

DOCTORAL THESIS

Gay Amateur Porn in the Filipino Twitter Alter Community: Affordances, Masculinity, and Affect

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the alter community on Twitter, a network of Filipino Twitter users engaging in the production, distribution, and consumption of self-made or amateur pornography. In the alter community, social activities and relationships revolve around amateur pornography and narratives of sexual encounters. In this thesis, I seek to suggest alternative ways of understanding gay sexuality and its relationship with media. Trying to do away with purely a top-down approach on pornography and platforms that focus on how sexuality is regulated, this thesis engages the experiences of Filipino gay pornographers in making and consuming pornography. Instead of discussing how online platforms regulate sexuality, this research examines how gay men negotiate with the affordances and features of Twitter as a platform for pornography and sexualized forms of expression and socialization. Using virtual ethnography as the methodological framework, this thesis draws from my observations on how Twitter facilitates socialization and pornography, interviews with Filipino gay pornographers, analysis of videos and posts concerning pornography and gay sexuality, and my own personal experiences as a Filipino gay man and a lurker in the alter community. Starting from the question “what gay men get from doing gay pornography”, the chapters of this thesis move into the questions of emotions and affect and political economy of amateur pornography. In seeking to know the emotive and affective side of doing pornography, this research also examines Twitter’s features that regulate sexualized expressions and construction of the virtual self. In doing so, this thesis also takes into account gay men’s experiences and narratives about their sexuality and their attempts in dealing with Twitter’s affordances and limitations. What does this all mean for gay sexual politics in the Philippines? What can we learn from the alter community when we think of gay or queer sexuality in Asia? This discusses the affective dimensions of pornography on Twitter and how it facilitates opportunities of self-actualization among gay men. It argues that Twitter, through its design and algorithm, creates a distinct economy of affect and attention. Twitter’s features compel gay men to be creative and entrepreneurial in making pornography and socializing with the other community members. This thesis also critically examines the alter community as a site of control and political contestation of sexuality. Believed to be a matter of private, personal, or individual identity, lifestyle, or choice, this thesis argues that sexuality is a very public matter because sexuality hinges on social obligations. Therefore, sexuality is at the core of how relationships are organized. This thesis finally examines the contradictions between Twitter’s allowance of pornography and how it regulates sexual bodies in the platform. This contradiction between the liberal attitude and the conservative stance of Twitter results to the regulation and institutionalization of acceptable sexual and gay bodies in virtual spaces.

Keywords: Amateur pornography, gay pornography, Twitter, alter community, virtual ethnography