

The hidden side of prostitution: sex buyers speak

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Foreword

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Whenever prostitution is discussed, the focus is generally on the people selling their bodies. As a rule, these individuals are women, characterized by a poor socioeconomic situation, low social status, an extreme risk of becoming the victim of violence and difficulties in leaving the prostitution trade. The purpose of this publication is to give an overview of the other side of prostitution: the people – generally men – who buy sex. What do they think, how they think, and how they explain their activity?

According to a study conducted by the Estonian Open Society Institute, about 12% of men in Estonia have bought services from a prostitute at least once, and about 2% are regular customers; 0.6% of men buy sex every month.¹ We know little about Estonian sex buyers, and this study is to our knowledge the first to explore what goes on inside their heads.

Studies conducted in other countries have shown that sex buyers come in all ages and social classes. Many of them live with a partner in a relationship and have children. A typical buyer has money, education, and power; his life is stable and he has a family – he is in many ways the very antithesis of the prostitute whose body he buys.

In Estonia, leading a minor to prostitution is currently a punishable offence, as is any sort of aiding of prostitution, including allowing use of space and procuring customers for a prostitute. Prostitution is not punishable, and neither is buying sex. Thus the state has taken a clear and consistent position only with regard to procurement (pimping) while the other aspects are left unregulated. As to whether this is a good or sufficient solution, this will require a broader social discussion. (Estonian Statistical Office. (2005). *Laps ja perekond (Child and Family)*. Fact sheet. Tallinn. Estonian Statistical Office.)

Other countries have approached the question in very disparate ways. There are countries where prostitution is completely prohibited, and others where prostitution has been legalized. Procuring or pimping is generally against the law everywhere. Only in a few countries are brothels allowed. In Europe, prostitution is generally not punished and there is an attempt to render assistance to women who have entered the prostitution trade.

There are also a few countries where it is specifically prohibited to buy sex. Sweden has expressed the state position the most clearly; there the corresponding legal act has a very clear ideological message: prostitution is violence against women, and in the prostitution trade punishment should be meted out to those who exploit other people (sex buyers and procurers), and the weaker ones (women involved in prostitution) should be protected. Finland has chosen a fairly ambiguous path. Buying sex is prohibited if the case involves a victim of trafficking in human beings. Sex buyers must thus be able to distinguish between people who have been forced into such a situation and those who have not. As the legal act has been in force for a very short time, it is too early to assess its effectiveness.

In discussions on social affairs, it is often argued as a justification for prostitution that there are people (generally men) who would otherwise not be able to obtain sex, and that prostitution is an inevitability that cannot be regulated. It is also believed that, for hypersexual women, prostitution represents a good opportunity to combine their job with a hobby. This study did not confirm these claims.

¹ Iris Pettai, Helve Kase, Ivi Proos (2003). *Prostitution in Estonia: social risks and economic pressure*. Tallinn: Open Society Institute.

The interviewees often saw buying sex as entertainment. Most of them were in a steady relationship or had been in such a relationship earlier. Thus, for the interviewees, it was not at all a matter of buying sex being their only way to obtain sex; rather it was seen as a way to spend their leisure time.

In a number of interviews, the basis given for the act of buying was to gain experience. They did not have the courage to talk to their partner about their desires or they did not want to appear inexperienced and inept. Such an attitude reflects the traditional view of gender roles, where mutual trust and communication are not at the centre of the relationship but rather a fear of making a mistake and not meeting the other person's expectations.

Even though many of the men who participated in the study thought some women had indeed entered the prostitution business to combine work with a hobby, they said they had not encountered such an individual. Data from other studies regarding the age, socioeconomic situation and mental and physical health give reason to conclude that a predominant share of women do not engage in such work as a hobby.

State policy and society's attitude affect the spread of prostitution to a very large degree. Prostitution may be inevitable as long as strong socioeconomic inequality prevails in society and women are viewed as commodities. The extent of the problem is very different from one culture to another. In a cultural space where it is condemned, there is much less prostitution than in a culture where it is tolerated. While the number of buyers in Estonia is comparable to the Nordic countries, where 11-13% of men have paid for sex, in Spain and Italy on the other hand, nearly half of all men have paid for sex.²

Sex buyers do not live in isolation from the rest of society. The prevailing values and established norms influence them just like other people. If it is the norm in a society for a woman's body to be displayed as a commodity and sex is an accepted form of entertainment, buyers will embrace these norms and act accordingly.

Prostitution as a phenomenon will not go away until demand for it disappears. Estonian society needs broad discussion on this topic and more attention to be paid to controlling demand. We hope that this publication will provide impetus in that direction.

² Sven-Axel Månsson (2002). *Men's Practices in Prostitution: The Case of Sweden, 1998*. Prostitution. Collection of the articles and materials. Oslo: Library of Criminology.

Short summary

The purpose of this publication is to offer readers the opportunity to think about the topic of prostitution – this time from the point of view of sex buyers. The basis of the publication is a sociological study carried out within the framework of my master's thesis, in the course of which I interviewed 15 sex buyers, all of them male.

The main topics for research were the following:

- what are the situations in which sex is bought?
- how is the buying of sex rationalized?
- what are the buyers' attitudes toward prostitution in general?

The publication consists of two major parts: theoretical and empirical. The first section describes five predominant theoretical models that are used to explain the reasons for buying sex. The theoretical section is followed by an overview of the research methods. The second part of the publication focuses on interviews conducted with sex buyers. I describe the general attitudes of respondents with regard to buying sex, the situations for buying sex and ways of maintaining contact with prostitutes, the attitudes of buyers into two opposing prostitution policies – legalization of prostitution and criminalization of sexual services– and the various rhetorics that interviewees used in explaining their activity. A rhetoric is defined as a discursive technique used by respondents to construct a certain view of the world.

As a result of the study, it became evident that sex buyers used five major kinds of rhetorics to justify their actions: the rhetoric of consumption, the rhetoric of freedom of choice and coercion, the rhetoric of social construction, the rhetoric of natural predeterminism and the rhetoric of dependency. The rhetorics were assigned notional names which attempted to stress the most characteristic arguments of each rhetoric. Each basic rhetoric contained a certain number of sub-rhetorics, which relied on the primary assertions of the basic rhetoric, but introduced some new aspect.

Analysis revealed that as a rule different rhetorics were used alternately and quite conflictingly. The choice of a suitable rhetoric also depends on whether the subject was talking about a personal experience or in more general terms. For example, often the assertion was used, in talking about prostitution in more general terms, that prostitutes were necessary for men who would not otherwise get sex. This justification was never used with respect to themselves; rather, the entertainment function of buying sex was emphasized.

I did not aim in my research to make judgments about the actions of sex buyers. Instead, I wanted to make a contribution toward broadening discussion on the topic of prostitution and to show how buyers analyze the reasons for their own actions.

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been more discussion in Estonia about prostitution. The topics of these discussions have been the different aspects of this phenomenon: policies of fighting prostitution, health issues, causes and consequences of prostitution, brothel activity, the connection of prostitution to trafficking in human beings, and so on. All of these discussions have largely focused on one of the parties involved in prostitution – the seller of sex. There has been less discussion devoted to the other parties involved in the prostitution trade.

-- the pimps and procurers. And little has been said about the parties without whom there would be no prostitution -- the sex buyers or "johns".

It seems odd that sex buyers, who have been connected with prostitution as a phenomenon as long as there have been prostitutes, have been able to stay hidden from the public. The invisibility of sex buyers is even encoded into our language – Estonian lacks specific words for the "john" or prostitute's customer. Whereas there are a great number of words (all with a negative subtext) for prostitutes – *lits* ("slut"), *hoor* (whore), *lõbutüdruk* (roughly translates as "good times girl"), *linnuke* (diminutive of "bird") – in Estonian there are only economic words to describe johns, such as client, buyer, consumer etc. The words used about the buyers are not negative but rather neutral.

We lack knowledge about who the people who buy sex are. The most common view of a buyer of sex is based on a rigid and one-dimensional vision of male sexuality. This image is biologically deterministic and treats men's sexual urges as invariable and great. We have no real information on whether the image conforms to actuality or not.

Sociological studies carried out in various countries indicate that the use of prostitutes is primarily a practice engaged in by men. It is complicated to evaluate how many men worldwide buy sex. On the basis of studies carried out to date, it can be argued that the number of men who buy sex varies substantially from one country and culture to another. In Europe the level of buyers varies from, say, 7% in Great Britain to 39% in Spain (Hughes 2004). In the Nordic countries the average is 11-13% (Mansson 2004).

In order to understand why men patronize prostitutes, the sexuality of both men and women must be analyzed along with gender relations in society. Sexuality is a socially constructed phenomenon which is not invariable or self-evident. Thus it can be argued that the meaning of buying the services of a prostitute as it is today and was for instance a hundred years ago is essentially different both on the social and individual level. The activity has different meanings in different cultural contexts (Mansson 2001, 139).

This publication is based on the sociological research carried out in the framework of my master's thesis, the goal of which is to contribute to understanding prostitution as a social phenomenon and problem, analyzing the given topic from the perspective of a sex buyer.

As a sociologist, my primary desire was to broaden discussion on the topic of prostitution in society, by studying sex buyers and the rhetorics they use to make sense of and describe their actions as well as to examine the situations in which sex is purchased and the attitudes of buyers with regard to prostitution. In addition to the above, I wanted to learn how sex buyers viewed legalization of prostitution or criminalization of buying sexual services.

The empirical material for the study is comprised of fifteen open interviews with sex buyers. In addition to interviews I monitored, for a duration of about a year, discussions in two major Internet forums which represent meeting points for sex buyers.

2. Different points of view in explaining the reasons for buying sex

This chapter provides a short overview of the theoretical approaches used in describing the actions of clients of prostitutes. These help the reader to place the empirical section of the publication in a better social context, as I used a similar system for classifying the basic rhetorics used by the respondents. I classified the theories into five categories and gave them names, based on the primary motivations cited as reasons for buying sex.

Each method of explanation constructs the causes of prostitution differently, and at times in contradiction to each other. To the questions of whether prostitution is sex or violence, a coerced or voluntary activity, and a normal or deviant activity, there is no one single answer. There are only interpretations of various theoretical approaches, which make sense of prostitution, and the nature of the parties involved in prostitution, in different ways.

2.1. Buying sex as a consumer activity

Consumer theory treats prostitution as a normal economic activity revolving around an encounter between buyer and seller. Prostitution is seen as a necessary phenomenon that must be regulated by the state or municipal authorities. This means licensing of the activity of prostitutes – both those who work in brothels and as sole proprietor – health checks for prostitutes, moving commercial sex to a district designated for that purpose and finally, collecting taxes from the service providers for the right to render the service. Provision of service without a licence is punished (Pajumets 2004, 21).

Buying sex is a transaction in the course of which a customer buys non-procreative sex from a prostitute (Edlund and Korn 2001, 184). Depending on his economic status, the customer buys the type of prostitution that is within his means. The prostitution market is structured similarly to markets for other goods – there are suitable goods for price-sensitive and non-price-sensitive consumers. Buying sex is similar to any other purchase of a good, where the customer chooses the one most suitable for him from a number of offers and pays the requested amount, gaining the right to consume the good.

2.2. Buying sex as violence

A number of feminist theories see prostitution as violence perpetrated by men against women, which can be equated to rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Prostitution is a reflection of unequal power relations. Men who consume the services of prostitutes are defined as miscreants who denigrate all of womankind through their actions (Bromberg 1998). Prostitution as a phenomenon perpetuates the view of women as commodities, and their exploitation and subjugation. The services and behaviour that men buy contain all forms of sexual violence that feminists aim to abolish in society and which are considered illegal in everyday life (Sullivan and Jeffreys 2004, 65).

We may include in this category a theory on the nature of gay prostitution, which holds that gay prostitution is based on exactly the same inequality that is also responsible for perpetuating heterosexual prostitution. The predominant masculine sexuality, which is accompanied by violence against women, also positions gay men in the class of the subjugated and exploited (Farley 2003, 95).

According to these theories, the aggressive nature of men is not biological but rather culturally constructed as a part of the male gender role. As a result, it is possible to change this as well. Men are socialized to have sexual desires and to consider it natural that these desires be

satisfied (Weisberg 1996, 194). The relationship between the buyer of sex and the prostitute, then, is always cold, selfish and mechanical, and one party (customer) is clearly in a position of power. The buyer of sex is the one who holds the social and economic power to use another individual as a sexualized doll (Farley 2003, 34).

Demand for paid sex perpetuates the buying and selling of human flesh, as the latter is a method used to provide the sex trade with new women and children. The proponents of this view believe that the actions of the customers of prostitutes should be punishable, allowing prostitution, and trafficking in human beings, to be combated more effectively (Farley 2003, 326).

2.3. *Buying sex as a social construct*

Theories dealing with demand as a social construct assert that demand for commercial sex is largely a phenomenon that is socially, culturally and historically determined.

Demand must be socially constructed – it must be made clear to people that they need some product or service. The idea must be instilled in them that buying services from a prostitute means having fun and allows them to define themselves as an “adult”, “real man” or some other desirable standard of social identity (O’Connell Davidson 2006).

According to theories which hold that demand is a social construct, demand for prostitution is formed in a social and cultural context in which masculinity and masculine sexuality are constructed through sexual mastery and taking control of a woman’s body. On the other hand, female sexuality is controlled, repressed and nearly non-existent. In other words, male sexuality is constructed in the context of power and competition, while female sexuality is constructed as nearly non-existent. Intensive sexual activity is normalized as the primary male sexual need. A male who is capable of demonstrating his sexual mastery through intensive sexual activity with different women is considered by his same-sex peers as well as himself to be masculine, successful and powerful. The symbolic marking of the beginning of manhood by way of a ritualized visit to a prostitute is fairly widespread (Sanger 1997).

The desire to consume the service offered by a prostitute does not arise so much within an individual; rather, this need is created on a broader societal level. Demand is also of course closely connected with supply, availability and affordability of goods/services.

2.4 *Buying of sex as a biological inevitability*

Biological theories are no doubt among the oldest and best-known when it comes to explaining demand for prostitution. The theory is based on the position that men’s sexual impulses are just as instinctive and uncontrollable as, for example, the need for food and water. According to biological theories, prostitution fills a void between the male and female levels of sexuality, and also offers a way for men who have no sexual partners at all to satisfy their sexual needs (Ben-Israel and Levenkron 2005, 18)

Men are the victims of their uncontrollable sexual desires, and were it not for prostitutes, men with unsatisfied sexual needs could become dangerous to women who are not prostitutes.

2.5. *Buying sex as an addiction*

Experts who have studied dependency estimate that 3–6% of the world’s population can be considered to be sex addicts (Carnes 2005). Sex addiction is a diagnosable, treatable disease, and today is treated the same way that alcohol or drug dependency was treated 40 years ago.

A sex addict is characterized by uncontrollable sexual behaviour and the serious consequences this behaviour leads to. An inability to change or cease one's behaviour, a constant seeking of risks or self-destructive behaviour, a constant search for new and more intense sexual experiences – all these are typical. For a sex addict, sexual ideas fixes and fantasies are the primary coping strategy. The creation of new sexual contacts, direct sexual activity and recovery from it take a great amount of time, and thus other activities become secondary (Carnes 1991).

Sexual dependency is characterized by a cycle of dependency which consists of the following parts:

- an idee fixe or all-consuming activity
- ritualization
- compulsive behaviour modes
- loss of control and desperation
- shame and guilt

The sex addict's system of beliefs contains certain basic tenets which are essentially false. For the most part, addicts do not have the feeling that they are fully valuable people, and it is hard for them to trust others. Addicts believe that sex is their most important need and that it helps them relieve a feeling of isolation and aloneness (Carnes 1991, 16).

The behavioural patterns of sexual dependency are considered to be pathological problems when sexual behaviour becomes the focal point of a person's life, causes feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment, and causes depression and anxiety, which in turn have an effect on people's social and professional activity. Addicts do not use sex when they have a feeling of attraction or for the purpose of a change of pace, but rather for coping with anxiety and/or emotional pain (Slobodzien 2005).

3. Research methods

I used qualitative methods in order to study how sex buyers talk about and rationalize their actions. The primary research instrument was the open topical interview. To establish a background of knowledge, I monitored, for about a year, discussions in two major Internet forums where a number of sex buyers participate.

In the course of the research, I conducted fifteen open interviews with male sex buyers. I used three ways of forming a sample for the research: the snowball method, creating contacts in Internet forums where sex buyers talk about their activities and personal contacts (such as though friends and acquaintances).

The snowball method, which is used by researchers to find a few respondents from the target group who in turn lead researchers to the additional respondents, turned out to be fairly effective in the case of prostitution clients. The snowball method is often used for inaccessible target groups (such as drug users, members of certain subcultures etc), if there is reason to believe that people in the target group have contacts with others in the same group.

The question may of course frequently arise as to how representative the information obtained is (as not all members of society have an equal opportunity to be part of the sample). Since the goal of this study is not to make generalizations about the entire population of clients of prostitution, the snowball method can be deemed appropriate.

In finding informants using the snowball method, the likelihood was also low that people who actually do not buy sex from prostitutes would happen to be included in the sample, as recommending another respondent takes place based on trust and knowledge.

Also playing a very important role in forming the sample was the Internet forum, from which I selected respondents after extensive analysis of discussions. In selecting potential informants, I considered, among other things, their use of language (for example, whether they spoke in the first person, whether what they said was credible and consistent, and so on). In the case of each selected person, I first monitored their postings in the forum for at least one month. This practice made it possible to increase the trustworthiness of the respondent and allowed me to be sure that it was indeed an individual who consumes or has consumed paid sex.

Finding respondents through personal contacts (such as through acquaintances) also turned out to be effective and it was through this particular approach that people who did not frequent Internet forums and who would otherwise have not been included in the sample, were included.

In contacting potential respondents, I proceeded from the principle of informed consent. This means that the researcher must inform potential subjects about the purpose and nature of the study, and to obtain their consent to be in the role of the subject and to ensure their confidentiality (O'Connell Davidson and Layder 1994, 57). I am convinced that the only approach in the case of relatively delicate and discreet topics is total honesty and elucidation of one's motives at the outset as well as being prepared to elicit a negative response. The potential subjects are to be briefed on one's goals and offered the opportunity to chose whether they agree to an interview or not. Experience to this point indicated that the majority of the people to whom I proposed an interview did consent to it (the differences lay only in whether the interview would be face to face or in electronic form). Of course the time necessary to persuade subjects varied.

In planning interviews, I first prepared the topics which I desired to cover during the interview. These topics were the following: process of and reasons for becoming a buyer of sex, buying situations, customer needs, dissemination of information, violence and conflict situations, activity planning, views on legalization of prostitution and criminalization of sex buying, use of

alcohol and drugs, HIV/AIDS and STD topics, other sex partners, links between human trade and prostitution, bad experiences in buying sex, public or concealed actions, views of prostitutes etc. I was open to the possibility that the list of topics proposed by me would not be complete, as a result of which respondents had an opportunity to initiate topics which I as the researcher had not planned into the interview scheme.

My desire was to give respondents as much decision-making freedom as possible as to what sequence they want to talk about the topics. Nor was the time devoted for the topics strictly delimited. We talked at greater length about topics that were more important for respondents and we devoted less time to ones that were not as important. Since I considered it important to cover all of the topics I planned into the interview scheme, interviews had to be "led" to a certain degree so that all topics would be discussed.

My goal in conducting the interviews was to be flexible – which means that the interview took place in a manner that was best-suited for each respondent. Since many consumers of paid sex desired for various reasons to conceal their identity, it proved impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews with them. Very frequently it was feared that, since Estonia is so small, it would turn out that subject and interviewer knew each other. This was probably not a groundless fear.

Since the purpose of the study was to find out how sex buyers talk about their actions and what arguments they use to rationalize them, I found that face to face interviews should not necessarily be the only possible method for conducting interviews. For this reason some of the interviews took place in electronic form. If the respondent did not desire or could not for some reason meet in person with me, I conducted the interview via e-mail or the instant message programme MSN Messenger.

I conducted 8 interviews using the traditional method (meeting the respondent) and these lasted an average of 60 to 120 minutes. Four interviews took place via e-mail and three via MSN Messenger. The average length of the transcripts of interviews conducted electronically was 6-10 pages (point size 11, Arial font).

3.1. Sample

The sample consisted of fifteen male buyers of sex of whom one identified himself as homosexual. The others were heterosexual men. I did not rule out including female respondents in planning the research but I did not come across any women in the course of the work who would have consented to talking about their experiences.

The sample consisted of former and/or current customers of prostitutes who live in Estonia and speak Estonian (there was one person of Russian ethnicity among them). I did not wish to include sex buyers who solely spoke Russian due to my own limited Russian language proficiency.

The respondents ranged in age from 21 to 43 years. Fourteen respondents were either cohabiting or married or had previously cohabited. More than one of the informants had had several previous cohabitations or marriages. One respondent lived alone at the time that the interview was conducted and had not previously cohabited with a partner. Ten respondents lived in Tallinn or Harju County, three in Tartu or in the vicinity, one in Viljandi and one in Haapsalu. There were men with secondary education and some with higher education. One respondent had not finished secondary school. No comment is provided on the professional activity of the informants for the purposes of preserving their complete anonymity.

Certainly no generalization can be made on the basis of the information gathered in the

framework of this research on all Estonian-speaking sex buyers, since the ones who consented to talk to me were primarily individuals who were not ashamed of their behaviour and for whom consumption of sex is in some sense part of their lifestyle. For this reason, a potential group of buyers may have been omitted – those for whom buying sex is an activity they are ashamed of, something they do not wish or dare talk about. This group also includes people whose status could be substantially damaged by talking about sex (such as public figures and other “familiar faces”).

The criterion for selecting interviewee quotations was that they best exemplify a specific rhetoric, a sex-buying situation or attitude. The names to which the quotations are credited have been changed. Nor may the information evident from a quotation enable identification of the speaker.

I performed qualitative analysis based on the interview transcripts. First of all, I selected the main topics that emerged from the interview transcripts and formed separate basic rhetorics. Each basic rhetoric contained sub-rhetorics, which were based on the primary assertions of the basic rhetoric, but added to it in some new aspect.

4. Results of the study

The study results are distributed into two parts. First of all, I provide an overview of the respondents' more general attitudes with regard to buying sex, the situations in which sex is purchased and ways in which contact is created with prostitutes, and whether and how the existence of regular sex partners affected the buyers' activity. I also give examples of what buyers thought of the two opposing prostitution policies: legalization of prostitution and criminalization of purchases of sexual services. In the second part of the chapter that introduces the results, I describe the ways in which the respondents explained the reasons for their activity.

4.1. Romantic expectations

The prostitution business is an area surrounded by a veil of secrecy. Sex buyers say they did not know what actually awaited them the first time they went to a prostitute. As a result, many had unrealistic expectations as to what is offered and takes place in a brothel. Erotic and pornographic films – and the mass media in general – have certainly helped shape the romantic and naïve images of brothels and sex with prostitutes. In the case of buyers who hoped to encounter the same sort of fantasy at a prostitute's had a fairly high likelihood of disappointment when reality turned out to be quite different from what is seen in films.

Sten: It absolutely frightened me. It was such a strange business that... It was... Well, first of all, since I had not had any contact with it, maybe I had some sort of romantic illusion. Well, actually it was that woman's obviously tired and jaded face and attitude...

A very negative first experience could prove determining for a buyer and extinguish any sort of desire in him to visit prostitutes in the future. For regular sex buyers, their first experience tended to be positive, which gave them the courage to be a consumer of paid sex on subsequent occasions.

In the buyers' words, the first time they were consumers of a prostitute's services was characterized by insecurity and a certain amount of awkwardness. This was a completely novel situation for them, one where different rules applied from the ones in everyday life.

Mario: A half-self-conscious activity, all that foreplay and...you go to a certain person and start right away into doing something very personal. That, like, takes getting used to.

4.2. Existence of a regular sex partner

Respondents fell into one of two groups depending on whether they used the services of a prostitute at a time when they had a regular partner (such as a female friend, spouse, partner) or not.

For one group of buyers, the existence of a regular partner immediately ruled out buying sex from prostitutes. They said they felt no more need for prostitutes and focused on their regular partner. For these individuals, using the services of a prostitute was only a possibility if they did not have a steady relationship. In such a period, becoming a consumer of paid sex was the easiest and fastest way to satisfy their sexual appetites, The latter did not mean however that they were not in sexual relationships with other non-prostitute women at the same time.

The other group of men also bought sex from prostitutes at a time when they had a regular partner (or more than one). There were those who became consumers of paid sex after they had begun the steady relationship and there were others who had used prostitutes, as they put it, "their whole life", regardless of whether they had or lacked a steady relationship.

Social discussions often mention men for whom paid sex is the only possibility for sexual intercourse. The sample for this research did not include any such men, who lacked sexual experiences with non-prostitute women. Predominantly the respondents were men who also had sex without having to pay for it and who had at least one regular partner, and frequently more than one.

4.3. A matter of shame or pride?

Many sex buyers mentioned that they believe society condemns them and as a result they feel compelled to conceal their behaviour. For the men who were ashamed of their actions, it was also very important that they remain anonymous to the researcher, as a result of which they consented to talk about their experiences only via electronic channels (e-mail or MSN Messenger). The opinion was also expressed that use of the services of a prostitute was illegal and thus there was no other option than to do it covertly. In fact, what is prohibited in Estonia is subjection to prostitution, disposing a minor to engage in prostitution and aiding prostitution (including allowing use of space and procuring customers for a prostitute) Penal Code, Sections 89, 175, 176 and 268). Buying and selling sex are not punishable.

Then again, some of the respondents found that there was nothing shameful about their behaviour and therefore they did not deem it necessary to keep their consumption a secret at all costs. In the opinion of such sex buyers, society takes a fairly indifferent attitude toward prostitution and those involved in it and each person has the opportunity to decide independently how to live his or her life.

Robert: *It definitely isn't a big difference for me whether it is overt or covert. I don't feel any shame over the fact that I have bought sex.*

Also interesting was the argument that since frequenting a prostitute can be considered tantamount to self-gratification, then consuming paid sex is more or less an appropriate behaviour for resolving one's problem.

Paul: *I think that if a man has a desire to release a load, he either goes into the bathroom to gratify himself or requests assistance from someone for this. And that isn't exactly a major sin. Masturbation is not permitted in public, though. Going to a prostitute is not yet punishable, on the other hand.*

In general it was considered self-evident that regular sexual partners do not know anything about their partner's patronizing prostitutes. Although the partner could have caught on to the fact that the man is consuming paid sex, sex buyers tried to conceal and deny it. For the most part, it was believed that partners would react with displeasure upon finding out. Only in individual cases was the partner in an intimate relationship aware of the partner's patronizing prostitutes and, in the words of the respondents, was this acceptable.

4.4. Finding contacts

The question of where and how respondents find prostitutes and what channels they use for obtaining information was an interesting one. Primarily three channels were cited: the Internet, newspaper advertisements and personal contacts (friends, acquaintances, prostitutes in public places, taxi drivers).

Respondents in this study considered the Internet one of the most important channels for making contact with prostitutes. On one hand the service providers themselves or their pimps advertise themselves on the Internet. On the Internet, it is possible to see the photos of

prostitutes. Although very often the persons depicted on the photographs are not the actual service providers, to a potential buyer it seems more certain to buy the service from a person whose purported picture he has seen. In addition, the search for contacts over the Internet is easy and convenient. It is something that can be done while doing other things and without attracting unwanted attention.

On the other hand, it is possible over the Internet (such as in special forums) to interact with other sex buyers, who share the telephone numbers and contact details of prostitutes. In addition to direct contact information, other clients provide feedback regarding the quality of service, changes in telephone numbers and addresses and other important aspects.

Another key source of information cited by respondents was newspaper advertisements in which telephone numbers for prostitutes (or dispatchers who sell sexual services) are published.

The third primary channel is information obtained through personal contacts. For example, information is obtained from friends or acquaintances. Direct contacts with prostitutes in places such as nightclubs or certain areas were also mentioned. Taxi drivers were used as information sources relatively rarely, as the latter would generally want a fee for giving out information. According to buyers, there is no point in paying for information that is sufficiently available free of charge.

4.5. Use of alcohol and/or drugs

The use of alcohol and drugs is an important topic in relation to buying sex, and it can be viewed from two angles: from the aspect of the sex buyers or prostitutes. The respondents emphasized that they prefer to patronize a prostitute who is not obviously drunk or under the influence of drugs. A prostitute who is too intoxicated by drugs or alcohol is not attractive or trustworthy in the eyes of the buyer.

Tauno: Naturally if you should happen upon one that is dirty, with needle tracks on her arms and arrogant manner, then it's "so long" fairly quickly! I won't take a negative attitude toward somebody or being a prostie, but because I would view people like that negatively even if they were not.

On the other hand, for the buyer, preceding a trip to a prostitute with consumption of alcohol was more the rule than the exception. According to respondents, alcohol helped relieve tensions, and it also made behaviour more uninhibited and self-confident. Furthermore, alcohol consumption acts as an aphrodisiac; the trip to the prostitute is undertaken in high spirits to satisfy the increased sexual appetite. Alcohol consumption could be considered nearly the rule in the case of men for whom consumption of paid sex was a form of entertainment.

Andres: Again it was like after a party. We probably drank too much, partied too much. [—] And when the good times started to run out of steam, it was time to sort of revive it again.

Albert: Sometimes you really like it when you're drunk. While sober you're not so into it, then you get by yourself.

Those who visited a prostitute without first using alcohol were men for whom consumption of paid sex had become a habit or even a dependency and who did so often during the workday, when they could not indulge in alcohol.

4.6. Collective or individual activity

For a number of sex buyers, their first contact with a prostitute took place on a visit to a brothel (or to prostitutes more generally) in the company of friends.

Robert: *It's not generally somewhere I would go alone. [—] It's a decision that is made in an exuberant mood, as in, OK boys, let's do it. And everyone is in agreement, of course, we're going!*

Mario: *We have gone together and not with what I could call a small group. We have bought the service and we have been getting down to business together... well, we have been together in a group.*

Andres: *The first time I went, it was after a party, in a totally great mood and my friend was along for moral support.*

It was also mentioned that the motivating force for the first visit to a prostitute was the belief that all men go to prostitutes (or have done so on at least one occasion in their life) and if it is not something that is recommended, it is at least an extremely normal mode of behaviour. After the first visit undertaken jointly, it was easier to go alone in the future.

At the same time there were also men who emphasized that they prefer not to tell anyone about their use of prostitutes, as they fear that it impinges on their masculinity – their friends would start to think that no one would want to have sex with them unless money were involved.

4.7. To legalize or criminalize?

As one of the topics for the interview, I asked respondents to discuss the issue of whether the state should intervene in matters related to the sex business and if so, how. More precisely, I wanted to learn the attitudes of sex buyers toward two opposite ends of the prostitution policy spectrum (legalization of prostitution and criminalization of buying sexual services).

Criminalization of buying prostitution services was a topic that was of sincere interest to sex buyers. On 1 January 1999, a law took effect in Sweden which made the purchase or attempted purchase of sexual services criminally punishable. The law is based on the idea that prostitution is male violence against women and children ("Prostitution and trafficking in human beings.") Fact sheet 2005). All of the respondents had heard of the legislative amendments adopted in Sweden and had arrived at their own positions in the matter. The deeper idea behind this amendment remained beyond the comprehension of most. It was found that prohibition would not solve the problem, but if the state desired to go the route of criminalization, it would be just to punish all parties involved in the prostitution business. At the same time, there was a fairly strong conviction that prohibiting the buying of sex would be pointless and would not lead to the desired results. A fairly typical opinion was that punishing the buying of the services of a prostitute would lead to prostitution becoming an even more underground activity than it is now and that the sex business would thus become more dangerous for both prostitutes and buyers.

Indrek: *In principle, it would be necessary to deal with the prostitution topic, but I believe that criminalizing the buying of sex would be doing battle with the consequences not the causes. [—] Criminalizing it would send the wrong signal to society. Rather, certain men should be furnished with free sex from time to time at the expense of the state. [—] Prohibiting the sex business seems like carrying coals to Newcastle.*

The respondents who felt that the women in the prostitution trade were in a weak socioeconomic position and lacked alternative ways of making a living also thought that

criminalization of buying of sex would not essentially resolve the problem. It was thought that punishing the patrons of sexual services would put these women in an even more complicated situation where their only way of earning their livelihood would have been turned into an illegal activity. In actuality, the criminalization of buying of sexual services would mean that the purchase of the service is punishable, but not the selling of one's body. In other words – the activity of prostitutes would not be made punishable by such a policy.

Whereas respondents were fairly sceptical toward the effectiveness of criminalizing buying sexual services as a prostitution policy, they took a more positive view of legalization of prostitution. It was found that since prostitution is not something that can be expunged from society, the most rational thing for the state would be to regulate it and earn revenue from it. It was also thought that prostitutes would also gain much more benefit from legalization of prostitution, as then social guarantees would be extended to them.

Andres: Well, since it is illegal here, it is obtained through illegal channels, and all of the dough goes to some underworld. [—] All that money flows there – into the businessmen's pockets. And the state as a result of that is deprived of a huge amount of money. Thanks to this, those girls and boys also would be worse off.

Even though the general attitude toward legalization of prostitution tended to be positive, there were also opinions that placed the effectiveness of the policy in reality in doubt. It was also noted that the fact that the prostitution business is closely connected with organized crime makes it fairly naïve to hope that those who are involved in it would start obediently paying taxes to the state. It was also noted that legalization of prostitution would be a good solution only if the buyers remained anonymous. Certainly a situation would not be acceptable where one's name would have to be disclosed when buying a legal service (so that a prostitute could declare income and expenses at the local tax board, etc).

4.8. Bad experiences in buying sex

The topic of legalization often arose in the context of talking about bad experiences. Nearly all of the respondents had encountered bad experiences in consuming sex. Often the bad experiences were tied to poor quality of service, false advertising and failure to keep promises.

Sex buyers felt that legalization of prostitution would contribute to an improvement of the quality of service. A number of people mentioned the fact that the entire business currently takes place on the honour system and the customer lacks any guarantees. If it were legalized, sex buyers believe they would have a way of lodging a complaint regarding substandard service and be able to demand that the situation be rectified or ask for a refund. If prostitution were legalized, it would also be possible to regulate prostitution advertising (which is currently prohibited) and its truthfulness.

Legalization would allow the health issues to be regulated better, respondents feel. Regular compulsory health checks for prostitutes would give customers assurance that it is safe to buy the service and it does not constitute a risk to the customer's health (and that of his other partners.) Instituting health checks for customers was not considered necessary by sex buyers, as they felt it would be sufficient for prostitutes to have a valid health certificate. Sex buyers did not mention the period of latency for STDs (the interval when a person has been infected but it does not yet show up on analyses) and problems related to it.

In addition to the inconsistent quality, poor experiences also stemmed from buyers being misled. Prostitution advertisements are very often misleading, and the actual service providers are not depicted on photographs used in the ads, and so on.

Mario: *Some of the women have been very awful. You show up, say thank you and go on your way. That is the market selection -- something for everybody. [—] The better you have had, the more choosy you are.*

A large disparity between promises and the actuality was been reason for immediate departure for all customers. Many have bought sex in spite of it, but later shared their bad experiences with other potential clients in Internet forums, for example.

Some of the bad experiences were for respondents related to the time factor. For example, it was a disappointment for one man when he bought an hour's worth of service but only managed to last ten minutes, at which point the prostitute considered the “transaction” a done deal.

Indrek: *Because when you go to a prostitute, you tend to think that you will manage to last for an entire hour. But actually everything comes off in a few minutes if the desire is great. And a prostitute isn't going to sit up with you any longer. True, the more expensive prostitutes are willing to sit around with you for the whole hour. The cheaper ones run for the showers right away and get out of there.*

Sex buyers noted that if they went to prostitutes simply wishing to pass time in a fun way, usually they were not disappointed. But if the expectation was for special sexual experiences, there could be a major gap between expectations and reality.

4.9. Rhetorics for explaining the reasons for buying sex

The rhetorics used by buyers were divided into five basic groups (rhetorics of consumption, rhetorics of social construction, rhetorics of natural predeterminism and rhetorics of dependence). The name assigned to each rhetoric characterizes its most typical basic assertion.

Each rhetoric also encompasses a certain number of sub-rhetorics (for example, the rhetoric of consumption covers the sub rhetoric of economic conservatism, and the social construction rhetoric encompasses the sub rhetoric of stress-causing expectations etc).

4.9.1. Rhetorics of consumption

Rationales which defined prostitute services as an ordinary transaction of purchase and sale where a certain amount of money gets a certain amount of goods – I filed under the rhetorics of consumption. In this context the good being purchased was sexual intercourse or sexual satisfaction for which the customer pays a previously agreed upon amount of money.

Andres: *It's exactly the same as dry cleaning. I have thought it out like this as well, that it is actually a service.*

In the case of rhetorics of consumption, paid sex has no special emotional value – it is a case of a good which the customer has selected based on his desires and purchasing power. It is a case of a transaction of purchase and sale, with which, from the point of view of the buyer, no moral arguments are associated. The Estonian language also supports the use of rhetorics of consumption, which in many ways reduces prostitution to a level equal with many other economic activities.

Rhetoric of economic conservatism

Sex buyers very frequently used the argument that buying sex from a prostitute is often much

more inexpensive than having a regular partner (whether a girlfriend, lover or spouse). Taking shape within this discourse was a rhetoric of economic conservatism, where the quality, price and time resources needed to acquire a good were measured in comparison to one another. In a situation where the desired good was solely sex (not closeness, empathy or friendship), respondents said it was economically rational to visit a prostitute. Thus buying sex from a prostitute was an tactical economic transaction in the case of which expenses and revenue were in balance, from the buyer's perspective.

Sergei: *If anyone says that there are no expenditures on a woman in a relationship, I don't really buy it.*

Indrek: *It could even be said that there is no such thing as free sex. What at first appears free can later become much more expensive, and vice versa. Transparent paid sex is cheaper in the final reckoning.*

In the context of economic rationality, sex buyers compared the purchase of service from a prostitute with the money required for a steady relationship. At the same time, there was some discord here, as a prostitute's service and the sex life that takes place in a steady relationship are essentially two fairly different things. A steady relationship encompasses much more than sex. A very specific service was bought from prostitutes, while the nature of a shared life was on the other hand much more multifaceted. In spite of this, sex buyers always compared the cost of a steady relationship with that of a prostitute's services and admitted that it was much more rational economically to consume the services of a prostitute than to be in a steady relationship.

Rhetoric of a good as property

As to the question whether paying money to a prostitute gives a buyer the total right to control the situation and do whatever he desires (such as to employ violence with or humiliate the prostitute), consensus was lacking among sex buyers.

From the standpoint of some of the buyers, a prostitute is still an individual in spite of her activity, and thus should be accorded basic human treatment and reckoned with. For the customer, she is above all a woman, albeit one who could be bought for money. As a service provider, they did not consider the prostitute as significantly different from a barber or masseur against whom people ordinarily do not employ violence. Thus it was not understood why different principles should apply in dealings with prostitutes. The attitude toward prostitutes on the part of such men was more respectful; they emphasized their attempts to understand the prostitute and to be a pleasant customer.

Sergei: *A man does not strike a woman, full stop. Any sort of humiliation is completely out for me.*

At the same time there were buyers in whose opinion a prostitute was a commodity over whom a paying client should have complete power. What such men bought for money was rather power and domination and the right to do as they pleased with prostitutes. Their attitudes toward prostitutes were generally more negative; for them a prostitute was an anonymous object who could be used to satisfy one's needs.

Peeter: *Perhaps you can't satisfy your sexual urges with a girl you have chatted up in a bar the way you would want to in reality. You go to a brothel for a specific kind of experience.*

Money gave the buyer the right and opportunity not to be polite and not to consider the wishes of the prostitute, if they so desired. Knowing they had that such a right generated a feeling of power – if they have enough money, it was possible to buy their immunity to all rules and good morals governing interpersonal interaction and conduct with fellow humans. For such clients,

going to a prostitute was like stepping beyond the boundaries of the norms of everyday life.

Even though the primary thing in buying sex from a prostitute was the satisfaction of the interests of the buyers themselves, the question of whether the prostitute enjoyed the sex with the client played an important part in how the attitude toward the prostitute developed.

Some of the respondents felt that prostitutes were faking and did not actually enjoy sex with men who were strangers. This knowledge in turn lessened the enjoyment for the john and promoted an ambivalent or negative attitude toward prostitutes. Such buyers described the prostitute as more of an object or means to an end that could be used to be relieved of their physical "load".

There were markedly more romantic views. A situation where the buyer felt that the prostitute enjoyed the action as well was a clear sign of recognition for the man. Such cases were described as positive experiences. In general, the attitude of such respondents toward prostitutes was more positive – they treated them as individuals with their own desires, as people whose opinion counted. But here too it was more that the buyer's own satisfaction increased if he felt that the prostitute enjoyed the sex and her sex partner of the moment.

Rhetoric of a special good

All buyers had heard of men with strange proclivities who like to use prostitutes and force them to engage in perversities. The nature or content of supposed perversities was not specified. In talking about the necessity of prostitution, such men with perverse desires were always mentioned. No one has personally had contact with any "perverts". Nor did any of the buyers fall in the category of a man with perverse proclivities.

In talking about their own experiences, respondents referred more to seeking special or extraordinary sex desires than perversities or perverse desires. While the term "perverse" was clearly negative for the customers, "special" was more positive. Sex buyers said a prostitute was often the only way to satisfy special desires..

Tauno: For example, great interest arose in anal sex, as everywhere people spoke about it and sang its praises. [—] I went to a girl who offered the service and tried it.

It was possible to buy sex from a prostitute that an ordinary partner in the opinion of the respondent would not have consented to. The potential refusal by a partner was in this case the man's own assessment, as in most cases he had not spoken to his partner on that topic. The activities that a particular respondent considered "special" varied considerably. For example, one man mentioned that he received oral sex, long solely a fantasy of his, in a brothel. He did not dare frequently tell his "legitimate" partner of his desires and fantasies, thinking that they would be met with condemnation and ridicule. The fear of condemnation was often subjective, since mostly a man had not even asked his partner what she would think of certain fantasies or activities. In some cases, a man had talked of his desires and the woman had ridiculed them. But a buyer did not have to be ashamed of his fantasies and desires in front of a prostitute. Many respondents took a very conservative attitude toward sex in their marriage or cohabitation. They had a rigid view of the traditional female sexuality characterized by the position that there are things a "proper woman" did not do.

The other aspect of specialness that was often sought in the prostitution business was the chance to have sex with a kind of woman with whom sexual activity would likely be ruled out in ordinary life. For example, on the basis of the discussion in Internet forums for sex buyers, it can be argued that if there was a black prostitute in Tallinn brothels, there would be a great many men who would want to spend time with her in spite of the high price.

Peeter: Well, many did shell out 2500 kroons an hour. Why? Because they know that they will

not get another black woman. You see, a man is prepared to pay whatever price to get something – even if only once – that he will not get again, or something that is truly enticing .

No doubt it was considered a one of a kind opportunity to try sex with a black woman. Respondents who had bought sex in some foreign country with the same purpose in mind also mentioned the desire to sample sexual intercourse with a person of another race.

The “customer is king” rhetoric

When they patronized a prostitute, buyers lacked a direct need to satisfy the desires and fulfill the expectations of the other party. Whereas sex with a non-prostitute woman would presuppose manners, gentleness and reciprocal understanding, use of a prostitute’s services was frequently clearly a one-sided transaction where the buyer was to get satisfaction, and not the seller. Paying money gave the buyer the freedom to act egotistical and not consider the other party. There was no need to worry about how long one would be capable of having sex and whether one’s partner received satisfaction.

Sergei: You don’t need to be hung up about anything and there are no strings attached.

Tauno: If it is free, I always do a lot more to make sure my partner is satisfied. But if it is paid it doesn’t necessarily always work out...

Some sex buyers did add that if possible they tried to offer prostitutes some enjoyment, but this was not a critical consideration. An argument cited was that prostitutes do not say anything disparaging to customers if intercourse proved too brief or was not satisfactory for other reasons. Unlike a regular partner, a prostitute would tend to be happy about the brevity of intercourse.

In addition to the fact that buyers did not sense a direct obligation to offer their partner sexual satisfaction in the case of a prostitute, there was also no emotional or intimacy problems that could jeopardize the male’s steady relationship. A typical argument cited was the reasoning that “unlike a lover, a prostitute will not call you at home in the evening”. Thus patronizing a prostitute was the safe bet, buyers said, if a male in a steady relationship needing to conceal his behaviour.

Rhetoric of saving time

Buyers described buying sex as a simple, efficient and convenient opportunity to satisfy their sexual drive. The most time-consuming part was finding a suitable prostitute from advertisements and offers. Unlike a sexual partnership that did not involve money, no time, energy or money had to be spent on the courtship of a potential partner. Using a prostitute also freed the buyer of a feeling of guilt in front of his regular sex partner – as not much time had to be spent on consuming the prostitute’s services, there was that much more time to spend with the family. On the other hand, keeping a mistress would have been very time-consuming, and the family would have suffered more as a result.

In the case of a prostitute, the expectations of both sides were clear at the outset, which ruled out any misunderstandings. The more precise details (sum of money, specific requests) were agreed upon in advance by telephone.

Sergei: That is often due to laziness or complacency. You pick up the phone, call, reach an agreement, make the trip and pay for what you ordered.

Naturally there were definite frameworks for the goods purchased for money. The time allotted for the “transaction” was very clearly determined in advance, and no expression of romantic

feelings was expected from the prostitute. After the end of the sexual congress, departure took place relatively rapidly. A customer who expected the sexual intercourse with a prostitute to be romantic could well be disappointed. Buying sex from a prostitute was convenient and rapid but not romantic.

Paul: *You go, hand over the money, then your pants get taken off and they start sucking. The rest is as the customer wants. Then it is time to stand up, wash off and this is intended as a sign that now might be a good time to leave.*

Mario: *You do your thing, hit the shower, get dressed and go from there. You don't stay behind to converse and drowse and read romance novels.*

Customers often compared buying sex from a prostitute to self-gratification, which allows one to become free of a bothersome physical need, rapidly and without feelings. Just as self-gratification cannot be compared to sex with a likeable partner, sex with a prostitute was not comparable to “free” intercourse.

Mario: *You can get very superficial physical contact for a fee, but if you develop a non-threatening emotional connection with someone, the enjoyment that you receive is something else. It can't be compared, it is apples and oranges. A prostitute is a like putting out a fire, you can extinguish a pressing need. [—] So why do men do it, anyway? You want to have sex with a living person.*

Rhetoric of entertainment

Men who consumed the services of prostitutes primarily in the company of others saw paid sex primarily as entertainment, as one opportunity to spend time. They categorized themselves above all as “Sunday drivers” – for them, going to a prostitute did not stem from a physical need but from a need to spend time in a “fun” way. Even though advertising of prostitution is prohibited in Estonia, there are nevertheless many advertisements which offer potential clients a large amount of information about services and prices. As the advertising is accessible to all, the attitude toward prostitution is normalizing – it is considered an acceptable entertainment and a fun way of spending time.

Andres: *About three years ago there was this rowdier period where our whole crowd...well we had to have fun and as much fun as we could afford and in every conceivable way. We had to try everything for ourselves and... [—] And well, it was truly public knowledge... as to where they were... and some sorts of business cards were distributed as nightclubs and there was no difficulty in doing so.*

Such buyers stood out clearly from the “desperate customers” who, they believed, were driven by the objective of satisfying a physical need. The attitude of “Sunday drivers” toward the “desperate ones” was quite supercilious. From the point of view of the entertainment-seeking consumers, patronizing prostitutes was acceptable as long as it was a voluntary activity from the point of view of the buyer. The customer, as they put it, had to have an internal need to decide when he went to a prostitute. A forced condition dictated by physical needs was not acceptable from the point of view of the clients who consumed paid sex as entertainment. A similar status-based distinction between entertainment and dependence-driven consumption also emerged in research conducted among drug users (Allaste et al 2005).

One important component of entertainment-driven sex buying was drug and/or alcohol consumption. This could take place either before or during the visit to the prostitute. Often the trip to the brothel or place where the prostitute services were provided was often undertaken together, with a group of friends. Often this would take place after a party where a large quantity of alcohol had been consumed and there was no desire to go home yet. The visit to the

brothel or apartment where sexual services were provided was a symbolic end to a wild party. Moreover, respondents found it interesting afterwards to discuss with friends what had happened, to share experiences and advice and make jokes.

4.9.2. Rhetorics of freedom of choice versus coercion

Explanations in which respondents brought up the aspect of voluntariness or coercion related to the prostitutes' activity I classified under the rhetorics of freedom of choice or coercion.

Rhetoric of the hypersexual prostitute

The view of prostitutes as hypersexual women was familiar to sex buyers and they were quite inclined to use it. These were rhetorics that are also used in society at large. The mass media and erotic and pornographic films promote their spread. Customers believed that for women with extremely great sexual needs, prostitution was the best solution for uniting their vocation and avocation.

Tauno: *But there are also those for whom it's two things rolled into one.* There are people with bigger needs, who enjoy sex constantly, 24/7, and if they pay you for it, too, then why not. So, you see, they might well like the work. And really they wouldn't have any spare time aside from their other work to satisfy their needs.

For the most part, respondents cited the argument that prostitutes have a greater sex drive than other women, and enjoy their work and the money they get for it. The notion of a sexually insatiable prostitute who combines business and pleasure was an attractive one for buyers. At the same time, it was revealed in the interviews that personally the respondents had not yet come into contact with any prostitutes they would classify as hypersexual. This rhetoric was therefore resorted to above all when prostitution was discussed in general terms, and not in the context of specific personal experiences.

Rhetoric of the woman driven into a rut

Moving to from the general to the particular, the opinion was expressed that many prostitutes actually do not enjoy what they do, but only do it because they are forced to. It was found that in all likelihood, the women who become involved in the prostitution trade are those who do not have the necessary acquaintances, education, skills and aptitude to do anything else.

Tauno: *Workers who have no other choice, I fear, don't feel any joy in this kind of work.*

Sergei: *Free is better; then both people want it.*

Paul: *There are also women who have to somehow make ends meet for themselves and their children.*

Mario: *If we look at our own country, then they are mainly Russian-speaking women. Their environment has nothing really very dignified to offer them so why not come to the capital, work for a really decent wage and then go home. [—] The family can live respectably.*

Based on personal experience, often an image of a prostitute was revealed – a woman who had become one of society's losers and was in a poor socioeconomic condition, who in selling her body acts perforce and not out of her own free will.

In talking about a prostitute's actual lack of free will, one respondent brought up manipulation used to recruit prostitutes. In this connection, discussion turned to the reasons why one person

is more susceptible to manipulation than another.

Andres: *And I understood that a great many people do it because as a result of manipulation they have... their self-esteem has been laid so low that they think it is the only place to, like, find work. And there they stay.*

Acting out of sheer necessity was one of the reasons that buyers said that many prostitutes (ab)use alcohol and/or drugs. Drugs and alcohol help them blunt their emotions and cope with the everyday feeling of subjugation that selling one's body can produce.

Peeter: *Many are not capable of doing this work while sober, but money is what puts everything in place.*

Topics associated with trafficking in human beings were introduced as well in the framework of the rhetoric of the woman driven into a rut. Respondents drew a clear line between the prostitution trade and trafficking in human beings – saying the first is characterized by free will, the second by coercion. Buyers felt that among women who had entered the sex industry due to trafficking in human beings, there were many more people who would not sell their body voluntarily or with pleasure.

Rhetoric of the ethical sex buyer

The distinction between trafficking in human beings and prostitution showed that respondents tried to construct the relationship between the prostitute and the buyer as a relationship of equals where both have full responsibility for their actions. This freed the buyer of the feeling of guilt, for as a matter of conscience it was considered important that sex not be bought from some “sex slave” but rather from women who act mindfully and out of free will. It was also mentioned that it was not possible to enjoy sex with persons forced into prostitution, Buyers were considered to be capable to make a difference between whether the person offering sexual services was acting voluntarily or compulsorily.

The desire to define oneself as an ethical actor was also corroborated by the attitude of buyers with regard to prostitutes consuming intoxicants. Respondents reiterated that for them, a prostitute in a state of alcohol or drug intoxication was acceptable only as long as it was not blatantly obvious. A prostitute who had overindulged in intoxicants could rather awaken suspicion that a person selling sex was not as free in their actions and decisions as the buyer would like her to be.

Empathy and desire to help the prostitute were also mentioned. One customer described an incident where in spite of having paid money, things never led to actual sex since the prostitute was clearly “in a state” and did not desire to engage in intercourse. Out of a desire to protect the prostitute from possible retributions, the customer did not tell the pimp of the fact that he had not received service.

Tauno: *I visited a house in the capital city. I picked a very nice-looking girl, paid money right away, and we retired. It wasn't exactly a cheap den. It seemed to start rolling, but every time before we actually got around to it, she pushed me away. I understood that something wasn't right. And eventually time ran out. I could have protested loudly and demanded a refund. Certainly a substitute would have been granted. But afterwards, when you're relaxing in the sauna, you don't want to think about what they would do to the girl.*

A situation where a sex buyer could indeed sense that a prostitute was not selling her body because she had an insatiable sex drive but rather for the purpose of economic coping, the buyer helped make it all morally acceptable for himself by the position that he was helping the prostitute feed her family – where else would the latter get money?

4.9.3. Rhetorics of social construction

Explanations where analysis of the reasons for buying sex was based above all on gender roles which dictate the socially expected boundaries of behaviour for men and women. I classified these under “rhetorics of social construction”.

Gender roles are essentially socially constructed modes of behaviour which change over time and are different in each culture. The traditional gender roles for men and women are rigid and construct male and female sexuality in very different ways. Men are expected to be sexually active and have many sex partners, while women are expected to be passive, dependent and with as few bed mates as possible. Men must constantly be proving their manhood, by acting according to the gender role.

Rhetoric of the ‘real man’

Respondents in this study stressed strongly traditional gender roles and their effect on the behaviour of men and women. Very frequently a connection between physique and social behaviour was noted: physical differences result in different gender roles as well. Sex buyers defined female and male sexuality in large part as opposites, which is the basis for the different behaviours of men and women and the different expectations and needs as well.

Mario: Sex means very very different things for men and for women. Men need to satisfy a physical need very quickly, and do not need any kind of world of emotions to accompany it. But it is fairly complicated for women to attend to it if they are not close to the person.

This divide also revealed a clear distinction between female sexuality and the sexuality of prostitutes, which in turn differ sharply from each other. Whereas the sexuality of an “ordinary” woman requires emotions and closeness, the sexuality of a woman engaged in prostitution is more similar to that of men, in the case of which it is possible to separate feelings from sex.

The traditional male gender role presupposes sexual experience and skill, in the opinion of buyers — a man must know exactly what to do and how to do it. Inexperience or lack of skill is taboo, and very frequently stigmatized. Men must be experienced and in the dominant position in order to conform to the traditional gender role expectations for males. Thus acquiring the necessary experience from a prostitute, a sexually experienced woman is considered good.

Robert: It's more like I go and ask a “pro” for help with a some new position, so I can in future offer my chosen one better enjoyment. Otherwise if you try it on your chosen one, and it is unsuccessful, you don't know where to ask for advice as to what went wrong. But a young woman in the corresponding profession can help, as she has longer experience.

The motive of “doing it right” was very important. Doing something “right” could prove even more important than getting the technique “slightly wrong” but still in a way that offered the partner pleasure. A truly manly man always knows what to do and does everything correctly. It was also mentioned that if brothels were legal in Estonia, the tradition of celebrating coming of age in a brothel under the skilful attention of a prostitute would become more deeply instilled as a tradition.

Rhetoric of a better starting position

Although at the beginning of the interviews, respondents were firmly of the position that nature had endowed women with less of a sex drive than men, as the discussion progressed a large part reached the opinion that female sexuality need not be weaker but that rather it is constrained more by the traditional gender role of women.

Jaanus: *Women are more desperate with that obligation to keep the home in order and... And actually the great jealousy on the part of the men too. And if a woman has been able to provide for herself, with above average education, the attitudes are already quite different. Everyone desires a change of pace, only if they don't have the conditions, moralizing serves well as a defensive shield.*

Women who are not restricted by the conditions prescribed by the traditional gender role may allow themselves greater freedom in their sexuality as well. Respondents did not have one single assessment of a woman not conforming to the requirements of the traditional gender role. On one hand, it was considered positive for a woman to dare and be able to have an active sexual life and show initiative -- it meant going beyond the traditional framework of femininity. On the other hand, the traditional passive and dependent woman seemed safe and familiar.

Also voice was the opinion that since women are in a weaker position in society compared to men, they lack the resources to permit themselves such a service. Over the centuries, women have been taught to suffer and suppress their sexuality, which is why they have not learned to use prostitutes to satisfy their desires.

Indrek: *I think that this developed from the time that men went to work and women had as many privileges as sheep. Only men had money to pay for something like that. [—] Women simply don't have money and it will take more time before women will also understand that they too might want that service. The other reason is certainly the fact that women have been taught and trained to suffer. No doubt they suffer from being starved for sex and do not deign go to a brothel.*

It was also stressed that society takes a very different attitude to male and female sexuality. The behaviour that was permitted for men often prompts condemnation when women engage in it.

Robert: *And it has been like that since time immemorial – that much more is permitted for men in the field of sex...to err, than it is for women. A woman does not even have to do anything and still someone may consider her a slut. But with men on the other hand, if he strays, he is a boss man, who is doing something just for kicks.*

Mario: *Why are certain things allowed for men but not for women? Why is a woman a slut because of it, if she does the same things that a man does? These are unwritten rules that have developed in society. [—] Women will certainly have to fight for their rights a long while yet.*

From the above an understanding developed that in actuality, female sexuality is not essentially different but rather it is constructed by social norms as the opposite to male sexuality.

Rhetoric of stress-causing expectations

The expectations imposed on men by traditional gender roles were mentioned repeatedly by respondents as a cause of stress and tension. Society sets exceedingly high demands on men and if they do not meet them, condemns them.

Sten: *If there is any inequality at all in our society, it is men who suffer from it. A man who is not able to support his family, buy a place to live and own a good car, is worth nothing. On top of it all, he has to have a good sense of humour, be educated, to say nothing of a decent penis and virility.*

On the other hand, the traditional female gender role was considered to be much less of a

cause of stress as it was not, in the opinion of respondents, fraught with the obligation to be successful at all costs. In the opinion of men, society imposes very high expectations both in professional and personal life. A man must be successful at work as well as at home, be capable of maximum performance on the career ladder as well as “in the sack”.

Mario: Actually one potency problem for men lies in the fact that women all force upon you that you have to be so and so, look a certain way. All that is an endless hassle. And you have to talk to a woman so skilfully that she gets turned on by it. And third, treat her so well that she could live life to the fullest and enjoy it completely. All this is so complicated. See how much time it all takes to get to know one another as you should.

Use of a prostitute’s services was thus defined as a temporary escape from the expectations of society and the machinery of the demands subjected by gender roles. The sex trade made it possible to be more unrestrained and not conform to the traditional principle of a man always having to satisfy the woman. In some sense, this is a paradox: even though consumption of the services of a prostitute was justified by a greater sexual need stemming from the male gender role, nevertheless paid sex allowed this need to be satisfied in a manner that did not conform to the traditional requirements imposed on masculinity.

Rhetoric of looking for a change of pace

In the opinion of sex buyers, consumption of prostitute services could be considered security for the survival of the regular relationship, as it offers the (married) man an essential change of pace and also convinces the (married) man that his regular partner is valuable and better than the prostitute.

Tauno: I really like grilled sea trout. But if I should get it three times a day for many years in a row, I’m sure that fur or five years later I would inflict violence on whoever brings me the next grilled fish. You have to get a change of pace to know that the grilled trout is the best.

The desire for a change of pace is something that respondents attributed to all men and what in essence could not be verified.

Peeter: And incidentally, everyone visits prostitutes, no matter what their profession.

Sex buyers did not stress the consumption of prostitute services as a direct threat to the regular relationship. Rather they were characterized by the view that the regular partner should understand that consumption of paid sex was natural and better than keeping a mistress.

4.9.4. Rhetorics of natural predeterminism

Rhetorics of natural predeterminism rely primarily on the position that men have a specific need for sex and psychologically have a greater sex drive which requires immediate satiation. For this reason it is as if prostitution was created specifically for satisfying the sexual needs of men and preserving order in society, as an unrequited sex drive makes man dangerous to the rest of the members of society (above all to women).

Rhetoric of the high sex drive

Respondents of this study cited the physical attributes (a great need for sex stemming from male biology) as the main reason for buying sex relatively infrequently. For the most part, the first person was not used in talking about it (“I have a very high sex drive”) but rather the explanation was attributed to all men. This was something that was considered to be typical of

the entire male sex.

Toomas: *Nature has put things in place clearly: women have a limited number of egg cells, but men's semen just flows and flows.*

One respondent stated that, sadly, married men actually did not have many opportunities to satisfy their sexual need in a legal manner.

Indrek: *Unsatisfied sexual tension is what men subconsciously try to mute with alcohol. But when the alcoholic haze clears, the tension returns. And then usually there are two routes, whether to gratify oneself or go to a brothel or find someone from off the street. There are many options! Rapes, child molestation and other such things are part of the same group. The reason is one and the same. There is also the option of being persistent with one's wife until she finally gives in and has sex. But usually married women do not have sex, or only when they want to get pregnant. That is unfortunately the reality.*

Rhetoric of the buffer

Sex buyers claimed that the existence of prostitutes helps prevent "ordinary" women from being raped. Men who might otherwise stalk non-prostitute women on the street get their needs satisfied in a legitimate manner with the help of a prostitute. IN this manner, prostitutes act as a buffer which protects women who are not prostitutes and thereby also protects all of society.

Kristo: *Even one less rape of a woman by some sick individual is worth hanging on to prostitution. The maniac can go to a brothel and get rid of his tensions there.*

The fact that in reality rapes mostly involve people who knew each other previously, and are not spontaneous but rather premeditated, was not mentioned by sex buyers. It was also overlooked whether it was fair, and how fair it was, for a potential rapist to have the right to do, for a fee, that which would be criminally punishable, were money not paid. From the standpoint of the sex buyers, the likelihood of a prostitute being raped was very small. The money paid constituted a kind of protection from a potential rape of charge.

Another target group mentioned was disabled people, with the claim that they lack other opportunity to find sex partners, and as a result that the existence of prostitutes was critical. At the same time there was no unanimity in this matter and one respondent even expressed deep shock that such arguments were used.

Andres: *Sometimes people say that whores are necessary so that wheelchair-bound... that invalids could have sex with someone. Some politician said that...that an invalid was someone that could not get other people. That is a completely insane definition! As if it were permitted for an invalid to have sex as if he would not find love, isn't it. I don't see any difference whether a person has two legs and two arms or not...you can still love that person and have sex with him I am completely put out by the fact that someone said something like that against their better judgment!*

The opinions that prostitute services are needed by those who cannot obtain sex elsewhere were nevertheless common, and were often used in discussing prostitution in more general terms.

Rhetoric of physical attributes

The physical differences between men and women were stressed in their analysis of how the prostitution trade broke down according to gender. In the opinion of respondents, prostitutes are mainly women because the physiology of men does not make it possible for them to

become prostitutes. If women can provide service to even a very unpleasant customer by employing certain measures, it would be very difficult if not impossible for men to do so.

Tauno: *And let's be honest, there are not exactly tons of males who are suited for this business. Sure, going by what people say, we may all be Hercules and wonders of the world below the belt, but actually... How many customers would you have if the little fellow is reluctant? It might have solid measurements, but if it is soft and the customer is simply not to his liking.*

Paul: *If a man can't get it up, it won't be gotten up even with a crowbar.*

Indrek: *A man needs stimulation for sexual contact, for it to get hard. A woman can fool a man by using a lubricant. A man can't do so. [—] And men have a difficult time doing this work.*

The existence of the prostitution trade was clearly linked to demand for paid sexual services. If demand for prostitutes were lacking among men, there would be no prostitutes, either. At the same time, it became evident from respondents that since the supply was so great and finding prostitutes was easy, this also shaped demand. The existence of demand was inseparably tied to the physical makeup of men, in the opinion of sex buyers. Because such a large demand is lacking among women, there are also very few male prostitutes, and most of them serve gay men.

In addition, it was believed that as men are physically weaker than women, they have fewer opportunities to earn money in hardship. The physical strength of men allows them to earn money more successfully than women through robberies or car thefts, for example, while women on the other hand have few other options but to sell their body.

4.9.5. Rhetorics of dependency

Rationales where the respondents brought up the possibility of loss of control over their behaviour and expressed this as a problematic aspect, I classified under rhetorics of dependency. It is important to point out here that none of the individuals interviewed for the study directly identified themselves as a sex addict.

Two respondents mentioned they had a habit of buying sex which from time to time could prove problematic. This means that it was not a physical need which prompted them to go to a prostitute but rather a behavioural pattern that started repeating itself automatically in certain situations.

Sergei: *Usually around lunchtime, something subconscious ... you look at the ads to see if there is anything interesting and pick up the phone.*

But in two forums which I followed regularly while conducting the study, there were people who defined their sex addiction as a direct problem. For this reason I considered it important to bring up this rhetoric in the given context as a habit may lead to a serious addiction as the next step.

The individuals who identified as sex addicts described addiction as a situation where in fact even a direct desire to go to a prostitute was lacking, yet they go there anyway due to some internal urge. If information is received that some new girl has entered the prostitution business, an addict feels an unquenchable need to try the new prostitute. It was admitted that such a behaviour has become a problem as it takes up noteworthy time and monetary resources and people feel themselves a prisoner of their behaviour.

5. Discussion

Sex buyers mostly used different rhetorics alternately. The rhetorics frequently contradicted each other. The transition between rhetorics was fluid and continuous. It was very common for components of different rhetorics to be used simultaneously. The choice of a suitable rhetoric also depends on whether the subject was talking about a personal experience or about prostitution as a phenomenon in more general terms. The choice of rhetoric also depended on the specific topic. For example, primarily the rhetoric of natural predeterminism was used in talking about criminalization of the use of prostitute services. Nor was reference made even once to the function of sex consumption as entertainment.

Another thing that was characteristic was that the explanation used could often reflect the respondent's perception about how activity should be talked about, to help justify it, and not so much what he actually thought. The actual opinions surfaced above all through personal experiences. And here there were big differences between rhetorics that were used in talking about the situation more generally and those used when becoming more specific.

The rationales used to talk about personal experiences were very different from those used to talk about prostitution from a theoretical angle. For example, very often rhetorics of freedom of choice were used to talk about prostitution more generally, whereas rhetorics of coercion were also employed in referring to personal experience. The former were used more for the purposes of justifying one's behaviour and the sex business as a phenomenon while the latter were employed more in talking about real-life experiences.

A similar use of fairly opposing rhetorics also took place when respondents talked about biological sexual need. In talking about men as a social group as a whole, often the rhetoric of natural predeterminism was employed. The main argument behind such a rhetoric can be considered to be the claims that the physiological makeup of males rules out monogamy and requires a greater number of sexual relationships than in the case of women. As a result, men have essentially only two options: to find themselves a mistress or use the services of a prostitute. Otherwise, their sexuality will become dangerous to other members of society. In using the rhetoric of natural predeterminism, a clear line was drawn between the general and the personal. Respondents mainly did not use this rhetoric when talking about themselves. One reason may lie in the fact that the rhetoric of natural predeterminism was in a certain sense in contradiction to the respondents' construction of true masculinity. A "real man" has no lack of sex partners and does not use prostitutes because someone else does not desire him sexually, but rather for entertainment purposes. Thus it is also logical that the desire to conform to one's own image of masculinity, one did not want to make reference to looking for prostitute services out of biological necessity.

When respondents talked about the reasons for buying sex in more general terms, and not out of personal experience, they used arguments of rhetorics of natural predeterminism in conjunction with the arguments of the rhetoric of consumption and the rhetoric of social construction. As sex buyers considered monogamy to be impossible as a result of male physiology, using a prostitute was financially less costly and more convenient than, say, keeping a mistress. Respondents considered this a more honest solution with regard to regular sex partners. In addition, they brought up the moral behaviour argument – that the relationship with a woman on the side was much more immoral than using the services of a prostitute from time to time. At the same time, a number of sex buyers noted that at the times when they had a regular partner, they did not use prostitute services. This means that in talking about personal experiences, they do not rule out the possibility of monogamy. In talking about men as a social group as a whole, however, monogamy was ruled out.

Attesting to the contradictory use of different rhetorics, for example, was the assertion, classified under the rhetorics of consumption, that buying sex from a prostitute was safer than

keeping a mistress as the prostitute never calls you at home in the evening. At the same time, in the course of the discussion it became evident that prostitutes had in fact called quite a few of the respondents at home and engaged in active follow-up promotion of their services. This shows that certain rhetorics were used more for the purpose of rationalizing a behaviour, while others were used for describing real situations.

Sex buyers very often used the rhetoric of freedom of choice in parallel with the rhetoric of coercion. This means that if in one context a customer talked about prostitutes as women with low self-esteem in a weak socioeconomic position who have fallen victim to manipulation, a customer might in another context freely define a prostitute as a hypersexual woman for whom prostitution is a great way to unite her work with a hobby. In the given case, it was more the rhetoric of coercion that was used based on personal experiences and the hypersexual women argument was employed in talking about prostitution in a more abstract sense.

Topics of trafficking in human beings were also salient in the context of forced choices. Even though respondents were aware of trafficking in human beings as a serious problem, they saw the connections between prostitution and trafficking in women as fairly weak. For the most part, they did not link trafficking as a criminal phenomenon with the domestic Estonian sex business. The prevalent attitude was that trafficking in human beings was by its nature negative, while prostitution was neutral or a rather positive phenomenon. For the most part, sex buyers did not give deeper thought to why or how a person selling her body had become involved in the sex business. Talking about one black prostitute, it was above all the opportunity of buying “special” sex which was stressed – sex, which perhaps would not be available – and not the way in which the woman had come to be in Estonia. At the same time, the likelihood was fairly low that those who had consumed the services of the prostitute were not aware of how the prostitute had come to be in Estonia (insofar as the topic had received broad coverage in the media).

Customers did indeed associate alcohol and drug use by prostitutes with remediation of a feeling of discomfort associated with prostitution (which pointed partly to the coerciveness), but for the sex buyer, the case of the drug intoxicated prostitute was a problem foremost from the aspect of low appeal or safety. Widespread among the buyers was the attitude that a drug or alcohol intoxicated prostitute would not necessarily pay enough attention to her health. In addition, prostitutes who used drugs were frequently associated with HIV infection. As a result, respondents considered it safer to buy service from prostitutes who were not disruptively drunk or under the influence of drugs.

In speaking about personal experience, the words of respondents pointed to a desire to portray themselves as ethical sex buyers. This means that it was considered important that sex be purchased from “women who had freely chosen the profession”, in the case of which it was easy for a buyer to make the presumption that it was a transaction between two equals. This might have been one reason why there was a desire that the prostitute not be excessively under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Abuse of intoxicants could have interfered with the notion that a prostitute had the freedom of choice to make money in this manner. The need to define oneself as a moral actor was also indicated by the frequent emphasis on humane treatment of prostitutes and positive attitudes towards them.

Respondents classified sex buyers into different status classes based on their motivation for buying sex. Above all, buying sex was acceptable and thus accorded a higher status if it did not arise out of a physical need but rather, say, entertainment purposes. Use for entertainment purposes predominantly took place in groups, and was often part of partying. In this manner a trip to a brothel helped construct a conformist view of masculinity and manly behaviour. A joint sex purchase strengthened the solidarity among a group of friends and allowed them to create a “joint secret” to conceal from girlfriends or partners.

Also brought out was the position that going to a prostitute was something that better-off men could permit, while poorer men had to get by on their own. Thus consumption of paid sex was evidence, in a certain sense, of a higher status and success. But the above held true only for those men who also had non-prostitute sex partners. Men for whom paid sex was the only way of getting sex were viewed more disparagingly, even though the rhetoric of natural predeterminism was used repeatedly to rationalize the existence of prostitution.

The existence of prostitution and arguments in favour of the right to buy sex were used primarily by respondents who had repeatedly used paid sex and whose general impression of prostitute services was a positive one. The rhetoric of coercion was employed more by respondents for whom paid sex left a negative impression and who were not regular consumers of prostitutes' services.

Respondents mostly did not define sex buying as a problem for themselves (or for society). It was for them a normal phenomenon, and fighting it was considered pointless and incomprehensible. The status of consumption of paid sex as a phenomenon was nevertheless conflicted, buyers felt: on one hand it was a behaviour that was frowned on by society, but on the other hand, accepted. The ambivalent attitude affects sex buyers and sellers. The result is that emphasis was placed on the need for a policy decision that would set forth the rules of play and determine the position of prostitution in society.

Even though advertising of prostitution is prohibited in Estonia, it is found everywhere. The words "prostitution" and "paid sex" or "sex for hire" are not used in newspaper advertisements, but everyone understands what lies behind the words "erotic massage". Media outlets that have a regard for their own reputation have today stopped carrying such ads, but publications can still be found for which this is not a problem. In addition, a large share of prostitution advertising has moved on to the Internet, which is much more difficult to regulate.

Arguments connected to sexuality are often stressed in the advertising industry in the selling many types of goods. Sexy telephones, sexy cars – sex and the naked female form can be used to sell anything. This contributes to an attitude that prostitution, too, is a normal and legitimate form of entertainment. The interviews clearly indicate that consumption of paid sex is very often a part of entertainment, and of wild parties. The mass media and advertising industry have in large part promoted the formation of such views.

Naturally, demand (and the creation of new consumers) is also affected by price and availability of the service. A number of buyers brought out the fact that they probably would not have gone to a prostitute if the opportunity had not been offered them so persistently. The opportunity to buy sex is so available and simple that often no effort need not be expended for that purpose. As to whether reducing availability of the service would impact consumption, and if so, to what extent, this is a question that merits more thorough study.

The views of sex buyers on prostitution policies (such as legalization or criminalization of the purchase of sexual services) attested to the fact that the principles behind various approaches, weaknesses and strengths would have to be analyzed more on the level of society. The prohibition on purchase of sexual services implemented in Sweden was for the most part beyond the comprehension of respondents; they did not understand why the buyer, and not the seller, should be punished. Nor did they understand how such a legal act could benefit prostitutes if they were not offered alternative ways of coping. They also lacked knowledge of the effects of legalizing prostitution.

In talking about prostitution, we cannot neglect international trafficking in human beings, against which Estonia is among the countries engaged in combat. It is well known that Estonia has become a country of origin, transit and destination for trafficking in human beings. Nor is a secret that trafficking in human beings is responsible for bringing new people into the sex

business. In the light of these developments, Estonia must take a clear decision on what attitude we as a country should take toward prostitution as a phenomenon.

The taking of a considered decision will require all arguments and perspectives to be analyzed and the impacts of various approaches to be assessed. This study offered an opportunity to make sense of prostitution as a phenomenon from the buyer's point of view.

6. Summary

This publication dealt with the topic of prostitution from the point of view of the buyers, trying to find answers to the questions of how the use of prostitutes' services takes place, how people who use paid sex rationalize their behaviour, and what their attitudes are toward the various aspects of prostitution (such as prostitution policies) in more general terms.

The reasons for prostitution and why people buy sex have been explained using very many different theoretical models. The first chapter of the publication provided a brief overview of five predominant approaches. It aimed to offer readers a theoretical framework that would facilitate placing the empirical part of the research into a wider societal context.

To gain an answer to the question of how sex buyers themselves explain their activity and what rhetorics they use for this purpose, I used open topical interviews as the primary research instrument. The sample consisted of fifteen male buyers of sex, of whom fourteen were heterosexual and one identified himself as a homosexual man.

Many of the respondents were impelled to visit a prostitute for the first time by curiosity and the desire to know "how it all is". Often they did so in the company of friends during a party, in a elevated mood brought on by consumed alcohol. There were also those who preferred to buy sex alone, concealing it from everyone, as they feared that their masculinity could be jeopardized if it were disclosed.

Five primary rhetorics were used to rationalize their actions: rhetoric of consumption, the rhetoric of freedom of choice vs. coercion, the rhetoric of social construction, the rhetoric of natural predeterminism and the rhetoric of dependency. The rhetorics were assigned names which emphasized the most characteristic arguments of each rhetoric. Each primary rhetoric contained a certain number of sub-rhetorics, which relied on the primary assertions of the basic rhetoric, but also complemented it, adding some new aspect.

The analysis revealed that as a rule different rhetorics were used alternately and quite conflictingly. The choice of a suitable rhetoric also depended on whether the subject was talking about a personal experience or in more general terms about some topic. For example, often the assertion was used, in talking about prostitution in more general terms, that prostitutes were necessary for men who would not otherwise get sex. This justification was not used with respect to themselves. Rather, the entertainment oriented function of buying sex was emphasized.

Different rhetorics were also used in analysis of what impelled prostitutes to be in their chosen profession, depending on whether discussion centred on specific prostitutes with whom the respondent had had personal contact or a hypothetical prostitute in the abstract. For example, in talking about prostitutes in the more abstract sense, it was claimed very often that these were hypersexual women for whom the sex trade was a good chance to combine their work and their hobby. On the basis of personal experiences, however, it was emphasised it was likely a case of women who lacked alternative opportunities.

According to theories which deal with demand for sexual services as a socially constructed need, demand for prostitute services is something that must be created in a person. It must be instilled in a person that this is something that he needs. Likewise, the meanings of such a behaviour must be constructed in a person's consciousness. If we (meaning in this case males) are told repeatedly that frequenting prostitutes is something exciting, fun and sexy in a masculine way, it can be assumed that interest will not disappear in such a form of entertainment.

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