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Sex Bait: Sex Talk on Commercial Blogs as Informal Sexuality Education

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Institutionalized sexuality education in Singapore undertakes a conservative, medicalized approach that promotes abstinence, and idealizes healthy (heterosexual) relationships between married couples. It assigns parents, the school, students, and the community as stakeholders in maintaining a comprehensive sexuality education (Liew 2014). However, young people are increasingly turning to commercial bloggers who are trendy, clout rich, and influential on the Internet Abidin (2014) for firsthand “lifestyle” information and advice. In response, some bloggers have innovatively engaged in various degrees of sensuousness to market sex and sexuality related campaigns and products, and to lure traffic to increase their viewership. Through ethnographic fieldwork conducted with lifestyle bloggers in Singapore, and the long-term observation of social media enterprises, this chapter examines sexual literacies among these bloggers. It argues that these bloggers have stepped in as informal educators of sex and sexuality education to provide alternative approaches amid a state-controlled hegemonic discourse. A close analysis reveals key scripts appropriated by bloggers to disseminate personal and endorsed sexuality education such as “shock and allure”, “pedantic consumption”, and “personal illustrations”.

Data discussed in this chapter is drawn from the author’s research on social media microcelebrity in Singapore since mid-2010, including nine months of

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intensive participant observation conducted with these bloggers in the flesh in the capacity of various roles. Personal interviews were also conducted between December 2012 and July 2013. Fieldwork entailed continued interaction with other actors involved in the bloggers' social milieu, including their peers, back-end production management, sponsors and advertisers, and readers. Although data presented here—catalogued up till late 2014—is mostly drawn from the textual and visual content of publically accessed blogs and associated social media platforms including Twitter and Instagram, the analysis is influenced by long-term ethnographic work among these bloggers. A grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) was adopted in the thematic coding of all content.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the place of sexuality education in Singapore in relation to the government's tight control over the national syllabus structured by the Ministry of Education (MOE). This is followed by an overview of the local commercial lifestyle blogging industry, and how sex talk has come to be a mainstay of content management. Two sexual scripts—shock and allure, and personal illustrations—will be examined in tandem with case studies and vignettes drawn from ethnographic fieldwork with Singaporean lifestyle bloggers. The chapter closes with an analysis of these sexual pedagogies in relation to local moral boundaries, class, and gender, highlighting the importance of commercial lifestyle bloggers as informal educators and gatekeepers of the circulation of populist sexuality education.

Sexuality Education in Singapore

Sexuality education in Singapore is generally disseminated via educational institutes regulated by the MOE. The MOE is the national board that directs educational policies and regulates curriculum across all government (also known as 'state schools' and colloquially referred to as 'neighborhood schools'), and government-aided schools in Singapore (MOE 2014a). However, the MOE also regulates the education syllabus to different degrees in the nation's range of institutional offerings including autonomous schools, independent schools, and specialized schools. These institutions' relationships with MOE vary in terms of financial assistance, organizational operations, and institutional autonomy to develop their syllabus and niche areas.

Sexuality education formally begins in Primary 5 (average age 11) and continues up to the second and final year of Junior College (JC) (average age 18) or the third and final year of Central Institutes (CI) (average age 19). However, strands of sexuality education are also integrated into the main syllabus in Health Education (Primary 3 to 6), and in General Science and

Biology subjects (Primary 4 to JC2 or CI3). Primary school education is compulsory in Singapore, and the law may penalize parents who fail to enroll their children by the age of seven. As such, there is a catchall for all children to receive at least basic sexuality education at the Primary 5 and 6 levels.

The MOE lists Sexuality Education under its Social and Emotional Learning Programs, and covers the physical, emotional, social, and ethical dimensions of a person's sexuality (MOE 2014b). On its website, the MOE alludes its implementation of sexuality education programs to the exposure youths face from "globalisation and technological advancements ... from around the world". This is further broken down into three key impetuses: "Greater Access to Information", "Sexual Activity, STIs/HIV among Teenagers", and "Problems related to Teenage Pregnancies". In particular, this fear from youths' "Greater Access to Information" is explained as the exposure to the "social norms of other societies and interest groups", which the MOE claims is less objective and reliable than information obtained via schools and parental guidance.

The MOE reports that Singapore faces an average of 2000 teenage pregnancies annually (MOE 2014b). Among its goals of sexuality education are for students to practice virtue "premised on the heterosexual married couple forming a nuclear family as the basic unit of society, through the inculcation of positive mainstream values and attitudes about sexuality" (MOE 2014c; emphasis in original). In addition, one of the MOE's four key messages of sexuality education is for students to "[p]ractice abstinence before marriage, as it is the best protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and unwanted pregnancies [because] [c]asual sex can harm and hurt them and their loved ones" (MOE 2014c).

On a practical level, students are taught about contraception and the prevention of diseases "from a health perspective" (MOE 2014d). However, the program is focused on rejecting sexual advances and the repercussions of casual sex (Liew 2014). Regarding sexual orientation, the MOE's stance is for educators to teach students "what homosexuality *is* and the current *legal* provisions concerning homosexual acts in Singapore" (MOE 2014d; emphasis mine). Educators and external speakers approved by the MOE are asked not to use schools as "arenas for advocacy on controversial issues" (MOE 2014d). For instance, in October 2014, external vendor Focus on the Family Singapore, a pro-Christian charity, was accused of propagating sexism and gender stereotypes in a workshop it was engaged to give to students at Hwa Chong Institution. A student who had attended the workshop wrote an open letter to the principal of her coeducation preuniversity institution citing her concerns over the bigotry and conservatism undertones. Her letter, which was posted on Facebook, went viral nationally and inspired a petition organized

and signed by more than 300 others calling for the program to be discontinued (see Lee and Tan 2014). Although the MOE responded citing that the workshop was intended to focus on managing healthy relationships rather than its designated sexuality education syllabus, this event underscored two things: first, that young people are increasingly turning to social media to vocalize opinions that would usually be edged out of hegemonic educational system; second, that young people are using social media to organize themselves and share and obtain information regarding sexual education within their peer networks.

Women's Magazines, Commercial Lifestyle Blogging, and Sex Talk

Commercial lifestyle blogs are one successor of contemporary women's magazines. Kim and Ward define contemporary women's magazines as "mainstream adult magazines that are geared toward an adolescent or young adult female audience and that express the clear intention of providing readers with advice, scripts, and information about dating and sexual relationships" (2004, p. 49). They also feature product placements (Frith 2009) and concealed ads (McCracken 1993). Commercial lifestyle blogs bear similar offerings but with an underlying rhetoric of personalizing "advertorials" to readers engaged in aspirational consumption. The "advertorial" is a highly personalized and opinion-laden advertisement written in the style of an opinion editorial. Both contemporary women's magazines and commercial lifestyle blogs offer lessons to readers on how to perform in their private lives (Ferguson 1983), albeit largely through highly feminized (Basnyat and Chang 2014), domestic (Pugsley 2007), and sexual scripts (Kim and Ward 2004). Kim and Ward highlight that sexual scripts provided by contemporary women's magazines specifically target female readers via "intimate" address, and are "accessible", "private", "inexpensive", "available for multiple readings", and "sexually explicit" (2004, p. 49)—all characteristics are similarly demonstrated through commercial lifestyle blogs.

Commercial lifestyle bloggers in Singapore are predominantly women aged between 15 and 35. Reflecting Singapore's national ethnic make-up, most are Chinese. Those with a sizable viewership can monetize their social media platforms by selling advertising space in the form of a clickthrough image or URL; by writing advertorials; and by taking on sponsorships for various brands and companies. Their strength is reflected in the infocomm

Development Authority's (iDA) 2012 report finding that "Reading blogs that are created by others" was the third most popular activity after "Social Networking" and "Instant Messaging" (iDA 2012).

Since 2005 in Singapore, many young women have taken to social media to craft "microcelebrity personas" as a career. Theresa Senft defines microcelebrity as "a new style of online performance that involves people 'amping up' their popularity over the Web using technologies like video, blogs and social networking sites" (2008, p. 25). Unlike mainstream entertainment industry celebrities who are public icons with large-scale followings, microcelebrity "is a state of being famous to a niche group of people" and involves the curation of a persona that feels "authentic" to readers (Marwick 2013, p. 114). While entrepreneurial "bloggers" often transgress the blog form by using a range of social media platforms, these women are best understood by non-insiders across generations, class, genders, and cultural backgrounds as "bloggers" and will be referred to here as "commercial bloggers".

Microcelebrity bloggers document their everyday lives, from the mundane to exciting snippets of the exclusive opportunities in their line of work. This form of blog and social media publishing falls within the "lifestyle" genre, where each woman's life, "as lived" is the central theme of their output. The main appeal for readers is the sharing of personal, usually publically inaccessible, aspects of their life. Therefore, privacy becomes a commodity that is manipulated and performed to advance their careers. Sex-related content is one form of "clickbait" that sustains reader interest given the increasing saturation of the market. "Clickbait" is a "stylistic and narrative luring device [that] induce[s] anticipation and curiosity" among readers, capturing their attention and thus inviting them to click on a link to "read on" (Blom and Hansen 2015, p. 87). Popularized by commercialization and tabloidization in journalism, Blom and Hansen also refer to clickbait as a "forward-referring technique" that teases readers, utilizes "emotional wording", and creates "suspense". I use the term "sexbait" as a variant of clickbait that appropriates sex-related content to entice and sustain readership.

The sexuality education that bloggers offer to their readers seems to go unpoliced by the state censorship board, the Media Development Authority, despite some occasional raunchy content, because these blogs are largely perceived as entertainment and advertising outlets that do serve as useful sources of sexual literacies. Whereas overtly sexualized content on sex blogs have garnered state attention and community concern due to their blatant agenda to shock and defy social norms without any productive outcome (see Channel News Asia 2012; Chew 2012).

Shock and Allure

On 26 November 2012, a videoclip titled “Holly Jean caught in bed with ang moh man”¹ was posted on YouTube, under the account of an unknown user known as “jeremy”, in the aesthetic of an amateur video filmed with a handheld camera. By July 2014, the video had received over 27,000 views. The clip featured Holly and an unknown man (with his face blurred out) on a couch, playfully conversing about what and how they intended to film what is presumed to be an intimate sexual act to follow. Holly was shown removing her nightgown, after which the camera zoomed in on her bra and cleavage. Toward the end of the clip, the camera is left to the side, facing the couple. The man and Holly are seen pressed up against each other, simulating sex, passionate kissing, and arousing sounds, with a few seconds focused on Holly’s facial expressions. Amid some sensual moaning, she is heard muttering “PS I love you”. The couple can only be seen from the waist up and Holly remained clothed in her lingerie. The video quickly went viral and created much buzz online, in part fuelled by mainstream press coverage and lengthy discussion on popular chat forums. Holly remained silent and “uncontactable” on her social media.

Six days later, a second video clip “The full version—Leaked Holly Jean Sex Tape”² was released on YouTube. It received over 202,000 views as of July 2014. The attached caption revealed that the initial “leaked” sex tape had been staged as part of a Durex campaign that Holly was engaged in:

A week ago, you may have come across what looked like a leaked Sex tape, of myself and an unidentified male. Lots of speculation about what was going on about the leaked footage, was he a bitter ex BF etc? Today, I can finally reveal to you the full version. P.S. I Love you means PLAY SAFE I LOVE YOU ... a campaign by Durex to encourage safe sex among youth in Singapore. xx www.hollyjean.sg

The extended video continues from part one to reveal the “backstage” film crew in the midst of filming and applauding the “actors” after the scene was cut. On the same day, Holly published a blogpost³ discussing the video production process. She tells readers:

¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imB_vr9h4_Y

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMSryVcmRZM>

³ <http://www.hollyjean.sg/2012/12/the-leaked-holly-jean-sex-tape.html>

I'm sorry I've been laying low and avoiding questions about the leaked sex tape circulating on the internet.

The male model in the video and I didn't actually have sex. But we were pretty convincing huh!!

Even though the 'leaked sex tape' is controversial in nature, I decided to be part of this campaign because I think it's a great way to get the attention of the youths, and through that we can educate and get the message across to them. And this message is more likely to 'stick' than merely preaching the importance of playing safe.

You can't dictate that they should wear condoms ... if anything, that would make condoms unappealing. So what better way to get the attention of the youth than with a leaked sex tape.

Holly states on her blog that her "leaked" sex video "needed the chance to get your attention and sink in" and that the aesthetic and shock value of a leaked sex tape was selected to target "the youth", perhaps pandering to an audience constantly "in search of spectacles" (Kitzmann 2004). The post directed attention to Durex's new campaign that was encouraging the public to use a condom under all circumstances. Holly then presented readers with some statistics from the Durex Face of Global Sex Report 2012, and a short vignette about how the Durex range offers not only protection, but also pleasure with its "warming lube" condoms, "ribbed" condoms, and one that helps a man "last longer". The post ended with a call for participants to submit a 3–5-minute-long "educational video" to Durex's Safe Sex Video Online Competition.

In this event, Holly is not merely "bringing" the conventionally private sexual body and act of sexual intercourse into the public forefront, but goes further to stage it (with a professional film crew, no less) and manufacture "controversy" to bait attention. Although her intentions were ultimately positive and productive—the Durex advertisement had after all gone viral—Holly opens her blogpost with an apology that can be interpreted as addressing three groups of people. The first are her loyal readers and the press who have been sending her correspondence to solicit comments on the "scandal", which she explains she had to avoid for the video to have impact. The second are readers and curious passersby who may have found her provocative video offensive, since much of the hype generated on social media and forums

involved conversations about young people's relationship with private acts, recording technology, and risk. The third are readers who had fallen for the clickbait only to realize that her sex tape was inauthentic and the sex staged, in acknowledgement of the several forums commenters expressing disappointment in having bought into a publicity stunt. In any case, Holly's full explanation of the production process and her conceptualization of the advertisement implicitly signposts Internet users' voyeuristic interest in the taboo.

Personal Illustrations

As premised earlier, lifestyle bloggers are characterized by the personal accounts of daily events that they archive. Much of these revelations attempt different extents of privacy play in order to draw readers into the life world of these bloggers. In some instances, sexual pedagogies organically emerge from blogger narratives when they attempt to use sex talk as bait to increase readership and sustain their readers' accessibility and intimacy to their blog persona. The personal narratives of bloggers Naomi and Peggy, can be seen to include informal "lessons" on sexual agency, and counter-hegemonic sexuality.

Naomi is among the most popular social media microcelebrities in Singapore, whose social media posts frequently achieve viral status in the country and regionally in South East Asia. For instance, her Instagram photos may garner up to 2000 "Likes" in the first minute, and amass over 20,000 "Likes" on average. As of November 2014, Naomi boasts over 114,800 Twitter followers, over 174,000 Instagram followers, and over 146,000 followers on Facebook. Although her blog readership is not revealed, Naomi is often named as the most popular blogger in her age group among social media followers, mainstream press reports, and blog management agencies.

In a controversial blogpost entitled "Confessions of a teen",⁴ published at the age of 15, Naomi revealed that she had lost her virginity to her second boyfriend at the age of 13. (In Singapore, the age of consent for heterosexual sex is 16.) In the post, Naomi states that she decided to publicize this reveal to counter gossip that her "haters" were circulating about her, yet she also seems to be offering advice to readers based on her experience:

⁴<http://naomineo.blogspot.com.au/2011/08/confessions-of-teen.html>

Like I mentioned previously, I really had a strong affection towards him, and I felt really insecure about our relationship so I was naive enough to think that this would proly sustain his love for me. Well, ostensibly I was wrong about having that thought. ... As we only lasted for six months. Yes, honestly I did regret it terribly. And no, it's not entirely his fault, I admit I had a choice at that time.

After we broke up, I took about a year and a half to get over this guy completely. I wouldn't deny, many others came in and out of my life which I thought I could replace him with and yes, I did hurt some of them realizing I couldn't forgo the past. But at the same time, I suffered pretty badly as well.

I had another 5 official relationships after him, and 3 were as bad, they weren't serious with me nor did their feelings endured any longer. Whereas, I let the other initial two down similarly due to my unforgettable past. *Sigh, karma perhaps.*

In this particular post, Naomi recounts her (regrettable) decision to consent to under-aged, premarital sex in a relationship that only lasted six months, and details her agonizing experience in “getting over” this incident. After the news broke, readers searched her web presence to find old blogs that contained pictures of said boyfriend, including ones of them kissing.⁵ Attempting to draw a lesson from this experience and subsequent “failed” relationships, she tells her readers: “If you don't love someone, just end the damn relationship, don't cheat on them”. Photographs of some of her ex-boyfriends are in the archives of her current blog, and have been screenshot and disseminated among readers who are gossiping about her. Subsequently, she has been popular among young teenage readers for sharing controversial views on sexual practice and body image, and for answering fan Q&As on her sexual life and sex advice, which are communicated and archived via email and on Naomi's Formspring and AskFM accounts. On several instances, young readers are seen asking Naomi for advice about losing their virginity, contraception, and the management of relationships in general. Naomi usually offers short personal vignettes or redirects readers to her blogposts, and cautions them to consider their decision carefully.

⁵ <http://www.perdurable-solicitude.blogspot.com.sg/>

In February 2012, another one of Naomi's Facebook posts⁶ obtained viral status. She writes:

It's funny how guys can have sex with so many girls and nothing happens, but once a girl loses her purity she's deemed to be a slut to 3/4 of the society or her peers. Sex is meant for both parties. Girls who says they don't enjoy sex are obviously lying. Girls who calls others sluts for sleeping with their bf obviously don't know how it feels. It's insane. Just saying.

As of November 2014, the post has received over 2400 "Likes" and 34 "Shares", and screenshots have had wide circulation. The post itself invited over 110 comments from Facebook users debating their opinions on gender stereotypes and the moralizing labels attached to women who enjoy sex. In response to some users who detracted from Naomi's message by being coy with flirtatious messages, the blogger writes:

Don't be ridiculous. I'm just saying. I'm trying to put across the point that, first it's unfair to girls as to how they are the only ones receiving insults, not the guys. Secondly, if it's your boyfriend, and someone you really love there's no wrong to it. Thirdly, It's just annoying to see how some girls go like 'eeew, I don't like it. It's disgusting' when deep down they actually do.

In May 2013, Naomi posted several photographs of herself and, seeking to offer readers a "bra education", points out how her breasts are shaped and sized differently at different times. Responding to accusations of photoshopping her breasts or undergoing bust enhancement surgery, Naomi explains that she is merely "enhancing" her appearance with different types of bras suited for different attires and occasions. She highlights that these changes do not make women any less "real" because they are still working with their natural bodies. She also tells readers that there is no shame in wanting to "improve", "better", or "enhance" one's appearance. Like many of her past posts, this achieved virality and was even publicized on mainstream news platforms.

Naomi speaks to her young readers about sexual agency and autonomy through a personal voice that is engaging and, at times, controversially honest. She privileges a sex-positive and body-positive lifestyle that is largely absent from a national educational curriculum founded on conservatism and abstinence. For this reason, she has emerged as a thought leader among her peers on taboo issues. Another blogger, Peggy, has drawn on personal illustrations

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/Naaomineo/posts/312035762186222>

to guide readers with sexual literacies regarding homosexuality. While there are a handful of commercial lifestyle bloggers who have been outed or have publicized their homosexuality, most either make token mentions of their female partners in “couple photographs”, or have not disclosed this aspect of their lives despite public web gossip and knowledge about their open secret. Peggy is one of the few women lifestyle bloggers who has been consistently and overtly featuring her partner and their lives in her social media content, in a similar aesthetic to bloggers who write about their heterosexual male partners.

Peggy first publically wrote about her confusion over being attracted to a same-sex person in September 2011.⁷ She tells her readers:

All I know is that the affection I had for this person is way beyond what I should have for someone of the same gender. The thing is, it really doesn't matter what she is, who she is, or where she went to before she came to me. I love what I see when I look at her, and how we could have so little yet so much in common. I love her and love needs no classification. I hope things will not get too hard for us.

At the time, her blog already contained archives of her past two relationships with men. She was among the more prominent commercial lifestyle bloggers in part due to a stint on a television talent show, and once modeling for “Love, Bonito”, one of the most prolific Internet-based fashion stores in Singapore. A month later, Peggy wrote a long and heartfelt entry about how she met her partner.⁸ The post contained intimate exchange from the long-time friends including screenshots of Facebook Messenger conversations dating back to February 2008. Peggy produced a narrative account of the uncertainty and frustration she felt toward the development of her feelings throughout the course of these years, and talked readers through her various stages of self-discovery. She also detailed her partner's growing years through various stages of school life, including photographs of her appearance at each stage.

In response to comments on her blog, Peggy penned a second blogpost⁹ collating some of these responses to encourage readers in similar situations. She writes:

Writing about my newfound relationship with A had opened my eyes to many things. I realized that love has no boundaries—it's not limited by race,

⁷ <http://www.sixpegs.com/2011/09/are-you-lightning/>

⁸ <http://www.sixpegs.com/2011/11/a/>

⁹ <http://www.sixpegs.com/2011/11/she-loves-her/>

it's not limited by religion, it's not limited by gender. I realized that love can be so powerful that it has given me strength to overcome things I never imagined I could conquer. Most importantly, I realized that I am normal. I am not alone. And there are many like me out there. Some of them are liberated. Some of them are struggling and suffering and don't have the freedom to love.

Over the next few months, several users congregated on Peggy's blog to share in the joy of her new relationship. Readers in seasoned same-sex relationships offered their support while others asked for advice from Peggy and her readers. She became an agony aunt to a niche market in this time and even produced a blogpost containing the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on her homosexuality and relationship. Since then, Peggy has been blogging about her experiences in coming out and resources available to her, such as Oogachaga,¹⁰ a queer-friendly organization that provides counseling and support to gay and lesbian communities, and Pink Dot SG, an annual nonprofit public event in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) people in Singapore. More recently, Peggy has been writing about her journey with her partner toward marriage.¹¹

The resources that Peggy shares with her readers, although freely available and searchable on the web, are not promoted in the mainstream educational syllabus. Personal voices on the process of coming out and the struggles involved also do not feature in the hegemonic discourse of mainstream sexuality education, although schools provide counseling services for students who indicate that they are struggling with these issues. The level of intimacy and insight that Peggy offers through narrative accounts of her self-discovery and relationship as they unfold, invites these side-lined others to partake in a conversation and community of support. Unlike organizations such as Oogachaga, the informal networks that Peggy has developed over time premise her as a key node of information dissemination. Unlike the hard and fast FAQs available on most LGBT support websites, Peggy delivers information about external LGBT support agencies by interweaving them into her personal journey, thus delivering sexual literacies effectively via her charismatic blog persona.

¹⁰ <http://www.sixpegs.com/2012/11/coming-out/>

¹¹ <http://www.sixpegs.com/tag/transgender/>

Sexbait, Sex Talk, and Informal Sexuality Education

Amid Singapore's conservative approach toward sexuality education, young and influential commercial lifestyle bloggers have emerged as thought leaders providing alternative discourses to sexuality education within their cohorts. In contrast to the overtly disciplinary, pragmatic, and prescriptive (Haywood 1996) model of sexuality education regulated by the state, bloggers provide more receptive informal modes of learning, which are spontaneous (Eshach 2007, p. 173). Informal sexuality education encompasses sex-related information and influence a person receives outside the classroom (Spanier 1976). Where blogger role models replace authoritative didactic figures, readers are also "motivated intrinsically" (Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson in Eshach 2007, p. 173) given that they exercise agency in seeking their reading material and imitating the sexual scripts they wish to pursue. Informal sexuality education has proven to be significantly more impactful on premarital sexual behavior than formal sexuality education, where peer group pressures—or in this case, the pressure to perform aspirational scripts offered by commercial bloggers—take precedence over previous "sexual socialization influences" (Spanier 1976, p. 40). Spanier adds that while not every one may be privileged to receive formal sexuality education, every person is exposed to "informal sex-educating experiences" in "one form or another", such as peer conversations, familial instruction, or societal influences (1976, pp. 41–42).

Be it Holly's risqué "leaked sex tape" or Naomi and Peggy's confessional stories, perhaps it is the hybrid "edu-tainment" comprising education packaged in an entertaining, attention-baiting format that lures readers in and sustains their interest. As a successor of contemporary women's magazines, it is tempting to brand commercial lifestyle blogs as mere trashy, raunchy, or frivolous media. Like women's magazines, however, such blogs are a crucial avenue for "women's oppression [to be] debated and negotiated, rather than merely reinforced" (Gough-Yates in Frith 2009). The highly personalized narratives offered by each blogger present the "sex talk" message as intimate and accessible, and different to the moralistic staple of formal sexuality education or traditional advertising formats. The "confessional" trope of Naomi and Peggy's personal illustrations, as a mode of "unmasking" one's personal sex life, also bear a "normalizing function" against which "'bad' sex [or bad beliefs about one's sexuality] can be corrected" (Yang 2004, p. 516). In addition, like contemporary women's magazines, exposure to commercial lifestyle blogs cultivates particular depictions of women, femininity, and

sexuality as “normative, expectable, and acceptable” (Basnyat and Chang 2014, p. 83). As sighted in blog readers’ positive comments and the bloggers’ increasing number of engagements with corporate sponsors (i.e. contraception, feminine hygiene, and LGBT support services), the delivery of sexual literacies through innovative and creative ways has proven fruitful for drawing readers in via clickbait, aspirational envy, or homosocial intimacies. Taken together, the underlying commercial rhetoric and aspirational consumption channeled through these blogs and the embedded sex talk have inadvertently positioned commercial lifestyle blogs as effective platforms for informal sexuality education.

However, some implicit ideologies across the case studies presented require a closer examination. First, while Holly Jean’s appropriation of shock and allure sexbait successfully disseminated her message, she demonstrates an apologetic transgression when she acknowledges the deceit into which she had lured her readers. The implicit secondary message seemed to shroud shame over her production and subsequent “publicization” of the sex tape, and has resulted in the promotion of safe sex on the one hand, but the retraction from a sex-positive body image on another. Second, while both Naomi and Peggy effectively draw on personal illustrations to disseminate sexual scripts to readers, it is unclear if the long-term effect of this approach will continue to have an educational impact on readers, or if the audience will be desensitized to the baiting for mere entertainment. Furthermore, as a feminized and largely women-dominated industry at present, the influence that commercial lifestyle bloggers have among readers and their sexual pedagogies appears confined to young females. While there are some attempts at encouraging their readers to relay information and appropriate products and services to their male partners, there has yet to be an equally influential and large-scale mechanism for capturing the attention of young males.

Nevertheless, commercial lifestyle bloggers are filling in an important gap in the formal sexuality education syllabus. Allen argues “for the need to comprehend young people’s sexual knowledge from their own conceptualisation”, in a bid to recalibrate sexuality education to accommodate the gap between young people’s “head knowledge” and their actual praxis (2001, p. 109). This acknowledges young people’s subjective agency, and brings the focus back to discourses they wish to pursue in tandem with their everyday lived realities. By offering an alternative to authoritative, didactic, and rigid modes of formal sexuality education, commercial lifestyle bloggers in Singapore are pioneering vernacular dialogues in native nomenclatures that appeal to young people. Driven by the logic of the market in the attention economy, commercial bloggers *have* to be receptive to readers’ preferences, and thus their

blogs inadvertently reflect or debut populist sexuality discourses. Since the commercial success of bloggers is dependent on readers' sustained attention, a "horizontally structured power relation" (Yang 2004, p. 517) emerges in which the normative is coproduced and negotiated by both bloggers and masses of readers. Given commercial lifestyle bloggers' rapid integration and engagement across a wide range of industries, their discursive influence as opinion leaders and shapers of popular praxis is projected to grow, suitably placing them as informal sexuality educators.

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