



Is Nude is the New Black ?

4th June 2005

I saw my first adult magazine when I was about 13 years old. I was with a group of friends (mixed) and after finding it in the woods near my house, I remember all huddling in a hidden area at the end of my garden to have a 'look'. We were all giggling profusely and highly embarrassed by each other's presence in front of these graphic images.

Since launching one of the first dedicated mobile erotic companies in 2003, I often see a similar slightly embarrassed reaction to the context of our services. I can easily raise a nervous giggle from a professional executive by including a carefully chosen word or description in my conversation. Being a woman helps of course!

The whole theme of erotic and adult entertainment seems to give us that little tinge of embarrassment and we feel ever so slightly uncomfortable, just for a minute, when the subject is raised. It's still a taboo subject after all. Many argue that what happens behind our closed doors should stay there. In my five years in the adult industry, I have never met a man who hasn't viewed or bought porn at one time or another in his life, but this is a subject, which of course, is never talked about in 'normal' circles.

But is this all about to change??

In the last year, we have already started to hear about the boys down the pub proudly showing their mates their latest collection of erotic mobile images and videos. We wouldn't have dreamed of taking the latest issue of Private out in public with us! Mobile and Erotica is a match made in heaven for both the consumer and industry and subsequently, the necessary elements of mobile industry have finally come together to create the first totally regulated, imaginative and immediately accessible adult entertainment channel.

Erotica is going mainstream like we have never experienced before!

It's the unique characteristics that Mobile and Erotica can bring together to ensure its consumer appeal and commercial success:

1. *It's impulsive* – Our mobiles are always with us, so it offers instant reaction or gratification, something that our generation not only expects, but demands.
2. *It's non-committal* - The micro-payment commercial model is enticing a completely new, expanded and casual audience to 'dip-in' and try it out.
3. *It's responsible* - Thanks to the regulations and access controls being put in place by Network Operators, we are able to promote to a targeted and approved audience and the scope for abuse by the 'quick buck' brigade will soon become non-existent. We are already seeing that users have more purchasing confidence and are actually handing over their personal details to be able to access +18 entertainment, something that has never been successful in other mediums.
4. *It's innovative* - Adult Entertainment has always pushed the technical boundaries to be able to offer services that appeal to the consumer, rather than settling for what's available. The mobile model will emerge as immersive fantasies, personalised erotic tastes and accessible interaction.

5. *It's serious* – We know there is a HUGE consumer demand and following from the immense success of the internet combined with the factors above, mobile corporations and entrepreneurs alike all want a piece of the pie. Therefore, it is getting much more exposure in mainstream circles than ever before. This of course, is following through to the consumer market. It's not taboo anymore. It's serious business.

For Cherrysauce, one of the main and most surprising growth drivers has been the implementation of access controls in UK. After launching our direct to consumer portal in 2003, we did the usual 'banging our head against a brick wall' trying to convince operators and channels that this was going to be one of the main revenue drivers on mobile. They didn't disagree, but politically it was always an issue due to one of the board members being against it, or how they promote it without affecting the brand perception. Then came the announcement from Vodafone that they were going to bar all phones from adult services and ask users to phone up, admit they would like to view this type of content and hand over personal details. We honestly believed this was the end of the road! When a similar initiative was launched for IVR services, only 50,000 users actually verified. It killed the business overnight and subsequently they had to find an alternative solution.

Amazingly (and thankfully), sales from our adult channel increased after the auto-barring and the business has been growing at a rapid rate ever since. Since other operators have started to adopt similar controls, it seems like the whole world is becoming aware that there IS a way to offer mobile erotica, whilst responsibly protecting minors and not being detrimental to the brand. Specialist mobile erotic companies like Cherrysauce had the right strategy since the beginning, because we invariably came from some form of adult entertainment background and we fully understood the consumer mindset. What we needed was the access and exposure to the adult consumer. As a result of the access controls, not only do we now have that, but the less reputable companies that were initially adopting tricky tactics, unreliable services and giving us all a bad name are being weeded out and eradicated, leaving a mix of professional businesses that happen to provide erotic services.

As a result, I believe we are only now experiencing the official and mainstream launch of Mobile Erotica. To date, many of the erotic products we have seen on mobile have been adapted from other media, designed to technical restrictions, or sold by people who don't really understand how to fully bring the two elements together. Despite the low level of quality of mobile erotica that was available, the financial results showed that adult consumers still bought it, demonstrating both the demand for erotica on this medium and the commercial strength of mobile accessibility!

You may have noticed that I always refer to the terms erotic and adult as apposed to porn. This is due to the common misconception that it all the same. Using the word porn creates a misleading image of what this new industry is all about. It is our belief that erotica need not necessarily be explicit. Suggestively erotic (i.e. the way the girl is looking into the camera) can actually be much more arousing than explicitly pornographic. Thankfully, the industry is starting to view this in the same way and this is contributing to the rapid growth of Mobile Erotica.

Now, with the advancements in technology, the dawn of 3g and the growth in specialist companies for Mobile Erotica, a new and mobile specific generation of erotic content and services is emerging. The successful players will give users a real motive to consume our products on their handsets, because other channels offer higher resolution, faster downloads and bigger screens. The key is to give users real value for money and deliver products and erotic experiences that they can't get elsewhere. It's a new audience and a new medium; therefore, to ensure its success, it has to be a new product!

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