

Public Images, Private Lives: Blurring Truth and Fantasy in the World of Professional Bondage and Discipline

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Abstract

Public images and private lives often do not match up. Indeed, social life is premised as much on what is not shown as it is on what is revealed. Concealment, deception and the blurring of truth and fantasy can be fundamental for social life. Advertising services in the Australian sex industry, as with advertising many other services and products, relies on appealing to a market by blurring truth and fantasy. This is even more pronounced in the realm of professional Bondage and Discipline (BD), where service providers cater for a niche market revolving around fetish, role play and mind games. In this paper I look at the public perception of those offering BD services, with newspaper advertisements providing the most visible medium by which opinions are formed of this underground group of professional players, who are generally included as part of a city's sex industry. I also examine the blurring of truth and fantasy in order to cater for a relatively small group of individuals, where competition is high and repeat business is essential to earn a living.

Keywords: Professional BDSM, sex industry, advertising, framing client relationships, exchange of power in relationships.

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Introduction

Every city has an underground network where a number of activities and transactions occur. These include trading in illicit goods, money laundering, and contacts between the criminal elements of a city. The sex industry is seen as part of this underground city, not necessarily because of its legal status; rather due to the stigma often attached to working in this industry. While brothels provide a visible venue for sex worker-client interaction, not all sex workers or their clients wish to use such obvious premises. In Australia sex work is not illegal, with laws varying from state to state as to how services can be advertised. How clients and sex workers connect with each other is of interest to me, and here I have focussed specifically on one group of service providers in order to narrow down my field of research when looking at what can be said in an advertisement and what this reveals.

This paper aims to address the gap in scholarship by examining the way professional BDSM services are advertised to attract clients, the effect this has on public perception, and how those who work in this field strive to protect the boundaries between their work and private lives. I will argue it is necessary to blur truth and fantasy in the realm of professional bondage and discipline, where providers cater for a niche market that revolves around fetish, role play and mind games.

Methodology

This research was carried out in Perth, Western Australia from 2010 to 2015, during which time I conducted open-ended interviews with 27 women who were working or had worked as professional BD service providers in Perth, interstate and overseas. Although transsexuals do offer professional BD services, my focus was on women providing these services for men, because the clients who see transsexuals are after a different type of service from a small number of providers. I also interviewed 42 men who were clients in professional dungeons, or who frequented these establishments in the capacity of slave or 'Sissy Maid.'¹ I observed some of the daily routines² by being allowed to sit in the 'girls' room³ of five professional dungeons in Perth. On several occasions, I was invited as an observer into sessions where the clients wanted someone to watch them being disciplined, cross dressing, or as an adult baby. Over the same period of time I also had many discussions with more than 80 adults who participate in BDSM as a lifestyle choice, having been invited to their social gatherings. Here I was able to discuss some of the differences between private sessions of play and the services offered by professional BD providers. It is interesting to note not all lifestyle BDSM participants have a positive view of those providing professional services. I also had informal discussions with members of the public not connected to the BDSM industry or lifestyle over the period of my research, in an attempt to gauge their responses to paid sexual and BD services. I

¹ A Sissy Maid is a man who usually dresses as a maid and serves the Mistress of an establishment, performing duties as required.

² These routines included how bookings were managed so that clients did not see each other, cleaning and maintenance of rooms and equipment, discussions on safety, dealing with difficult clients, phone etiquette, etc.

³ This is usually an area reserved for Mistresses and submissives to relax in when they are not in a booking. However, cross dressed clients sometimes had coffee and chatted "in role" with the girls in this area of the house.

examined the narratives in newspaper advertisements then discussed these with professional BD providers, clients who used such services, members of the Perth BDSM community, and people who had no connection with these activities. I was able to gather information on how a number of people from these different perspectives view professional BD services and their opinions of those who worked in this field.

Context

“It’s a fine line between pleasure and pain” is a line from a popular song by Chrissie Amphlett and the Divinyls. This comment seems to hint pain can be pleasurable at times, which is the basis of much of the sensual play that occurs in what can be described as an erotic consensual exchange of power (Weiss, 2006, p232). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the practice referred to as BDSM, which includes activities such as bondage, discipline, domination, submission, sadism, and masochism.

There has been very little research into the prevalence of professional BDSM and the experience of those who participate in it, either as service providers or clients. Much of the existing research deals with therapy to ‘treat’ individuals with BDSM tendencies. Generally, however, BDSM individuals do not view themselves as being in need of psychological treatment, rather as simply having a preference for different sensual and sexual activities (Kolmes et al, 2006, p303). Gayle Rubin argues,

Most people find it difficult to grasp that whatever they like to do sexually will be thoroughly repulsive to someone else, and that whatever repels them sexually will be the most treasured delight of someone, somewhere...Most people mistake their sexual preferences for a universal system that will or should work for everyone. (Rubin, 1984, p283)

BDSM individuals have long been considered deviant. As early as 1905, the iconic Freud regarded sadism and masochism as sexual aberrations because they deviated from what he called the “normal sexual aim” of penile-vaginal intercourse between two people of the opposite sex (see Strachey, 1953, pp157-160). This regard for BDSM practices as deviant is still prevalent in society and has forced many participants to hide their fetishes, or to seek out discreet professional providers when other options are not available. Professional Mistresses and submissives⁴ cater for this niche market by providing services, equipment, clothing and props to clients in a non-judgmental atmosphere.

The focus of professional sessions is on fulfilling the client’s fantasy through activities that may involve psychological and sensory stimulation. Erotic acts of domination or submission, role play, bondage, punishment, and humiliation can be incorporated into scenarios to cater for the needs of the client. This exchange of power between the players is usually governed by set rules established before the

⁴ Professional providers of domination are usually referred to as Mistresses, Dommes, Dominatrices, or Pro-Dommes. Those who provide professional submissive services may be known as pro-submissives, pro-sub, submissives, or slaves. The convention is that dominant terms have a capital letter, while submissive terms are written in lower case. Here I will use the terms Mistress and submissive, with these being the titles I observed in common usage. However, during a session these forms of address between the worker and the client often vary, depending upon the scenario.

session begins, or as the result of repeated sessions. Knowing a client's boundaries and limits is vital so these can be reached and explored safely, thus enabling the client to maximise the experience⁵.

Professional BD providers do not see themselves as sex workers, although they are part of the sex industry in Australia. The Mistresses and submissives I have spoken with insist there is no sex during their sessions; the focus is on erotic, sensual domination or submission. In the BD industry, what constitutes sex is, at times, ambiguous. This is where the truth can be blurred to suit the situation. A BD session may involve oral sex (French), hand relief, insertion of sex toys, or using a strap-on for anal penetration, but if vaginal intercourse is avoided, it is generally accepted the client and BD service provider have not had sex. Many Mistresses expressed disdain for BD providers who also offered sex as part of their services, with one Mistress describing them as "just a hooker with a whip." This phrase was used derisively by both professional BD workers and some experienced clients to describe a sex worker who had added a bit of kink to her repertoire by using equipment such as handcuffs, blindfolds and floggers, without any training.⁶

BDSM practices seem to be making more of an appearance in films, television programmes and books which are not classified as pornography. This may indicate that at least the thought or the imagery attached to these erotic practices is becoming more acceptable to mainstream Western society. The record-breaking sales of the 2011 novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* along with the subsequent books in the trilogy indicate this sub-genre of BD romance is extremely popular. For several years now, shops and internet sites selling adult toys have stocked equipment for both the serious BDSM players and those who just want to add a little spice to their sex life. The *Fifty Shades* phenomenon has seen a huge increase in the sales of what is classed as soft BD equipment; fur-lined handcuffs, blindfolds, and fun games with instructions such as 'tickle me' or 'spank me' on dice.⁷ This however, is all viewed as just a bit of fun by people I interviewed in adult shops. Serious BDSM players and those who provide professional services in this field are still generally misunderstood because the equipment they use looks more dangerous than these toys. Television crime dramas such as *Wire in the Blood* have storylines depicting characters using bondage and discipline for sexual abuse, torture, and murder, with these characters often portrayed as suffering from mental illness (Barker et al, 2007, p109). Several BDSM activities are listed as paraphilia⁸ by the American Psychiatric Association, thus perpetuating the idea that those who indulge in such practices are to be viewed with caution.

Advertising

When considering advertising in the sex industry, two questions come to mind. What is truth in a fantasy world? How far can the truth be stretched before it becomes a lie?

⁵ Information obtained from extensive interviewing and observations by the author.

⁶ All the interviewed professional BD providers took pride in the fact that they researched their craft, practised, and were willing to pass knowledge on to new people in the industry, as one might pass on any trade.

⁷ Information was gained from interviews with staff at several adult shops in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney, and through examining advertisements for internet suppliers of sex toys and equipment.

⁸ A type of psychosexual disorder marked by sexual urges, fantasies, and behaviour involving objects, suffering or humiliation.

Sales and marketing ploys often involve playing with the truth to sell a product or service, enhancing the good points and playing down the bad. The sex industry is no different. Governance of advertising for any sector of the sex industry is near impossible. Newspaper editors can place controls and regulations on abbreviations, words and phrases, but verifying the truth is the domain of the client, who, after making an appointment and meeting the person who has advertised, has a small window of opportunity to decide whether or not to go through with the transaction. Although considered to be part of an industry, there is no central body to complain to if the description of the service or person in the newspaper advertisement does not, in the eyes of the client, meet with the reality, or if the service is not considered to be good value for money.

Demand for professional BD services is difficult to quantify, given the stigma attached to both working in this industry and using the services provided. Newspaper advertisements provide the most public view of what is happening in the Australian sex industry. The number of advertisements appears to be rising, according to representatives of a church-based anti-prostitution lobby group.⁹ Professional sexual and BD services are also advertised on internet websites, but one has to actively search for these, while the personal section of the classifieds¹⁰ is readily available in daily local newspapers, bringing these advertisements into our homes, workplaces, schools and cafes. Here I look at what the advertisements for professional Bondage and Discipline providers potentially can tell us, and also what they do not tell us, about this section of the Australian sex industry.

Advertising for the sex industry operates in a world of social types, where clients are attracted to stereotypes and specific fantasies, not real people. It is an industry that runs on signs and symbols rather than on reality, and this blurring of social reality helps to maintain its structure. Newspaper advertisements for professional Mistresses and submissives may portray a persona who is sexually insatiable, deviant, willing to inflict or receive pain, and keen to do almost anything. However, it is important to remember these advertisements are written to entice clients who are seeking a fantasy experience. They are framed in a way that does not always reflect a true picture of the person behind the advertisement, who is simply providing a service to those who wish to partake of it.

Advertisements for many goods and services are constructed in a way that highlights some features and plays down others. For example, real estate is a field where the truth is often stretched to accentuate the good points of a property while neglecting to mention the less desirable aspects. These tactics are prevalent in many forms of advertising with the sex industry being no different. Members of the general public I interviewed were able to accept that advertising a house as needing a little ‘tender loving care (TLC)’ could mean a substantial amount of work was required to make it habitable, but they did not seem to transfer this critical reading of advertising to the sex industry. Here, from the ethnographic evidence I have gathered, it seems more

⁹ This group claims to have counted the number of advertisements for sexual services on Wednesdays and Saturdays for the last five years. I sighted their records, which consisted of dates and numbers of advertisements.

¹⁰ The classifieds is a section of many newspapers where goods and services are advertised. This can include a personal or adult services section where phone chat lines, brothels, swingers clubs, private sex workers and sensual massage services are listed.

likely advertisements for sex workers are seen as accurate presentations of the people behind these short pieces of narrative.¹¹

When you see an advertisement in the classifieds for a 2008 Toyota Camry, you can be fairly sure the item for sale is indeed a 2008 Toyota Camry. Age, odometer reading, and several other claims are easy to verify upon seeing the vehicle and its registration papers. However, advertisements in the sex industry are not so straightforward, with claims being made to entice clients rather than reflect a true picture of the provider. By looking at newspaper advertisements for BD providers as pieces of narrative, one can see very little information is given as to the age, nationality, or dress size of these women, whereas these attributes seem to be a prominent feature in many of the advertisements for sex workers, although we cannot assume the information given there is strictly the truth. The focus of advertisements for sexual services seems to be on attracting clients to the appearance of the sex worker. The emphasis of BD advertisements appears to be more about the type of service provided than looks, although physical features do play a part in attracting some clients. Repeat business is dependent upon the ability to provide the required service rather than simply 'looking the part.'¹²

The advertisements in the personal section of newspapers are written in a coded language, dictated by what is currently allowed by the newspaper, which sex workers learn through trial and error when placing advertisements. The people working in the classified advertisements section of newspapers have guidelines as to what wording is currently acceptable in the personal columns, and they are able to suggest alternatives when advertisements are being placed.¹³ As a consequence, a complicated system of abbreviations, words and phrases is used to describe services offered. These change over time, with a word not being allowed for a few months and then being allowed again, while another word is banned. For example, the phrase 'strap on' is sometimes allowed and then suddenly has to be replaced with 'st/on'. However, abbreviations can lead to confusion, with potential clients not always certain what these mean. From the evidence I have gathered, one of the drivers for banning specific words is pressure from lobby groups, "who seem to spend quite a lot of time studying this section of newspapers, looking for words and phrases that might be construed as offensive by the general public."¹⁴ According to the Australian sex industry support group Scarlet Alliance, the same words are used in other advertisements within the same newspaper, seemingly without causing offence. The word 'spanking' is a case in point. However, describing a home for sale as having a 'brand spanking new kitchen' is a little different from advertising a BD Mistress who is willing to provide a 'good spanking'. Context plays a large part in the acceptance of words and phrases by the wider community.

¹¹ From discussions with men who have visited both sex workers and BD providers it seems that advertisements are taken at face value. The same is also a comment made by some members of the general public when interviewed.

¹² This example was told to me by a Mistress who had worked in New York and Sydney, and the sentiment was reiterated by three submissives working in Perth, as well as by several of the clients I spoke with at Perth dungeons.

¹³ This was told to me by a woman I interviewed who used to work in this section of a Perth newspaper. I then phoned the advertising section of two newspapers and verified this information.

¹⁴ A comment made during an interview by a woman working for a Perth newspaper classified advertisements section, September 2011.

Another driver for words and phrases to be abbreviated is the cost of these advertisements, which is considerably more than similarly sized advertisements in the same newspaper for something else like a car, furniture or hairdressing service.¹⁵ According to Scarlet Alliance, newspaper companies are discriminating against sex workers by charging high fees for placing advertisements. Some Australian newspapers also dictate the number of days per week an advertisement is run, with the minimum purchase being a full week. Working seven days in a row is not good from the perspective of occupational health and safety, and yet sex workers advertising in these newspapers are not given the choice to work fewer days in a week; an option available to advertisers in other fields. The high cost of this type of newspaper advertising makes it expensive for someone to advertise and then choose not to work on that day.

The advertisements for BD services are representations, as each person attempts to attract clients in a world where competition is fierce and fantasy is the dominant theme. Each advertisement is a single entity, bought and paid for separately, but together they provide a powerful appearance of coherence in an industry that in reality is a collection of private individuals who hide behind their invented public personas. Anonymity is paramount for the majority of these advertisers, for although they can be seen as providing a saleable commodity, no amount of framing Mistresses and submissives as service providers will take away the stigma attached to this kind of work.

Public perceptions

Newspaper advertisements for BD services are written to attract clients, not to influence public opinion. However, the wording in the advertisements can lead to misconceptions, prejudice and sometimes fear of the people working in this industry or for their health and safety. These views are often held by members of the community who have never used the services of a professional BDSM provider or who have never knowingly met one socially.¹⁶ Framing advertisements to appeal to clients does not always give an accurate picture of the service provider. However, people who find the idea of BDSM abhorrent will use the narrative in the advertisements when forming opinions of those who work in this field, subjecting them to moral judgements, perhaps forgetting an advertisement of this type must be written more as fantasy than reality.¹⁷

If newspaper advertisements are used as a frame of reference, inaccuracies may be perpetuated with regard to understanding what motivates a person to either work in this industry or to use the services it provides. Professional Mistresses and submissives are not necessarily depraved individuals who enjoy inflicting or receiving pain and humiliation. They have simply honed skills to accommodate the needs of a niche market. This does not imply the BD provider really enjoys every activity; merely that they can provide for someone who requires a particular service. One Mistress I spoke with is very good with clients who like to cross dress, but this does not mean she enjoys this in her private life. While I would argue submissives could not do the type of work expected of them if they absolutely hated it, this does not

¹⁵ Evidence of advertising costs gathered from phoning newspapers.

¹⁶ Information gained through extensive interviews.

¹⁷ These opinions were given by some of the interviewees with no experience of BDSM.

mean they love every aspect of bondage and discipline or want to be dominated in their private lives.

Those who participate in BDSM practices, either professionally or as a lifestyle choice, tend to be wary with whom they share this information. Telling partners, friends and even health professionals can expose participants to unwelcome comments and judgements. Mandy, a submissive, found her physiotherapist was quite understanding and even interested in her work when she said she was a private escort, but his attitude seemed to change when he saw some marks on her caused by being flogged. He suddenly became concerned for Mandy's safety and suggested her clients must be dangerous if they wanted to physically hurt her. As shown by Williams and Storm (2012, p9),

Because secrecy associated with BDSM has a protective function, participants, when exposed, sometimes may be mislabelled as being psychopathological, morally deficient, dangerous, and/or sex addicts due to pervasive social discourses concerning sexuality.

A regular client of a professional submissive could not admit to his doctor the pain in his forearm was caused by regularly spanking a woman, for fear of being judged as depraved. Instead, he was treated for a supposed tennis injury, which did not help the problem. He told me the two actions were different, but it was the nearest injury he could think of at the time. His fear of being judged is reflected in the following quote from researchers in the field of bondage and discipline.

Despite accumulating evidence to the contrary, consensual participation in sadomasochistic (BDSM) activities often is assumed to be related to an underlying psychopathology by many professionals and members of the general public. (Williams and Storm, 2012, p2)

I have discussed BDSM with many participants. The majority reported they experienced feelings of release from the tensions of everyday life, with role play allowing them to explore their inner feelings, pleasures and fears. Endorphins released during activities such as bondage and physical punishment often made these pleasurable rather than painful experiences. However, I have also observed reactions from people who do not understand the erotic exchange of power that occurs during a BD session. They can be scathing in their comments about those who engage in such practices.

Public images, private lives

Managing relationships between ourselves and others is a core feature of maintaining privacy. Altman (1975, p10) refers to privacy as a "boundary regulatory process by which a person (or group) makes himself more or less accessible and open to others." While such boundaries between provider and client may be relatively easy to maintain in many occupations, working in the sex industry has its own set of issues that make negotiating privacy both important and difficult for many people. Others' perception of us is affected by what we reveal to them, so blurring truth and fantasy becomes paramount in the provision of sexual and erotic services, where providers do not wish to reveal their true identities. All of the professional service providers I interviewed

work under what they refer to as their professional names. The reason given for this was to separate personal and professional life. It is interesting to note that the practice of adopting a name while participating in BDSM was also prevalent among those I interviewed who attended social BDSM functions. They also said the reason for this was to separate the two aspects of their lives, particularly when using social media sites to connect with each other.

Many BD workers are able to survive in the industry by blurring truth and fantasy to provide for their clients' different fetishes and fantasies. However, being convincing as a Mistress or submissive can lead to some problems when the public persona is confused with the private life of the service provider. Fantasy and reality become difficult to separate when some clients are surprised to discover the professional providing a service is excellent at her chosen career, yet may not be into a particular fetish as a lifestyle choice. One Mistress, Amy, regularly sees adult babies, but one of these men was almost offended she did not want to take him on as her very own 'little baby boy' for fun rather than payment. According to Mistress Amy, "He suggested he would not have to pay for future sessions, in return for me having the pleasure of a (120 kilogram) baby to feed, change and mother." Amy reports the tone of his comment, "But I thought you would like having your own baby to play with," indicated he seemed quite surprised and hurt she did not take him up on this offer. He appeared to have framed their relationship as mother and baby, rather than professional and client.

A fairly common problem for professional BD workers I interviewed is the client who wants a free session because the Mistress or submissive he is seeing appears to enjoy the session so much, "Why wouldn't she want to do it for free?"¹⁸ The other request is to exchange 'slave' or 'Sissy Maid' services such as cleaning, making coffee, being a willing body for the Mistress to practise on, instead of payment.¹⁹ These submissive clients can be quite demanding of attention, often performing tasks badly in order to be punished. This takes up valuable time when a Mistress has other things to do.²⁰ Professional submissive workers have told me clients will ask if they have a Master,²¹ and offer to fulfil this role in a non-paying way, under the assumption the submissive needs and wants to be dominated by someone. This type of role play often occurs in lifestyle BDSM. One woman working in Sydney reported she had agreed to this sort of non-paying BD relationship with a client, but then was expected to be available any time he felt like a session. This caused her to lose bookings, and therefore income, because of this man's excessive demands on her time. The situation soon became one where he monopolised her time, but provided neither payment nor the benefits of a lifestyle relationship, resulting in the woman feeling used. There are many reasons why she might have entered into this type of arrangement with a dominant client who had previously paid for sessions, but a detailed discussion of them is beyond the scope of this paper. Evidence gathered from both professional BD providers and their clients indicates there is a common misconception among some clients that just because a session appears to be pleasurable, the BD or indeed sex worker would be prepared to provide the service for free. Here we see blurring the fantasy of a fun session with the truth that someone is trying to make a living. Clients may confuse intimacy with

¹⁸ Comment made by a client of Miss Treat.

¹⁹ Evidence from several Mistresses and submissives.

²⁰ I witnessed this while observing at dungeons.

²¹ In this case, someone in their private life who dominates them.

friendship and read more into the relationship than is actually there. It is hard to think of another industry where it is frequently assumed, just because the provider appears to be having fun, the fee could be waived. Daisy, an experienced submissive, makes the analogy “A mechanic may love working on cars, but is not likely to fix yours for free.”

While the Mistresses I spoke with certainly do not enjoy clients who turn up with a fully scripted scenario, written out in great detail, some guidance is appreciated. In their view, it is hard to work with someone who wants a lengthy session of “Whatever you want to do to me, Mistress.” One Mistress told me she really feels like saying, “I’d rather you just stay here and I’ll go have a nice cup of tea!” Professional BD Mistresses I interviewed said they need to make their clients feel special and to help them explore their sensuality and limits safely. However, with no guidance as to what the submissive client feels like doing on that particular day, it would be easy for a session to fall flat if the worker does not do what the client wanted to do (or have done to him). This affects repeat business. In lifestyle BDSM, there is an idea the dominant person is responsible for and in charge of the submissive’s pleasure, wanting to push the submissive’s limits through training, guidance and discipline. This allows the submissive to explore his/her sensuality and limits safely. This is more in tune with a non-commercial/lifestyle relationship than a professional one, where the BD worker has no personal attachment to the client. Here, clients may miss the distinction between a commercial BD session and a BDSM lifestyle relationship, thus blurring the boundary between public images and private lives.

Conclusion

This study has focussed on BD service providers in Australia, a country where the sex industry is not illegal and advertising sexual services is allowed in daily newspapers, albeit with many restrictions. In this paper I have shown newspaper advertisements for BD service providers do not reveal the real people behind them. They are constructed to portray an image designed to sell a service and representing a fantasy which will hopefully attract clients. Unfortunately, these manufactured personas may be judged as deviant by some members of society as they read these small pieces of narrative. According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), ordinary citizens try to understand events in light of what touches their own lives, bringing their own life experiences and thought processes into play when trying to understand how others behave and act. It would be difficult to understand the practices and complex relationships of either professional or lifestyle BDSM purely from outside these experiences, and yet judgements are made, seemingly without the benefit of knowledge.

The people who work in the BD sector provide dominant or submissive services, usually controlled by set rules of conduct. From my observations I have found that the women who provide professional domination do not usually have some hidden desire to inflict torture on the men who visit them. Rather they allow their fantasy persona to act out the role of a Mistress, while the reality may be quite different. They are filling a niche in a market which understands people have different needs, wants and desires. The people I have met who work in BD seem to have a genuine understanding of various fetishes, whether they follow a BD lifestyle or not. It is the professional way they deal with client-specific requests which ensures repeat

business. However, it would appear some members of the public may confuse fantasy with reality, viewing professional BD services as acts of sadomasochism, performed by sex workers who have a perverted view on sexuality, either wanting to dominate or to be dominated and abused. According to abolitionists, prostitution is a way of training men to abuse women, with BD establishments being the worst offenders (Jeffreys, 2002).

There are many reasons why people use professional service providers to cater for their sexual needs. While brothels are available, not all clients feel comfortable entering such public establishments, preferring to connect with private service providers who advertise individually. These connections form part of the underground network that can be found in Australian cities. While a city's brothels may be visible to those who pass by, with a tell-tale red light and the name of the establishment on a sign, I found the professional dungeons of Perth were indistinguishable from the inner city or suburban homes around them.

Newspaper advertisements provide a window into this underground city, through which one can catch a glimpse of what goes on. From the evidence I have collected, it is not the aim of sex workers advertising these types of services to influence public opinion about fetishes or their services, while they try to attract clients in a very competitive niche market. However, without knowledge of the limitations of these narratives, wrong impressions can be formed and judgements made about consenting adults who are simply making connections for business and pleasure.

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