

# Consuming Pleasures : Women, Sexuality, and Postfeminism in Post-Growth Japan

その他のタイトル	快楽を消費する : 成長後の日本における女性、セクシュアリティ、そしてポストフェミニズム
学位授与年月日	2017-01-20
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15083/00075422">http://doi.org/10.15083/00075422</a>

## 論文の内容の要旨

論文題目                    Consuming Pleasures: Women, Sexuality, and Postfeminism in Post-Growth Japan

(快樂を消費する：成長後の日本における女性、  
セクシュアリティ、そしてポストフェミニズム)

氏名                         ハンブルトン   アレクサンドラ   メイ

In Japan, as a result of an education system and mainstream media that denies women active sexualities, and the limited success of second wave feminism, the rhetoric of women's right to sexual pleasure never gained a strong foothold. Second wave feminism made great inroads into legislation, but widespread cultural change remained elusive—particularly in regards to female sexuality. This dissertation is a study of representations of female sexuality in post-growth neoliberal Japan. Based on more than two years of fieldwork conducted in the Tokyo area, combined with discourse analysis I question why feminist conceptualizations of women's right to pleasure have struggled to make inroads in a Japan that clings to a pronatalist, pro-growth ideology as the result of growing anxiety over the country's economy and future. I then examine women's magazine *anan*, alternative sex education providers, and the growing number of female-friendly pleasure product companies who are working to change perceptions of female sexuality and contemplate whether their work can be considered feminist. This sector—an example of what Andi Zeisler (2016) has termed 'marketplace feminism' may be thoroughly commercialized, however it also offers a space in which women may explore discourses of sex and pleasure that were not previously available.

In Chapter 1, I examine how second wave feminism failed to address desire, and argued that the female-friendly pleasure product industry is filling that space. Chapter 2 traces

the history of women's magazine *anan* and its yearly 'sex special issue', arguing that the potential for the magazine to perpetuate a feminist agenda was there in its early years, only to be lost as commercialization and celebrity culture took over. In Chapter 3, I analyze sex education in Japan and the raft of sex self-help literature, medical specialists, and non-government organizations working to educate the public on issues of sex and pleasure. Chapter 4 examines the contemporary sex toy industry, concluding that it both offers spaces for the exploration of notions of pleasure, while commercializing female desire and encouraging women to subscribe to phallogentric ideas of sex. In Chapter 5, I consider the female-friendly pornography industry, and the way in which the consumption of pornography can be considered transgressive, whilst simultaneously commercially coopting women's sexual desires.

Throughout each chapter, sex, pleasure, and information are demonstrated to be commercial products. Sex for pleasure's sake, for *women's* pleasure's sake, is almost nonexistent. Instead, it is viewed through a neoliberal lens in which everything can be packaged, marketed, and sold. Within neoliberal Japan, small spaces for the exploration of female sexuality may serve as a form of 'vaccination' against more active forms of feminist engagement as women are propelled to demonstrate their progressive stance on sex, whilst reiterating their desire to be beautiful and attractive to men. Feminist discourses of pleasure filter in from overseas, mediated by women who have developed an interest in female sexuality and presented through the lens of consumer capitalism—a small-scale form of marketplace feminism. The subversive behavior of the women outlined in this dissertation is thereby simultaneously made possible by the commodification of female desire, and commodified by the market in which it appears.

Finally, I conclude that despite its links to consumer capitalism, marketplace feminism in the female-friendly product industry may just offer a space for feminist exploration. The

women in this thesis are engaging in transgressive acts in that they are not quietly putting their sexuality to use in the service of men and the state, but are instead seeking to find new and creative ways to be sexual beings in an environment that does not welcome, or even tolerate, such behavior. Purveyors of female-friendly pleasure products focus on the creation and expansion of a market for female-friendly pleasure products out of necessity for survival. Nonetheless, these companies also provide room in which to discuss issues of female sexuality that have previously been overlooked. These serve as spaces for education and feminist consciousness-raising as women discuss not only sexual pleasure, but also birth control, work, family, and child-rearing. Inadvertent feminism, rather than explicitly activist feminist engagement is the result. ‘Small victories’—in the form of women discovering that they have the right to pleasure, discussing the injustices they experience as women, or realizing that perhaps they do not need men—abound.