

THE PROSUMER ECONOMY

Case: Israeli sex work

Group 2

Word count: 1113

Rashne Limke

BI40025, BI42367,
BI31683, BI18319



Image of israel
(unsplash, 2020)



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Images to convey the mediatisation of sex work (unsplash, 2020)



MEDIATISATION AND ISREALI SEX WORK

Case summary of the prosumer economy and isreali sex work

Based on a journal article that showed how online forums where clients post reviews about sex workers result in a dangerous environment for women, this e-zine examines the relationship between mediatisation and sex work in Israel. It also explores the implications on the meaning of work, where sex is viewed as reproductive labour and therefore sex work is classified as illegitimate work.

The notion of sex work as an illegitimate activity has partly arose from the role gender dynamics play within this industry. Online forums expose workers to objectification and allow prosumers to exploit sex workers by leveraging their power over these women.

Finally, we discuss and address the problems of the Nordic Model, which is newly in place in Israel. We propose the Israeli government do more to protect sex workers and suggest the adoption of a Dutch or German model to improve the future of sex work.



Back streets of isreal to convey illegitimacy of work (unsplash, 2020)

The meaning of work

The contemporary work society rests on the idea that all work is an economic necessity, and we have a moral obligation to work. As a result, there is no opportunity for refusal of work, which is what is required to have a vision of liberation (Weeks, 2016).

Because said work society relies heavily on the value of work (Shoikhedbrod, 2020), the way workers are treated differs between sectors and workers. This is where the complication lies in this case study; sex work is ordinarily not recognised as legitimate work. As a result, these women are not being treated as workers, but as objects.

The forums we are discussing in this report are accelerating this further, as they have rendered 'customers' into 'employers'. This, in combination with the women being objectified, puts these women in a position where they are being exploited to extremes.



Role of Gender

Conveys vulnerability of women and their isolation (unsplash, 2020)

Sex is reproductive labour; while not of much economic value, it is essential to life. It becomes productive when care and emotion is commodified, rendering it into sex work. As a form of care work, sex workers nurture the sexual desires of their clients in exchange for payment (Pande, 2017). It allows clients to indulge in fantasies and have their emotional needs fulfilled. Like other service jobs, sex work involves emotional labour in the form of surface or deep acting (Sanders, 2005).

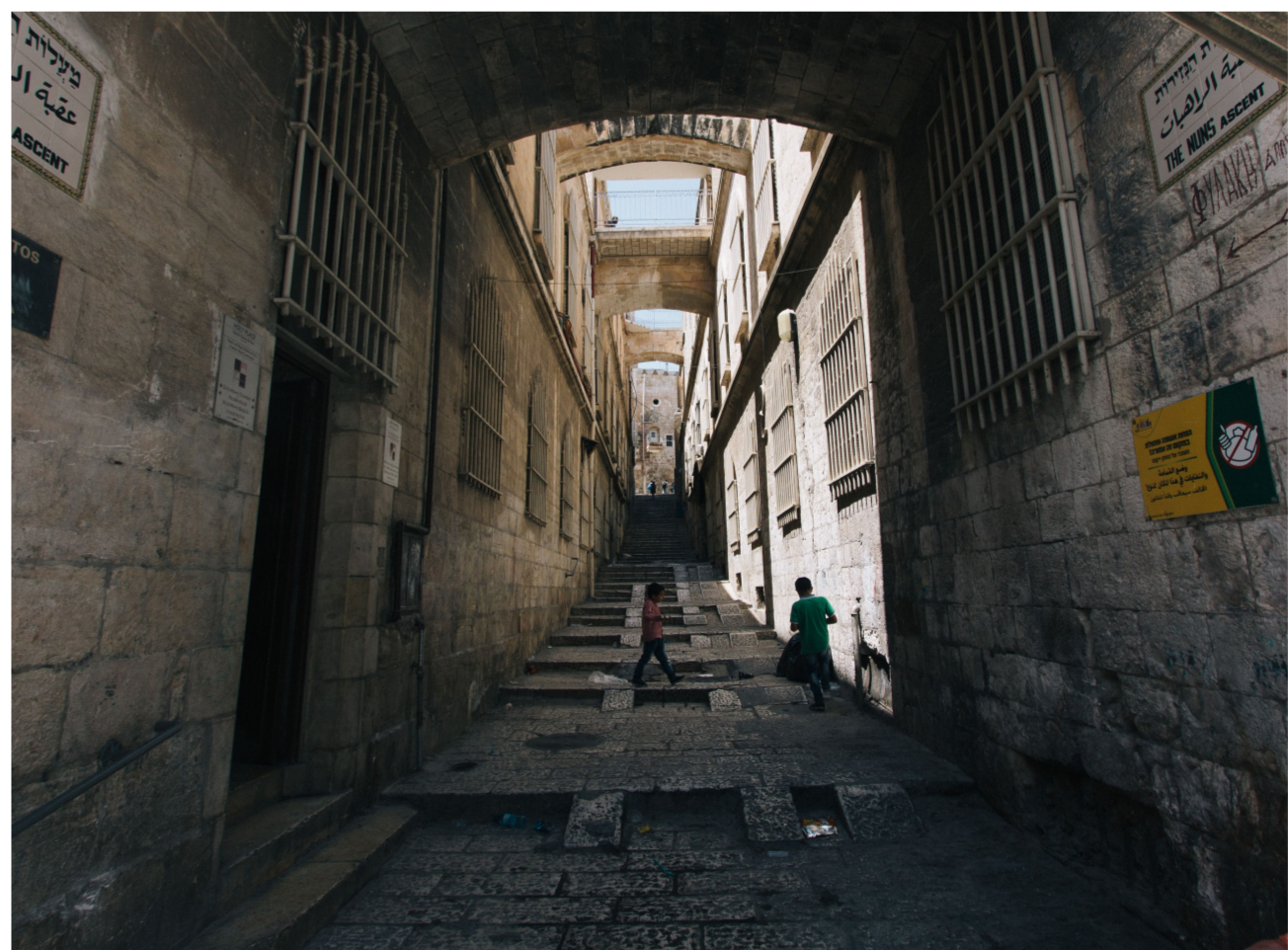
These performances are constructed around femininity and sexuality, reflecting the desires of the clients, and are done to maximise income and safety for sex workers (Sanders, 2005). The level of performance reflects the engagement sex workers have with their clients and performances. The aforementioned commercialising of sex and emotion demands sex workers perform authenticity, which turns the performance into deep acting, blurring the line between acting and legitimate feeling (Hochschild, 2012). This takes away power these women would have if they performed through surface acting, which carries awareness of the dissonance between the personality of sex workers and their performance.

Emotional work is generally categorised as women's work (Hochschild, 2012). In Israel, sex work is predominantly done by migrant women. Both perspectives naturalise the illegitimate work for the worker's gender and race as not meriting recompense. This coloniality of work undervalues and dehumanises them (Limki, 2017). Consequential of their isolation from society, this leaves them vulnerable to exploitation by the Israeli men.

Mediatisation

These forums are run by men for men. The increasing importance of information, image and media within society, also called mediatisation (Lury, 2011), is prevalent on these forums. Men share their experiences while projecting an image of themselves (Krotz, 2020), making them visible all while maintaining anonymity. Thus, men on these forums dictate the way sex workers are seen and allowed to be discussed (Krotz, 2020). This perpetuates beliefs surrounding the naturalisation and devaluation of sex work in these forums, where clients view sex workers as categorically distinct, and so their work is naturalised and undervalued (Limki, 2017).

It is encouraged to join in on these attitudes in exchange for prestige. This creates a culture that not only perpetuates the dehumanisation and objectification of sex workers but encourages it, thus creating beliefs that they are entitled to the reproductive labour these women provide and their bodies. This further naturalises the coloniality of sex workers and their exploitation (Limki, 2017). This homogenous perspective unifies members on these forums, enabling their misogyny and creating a group power they can leverage to exploit these women. This allows them to take control of the definition of care work and its value, which only makes the problem worse.



Images to represent the dissociation clients have from sex workers humanity mediatisation has encouraged (unsplash, 2020)

THE FUTURE OF WORK

The sex industry in Israel is set to undergo an upheaval with the introduction of the Nordic Model, adopted from Sweden. This model aims to decrease the demand for prostitution, by criminalising consumers of sex work while decriminalising sex workers, thus criminalising the industry while protecting sex workers.

The implementation of the model in France in 2017 shows the model is flawed and creates a more dangerous and uncertain environment for sex workers (Fein, 2018; Bail et al., 2018; Bachlakova, 2020). In Israel, sex workers are exploited by prosumers. These laws do not address this, so working conditions for these women are likely to become more dangerous.

It is unlikely sex work will disappear; a recent survey by the University of Tel Aviv predicts that these laws will not reduce demand. Accordingly, half of men in Israel who have paid for sexual services in the last five years will not be influenced away by the new laws (Yaron, 2020).



Images to represent (in order):

France as a case study

The criminalization of sex work

The likelihood sex workers will be further isolated and driven underground (unsplash, 2020)



Solutions to the future of work

While the model decriminalises sex workers, it criminalises their clients, showing their work is not considered legitimate. To legitimise the devalued work of sex workers, we need to put the needs of sex workers in Israel first by dismantling the power structures exploiting these women.

This may be done by adopting a model similar to the Dutch or German model. Instead of trying to erase the industry, these models aim to regulate and make the profession safer for everyone involved (Weitzer, 2017). Here it is important to stress that neither model should be adopted blindly but should be adjusted, learning from mistakes made by both countries to protect the individuals involved.

The prosumer dominance will tower over the sex workers unless mediatisation is placed under control by policy makers. There needs to be better surveillance on the forums, in order to create more protection and to stop the exploitation of sex workers.

For example, the European Union has a code of conduct on countering the use of illegal hate speech online, aiming to efficiently respond to complaints of illegal speech and remove it from the internet quickly.



Images to represent the illegitimate nature of the future of sex work (unsplash, 2020)

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