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Erotic and Pornographic Press in Poland

Key words: media system, changes of media system, media audiences, erotic press

Summary: The text is a presentation Polish erotic and pornographic press in existence in Poland since 1989. Research of this subject is part of the description of the changes in the media market and readership which took place in Poland after the fall of communism. Not only in Poland is pornography a controversial issue. That is why this segment of media market is not still fully described. However, the presence of erotic and pornographic magazines, their position on the market encourages taking an interest in this question. The author shows the legal status, functioning of the market and its participants (publishing houses).

I. Introduction

Erotic and pornographic press first came out on the Polish market in 1989. Even though it has been on the market for some time, this segment of the press has not been extensively researched. This is mainly because it has not yet been fully regulated. Similarly to prostitution, pornography is often accused of “indecency” and “offending morality” when it attempts to reach the masses. For media researchers it is a complex subject which may pose a series of difficulties.

II. Definitions and Legal Status

The “Dictionary of Polish Language” defines pornography as, “press, prints, theatre, film, photographs, paintings, drawings and other objects including indecent content, intended to sexually arouse the recipient”. Eroticism, on the other hand, includes material which does not treat people obscenely and does not reduce relationships between them to solely physiological. In defining eroticism its context is imperative. The justice system has continuous problems with distinguishing what is pornographic and what is not, as pornography has not been defined by the legal system. It is the expert witness who makes this decision in each different case. The subject remains hot also among social science researchers¹.

There are those who are in favour of its penalisation and those who are against severe restrictions. Those against pornography mention its harmfulness in general as well as the issue of its production. Moreover, there is debate over its accessibility on the market².

The criminal code, effective 1932-1970, in art. 214, stated that production and distribution of pornographic materials is illegal under the penalty of a fine or being sentenced up to two years in prison. The article was in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1923, which was ratified by Poland in 1926. The criminal code of 1969, in art. 173, re-stated the text included in art. 214. During communist times, there was censorship and

¹ See M. Filar, Pornografia, “Przegląd Ustawodawstwa Gospodarczego” 1993, nr 8 – 9.

B. McNair, Seks, demokracja i media, czyli kultura obnażania, Warszawa 2004, p. 85 – 97.
“Słownik języka polskiego” (wydanie elektroniczne), Warszawa 2004.

² See P. Czajkowski, A. Glembin, M. Topolski, Golizna bez paragrafu. Ustawa nie miała szans na skuteczność, “Nasz Kolporter” 2000, nr 4., W. Markiewicz, Rząd kontra nierząd, „Polityka”, 08. 04. 2006., Nagie fakty, “Newsweek” 2006, nr 6., P. Golik, Porn ban. The Parliamentarians' Clean Conscience, “The Warsaw Voice”, 20. 02. 2000., G. Sieczkowski, Łapczywe dłonie satyra. Prasa erotyczna wykorzystuje wciąż te same schematy, “Rzeczpospolita”, 07.15. 1995., J. Wojciechowski, Nie wiadomo, gdzie przebiega granica. Pornografia po 1 września 1998 r., “Rzeczpospolita”, 20. 03. 1998.

also the media (press, television) and distribution were under extremely strict customs restrictions.³

After the turnover in 1989, press law was modernized (press law, January 26, 1989, Dz. U. from 1984 r. nr 5, pos. 24, later amended), censorship ceased to exist and the state was no longer a monopolist on the press market. These changes allowed, for the first time since 1945, freedom of expression and independent media development. Soon after, the newstands were offering first erotic (pornographic) titles (distributed still by the state owned RSW "Prasa – Książka – Ruch"). This was possible due to the amended press law and unchanged criminal law, which did not clearly define pornography, as well as lack of expert agreement on the subject. In fact it was only child pornography which was prosecuted.

The new criminal code, of 1997, (criminal code Dz. U. from 1997 r. nr 163 pos. 1363, later amended; Chapter XXV, Crimes against sexual freedoms and decorousness), effective September, 1, 1998, legalized soft pornography. Thus, presently, erotic and pornographic press is legal in Poland⁴.

The current regulation sanctions freedom from pornography to those who do not wish to be exposed and to protect children. The criminal code prohibits hard pornography, that is including children, violence or animals, and allows, through lack of statute, soft pornography. This is a type of compromise in a world where pornography, virtually without limitations, can be accessed (through the Internet, satellite TV) from countries where the law is more liberal.⁵

The introduction of such law resulted in the regulation of legal issues and a creation of standards for publishers and distributors of such press.⁶

III. Erotic press market in Poland – members and functioning

During communist times, a few illustrated magazines contained, in a limited scope, erotic illustrations. Generally, pornography was a taboo subject on the official media market, press and film, therefore, the pornographic market existed solely underground. With freedom of the press, after the 1989 turnover, it was officially made legal.⁷ Public opinion research on the subject is rather ambiguous and its results largely depend on the wording of the questions in the surveys and the way they are carried out (due to this they should be discussed separately).⁸

³ M. Filar, Pornografia w Polsce w świetle prawa, "Problemy Rodziny" 1989, nr 3.

⁴ This means magazines which do not include minors (initially under 15, changed in 2004 to 18 years of age) with violent content or animals. Production of such materials is prohibited under the punishment of fine and up to 8 years of imprisonment (par. 3 art. 202). Prohibited is also presentation of pornographic content if it may reach people who may not wish it, with up to 1 year imprisonment (par. 1 art. 202). Access or presentation or pornographic content to minors under 15, up to 2 years of imprisonment (par. 2 art. 202). Recording of pornographic content with minors under 15, up to 10 years in prison (par. 4 art. 202). Possession or importing of such content, between 3 months and 5 years (par. 4a art. 202). The court may also decide to confiscate equipment used to commit the offences (par. 1-4), even if they did not belong to the offender (par. 5 art. 202).

⁵ M. Filar, Przepisy seksualne w nowym polskim kodeksie karnym, "Problemy Rodziny" 1999, nr 2 – 3., J. Wojciechowski, Nie wiadomo, gdzie przebiega granica. Pornografia po 1 września 1998 r., "Rzeczpospolita", 03. 20. 1998.

⁶ Standards include putting the magazines in foil, stamping them with "For adults only", not including pornographic content on the covers. Distributors are also advised proper placement of such magazines on their shelves in order not to breach the law. The regulation states that distributors are not limit distribution because of its content. The practise is that only those distributors who wish to sell such magazines are offered them. See M. Maicki, Informacja dla P.T. sprzedawców współpracujących z RUCH P.A., "Twój Ruch" 2005, nr 4., J. Sochaczewski, Prawo kolportera, "Press" 2005, nr 4., E. Szafrńska, Erotyczne uspokojenie, "Twój Ruch" 2005, nr 2.

⁷ Nudity was present in select magazines (since 1960s), in weeklies "ITD" (1960 – 1990), "Razem" (1975 – 1991) and "Pan" (1987-1992) (similar to "Playboy"). Full nudity was, however, generally not acceptable until 1989. See P. Golik, op. cit.

⁸ See public opinion surveys in: Survey "Pornografia w oczach społeczeństwa" (January 14-17, 1994), Survey "Aktualne problemy i wydarzenia" ((116) January 13 – 18, 2000), <http://www.cbop.org.pl> (Centrum Badania

Predominantly, it is the men who are purchasers of erotic and pornographic press and films while women are in the minority.⁹ According to distributors, there are two main groups of recipients. The first, similarly to other countries, is young men. In the West, according to their research, it is the 18-23 years old age group. The second is older, above average earning men, who may buy up to several of the more expensive magazines monthly.¹⁰ The average reader profile, as measured by publishers based on letters, telephones and public surveys, is a man, living in the city, between 18-25, single, with secondary or vocational school education.¹¹

Generally, despite being legalized, erotic and pornographic industry is out of the public eye. The publishers are reluctant to disclose information on their activity, therefore any attempts to comprehensively research the subject are based on speculation. This is also due to the fact that its opponents are mainly interested in depicting this industry as larger than it is and in negative light.¹² Without doubt, however, is the fact that this industry has become an important sector on the press and the general market. In Poland, post 1989 (similarly to other Western countries and some post-communist ones as well) there was marked increased demand for it, also due to technological progress, and it resulted in more social acceptance and greater propagation (as well as rising demand again)¹³. Nevertheless, numerical data regarding circulation and accessibility of pornographic press is incomplete.¹⁴

The sex products market in Poland, including, besides film (several dozen a year) and press, sex-phone-ins (0-700 numbers), sex-shops (first one opened in Warsaw, May 1990, between 1993-1994 there were between 300-350, presently there are around 250), paid Internet services, etc., is estimated to bring in \$6-7 mln a year (according to 2002 data). This is only a fraction of the amount it generates in Western European countries, the Czech Republic or in Hungary. Pornography is generally expensive. In Western Europe the market is much richer in comparison. This is not only due to wealthier societies and greater demand but also to deep sociological changes, such as individualisation, disintegration of relations between the sexes and a separation of the three spheres – sex, eroticism and love, that have taken place there. Since pornography has become legalized and accessible in Poland, people have become used to it, but despite a relaxation of morals, in comparison to Western Europe, the changes are not nearly as deep.¹⁵

Opinii Społecznej website), Pentor Survey, 1997 [in:] W. Markiewicz, Tylko dla dorosłych, "Polityka" 2000, nr 5., Zbigniew Izdebski survey from 1997 [in:] T. Szlendak, Tożsamość porno-surfera, "Odra" 2003, nr 7 – 8., "Rzeczpospolita" survey: "Wydawnictwa erotyczne", by PBS [in:] R. Wróbel, Zakazany owoc, "Rzeczpospolita", 17. 02. 1997.

⁹ See A. Araszkiewicz, K. Szczuka, Kwadratura ciała. Pornografia dla kobiet?, "Res Publica Nowa", November 2000., Kobiety chętniej eksperymentują (Interview of A. Szeliga with the press secretary of Pink Press Ltd.. Krzysztof Garwatowski), "Focus Ekstra" 2006, nr 5., Pornografia nie musi być groźna (Interview by K. Izdebska with a sexologist prof. Zbigniew Izdebski), "Focus Ekstra" 2006, nr 5.

¹⁰ J. Kaperek, Polki są nieśmiałe. Erotyka – tak, pornografia – nie – mówią klienci, "Nasz Kolporter" 2004, nr 5. J. Matracki, Kobiety też kupują!, "Nasz Kolporter" 2004, nr 5.

¹¹ P. Makuła, Zastój w różowym interesie?, "Przekrój" 2004, nr 15., J. Matracki, Kuszące, nagie ciała, "Nasz Kolporter" 2004, nr 5.

¹² During work on the vetoed by President Kwasniewski act on pornography ban (1999-2000) the Seym Family Committee did not have data on the amount of pornography sales in Poland., See P. Czajkowski, A. Glembin, M. Topolski, Golizna bez paragrafu. Ustawa nie miała szans na skuteczność, "Nasz Kolporter" 2000, nr 4.,

¹³ Cf. B. McNair, op. cit., p. 79 – 84.

¹⁴ Only Silk Media and PPH Medipol Handel and Wydawnictwo belong to Press Publishers Association. The only erotic magazines (qualifying) subject to control by the Press Distribution Association are "Playboy", "Hustler" and "Twój Weekend". Silk Media has its circulation figures on their website. Also helpful was the "Katalog Mediów Polskich" by the UJ's Media Research Centre edited by Sylwester Dziki as well as press distributors' catalogues.

¹⁵ See P. Golik, Porn ban. The Parliamentarians' Clean Conscience, "The Warsaw Voice", 20. 02. 2000., M. Jarco (with H. Suchar, M. Suchowiejsko, D. Wiczorek), Owoc dozwolony, "Wprost", 30. 07. 2000., M. Klimkowski, Teraz Polka, "Wprost", 24. 02. 2002., I. Rycia, A. Grabek (wsp.), Bzyku na kocyku, "Newsweek Polska" 2003, nr 29., W. Wiśniewski, Eroгенne sfery popkultury, "Kultura Popularna" 2006, nr 1.

A system transformation that started in 1989, including the media market, is still happening and with it are quantity and quality changes. The press market now includes new erotic and pornographic magazines. Within this first decade we can distinguish various characteristic phases.¹⁶

The first phase (May 1989 to mid 1991), characterized as “spontaneously enthusiastic with forced transformations”, included tempestuous changes regarding new offers and their reception. It was a time of debiuts on the market, erotic and pornographic as well, and redefining of people’s reading habits. In each of the phases we can observe foreign capital investments looking for ways of expansion into these post communist countries.¹⁷

During the second phase of “ostensible stabilization and surface changes” (from mid 1991 to the end of 1992) the market was becoming more stable. The readers, especially the younger ones, have started buying more new magazines, specifically targeted at various interests, such as erotic (pornographic) or parapsychological. Domestic publishers were enjoying a period of great boom for their products. At this time, available were expensive foreign magazines right next to low-price domestic ones. Their circulation was relatively low in comparison but they sold very well, mostly because they were such a novelty (some sold within a couple of days).¹⁸

During the third phase, of “fierce competition for the market in the period of first concession trial” (from 1992/1993 to August 1994) there was a revolution in offer and an internationalisation of ownership with a growing position of ‘copies’ of well-known foreign titles.¹⁹

In the fourth phase, of “market development after the first concession trial and an invasion of German magazines” (from autumn/winter 1994 to the end of 1996), there was a clear strengthening of erotic press on the market.²⁰

In the fifth phase of “new divisions in the media market and advancing specialisation” (from early 1997 until today) there is continuing invasion of new publishers and magazines as well as a consolidation of the market. We can clearly observe the influence of the new criminal code which depenalised soft pornography. Presently there is more availability of men lifestyle magazines which are evolving as a result of intensifying sexuality in mass culture (see below). Polish publishers are adapting to competition from abroad or to foreign investors on the market and the *know-how*. We can also witness growing visualisation, specialisation

¹⁶ This part of the text with its data was based on: Z. Bajka, *Kapitał zagraniczny w prasie polskiej – lata dziewięćdziesiąte*, “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze” 1998, nr 1– 2., Z. Bajka, *Kapitał zagraniczny w polskich mediach*, “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze” 1994, nr 1 – 2., P. Dziki (ed.), *Katalog Prasy Polskiej (Katalog Mediów Polskich)*, Kraków 1991/1992 – 1998/1999., R. Filar, *Dziesięć lat przemian mediów masowych w Polsce (1989–1999)*. *Propozycja periodyzacji*, “Zeszyty Prasoznawcze” 1999, nr 1 – 2., L. Gorgi, R. J. Pohoryles (with. I. Kováts, J. Mikulowski-Pomorski, A. Sawicz, B. Köpplöva, J. Jirak), *Media in Transition: The Cases Of Hungary, Poland And Czechia*, Vienna 1994., G. Sieczkowski, *Nagość na papierze. Prasa erotyczna w Polsce*, „Rzeczpospolita”, 1994.11.02., http://www.obp.pl/03-raport/2001/fifty_monthlies_of_highest.htm (strona internetowa Ośrodka Badań Prasoznawczych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego).

¹⁷ It was then when the following magazines were launched, in 1989: “Okay”, “Filo” (1986), “Seksrety”, “High Quality – Kabaret”; in 1990: “Cats”, “Inaczej”, “Magazyn Foto Sex”, “Magazyn Men”, “Sexi Magazyn”, “Sexodrama”, “Sexy Top”, “Topless”; in 1991: “Sex i Ty”, “Erotyka”, “Nago”, “Donosiciel – Miesięcznik Erotyczny”, “Soft”, “Facet” (earlier „Filo”), “Peep Show”, “Sexi – Magazyn”, “Erotyka w Literaturze i Życiu” and many others.

¹⁸ At that time launched were, in 1992: “High Society”, “No 1 International”, “Penthouse”, “Playboy”, “Playstar International”, “Sex Donosiciel”, “Twój Weekend”, “Wamp”; Average circulation (magazines targeted at heterosexuals) was between 60 000 (“Erotyka w Literaturze i Życiu”) and 320 000 (“Twój Weekend”). Gay magazines between 7 000 (“Magazyn Men”) to 20 0000 (“High Quality – Kabaret”).

¹⁹ Launched were, in 1993: “Erotyczny Donosiciel”; in 1994: “Eroticon”, “Humor Erotyczny i Nietylko”.

²⁰ Launched were in 1995: “CD Erotyka”, “Extasy”, “Nowy Wamp”, “Polskie Dziewczyny”, “Sexolatki”, “Sex Randka”, “Super Wamp”; in 1996: “Poradnik Erotyczny”, “Sexi – Poradnik”. At the time circulation ranged from 35 000 (“Erotyka w Literaturze i Życiu”) to 285 000 (“Cats”), with five with a circulation over 100 000. Gay magazines: from 7 000 (“Magazyn Men”) to 20 000 (Okay). Returns ranged from 17% (“Sex Donosiciel”) to 41 % (“Sexolatki”).

(beginnings of segmentation) and multimedialisation (combining traditional press with other media).²¹

Since the beginning, this market has undergone great changes in its functioning. After the big boom from the early 1990s, it was not easy keep up the sales at the same level, and not just because eroticism has ceased to be a novelty. Most Polish editors were initially publishing at very low editorial and print levels and, as a result, could not compete with on the market. They were eventually pushed out of it by either Polish versions of well known foreign magazines or more dynamic Polish ones.²² Foreign investors, as early as 1990, were entering our market. In the wider context what was taking place was filling market segments of the Polish transforming press market by foreign capital.²³

The dynamic changes taking place on this supply and demand market were also due to fast development of the electronic media, growing access to the Internet and digital technology. Another factor was the expansion of “sex telephone” market with the development of mobile phone (UMTS) technologies and other portable technologies such as palmtops, smartphones and other receivers. Publishing houses had to respond and they turned to multimedia by adding to their offer CDs or DVDs with erotic photographs and films as well as developing Internet services. The present offer is multimedial of which the traditional press is only a part of the business.²⁴

In the mid 1990s on the market appeared combo publishers which sold magazines together with erotic films on VHS tapes and later with DC-ROMs and DVDs, due to advancements in digital technologies. These publishers limited content and size to a minimum (they are mostly geared toward sales of multimedia as well as series of erotic/pornographic

²¹ Launched were, in 1997: “Erotyczny Detektyw”, “Facet”, “Film X Hit”, “Polski Wamp”, “Sex Kontakt Magazyn”, “Sekstra +”, “Twoje Życie Intymne”; in 1998: “Adam”, “Afrodyta”, “Erotyka – Wczoraj, Dziś i Zawsze”, “Escort”, “Hustler”, “Intim Kontakt”, “Panorama Seksu”, “Polki w Łóżku”, “Sex Fantasy”, “Ściśle Prywatnie”; in 1999: “Gejzer”, “Sex Live”, “Sex Player”, “Video Show”, “Striptiz”, “Turbo CD”; in 2000: “Markiz”; in 2001: “Alexxx”; 2002: “On i On”; in 2003: “Lolity”, “Sexy Stars”; in 2004: “One to Lubią”, “Imperium Sexu”; in 2005: “Gazeta Towarzyska”, “Foto Akt”, “Polki Prywatnie”, “Przez Dziurkę”, “Sextrem”; in 2006: “Teraz 18”, “Sex Randka”. In 2001 among the magazines with the highest circulation the top 7 were: “Cats” (13, 285), “Extasy” (18, 250), “Sex Fantasy” (19, 250), “Sex Kontakt Magazyn” (20, 250), “Striptiz” (21, 250), “Wamp” (37, 170), “Peep Show” (44, 155).

²² These are no longer existing publishers with large circulation magazines: Euro – Serwis, later “Fand A International” Ltd (Fred van Egen owner, later co-owner) between 1992 and 2001 published: “Wamp” (1992), “Super Wamp” (1995), “Film X Hit” (1997); Oficyna Wydawnicza “Mar – Ciz” Ltd. publishing: “Erotyka w Literaturze i Życiu”, “Sexodrama” and Donosiciel publishing “Donosiciel”, “Donosiciel – Miesięcznik Erotyczny” (1991), “Sex Donosiciel” (1992), “Erotyczny Donosiciel” (1993).

²³ German, British and American companies issue licences to Polish partners who, using their own capital but under the original company’s same, publish magazines, ie. “Penthouse” (two issues of the American version in 1992), “Playboy”, “Larry Flint’s Hustler”, etc. This means low costs for publishers and great profits. Local partners are willing to take the risk associated with publishing these magazines in exchange for materials they can use from the original versions. According to unofficial information, it cost \$200 000 to publish “Hustler” in Poland. Another form is exporting a magazine into Poland, publishing it in identical form as the original or only slightly modified, of course in Polish language. These are calque copies. Also, there are partnerships and branches of foreign companies on the market. However, not all companies have names which allow us to recognize the owner. Z. Bajka, op. cit., M. Wosion, Między Starrem a Urbanem, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 01.10.1998., A. Zarembo, A. Szarlik (wsp.), W poszukiwaniu nowych zdobyczy, “Newsweek Polska” 2002, nr 36.

²⁴ See M. Hausman, WAPseks, “Wprost”, 27. 05. 2001., P. Kościelniak, Dzielnica czerwonych witryn. Pornografia w Internecie, „Rzeczpospolita”, 12. 07. 2000., A. Krępski, Ciało jako towar rynkowy, “Ozon” 2006, nr 1., P. Stefański, Już nie tylko na papierze, <http://www.cyber.com.pl/archiwum/sex/21.shtml> (“Cyber” website), P. Tkacz, Cyberporn, <http://www.cyber.com.pl/archiwum/sex/7.shtml> (“Cyber” website), http://wirtualnemedial.pl/document,,515116,Pornografia_w_telefonach_warta_1_mld_USD.html (Wirtualne Media website), http://wirtualnemedial.pl/document,,679347,Erotyka_podbija_maly_ekran.html (Wirtualne Media website).

films). Within the last few years we can clearly observe increased interest in such magazines, with multimedia supplements, as opposed to press only.²⁵

It is the Internet which has had the greatest impact on publishers and their diminishing circulation and which has now become a key place where publishers promote their offers and products on the Polish market.²⁶

Observation and analysis of the data which is available allows us to come up with some conclusions. The basic factors which determine the amount of sales are: price, position, quality and advertising. An increasing number of publishers and price competition lead to a price war and, in result, very little difference in the price of offered products. This is advantageous for buyers who have a better opportunity to choose the type of product which best suits their needs and interests. At the same time, it makes publishers increase the quality of the offer without increasing the price or, in result, to cost cutting.

Market segmentation, as was the case in Western Europe and the US, looking for open niche markets, and preparing products targeted at recipients with particular and specific tastes allows publishers to sell their products at a higher price.

Erotic press has a limited range of advertising it can use. On the other hand, there are many products which cannot be advertised everywhere. Resulting is a nice trade-off, in this type of press advertisers can promote their products targeted at adults and are not limited by regulation in mainstream press (different regulation for magazines in plastic bags).²⁷

At the same time, for obvious reasons, advertising of such type of press is rather limited in scope.²⁸

Also the publishers became aware of the fact that some readers were interested in purchasing their archive materials at a lower price and have made such sales available through, for example, package sales or return sales of elements of products not sold previously (magazines, CDs, VCDs, DVDs). These are sold at lower prices but are of no extra cost of production. This was an ingenious idea as it considerably increased profits for many publishers (return sales of multimedia products are done by small publishers).²⁹

What was going on in the Polish market was typical and quite similar to what was going on in other countries where the distribution regulation is comparable, through open networks of press distributors such as kiosks, newsstands, etc.

With time the Polish erotic press market became saturated, consolidated and divided. Presently there are about 20 publishers remaining (including multimedia and film publishers), of which there are only a few major ones and these can be considered true media tycoons (as far as circulation).³⁰

²⁵ Some of these magazines advertise new films but what they include in their magazines are fragments of several films. VHS, VideoCD (VCD), DVDs expand what the reader can find in the magazine. There are also multimedia magazines with films (entire or fragments) and photo galleries or others with more typical computer gadgets (games, screen savers, etc.) and others with entire films.

²⁶ Most of these also offer Internet services, with complete information (for partners, readers, advertisers) about the company and its products and many other services, ie. forums, photo galleries, films, classifieds, sales of products (sex shops products, logos, screen savers, short films, erotic games, etc.) and services (sex phone-ins 0-700 numbers, night clubs). See http://wirtualnemedia.pl/document,,75870,Prasa_erotyczna_w_Internecie.html (Wirtualne Media website).

²⁷ The content includes advertising of magazines, sex shop products, erotic lingerie, condoms, some types of cosmetics, parapharmaceuticals, their manufacturers, distributors and sellers, Internet services (paid), phone-ins, happenings (erotic fairs, international festivals of erotic films) and classifieds (new erotic magazines will continue to emerge targeted at classifieds, in connection with night clubs and services).

²⁸ It is possible to advertise in other press, the Internet or sex shops. Silk Media, in 2005, advertised the sale of "Twój Weekend" in a radio commercial, spot on premature ejaculation was broadcasted by RMF FM, owned by Agora P.A. and in other local radio stations (keep in mind this magazine is rather more lifestyle/entertainment profiled).

²⁹ The materials available can be re-sold later (in sex-shops) but there is also organized illegal sale of returns which means losses for publishers.

³⁰ J. Matracki, op. cit.

A Koszalin based publisher, PWU "Bałtyk", in November 1989 created the monthly "Seksrety" which is the longest running printed erotic monthly in this country. It focuses on classified ads geared toward people meeting each other.³¹

The first foreign investor was the Danish publisher, Scandinavia Publishing House. It created a limited liability company with Polish capital, the Scandinavia – Poland Publishing House Ltd.. (the largest shareholder of "Cats" magazine). In autumn of 1990, launched was the well prepared monthly "Cats", a copy of the Scandinavian version. Later, launched were two others "Extra Raport" and "Playstar International" (issued for the last time in 1995). This company is also the publisher of para-scientific and para-psychological magazines (such as the later sold "Nie z tej Ziemi").³²

P.P.H.U. "OMIX" from Mikołow has been publishing, since 1991, magazines "Peep Show" (also with CDs and VCDs) and "Sexolatki" (1995) (as well as the not existant anymore "Sexi – Poradnik Erotyczny" (1996)), which include a variety of Polish materials only. The company also runs various erotic Internet portals. This is only one of its branches as it also possesses hobby and advertising magazines.³³

The Łódź based PPH Medipol Handel i Wydawnictwo company publishes licenced Polish versions of "No 1. International" (by Modern Publisher from Munich) (1991) and "Night Society" (1992) (initially it was under the name "High Society", like its original version, published since 1981 by the American Crescent Publishing Group Inc.).³⁴

Generally there are many presently socially accepted erotic titles on the Polish press market.³⁵ One of these is "Playboy" magazine, which entered the Polish market in 1992 as a version of the American original created by Hugh Hefner (Playboy Enterprises International – also running erotic TV channels and Internet portals). Early on it was published via VIPress Poland Ltd.. (until 2002), and presently by Marquard Media Polska Ltd. It is magazine for men combining journalism, literature and photography.³⁶

Also one of Europe's largest publishers, PK62 (public company), entered the Polish market. Created in 1990 in the Czech Republic, it publishes magazines with a combined circulation of 500 000/month. The next largest are MP Media, s.r.o. and KLAREX, s.r.o. (limited liability companies). PK62 also opened a chain of sex-shops, erotic bars and set up Internet portals (IMAR Ltd.). Apart from the Czech Republic and Poland, it is also active in other post-communist country markets and in Western Europe and North America. Its offer is quite diversified, from subtle erotic press to more unconventional magazines. It can be found on the top of many sales lists.³⁷ In Poland, as Saturn Publishing, it is present since 1995 with

³¹ <http://www.seksrety.com.pl> ("Seksrety" website).

³² Z. Bajka, op. cit.

³³ <http://peep-show.pl> ("Peep Show" website).

³⁴ <http://www.no1international.pl> (PPH Medipol Handel i Wydawnictwo website).

³⁵ Because there is so much available through the Internet and, as a result, printed pornography is on the decrease, there emerged a new generation of magazines which write, instead of showing, more about sex and sexology. They target the most desirable (advertising wise) readers and do not put off advertisers. More magazines are taking this route, becoming more lifestyle profiled, including also "Hustler". Their existence is dependent on readers' demand for these type of magazines. This trend can also be observed in the West where new segments of such press are springing up. Such publishers include monthlies "CKM" (since 1998, also in Serbia, Montenegro and Hungary, by Marquard Media Polska Ltd.), "Machina" (1995 – 2002, re-activated in 2006, by Platforma Mediowa Point Group), "He" (non-existant anymore) and "Maxim" (international British magazine, since 1995, with versions in over 20 countries, in Poland between 2001-2003 published by Hachette Filipacchi Polska sp. z o.o.). See J. Matracki, Najbogatsze i najpewniejsze – raport o rynku miesięczników, „Nasz Kółporter” 2004, nr 9., B. McNair, op. cit., p. 97 – 101.

³⁶ See A. Zarembo, A. Szarlik (wsp.), op. cit., <http://www.playboy.com> ("Playboy" website).

³⁷ Offering on the Czech market magazines such as "Magazines Leo", "Leo Speciál", "Extáze", "Fantastic", "Sex Kontakt Magazyn", "České Ložnice", "České Ložnice Speciál", "Porno Roku", "Flirt", "Sexystars", "Sex Rande", "Leo Čtení", "Leo Album", "Markýz", "Megalsex", "WWWsex", "Hardcore International", "Právě 18", "Oldies" and "Perfect Girls". Present in Slovakia (3 magazines plus those available in the Czech Republic), Hungary (3 magazines), the Ukraine (3 magazines), Canada (1 magazine), Austria (2 magazines), France (in French, also in Canada, 3 magazines) and in Norway (2 magazines). <http://www.pk62.cz/english/indem.html>

the monthlies: “Extasy”, later the “Sex Kontakt Magazyn” (1997) (classifieds), “Sex Fantasy” (1998), “Adam” (1998) (gay magazine presently published by Softpress) and “Sex Randka” (2006) (classifieds), bimonthlies: “Polki w Łóżku” (1998), “Striptiz” (1999), “Markiz” (2000), quarterlies: “Mega Sex”, “Sexy Stars” (2003), “Teraz 18” (2006), a semi-annual “Lolity” (2003) as well as occasionally published: “Extasy Album”, “Extasy Special”, “Megalsex” and “Lesbijki”. These are all Polish versions of Czech originals. Additionally, it publishes the “Stylowy Dom” (2003) magazine, a Polish version of “Moderni Byt”, an interior design magazine (Amconex Ltd. Publishing).³⁸

The Warsaw publisher Pink Press Ltd., created in 1995, initially published a gay magazine “Nowy Men” and one for heterosexuals “Nowy Wamp” (1995). According to data from 2002, this publisher controlled about 50% of erotic press market in Poland. It also had in its offer various Internet services (heterosexual and gay), sex phone-ins (0-700), mail-order Erotica, a chain of sex-shops in large cities, the “Pink Shop”, distribution of foreign films and its own productions (VHS, VCD, DVD) for the domestic market and for export (first pornographic Polish production was made by Pink Press in 1995) and it organized the sex fair Erotikon. Presently it publishes about 25 different magazines, most with multimedia supplements such as “Nowy Wamper” (with CD), “Wamper Exclusive” (with VCD), “Nowy Wamper CD” (with VCD and erotic computer programmes), “Nowy Wamper DVD” (based on an erotic TV programme), “Polski Wamper” (with a video magazine on VCD), “Ściśle Prywatne” (1998) (no supplements, initially with VHS, CD or DVD option), “Eroticon” (a bimonthly on the world of erotic showbusiness, with a foreign erotic film), “Sextra +” (1999) (a picture album, with a DVD film, available also in Spanish and Italian) as well as “Polski Sex CD” (a magazine with Polish CD film). Pink Press also publishes special editions and re-editions of magazines of small publishers (in order to re-sell multimedia products not sold previously). It also publishes gay magazines.³⁹

The Wrocław publisher, Lekos, also established in 1995, was one of the first to introduce supplements such as discs with pictures and erotic and pornographic films. It publishes “Sex Kolekcja”, “Video Life”, “Video Show” (VHS), “CD Show”, “Gazeta Męska”, “Mega Flash CD”, “Turbo CD” (1999), “Sex Hit CD”. There are also several other smaller publishers with a similar profile (this market segment is rather dynamic, publishers often go in and out of business). There is also RK System which publishes bimonthlies with CDs: “Sex CD”, “Hot Video Club”, “Video 69”, “Ekstra CD”, “Flash CD”, “Amatorki” as well as Nimfa with: “Sex Player”, “CD Show” and “Video Show” a magazine with a VHS cassette.⁴⁰

Missouri Corporation Ltd. from Jabłonna near Warsaw publishes monthlies “Erotyka – Wczoraj, Dziś i Zawsze” (1998), “Intim Kontakt” (1998) (classifieds), bimonthlies: “Amator Sex”, “Sex Live” (1999), “Afrodyta” (1998), “Sextrem” (2005) as well as the presently suspended version of a British magazine “Escort” (1998) by Paul Raymond Publications. Some of these magazines are also available in the Czech Republic, published by MP Media.⁴¹

In December 1998 launched was the first Polish edition of “Hustler”, created in 1974 by Larry Flint in America, having 25 copy versions worldwide. The European versions had to be changed somewhat as American Hustler’s shocking scandals and provocations (social and political) were not received well here. The magazine’s profile was changed to be more lifestyle type. It was initially published by Sławomir Grotomirski (Movex sp. z o.o.) out of

(strona internetowa Wydawnictwa PK62 a.p.), J. Benda, *Zahranicní kapitál v českých vydavatelstvích*, Praha 2006, p. 32.

³⁸ <http://www.extasy.pl> (Saturn Publishing website), <http://www.stylowydom.amconex.pl> (Amconex website).

³⁹ M. Klimkowski, *Teraz Polka*, “Wprost”, 24. 02. 2002., <http://www.pinkpresp.pl/prasa> (Pink Press website).

⁴⁰ <http://www.lekop.com>. (Lekos website), <http://www.sexcd.pl> (RK System website).

⁴¹ MP Media has in its offer magazines such as “Amatér sex”, “Česká milenka”, “České péčko”, “Erectus 55”, “Escort”, “Fontána”, “Inspirace”, “Intim kontakt”, “Mini Cats”, “Pussy Cats”, “Sexploze” and “Sextrem”. <http://www.erotyka.com> (Missouri Corporation Ltd. website), <http://www.sexclub.co.uk> (Paul Raymond Publications website), J. Benda, op. cit., p. 32.

Cracow. (Later it was printed under a similar "Hunter" name due to rifts with the Americans). Since 2002 it has been published by Geronia Poland Sp. z o.o., part of Hustler's international consortium in South and East Europe (Passavia Ltd. registered in Cyprus). There is also a bimonthly "Hustler DVD Book", with an erotic film.⁴²

In Wroclaw, in 2003, established was Silk Media company. Its first magazine was a biweekly "Twoj Weekend" taken from a German publisher H. Bauer Verlag (also active in Poland, under the same name). It was a Polish version (since 1992) of the German weekly "Wochenende". It was an erotic magazine which also included sexological advice, travel information, general 'life stories' and miscellaneous (more like an entertainment/advice magazine). The same is true in Poland (with a circulation of 91.5 thousand according to an Internet site). Its other magazines each vary from each other and are clearly profiled, from hobbyist to pornographic. In 2004, launched was the first magazine originally created by Silk Media, a monthly "One to Lubią" (circulation of 50 thousand). With the same logo there are also special editions with, for example, DVDs. In 2005, launched were two new bimonthlies "Przez Dziurkę" (60 000 circulation) and "Polki Prywatnie" (55 000 thousand) as well as a quarterly "Foto Akt" (15 000). The latter is a Polish edition of the international magazine "The New Nude", published by Portugese Ocinum – Marketing e Consultadoria, Lda. It is a high profile nude photography magazine targeted at wealthy professionals and amateur photographers.⁴³

Digital Red Publishing Ltd. is a publisher of erotic films (Italian, Spanish and American) on VideoCD and DVD: "Po Godzinach DVD", "Twoje Tabu", "Super Sex CD", "Erotyka CD", "Kolekcja DVD Erotyka", "Erotyka DVD" and "18 – tki w Akcji" as well as the multimedia magazine "PC Relax".⁴⁴ There are also a few other similar magazines of smaller publishers.

Another group of magazines are those targeted at minority groups, for homosexual women and men, comprising 3-5% of the population, which have been undergoing a boom since 1989.⁴⁵ There are two publishers specialising in this category. The above mentioned Pink Press Publishing launched "Nowy Men" in 1995. It also publishes other magazines which vary from each other and are clearly profiled: "Nowy Men Video DVD" with VCD and DVDs, "Nowy Men VCD", "Nowy Men Wydanie Specjalne", "Men Only", "Men Only – Pakiet", "Euromen Journal" and "Alexxx" (2001). There is also a monthly "Gejzer" (1999) with socio-cultural issues of gay societies as well as eroticism (pornography) (60-70% of content). It annually awards "Teczowe Laury" awards to politicians and artists for tolerance. Additionally Pink Press also owns an Internet portal "Polski Portal Gejowski".⁴⁶

The other publisher is the Poznan based Softpress Publishing. In its offer are magazines "Adam" (1998) (initially published by Saturn Publishing Ltd.) and "On i On" (2002). Moreover, it also prints works of literature and journalism targeted at homosexuals and owns the "POLGEJ.PL" Internet portal.⁴⁷

It seems that it is difficult for new publishers to enjoy success in this press market segment (eroticism and pornography). This is mostly because it is already very saturated. New players have to be price and quality competitive (through deeper market segmentation) with their offered products. However, regarding profits the market is still rather promising which can be observed based on new initiatives. Its functioning shows that despite foreign capital and publishers' experiences from even more competitive markets our domestic

⁴² M. Czarnecka, Skandalista branży, "Wprost", 25. 10. 1998., Hustler powraca na polski rynek, <http://www.mediarun.pl/news/id/2303> ("Mudiarun" website), Seks polityczny (Interview with Larry Flynt by M. Larco.), "Wprost", 08. 11. 1998.

⁴³ <http://www.silkmedia.pl> (Silk Media website), http://wirtualnemedial.pl/document.69482.Bauer_bez_erotyki.html (Wirtualne Media website).

⁴⁴ <http://www.digitalred.pl> (Digital Red website).

⁴⁵ See M. Gromadzka, Polska prasa gejowska, "Mediator" 2004, nr 1 – 2.

⁴⁶ <http://www.gay.pl> ("Polski Portal Gejowski" website).

⁴⁷ <http://www.polgej.pl> (Softpress website).

publishers are doing quite well and are able to remain competitive in this segment.⁴⁸

IV. Conclusion

Writing about erotic (pornographic) press is only part of a much wider issue which also encompasses the essence, appeal and meaning of pornography. This article attempts to present the transformations which have occurred on the Polish market and those regarding readership since 1989. This requires hard data which is not easy to find (regarding entire press market) as publishers are generally not keen of disclosing this type of information due to the possibility of the competition or their opponents taking advantage of such knowledge.

Fast technological progress leads to erotic press having acute competition from the new technologies which can offer easier access, cheaper and more discrete ways of pornography consumption than magazine or VHS, VCD or DVD films. This does not, however, mean the end of erotic press. It seems that its existence will not only depend on people's access to the Internet and further telecommunication technologies progress but also on society's wealth and social changes taking place. Regarding the latter, the Polish market is predominantly a consumer and a recipient of new trends in the media rather than a co-creator.

It is difficult to say what the future holds for erotic press market in Poland formally as there is no clear pornography regulation. It seems that the functioning of the market is largely dependent on the political situation at a given time in the country.

Today the erotic and pornographic market is largely shaped by foreign investors, their capital and experience. The domestic market is on the rise and it does seem to have profitable perspectives. In a situation where the popularity of printed magazines is on the decrease, in more developed and competitive markets, our market is becoming all the more so attractive. We can then expect new publishers and types of magazines entering the stage and, at the same time, new developments in the market's structure and functioning.

⁴⁸ See J. Matracki, *op. cit.*