3	15%
	ass	3	15%
	cum	3	15%

Table 5 demonstrates the same summary for tags (excluding Xhamster as it does not enable tagging). These key terms follow a similar pattern, resulting in an excessive overlap between the most used categories and tags. Most popular terms include references first of all to the genre and production of the clips, like 'amateur', 'realamateur' and 'homemade'. Numerous key terms are again descriptive of female characteristics or body parts. On RedTube and XTube, the most popular terms include explicit references to

male pleasure in the terms 'cum' and 'cum shot'.

The aggregated top key terms (Table 6 and Table 7) show that the information expressed most dominantly refer to the young age of the participating woman and to the performance of fellatio. Therefore it can be argued that the key terms of these sites are a manifestation of the privileged male gaze which has already been identified within the attributes of the video materials. The phrases and words used as keywords point out characteristics that can be considered as important and attractive from a heterosexual male perspective. This is in accordance with the fact that several videos are filmed explicitly from the male's point of view, and also the non-gonzo style recordings (using cameramen) utilize frames and angles that showcase the male's object of desire, the female. This confirms again that heterosexual males are the target group of each of these sites, consequently their layout and interface are necessarily designed to fulfill the fantasies of heterosexual males. Eventually these mainstream adult video-sharing websites become the 'ideal male sexual domain' where the male user can choose from a great variety of women to perform the sexual act he desires, as Heider and Harp have put it (2002).

Table 6. Aggregated top categories of the sample

	category	times applied	% within the overall sample
1	Amateur	80	80%
2	Teen(s)	25	25%
3	Blowjob	11	11%
4	POV	9	9%
5	Big Tits	7	7%

Table 7. Aggregated top tags of the video sample

	tag	times applied	% within the overall sample
1	amateur	51	51%
2	blowjob	29	29%
3	homemade	25	25%
4	brunette	23	23%
5	teen	23	23%
6	couple	18	18%
7	oral sex	16	16%
8	cum shot	13	13%

Social networking aspects

Adult video-sharing platforms are part of Web 2.0 developments, and as such, provide various features that foster interactivity among users. All analyzed sites implemented social networking aspects to a certain

extent, for example the most basic set of features, like commenting on UGC and rating it, are present on each of them. However, the emphasis and functionalities vary, and certain characteristics have implications that reach beyond this topic.

A peculiar and yet symbolic case of the 5 sites is Xvideos, which has undergone a significant change in this respect throughout the period when this research was conducted. In its initial state, social features were extremely undeveloped, including only the most basic features (commenting, rating). Thanks to the restructuring, now there are accessible user profiles which list not only detailed information on the user, but also allows to see recent activities of the member and post each other messages – which shows the general trend of adult video-sharing websites growing aware of the importance of social networking. Despite the new structure, the uploader's username is still not visible while viewing a video, which constrains not only the users for taking up contact with each other but has also decreases the chances of finding authentic UGP as the uploader is not verifiable. However, prevalent social aspects do not guarantee more authentic UGP: on PornHub, despite the strong feature set that enables various settings and communication possibilities between users, the video material consisted exclusively of promotional clips from third-party sites. Here, user accounts probably often have commercial purposes, but are not distinguished from personal accounts.

The two other sites, XTube and Xhamster are similar in the sense that both have initiatives that aim explicitly at gathering 'authentic' UGP. The member verification system of Xhamster requires an appropriate profile photo, showing amongst other the face. These verified accounts have privileges, for example they are ranked higher in the search results of the dating section. On XTube, uploaded materials must depict the uploader, according to the terms and conditions of the site, consequently promotional third-party materials are excluded and remain the privilege of dedicated commercial accounts. XTube also has its own 'real models': becoming an approved amateur enables selling the UGP created by that user. Furthermore, seemingly small details also point out the underlined importance of the individual user: the pagetitle for each videos include the user name, which is therefore also included in the filename if the video is downloaded. Also, when viewing a video, a suggested playlist option is 'More from this user', which yet again points out the possibility to browse the content of a user, and not solely through key terms, which provides a more personal perspective.

XTube and Xhamster also have the most extensive section dedicated to 'dating': a feature that provides tools for searching for eventual 'real-life' sex partners by age, location, etc. Accordingly, profiles include sexual 'turn-ons' along with other information that can be considered important only in a real life relationship, like for example smoking and drinking habits. Xhamster also provides a real-time sex-cam application between users. PornHub offers a similarly named menu but in this research project this was not considered as 'social' since the models are not users of the site.

Additionally, social networking aspects may result not only in a higher level of interactivity among the already registered users, but may also influence the number of those who register. While PornHub may

exceed XTube by far in terms of traffic according to their Alexa ranking (79th versus 646th), the sites' own statistics on user numbers reveal astonishing information. XTube claims to have 9,547,176 members (on May 17, 2012), almost 4 times the amount of registered PornHub users (2,598,307 on May 4, 2012), and 40 times the amount of RedTube members (253,323 on June 18, 2012). This could mean that PornHub and RedTube attract more visitors who only access and view the vast amount of pornographic material, but they remain anonymous and do not contribute. At the same time, XTube might have a lower overall visitor number, but a significantly higher number of users who have decided to 'join the community' by registering to the site.

To sum up, a clear relation between the prevalence or lack of social networking aspects and gender ideologies could not be established, but the features of the site exemplify that interactivity among the users of these communities are just as important as on other type of Web 2.0 platforms. From this analysis, it seems that social aspects are more connected to the question of interactivity and authenticity: sites that distinguish and promote 'personal' accounts, like Xhamster and XTube, seem more likely to be able to gather non-promotional, 'real' UGP, while others remain warehouses of third-party promotional materials, like PornHub. This also means that sites like PornHub are more likely to present materials within the norms of heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity, while the other type of sites possess the potential to host materials that challenge these traditions. On the other hand, as this analysis has shown, sites that have a higher ratio of 'authentic' UGP do not necessarily transgress these boundaries either, as it depends on other factors as well – like the case of Xhamster has demonstrated, where due the restrictions of the *Amateur* category the site remains heavily genderbiased. Social networking aspects and other feature-sets, such as the functionality of key terms are closely intertwined and are both determinants of the overall gender ideology of the platform.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to reveal and compare gender ideologies of adult video-sharing sites through the analysis of user-generated clips filed as 'amateur', the key terms (categories and tags) applied to these videos, and the assessment of social networking aspects of the platform. This chapter answers the research questions, and closes with the limitations of the study, along with the suggestions for further research.

> **RQ1: What are the underlying gender ideologies of mainstream adult video-sharing websites?**

Similar to Van Doorn's analysis of amateur videos on YouPorn (2010), the result of this research shows that mainstream adult video-sharing sites are representative of hegemonic ideologies: the majority of the UGP sample on Xvideos, Xhamster, Pornhub, RedTube and XTube, is created within the frameworks of heteronormativity. Most clips represent sexual activities of heterosexual couples – lesbianism is present but negligible in frequency, explicit homosexual acts of males are totally excluded. Authentic materials occasionally challenge the Western beauty standard of muscular men and thin women by representing participants who deviate from the performers of mainstream porn (in for example age or bodyweight), but these materials nevertheless follow the dominant visual codes of mainstream porn in the depiction of heterosexual acts.

The materials are also representative of hegemonic masculinity. The clips often provide a point-of-view perspective of the male participant, objectifying women as providers of sexual pleasure. The key terms are particularly revealing of this male-controlled domain: the vast majority of the key terms applied to the videos describe various characteristics of women, like 'brunette' and 'big tits', or cover sexual activities that necessarily involve the depiction of women, like 'blowjob'. Also, several terms that could initially be considered as 'unisex', for example 'ass' or 'anal', are solely referring to the woman within the context of these sites. The functionality and usage of key terms express similar ideologies: strict separation of 'straight' and 'gay' content is frequent, where 'straight' covers both heterosexuality and lesbianism, i.e. materials that are of interest to the main target group of heterosexual males. These platforms truly represent the 'ideal male sexual domain' (Heider & Harp, 2002) where the male user can pick his ideal woman to perform the desired acts, through a few key terms which are readily laid out on the interface of the site (Patterson, 2004).

Concerning social networking aspects of the sites, it became clear from the results of this study – as the recent restructuring of Xvideos exemplifies – that interactivity and community formation is just as appealing and important on adult video-sharing websites as on any other Web 2.0 platform. These characteristics have a complex and therefore unclear relation towards the underlying gender ideologies. As the findings show, dedicated social features are more related to the issue of authenticity, as they seem

capable of increasing the ratio of authentic materials. The distinction of 'authentic' and 'professional' content has become a crucial factor in interpreting the sites, since those with a high percentage of professional materials seem more likely to host mainstream pornographic footages which represent the hegemonic gender ideology. At the same time, a higher ratio of authentic UGP does not necessarily result in a higher ratio of materials that transgress the norms of the hegemonic ideology. Social networking tools in itself form just one piece of the picture: it is together with other characteristics of the platform (like the usage of key terms) that add up to the overall 'image' of a site. In the end, it seems to be the choice of those who are in charge of adult video-sharing sites whether the interface fosters or constrains processes that challenge or reinforce heteronormativity. Therefore, it seems that as long as there is enough demand from heterosexual males to generate sufficient revenue to keep these sites profitable, there is no motive to reconsider the concept of this 'ideal male sexual playground' that mainstream adult video-sharing sites currently represent.

Nevertheless, I agree with the academics who argue for the democratic appeal of new media in providing space and opportunity to experiment with established cultural standards and challenge traditional norms (Coopersmith, 1998; Costello & Kibby, 2001; Jacobs, 2004; Lehman, 2007), because these Web 2.0 platforms possess all potential characteristics that enable hosting such materials. However, it seems that this remains the privilege of the so-called alternative sites, like Nerve and SuicideGirls, which are smaller in terms of audience – a factor that enables the formation of a stronger community and a distinguished pornographic taste-culture (Attwood, 2007). The most popular adult video-sharing sites seem to remain the storehouse of footages which are created within the framework of the hegemonic gender ideology. Compared to alternative porn sites, these attract enormous traffic – a reason that could serve as a possible explanation for the difference in terms of gender ideology.

RQ2: Is there a difference between mainstream adult video-sharing websites in terms of gender ideology?

As mentioned above, the examined sites show an overarching trend of a heteronormative, male-dominated gender ideology. Only slight differences could be noted, the most noteworthy ones in the case of XTube. This site was the only platform to include instances of single male masturbation, materials which are condemned from the 'amateur' category of Xhamster and PornHub. Furthermore, XTube enables to enter the site by being exposed to 'straight', 'gay' or 'both' contents, whereas the other platforms aim at strictly separating these two areas. The separation can be done by for example condensing non-heterosexual materials into exclusive, specified categories, like on Xhamster or PornHub, yet again stressing the binary oppositions of gender and sexual orientation, explicitly not acknowledging anything 'in between'.

As an unexpected result, the most significant differences amongst the sites were less of gender ideological nature, but covered other aspects. An intriguing difference could be noted in the attitude

towards authentic UGP. XTube and Xhamster possess features that foster the creation of personal accounts – initiatives which seem to result in a higher ratio of authentic UGP. Xvideos on the other hand, although having recently introduced the possibility to create user profiles, still does not show the name of the uploader, making it unable to verify the source of a clip. Social features and user activity are also undeveloped on Xvideos, as opposed to XTube and Xhamster where various options are offered for browsing and connecting with other users. Although RedTube seemingly differentiates commercial accounts from personal ones, the emphasis is on the latter, as the majority of its sample is of professional production. PornHub does not differentiate its users in this matter, and the sample consisted only of professional materials. This might be the explanation for the little trace of interactivity among users, despite the extensive social feature-set offered by the site.

The most notable difference emerged from the interpretations of 'amateur'. A requirement for the UGP was to be filed as 'amateur' by the interface of the site, for which the underlying assumption was that these are by definition non-professional and non-commercial pornographic materials that are created and uploaded by users of the site. However, this study has shown that the term 'amateur' is interpreted in various ways across these platforms, and are not necessarily representative of materials that the research was initially looking for. On Xvideos and Xhamster, amateur porn consists mainly of low-quality clips recorded by males in gonzo style, providing a POV shot of sexual acts such as fellatio and intercourse, while the amateur videos presented on Pornhub seem to be professionally produced materials, with 'more average' people in 'everyday' stories instead of pornstars in unrealistic narratives.

What is 'amateur' pornography then? Is it any material that is categorized as such? Is it the depiction of people who make sex for pleasure and not for money? Is it videos in which 'average', non-pornstar people perform sex while being filmed by a cameraman, for little or no money? Probably none of these assumptions describe the spectrum which is eventually covered by this term within the sample of this study. And it is exactly here, that it has to be realized that *defining* the phenomenon is not equal to *understanding* it – quite a challenge in a scientific mindset. It is clear that the binaries dividing pornography are less and less valid within the technologies of new media that blurs all of these previous boundaries. Just as Web 2.0 provides endless possibilities for content-creation and interaction, our understanding of these processes and products has to adapt, and use an equally sophisticated, less rigid mental attitude for describing these new phenomena. With this study, I hope to have contributed to the reconceptualizing that is necessary for investigating this field further.

This study has attempted to add to the body of research on the developments of online pornography by analyzing the phenomenon of adult video-sharing websites. Despite the effort of providing an extensive overview through the analysis of several data, there are several issues that eventually hindered this research. First of all, since until now there is not much material on these recent topics, both theory and both methodology are in an exploratory phase and have open ends. One of the main issues that has arisen

is the problematic nature of the amateur-professional binary that has already been pointed out in earlier works (Paasonen, 2010; Van Doorn, 2010). This study has not only confirmed, but probably even deepened the struggle of grabbing this phenomenon, but has nevertheless been able to contribute to this emerging field of study by underlining the importance of reconceptualizing this and other binaries dividing pornography. Through the comparison of different sites, it has also shed more light onto the notion of '(real) amateur', which is yet another challenge to be theorized in academia.

Concerning future research, more attention should be devoted to the field of new media, gender and sexuality in general, due to its dynamic development and social relevance. However, it has to be emphasized that investigating such new phenomena requires new concepts. This study should be perceived as a pioneer in attempting to examine emerging platforms like adult video-sharing sites through a wider perspective by analyzing not only the audiovisual materials themselves, but also their contextual setting. As the results show, the gender ideologies that come to the fore from the videoclips are *dependent* on the attributes of the interface of the adult video-sharing site. The functionality and rules of using key terms determine which sexual attitudes and gender ideologies the overall image of the site constrains or fosters. Therefore, as a first step, future studies should try to break away from the binary oppositions of pornography when theorizing these newly emerging pornographic online environments, and follow a similar route of experimenting with the possibilities of contextualization. Also, it must not be forgotten that popular pornographic online environments have significant impact in how sexuality and gender is perceived and constructed, which are cornerstones of the identities of today's individuals. An interesting direction for further research would therefore be to investigate these phenomena from the user's perspective by for example exploring connections between online porn consumption/production habits, sexual preference and gender identity.

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7. Appendix

Analyzed sites

Xvideos – www.xvideos.com

Xhamster –www.xhamster.com

PornHub – www.pornhub.com

RedTube – www.redtube.com

XTube – www.xtube.com

Coding scheme for assessment of data

<u>Video sample</u>

- content:
    - o number of depicted participants
    - o gender of depicted participants
    - o age of depicted participants
    - o depicted sexual activities
    - o participants' relation to camera
    - o location, background, circumstances
- film aesthetics:
    - o camera position
    - o framing
    - o composition
    - o camera movement
    - o audiovisual quality
    - o editing

<u>Key terms and functionality</u>

- consumer perspective:
    - o homepage
    - o dedicated menus
    - o video sample
- user perspective (upload process):
    - o usage of categories
    - o usage of tags

- o additional features
- video sample:
    - o applied categories
    - o applied tags

Social networking aspects

- user profiles
    - o user-to-user interactivity
    - o user-to-document interactivity
    - o additional features
- user-generated content
    - o user-to-user interactivity
    - o user-to-document interactivity
    - o user-to-system interactivity
    - o types of UGC
    - o additional features
- additional dedicated menus
    - o user-to-user interactivity
    - o user-to-document interactivity
    - o user-to-system interactivity
    - o additional features
- level of interactivity visible on site