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Tagging in *3DXChat* animated sex game porn production

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study of tagging practices within online animated pornographic content produced inside the massive online multiplayer game *3DXChat* examines how user-generated porn producers position themselves within the structure of the online free porn platform XVideos and the porn conventions they relate their videos to. Based on a purposeful sample of 112 videos uploaded to XVideos, I retrieved 166 unique tags. I contextualize them through a two-year online ethnography experience and discuss them according to information categorization (taxonomy and folksonomy), sexual data within online porn platforms, and pornography. I conclude that *3DXChat* user-generated porn is subject to the consolidated sex-tech structures of its time, leaning towards conventional porn categories; the few social tags reflect the in-between stage of 'niched-mainstream'. Tags exemplify the serialization, indexation, influences, and potential limitations for sexual play.

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Introduction

Almost a decade ago, the video 'First 3dxchat Porno' was uploaded to XVideos – one of the oldest and largest free online pornographic platforms – by a user named Blowjobkate.¹ According to the profile description, this person made pornographic content in *3DXChat* (SexGame Devil 2012), a subscription-based online multiplayer sex game similar to popular early 2000s titles like *The Sims* (Electronic Arts 2000) and *Second Life* (Linden Lab 2003). For example, players have anthropomorphic avatars that can be customized, social skills are important for having a fulfilling experience, and virtual environments can be constructed for the purpose of hosting parties, among other things. The distinguishing characteristic of *3DXChat* is that it primarily focuses on sexual experiences by having built-in mechanics focusing on sexual acts. This study is about tagging *3DXChat* user-generated porn.

Blowjobkate said that she loved porn and fantasized about becoming a pornstar, a wish she could fulfil with animated porn productions created within *3DXChat* and uploaded to XVideos. Her porn debut was an 18-minute 360p-resolution video with the tags 'porn', 'porno', 'anal', 'hardcore', 'big', 'tits', 'blonde', '3d', 'pornstar', 'slut', 'big cock',

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'whore', 'cartoon', 'time', 'first', 'cumslut', 'slutty', and '3dxchat'. I encountered this video through the '3dxchat' tag in July 2023. I was midway through writing and organizing the data for this article when I decided to find the oldest *3DXChat* porn video available on XVideos at that time. And, according to the platform structure, there it was.

Tags, when applied to porn, create niches, promotions, and insights about tastes (Keilty and Leazer 2014; Lee and Lowrance 2023). In 2023, XVideos had 425,802 videos tagged under categories like '3d-animation', '3d-hentai', '3d-porn', 'game', 'gameplay', 'hentai-game', and 'porn-game'. The numbers fluctuate, but they certainly contrast with the *3DXChat* search results: I found 348 videos using the tag '3dxchat', 144 for '3dxchat-game', 147 with '3dxchat-gameplay', and 196 for '3dxchat-porn'. As expected, a single video has multiple such tags. Following two years of ethnographic research within the game, I wanted to explore this puddle of pornographic data. I am particularly interested in how user-generated porn producers – who are also players – position their content within the structures of XVideos and what porn conventions they relate their videos to.

This article takes a qualitative approach inspired by quantitative investigations about porn tagging within online porn platforms (Tyson et al. 2013, 2016; Mazières et al. 2014; Yu et al. 2019; Wong, Song, and Mahanti 2020), the platformization of sexuality (Rama et al. 2023; Stegeman et al. 2023), folksonomy practices (Dame 2016; Rafferty 2018; Price and Robinson 2021; Watson 2021), porn and sex in games (for example, Sundén and Sveningsson 2011; Wysocki and Lauteria 2015; Lankoski, Apperley, and Harviainen 2023; Lankoski and Välisalo 2023), and animated pornography (Paasonen 2019; Saunders 2019, 2023). I examine a sample of 112 videos created by *3DXChat* players who uploaded their content to XVideos, analyzing their tags while considering porn conventions. I argue that *3DXChat* user-generated porn tagging practices are part of a broad platformed porn production even though it is not as mainstream or profitable as other content. Also, I show how in addition to playing sex games, players are willing to document and share their sexual experiences beyond the game to other online environments, such as free porn platforms as discussed in this article.

Methodology

I carried out online ethnography during 2020–2022 in *3DXChat* following approval by the Ethical Board of Human and Social Research at the University of Turku. I also consulted the game's regulations and terms of use, received training about ethics and data management, and followed the legal and ethical guidelines, regulations, and best practices applied to internet research (franzke et al. 2020). During my fieldwork, I identified individuals and groups of players with diverse interests and some of them produced pornographic content (audio-visual or purely visual) within the game and used it as part of their sexual play. They preferred to upload their content to XVideos instead of other porn platforms, and this was the reason why I chose to study the former.² Still, I searched for *3DXChat* content on porn platforms on different occasions, and I found the results to be rather limited.³ For example, the company – or someone impersonating them – created an account⁴ on Pornhub in 2019 and uploaded eight videos (Figure 1). During 2021, some videos from sex workers were uploaded because of a partnership between *3DXChat*, Lovense, and Chaturbate; however, they were out of the scope of my research.

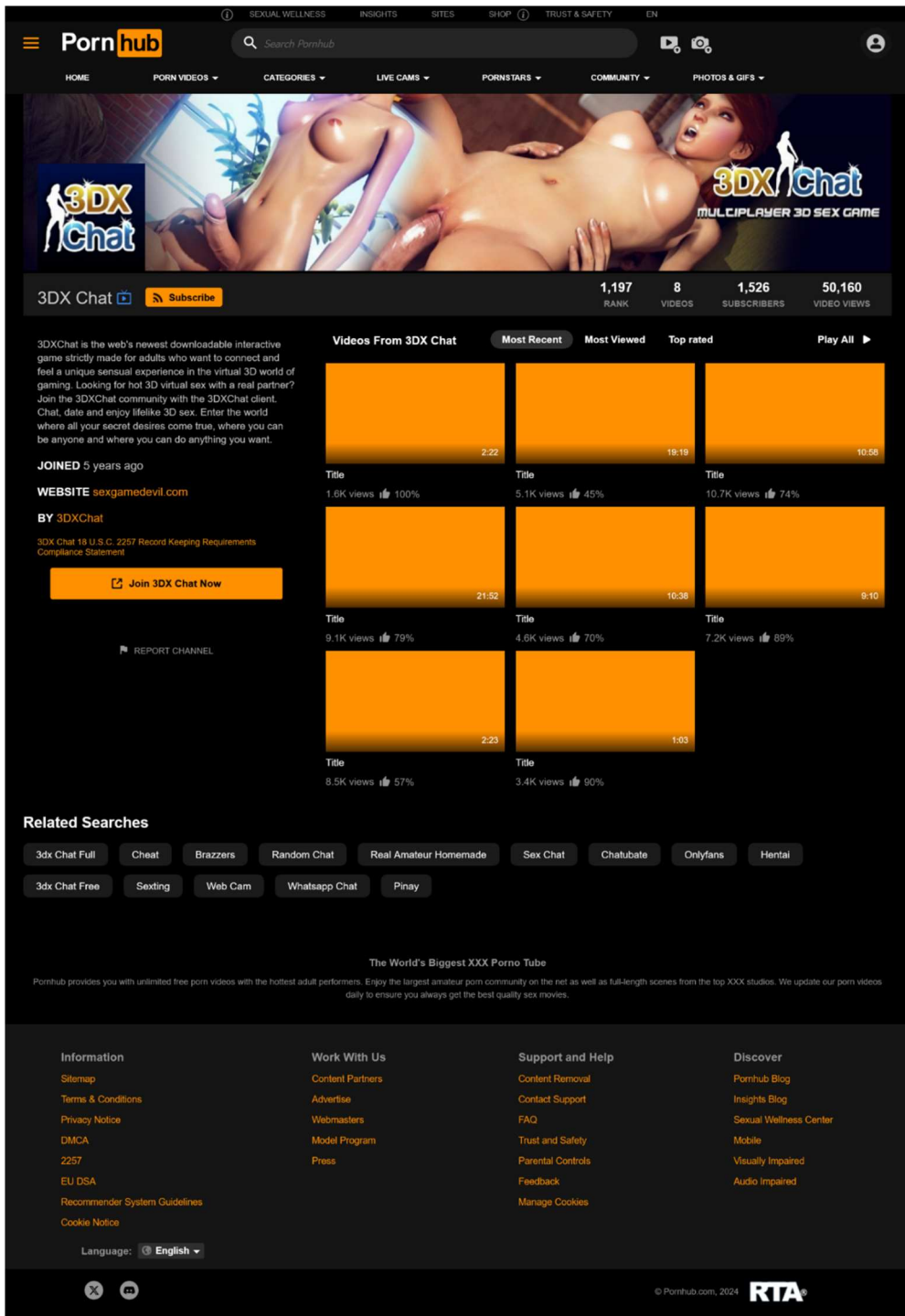


Figure 1. Screen capture of 3DXChat profile on Pornhub in July 2024. Source: Pornhub.

Data collection

In January 2023, I searched for '3DXChat' on XVideos and was presented with videos, playlists, and channels. I opted to work with the channels from *3DXChat* players I recognized from my fieldwork. They were playing and producing content about and from the game before I started my research, and some had established themselves as socially relevant – they 'owned' shared virtual worlds within the game where sex parties take place, for example. To protect their identities, I do not disclose their names and images or offer links to their accounts; I provide information that is sufficient to contextualize without overexposing them, since the study is not about individuals but about tagging within online porn platform systems.

I selected four channels (Table 1). CH1 works as a group and has two official shared worlds within *3DXChat*, operating in Western European and North American time zones. Their environment caters to those searching for 'paid' sex play with sex workers (referred to as escorts) playing in this specific location. Their staff include organizers, hosts, and in-house DJs who perform live music within the game to other players. CH2 has its own virtual spaces, a social programme (including a porn cinema), DJs, a dance group, and a monthly online magazine. CH3 and CH4, meanwhile, are sole productions from individual players who collaborate with others to upload content. They became inactive or had an infrequent upload pace before sampling.

During data collection, half of the videos from one of the pre-selected channels disappeared.⁵ When trying to find them to double-check information, I discovered that some were available on XNXX, another free porn platform owned by the same company. This information left me wondering whether the channel owners were aware that their content could be accessed elsewhere and what the implications are for data ownership and safety.

To delimit the data collection, I used the parameter of CH4, which only had 28 videos. The data were retrieved from the newest videos uploaded for the other channels. The total sample is therefore 112 videos. From the XVideos interface (Figures 2 and 3), I manually retrieved the following information:⁶ title, estimated publication date, length, approval rate, number of viewers, number and content of comments, whether they were part of a series, and, most importantly, their tags. Figure 3 shows how the tags are displayed and where they can be edited.

I did not systematically analyze the content of all videos for this article. However, tags as such are valuable data and can be informative about sexuality (Walker, Makin, and Morczek 2016, 660). Moreover, the doubts I had about the operation of porn platforms are on the radar of recent research, such as Rama et al.'s (2023) examination of Pornhub's recommendation system to understand its algorithm logics. Tags are susceptible to

Table 1. Information about the selected channels from XVideos retrieved in January 2023.

Channel	Signed up	Profile hits	Subscribers	Total views	Number of videos
CH 1	May 2019	83,292	2,042	5,592,295	496
CH 2	May 2019	53,749	735	1,908,222	162
CH 3	August 2019	31,924	458	1,216,885	72
CH 4	December 2020	5,050	119	90,769	28

Source: XVideos.

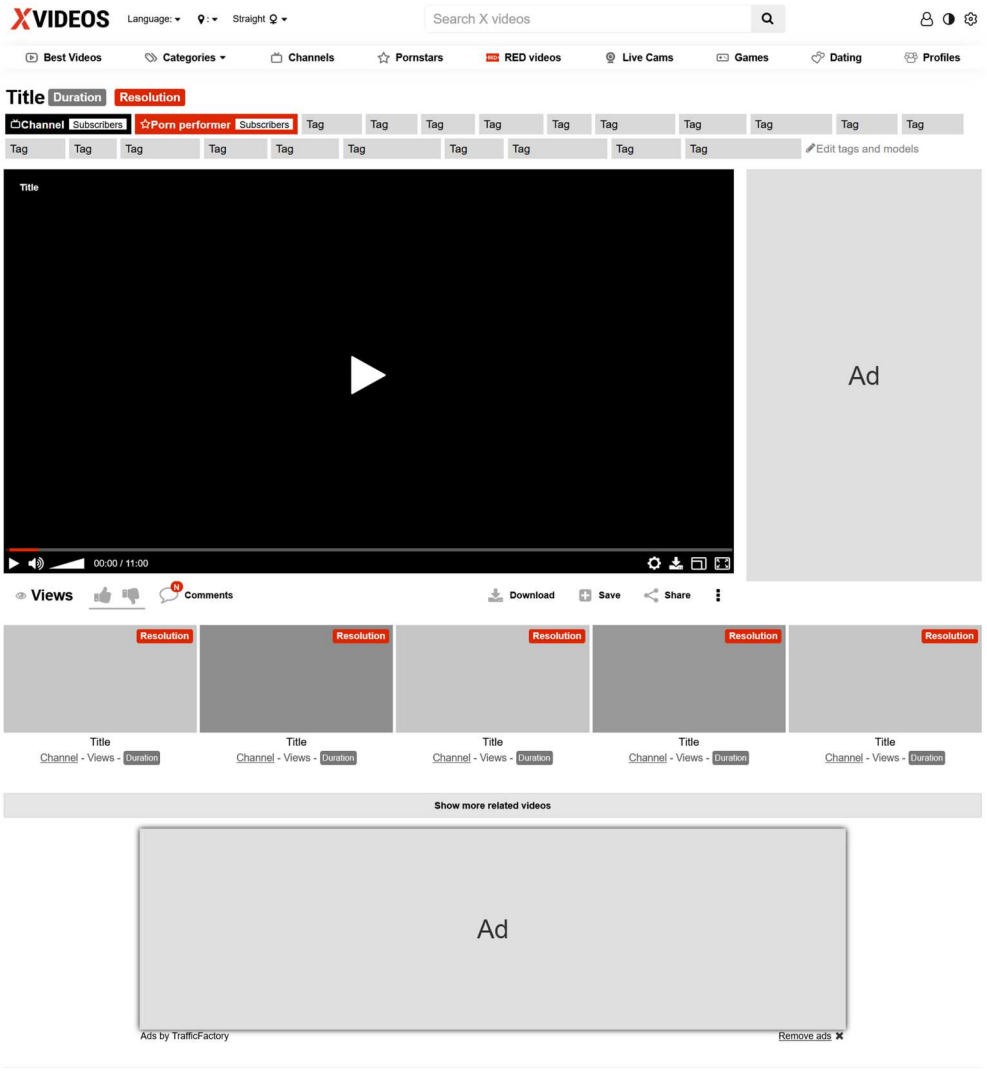


Figure 2. UX interface from XVideos website. Source: XVideos.

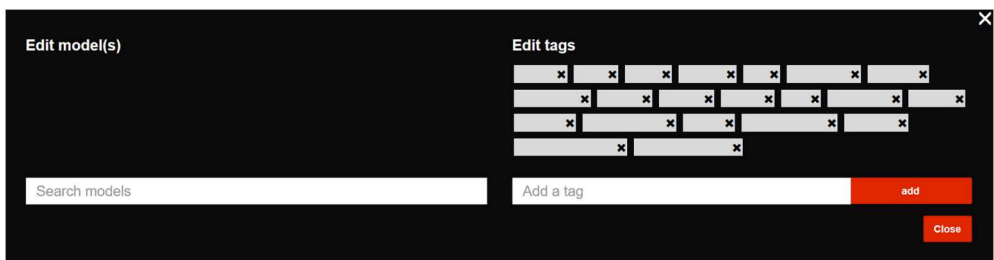


Figure 3. Screen capture of tagging interface on XVideos. Source: XVideos.

significant instability (Godoy and Corbellini 2016) and require contextualization that I can offer with my experience as a researcher and player of this sex game.

Coding scheme

The data were saved, organized, and coded using Microsoft Excel. The coding scheme was based on collected data and game characteristics (e.g. how sexual positions are organized and displayed to players). The tags were organized following this structure, and some were put into multiple categories (Table 2).

In total, 166 unique tags were used in the 112 videos. The categories with the most tags – more than 100 – were games (297 tags), sexual positions (259 tags), bodies (140 tags), and orgasm and ejaculation (129 tags). Most of them follow porn conventions and taxonomies, but it was surprising to see the emphasis on *3DXChat*, which can be a subtle game promotion.

Results and discussion

I grouped the coded categories by association. Tags in ‘Players in sex avatars’ are attributed to the physical and customisable avatar characteristics, including age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationality, and bodies. I also included tags mentioning specific players and/or their groups. ‘*3DXChat*’s multiplayer sex gaming environment’ delves into the meta-references to the game and the importance of metadata to porn business. Lastly, I grouped all tags specifying and describing sexual play (see subcategories under the ‘sex (S)’ code in Table 2) as well as how they were set in virtual places.

Table 2. Coding scheme for categorizing the tags.

Category	Subcategory	Description
Games (GM)		Reference to games in general and/or <i>3DXChat</i>
Meta-reference (MR)		Reference to sexual acts with other terms
Place (PL)		Reference to events like festivities, holidays, and locations within the game
Age (AG)		Reference to age group of the avatars presented in the videos
Avatar (AV)		Reference to avatars by their names and/or players’ groups
Bodies (BD)		Reference to body parts and characteristics
Race, ethnicity, and nationality (REN)		Reference connected to race, ethnicity, and nationality
Gender (GN)		Reference to gender identifications and language
Sex (S)	Type of sexual act (S-TSA)	Reference to the broader type of sexual act (anal, masturbation, vaginal, oral)
	Sexual intensity (S-SI)	Reference to the intensity of the sexual actions/animations
	Sexual orientation (S-SO)	Reference to the sexual orientation of avatars
	Sexual partners (S-SP)	Reference to the number of avatars partnered for the sexual interactions
	Sexual positions (S-SPO)	Reference to the sexual positions (broad or specific) displayed by avatars
	Orgasm, ejaculation, and squirt (S-OES)	Reference to orgasm, ejaculation, and squirt as act and/or fluids
	Fetishes and kinks (S-FK)	Reference to fetishes and kink contexts and actions
	Sex work (S-SW)	References to sexual working practices
	Sex objects (S-O)	Reference to objects that are part of sexual scenarios and/or used during sexual interactions
Other (OT)		References that did not fit under any of the previous categories

Source: Author.

Players in sex avatars

Avatars are players' digital bodies through which sexually mediated experiences happen. Creating avatars can in itself be a pleasing experience, revealing, for example, what is perceived as sensual, erotic, sexual, and attractive. I first explore the tags related to avatars by age, virtual bodies, gendered and sexual orientation markers, and avatars and groups added to the tags.

Age and ageing have different meanings for organic and digital bodies. Nonetheless, it is a relevant factor for sexual expression, experiences, and pornography. *3DXChat* players indicated their age in their avatar's profile,⁷ appearance customization, description of sexual playing preferences, and behaviour; these combinations varied according to the players' sexual intentions and interests. Like elsewhere, players commonly associated femininity with youth, whereas male-coded avatars preferred to be seen as more mature and experienced than the people they played with (but not necessarily older). Being an 'old pervert' had mostly a negative connotation when related to masculinity, even though the term can be seen positively in 'age play' interrelations and porn content. Thus, age perception was closely related to positive and desirable contextual characteristics associating gender and sexual performance.

The correlation between gender (feminine coded) and age (youth) revealed itself in tags where 'babe(s)' and 'teens' were preferred over 'mature'. I considered 'MILF' – an acronym popularized in the 1990s through US mainstream culture and porn (Walker, Makin, and Morczek 2016) – to also be part of the appeal for femininity/youth because their sexual appeal is connected to shattering expectations regarding age and proximity to young characteristics. Therefore, the commercial sex and porn rebranding of 'older (female) performers' regulates and influences how people will articulate age, gender, and sex, either by acknowledging the impact of platforms' commercial preferences for these bodies (for example, Caminhas 2023, 185) or by tagging animated porn.

Despite the aforementioned, male avatars in the sample did not receive tags associated with their age but rather with their race and bodily attributes. Racial, ethnical, and national coding overlapped with sexual partnership and bodies. Without these combinations, tagging would appear to be raceless, which was not the case: race appeared not only when explicitly expressed but, in the subtext, as in frequent tropes of black maleness and their genitals, and with black women and interracial sexuality.⁸ Mainstream US porn production has been producing and repeating the same sexualized racial – and racist – frames (Williams 2004; Cruz 2015). Within *3DXChat*, racialized sexual play is exemplified by players' disclosure of interest in and association with groups like 'Zebra Club for Interracial Sex', 'Kings Gangbang Squad', and 'Black Big Panther'.

Even though my analysis suggests that these tags were reproducing racial sexual tropes, I should also acknowledge that race play is not restricted to black and white bodies (Cruz 2015)⁹ and that racial power dynamics can gain multiple meanings for those who partake in and fantasize about it. My claim does not deny racism in pornography and sexual playing interactions with avatars but considers the ambiguities of sexual fantasies and racial-gendered expectations, as was suggested among the US black women discussed by Cruz (2015) and Miller-Young (2005).

Racist discourses are responsible for the pervasive imaginaries about black male desirability to their penis characteristics (Bury and Easton 2024). The abbreviation BBC ('big

black cock') and its variations were among the most tagged bodily attributes referring to black male avatars. Players referred to them as kings, breeders, and impregnators, and male avatars presented BBCs as a positive aspect of their virtual selves. Penis size alone contributed to this virtual body part to be the third most tagged trait. However, when I conducted this research, it was not possible to alter any aspect of penises in *3DXChat*: there was no such a thing as 'big cocks'. The exception to this code was an April Fools' prank where male avatars had big penises for a limited period of time (Figure 4).¹⁰ The pose was so disproportionally fabricated that the game could be seen as making fun of its own structural inspirations and limitations.

Among the tags with limited quantitative representation but qualitative substance were ethnic and national references, as well as some bodily characteristics. The first type would be better analyzed with a closer reading of the videos to understand how avatars were presented as sexual play agents, but it is sufficient to point out that these tags were based on stereotypes of Asian (especially Thai) and Latin American people; as with age, they were connected to female-coded avatars. There were few references to vulvas (tagged as 'pussy'), and porn was at the centre of vulva discussion at times – for example, being shaved or not (Paasonen and Vänskä 2022).

There was a clear distinction between the characterization of the sexual voraciousness of female and male-coded avatars in the tags that were used and combined. Meanwhile, male-coded avatars did not receive any tags; within the game, they were also described by their sexual appetite. However, there is no equivalent with the same sociocultural impact and ambiguity to describe male drive as 'whore' and 'slut' to label women. Female-coded avatar profiles included these terms to suggest openness to sexual encounters, and two channels from the sample used such tags.

Different lines of theorization have been proposed for players' gender identification and performance during play. Players' gender performance and identification have received the labels of 'gender-bending', 'gender switching', and 'gender swapping' (for example, Martey et al. 2014), as well as 'gender alignment' (for example, Kosciesza 2023; Whitehouse, Hitchens, and Matthews 2023).

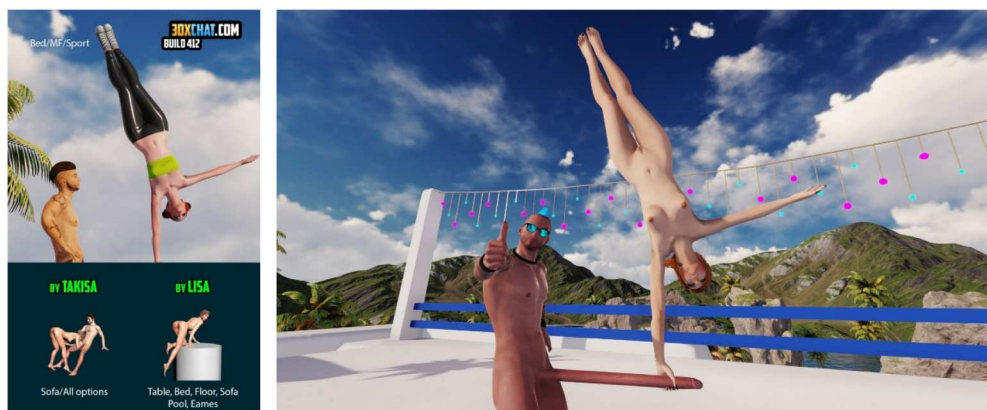


Figure 4. Two images from different avatars illustrating the April Fools' temporary sex position. Sources: *3DXChat* (right) and *3DXChat X* account (left).

3DXChat was structured under a binary gender model. Players have to choose between a female or a male avatar. That said, in *3DXChat* female-coded avatars are played by people who identify themselves in the spectrum of gender (and sexualities). I observed that descriptions of female-coded avatars had more connotations between promiscuity (sexual appetite) and submissiveness (sexual power dynamic). In addition, it was not less frequent to see these different characteristics being combined with allusions to trans, non-normative performances, and genitals.

The tags ‘futanari’ (‘futa’, in short) and ‘shemale’ fall under the umbrella of trans terminologies used online and in pornography; their meanings, origins, uses, and effects vary. According to Vaught (2023), ‘shemale’ would describe a trans woman with a penis marketed in heterosexual porn (see also Pezzutto and Comella 2020). ‘Futanari’ in western hentai would refer to ‘hyperfeminine women who have both penis and vaginas – intersex, trans femme characters if you will’ (van Engen 2023, 286). It seems that both tend to give more weight to the genitalia – having or not having a penis and/or vulva. The *3DXChat* structure and players’ attitudes are not distant from this. Female-coded avatar bodies can receive an attachment of penises, but male-coded avatars cannot have their penises removed. This structure opens the possibility for more people to relate to the female-coded avatars in a queer and performative way as well as being very normative. I interpret the hyper-focus on the genitalia of the avatars, along with the overuse of the term ‘futa’ (or ‘shemale’) in association with a sluttiness-submissive tendency, to be more aligned to a normative and fetishizing perspective on gender-sexuality and play. I saw these mixes and interchangeable uses being more widely adopted among players interested in cross-dressing and sissification.

Both Vaught (2023) and van Engen (2023) see a potential for positive and reparative readings (Paasonen 2014) for these labels by acknowledging the affective response of audiences as a trans and queer fantasy and the possibility of experiencing sexual pleasure. Moreover, Dame (2016) discusses the individual and group semantic importance of tagging for trans people; and Lee (2014) suggests that queer porn resists being categorized. However, these authors also recognize that the dynamics being depicted, the associated tags, and the public responses might not serve the purpose of sexual and bodily autonomy but rather extend transmisogyny, fetishization, and derogatory treatment. Within *3DXChat*, trans-labelled shared virtual environments, such as ‘<3Futacadia < 3| Futa Club|All OK’ or ‘Futas & Fems Nude Spa’, are popular and populated by players. Nonetheless, I am hesitant to suggest *3DXChat* as a trans-inclusive environment, and the tags reflect this ambivalence.

In the sample, the only sexual orientation tagged was ‘lesbian’, and this should be interpreted as being closer to straight porn classifications as ‘hot lesbians’ and ‘girl on girl’ (Diamond 2005; Morrison and Tallack 2005; Jackson and Gilbertson 2009; Pham 2016; Madraga, Nielsen, and Morrison 2018; Meehan 2021), not only because the depiction of sex in games tends to be heteronormative (for example, Lankoski, Apperley, and Harviainen 2023; Lankoski and Väiläsalo 2023), but in this sample they were combined with ‘blowjob’, ‘deepthroat’, ‘facial’ (cum), and ‘cumshot’.

Only one channel used tags crediting the avatars in the videos. These referred to female-coded avatars and a dance group, which were directly connected to the user-porn producers if they were not the owners of the animated porn channels. Self-promotion is part of the celebration of porn producers’ and performers’ efforts, a way of

gaining social capital among *3DXChat* players and perhaps among others producing user-generated porn online (Saunders 2019).

3DXChat's multiplayer sex gaming environment

Algorithm tricking through tagging is part of platform acts calling for justice (for example, Losh 2019) and self-promotion (Dame 2016; Monea 2022), but when it comes to porn content these strategies encounter much criticism – for example, for ‘contaminating’ searching results (Monea 2023) or ‘damaging’ businesses and consumers by allowing sex-related tags (for example, Tiidenberg 2021). Given the concentration of porn platforms in a few companies (Monea 2022) and how they intervene in the tagging infrastructure to their benefit, I argue that most of the tagging on *3DXChat* user-generated porn tends to be – or becomes – equivalent and invariably tied to pre-set taxonomies.

Optimization of metadata, like search engine optimization (SEO), is part of the history of the internet (Bradshaw 2019), and is also of interest to porn companies because their business models depend on visibility. Taking Pornhub as an example, the metadata emphasized the importance of categories and tags for a better performance on the platform and generation of advertising revenue.¹¹ Pornhub acts as a ‘metadata moderator’ filtering tags before the video becomes available. In contrast, XVideos does not have information about how tagging works on their domain and yet is the seventh domain with the most trafficking in the world (Wright, Tokunaga, and Herbenick 2023) with a great performance, which can create a favourable context to test their information models.

The scalability of porn production and circulation is correlated to technological improvements. Since the early 2000s, ‘Internet rules 34 and 35’ prophesized that everything has or will have a porn version online, but consumers have to develop their porn literacy to know where to find what they are looking for (Monea 2022, 4–6). I became porn literate on *3DXChat* as a result of my research; I found that players tagged more strategically when they referred to the game and the players because they had to create these classifications, and these are the most valuable folksonomy tags. They thus positioned their porn content as unique, possibly drawing consumer curiosity and attention.¹² All channels used ‘3DXChat’ as a tag, including ‘sex game’, ‘3DXChat-sex’, ‘3DXChat-porn’, or the abbreviation ‘3DX’. Players also emphasized the gameness by using ‘3DXChat-game’ and ‘3DXChat-gameplay’, in case someone is searching for sex games or game-related pornography. However, tags referring to players are incomprehensible to non-players, as they are part of a niche vocabulary (Dame 2016).

Nonetheless, there is also the possibility for tagging to become more consolidated as a porn category that works simultaneously as a ‘niched-mainstream’. For Mazières et al. (2014), ‘cartoon’ and ‘hentai’ tags were still very niched clusters in the free porn platforms they analyzed. *3DXChat* porn falls under the categories of parodies, toon porn (Capino 2004; Paasonen 2018, 2019; Saunders 2019), game porn, and even machinimas. They are mostly user-created pornographies using various software and going against intellectual property to express consumers’ sexual imagination by sexually engaging with products that do not offer many, if any, sexual possibilities. For example, LEGO porn production uses plastic asexual toys and presents a different form of playing or relating with the objects (Brownlee 2019). Also, the life simulator *The Sims* distanced itself from

sexual aspects, but players intervened with patches and other modding practices to make it closer to what they expect to emulate (Consalvo 2003; Sihvonen 2011).

However, the growth of interest about video games and other popular culture searches on porn-platform monopolies like Pornhub might reposition this type of content to mainstream profitable productions. Porn content is susceptible to political, economic, and infrastructural interests that are not in the hands of most consumers, even though their sexual imaginaries, experiences, and affects are subjected to the porn that fewer people want to produce and reproduce (Monea 2022, 149–155).

Sex play in sex games

Sex play virtual setting

The tags that I coded as ‘place’ and Mazières et al. (2014, 88) clustered as ‘context’ are some of the taxonomical serializations that Schaschek (2014) identified regarding plots, scenarios, and schemes. *3DXChat* players used tags mostly connected to Anglo-Saxon and Western holidays and festivities, such as Halloween and Christmas. Halloween has been characterized by dressing up in customizable garments and playing with levels of sexual explicitness that are generally not part of the regular personal display (Mackay and Mackay 2020). Christmas has been well explored in pornography through parodies, humorous dynamics, and reward or punishment for behaviour, among other possibilities. Although the data collection period coincided with these holidays, and the game includes people from various cultures, none of the channels explored other celebrations as plots or tags.

Various scenarios were used for placing and staging sex. Some appealed to tropes of voyeurism, with public places such as beaches and bathrooms (Figure 5).¹³ Others alluded to hidden cameras, which have been criticized because they can be non-consensual sexual material (Thompson and Wood 2018; Winter and Salter 2020).



Figure 5. Shared virtual environment bathroom. Source: Author.

Sex play structure

In a multiplayer online sex environment, I saw players expressing and expecting ease in having sexual experiences with more than one player. The tags reflected this interest as the most desirable partnerships involved ‘threesome(s)’ or ‘3some(s)’. However, there are technical constraints to sexual play. For example, only three avatars can be grouped¹⁴ together at a time for sexual animations. The sexual position choices are pre-determined by category (e.g. vaginal, anal, foreplay). So, in practice, having multi-partner sexual play is more challenging than players wished, and it is more common to see pairs in the environment.

Even though tags are not subjected to the game’s technical limitations, the way these trios are abbreviated in the game was incorporated in the tags – MMF and FFM.¹⁵ Looking closer at the data set to see how many videos used ‘threesomes’, ‘MMF’, and FFM’, I found 11 videos posted by three channels. Following that, I was interested in seeing which other tags were associated with these trios, and using the tags given by players – presented in italics – I describe three examples (Table 3).

Despite the different partnering combinations and some sexual flexibility, it is still very much heterosexual. Looking at sexual playing patterns within the game, I encountered more male-coded avatars saying that they do not accept sexual interactions with other men participating but prefer to have multiple female partners (FFM) and, if not, observe female-only partnering (FF or FFF). A similar restriction was not openly declared by female-coded avatars, which seemed ‘sexually flexible’.

The types of sexual actions were coded according to the game structure, distinguishing positions as foreplay, oral, vaginal, anal, or fetish. I incorporated tags such as ‘kissing’ under ‘foreplay’; ‘licking’, ‘sucking’, and ‘blowing’ under ‘oral’; and any reference to touch, friction, or insertion of body parts or objects as ‘masturbation’.¹⁶ I added the ‘chatting’ code because this is a frequently overlooked game feature and playing practice, although it is part of the sexual interactions (for example, Frank 2013).

The most used sexual activity tag was ‘anal’, which received five times more tags than ‘oral’. The lack of tags to other sexual types might reflect players’ disinterest in specifying sexual play that would be seen or are ‘expected’ in pornography. In this sample, vaginal sex could be considered implicit into sexual positions tags, for example, ‘missionary’, ‘doggy style’, ‘cow girl’, and ‘reverse cow girl’. However, there were a couple of tags that could or not include vaginal penetration, as in the cases of ‘double penetration’, ‘spit roast’, and ‘full nelson’. Moreover, anal sex and pleasure are surrounded by myths

Table 3. Description of tags used in three videos mentioning threesomes, FFM, and MMF.

Two female and one male (FFM)	Two male and one female (MMF)	Combination
In <i>3DXChat</i> , a <i>threesome</i> with two female avatars and one male-coded avatar (<i>FFM</i>) happens. Their sexual play includes <i>anal</i> , <i>blowjob</i> , and <i>pussy-licking</i> . There is a <i>cum</i> ejaculation on the <i>facial</i> area. At least one of the avatars is <i>blonde</i>	In <i>3DXChat</i> , a <i>hardcore</i> and <i>rough</i> , <i>interracial threesome</i> involving two male avatars and one female-coded avatar (<i>MMF</i>) happens. Their sexual play involves <i>deephroat</i> , <i>anal</i> , <i>spit roast</i> , <i>cum</i> , <i>creampie</i> , and <i>fart</i> . The following characteristics were added about the avatar (or avatars): <i>petite</i> and <i>redhead</i>	In <i>3DXChat</i> , an <i>orgy</i> happens on a <i>beach</i> . Groups include two female and one male-coded avatar (<i>FFM</i>) and two male and one female-coded avatar (<i>MMF</i>). They include <i>blowjob</i> and <i>cum</i>

Note: Tags given by players are presented in italics.

Source: Author.

and misinformation and exploited by pornography (Taormino 2006). Virtual environments are ideal scenarios for these interactions being affectively charged as acts of transgression and naughtiness.

Sexual positions were the category with the second most tags overall in this sample. 'Blowjob', 'deepthroat', 'doggystyle', and 'double penetration' were the top tags across channels; 'blowjob' was the only sexual position that all the channels used and the most used position. This concentration of a few tags is a pattern aligning with Mazières et al. (2014).

Sexual intensity was 'hardcore' and 'rough', referring to the repetition of looped animations that can be controlled inside the game with a slide bar. These tags were more frequently connected to oral, anal, and masturbatory sexual acts and the sexual positions 'blowjobs', 'deepthroat', and 'doggystyle'. In this sample, 21 of 112 videos used the combination of oral sexual positions and intensity. All operate in the serialization of the excessive qualities of porn (Williams 1999).

The correlation between sexual positions and orientations with partnership tags suggests that penetrative (female–male) sex including at least one male for one or more females was predominant. Femdom included both female–male (pegging) and female–female interactions. Penetrative female–female interactions are pornographically complex because they can be perceived as heteroporn (Jackson and Gilbertson 2009) and as inclusive of lesbian, queer, and other sexuality manifestations (Reich 1992; Hamming 2001; Butler 2004; Beirne 2008; Das 2014; Robinson 2018; Comella 2019; Jones 2021; Williams, Coto, and Berkowitz 2023).

Orgasms and ejaculation

Coding orgasms and ejaculations served as a parameter for analyzing depiction and audience engagement in porn (Lebedíková 2022). In my sample, players conflated orgasms with ejaculation. Tagging either the act of ejaculation or the fluids involved were important for stressing not only the sexual acts but also the pleasure felt by avatars, players, and perhaps spectators.

Cumshot tags were very relevant for all channels, being expected to spread around the female avatars' facial, vaginal, and anal areas in accordance with porn aesthetics (for example, Williams 1999; Attwood 2007). Cumshots are part of rhythmic patterns of arousal structuring serialization through multiple stages, including an end to an experience (Schaschek 2014, 50). Cumshots were implemented in the game soon after its launch and technically improved two years later. They are activated by players through a clickable sex effect button and used for visual and symbolic communication. Moreover, the game's announcements aligned with players' tagging preferences – oral sex on a male avatar with a penis followed by ejaculation into and onto a female avatar. Such ejaculatory iconography leaves out other possible bodies (Edelman 2015; Jones 2021) and non-heteronormative sexual interactions in the game.

Unlike cumshots, squirting was not announced by the game company at any point but has the same mechanical activation and symbolic meaning. It is a fast, watery splash of animation coming off a body with vulva, barely captured in a single frame or through screen captures, receiving four times fewer tags than 'cumshot'. However, my ethnography revealed that squirting was very common and valuable in *3DXChat* sexual play.

Fetish, kinks, objects, and sex work

Because of technical limitations and porn conventions, I categorized partnerships with three or more avatars and group interactions under fetishes and kinks. The relevant tags were 'gangbangs', 'orgies', 'cuckold', 'cheating', and 'swingers'. Power exchange was tagged under 'domination'; 'femdom' was the most used. There were no tags for submission or switching. 'Femdom' can have multiple readings in porn taxonomies and *3DXChat* contexts, but the multi-partner interactions of swingers in the game are similar to Harviainen and Frank's (2018) lifestyle discussions. Sexual play for swingers in physical and digital environments is subjected to non-spontaneous, organized, constrained settings for partner exchanges. I found a couple of members of a swinger group, but I was informed that their activities were put on hold because the organizers were not playing anymore.

Dynamics involving organic fluids like urine, blood, and faeces have to be adapted in *3DXChat*. For example, the tag 'water sports', alluding to urine, can be represented by activation of the squirting effect because it offers a visual illusion of urine. Moreover, porn involving squirting has been subject to restrictions for going against obscenity legislations (Straayer 2004; Schaschek 2014, 169; Monea 2022, 150), and is still surrounded by considerable curiosity, confusion, desire (for learning how to achieve it), and medical scrutiny (Påfs 2023).

Specific sexual objects were tagged; some had to be constructed and adapted by players. Straps¹⁷ in *3DXChat* are made of underwear to which an object with the shape and appearance of an erected penis is attached. According to the game structure, straps were to be used by female avatars. They were displayed on the right side of the screen interface with these options: off, penis, strap-on 1, and strap-on 2. In some sexual positions involving two to three female avatars, these straps were automatically added for penetration. Even though they can be removed later, the addition opens the possibility to a phallogocentric reading because of the ideas associated with the strap-on as well as the structural limitations to the mobility of avatars bodies and lack of sexual position that involve digital penetration, for example.

The inclusion of some sexual toys in pornography for female–female interactions (e.g. strap-on and dildo) has been controversial. Some people assign mostly negative values to these objects for their resemblance of penis and phallogocentric ideas, whereas others see them as having multiple meanings and ultimately offering proportionate pleasurable and inclusive (gender and disability) ways to have sexual interactions (Reich 1992; Hamming 2001; Das 2014; Schaschek 2014, 147; Robinson 2018; Jones 2021; Williams, Coto, and Berkowitz 2023). The same reservations and celebrations apply to the playing environment.

All channels used at least one tag referring to sex work (e.g. 'paid sex', 'escorting'). However, there is a clear distinction behind the rationale and motivations in tagging *3DXChat* animated porn and online porn that is posted on the same porn platform (XVideos). Whereas animated porn incorporates some of the porn logic to remain under a genre of audiovisual production of sexual material, it does not have the same pressure to reach successful metrics. Players' income does not depend on their animated porn production, unlike that of sex workers. To some players, sexual labour is a form of sexual play.



Figure 6. Group performance on a fire truck with three male avatars as firefighters. Source: Author.

The players engaging in sex work play are mostly female-coded; the few male-coded avatars partake if they are part of a group (Figure 6). Poles might not be exclusive to sex work, but players use them to attract and select play partners. They can also be used for self-entertainment, although I did not see male avatars doing that. Moreover, my introduction presented Blowjobkate, who wanted to be a ‘pornstar’ – another sex work-related tag. Porn industry practices and plots like ‘cast’ are easy to recreate within *3DXChat*, allowing players to present themselves as upcoming pornstars – presented as any labour in or related to the entertainment industry (Esch and Mayer 2007) and as a desirable alternative merging multiple roles through sexual experiences (see Schaschek [2014] on Dana DeArmond).

Conclusion

This study explored the tagging practices of *3DXChat* players to better understand how user-generated pornography is positioned on XVideos and its relation to porn conventions. The qualitative analysis examined a sample of 116 tags from 112 videos of *3DXChat* players producing porn in the game. It suggests that their tagging was mostly based on consolidated porn conventions and less on folksonomies, which were more evident when they referred to the game (*3DXChat*) and certain players or groups. Still, this kind of folksonomy was not so strategic or detached from the norm. Moreover, the information organization within platforms redirects consumers towards what is more popular, visible, and easy to categorize (e.g. with the suggestion of ‘similar to’ content). Consequently, social practices such as folksonomy tend to have less impact, depending more on consumers’ proximity to certain communities, as in the case of *3DXChat* players. Thus, social tagging is in the in-between stage of ‘niched-mainstream’.

The use of pre-set XVideos tags without taking more strategic approaches to gain visibility and even be featured on the main (landing) pages could be reconsidered by, for example, exploring the popularity of game characters and films among consumers, which was poorly done with few tags. Therefore, this sample exemplified the relevance of serialization for pornography as a genre, sexual script, and playing imaginary. I explored how people engage in sexual play with others online in various ways, including interracial interactions, exploitation of hyperboles, focus on youth, cis-male ejaculation, and mostly heterosexual perspectives about sex and sexuality, which are compatible with the current sex-tech structure.

Notes

1. I maintain the user profile and original video title. There has not been any activity for more than five years, and the profile was fabricated. For example, the watermark on the side indicates that the profile image was stolen from an actual but unidentifiable site.
2. I had not had the chance to interview the players who produce animated porn while I was conducting my research. Moreover, the materials I found produced by them did not include any information that could clarify the reasoning for using this platform over others.
3. While reviewing this article in July 2024, Pornhub informed that there were 178 results for the keyword '3DXChat'. <https://archive.is/ypF9s> (captured on July 21, 2024).
4. <https://archive.is/6RCxi> (captured on July 21, 2024).
5. I managed to re-access them, as I had their original link, but I could not find on XVideos or XNXX information that could explain how a video could still be accessible using the link even though it was removed from the channels. For comparison, it would be somewhat similar to finding and being able to watch an unlisted video on YouTube.
6. Not all the videos had information about the approval rate and number of viewers.
7. The profile has pre-set information categories that players can fill, and age is one of them. None of them are obligatory, but some have restrictions.
8. *3DXChat* players did not include any tags in their videos that could be interpreted as related to whiteness. In addition, throughout my research, I have been surrounded by 'shades of tanned' avatars, which I recognize as part of the racial passing possibilities and problematics of virtual settings (for example, Nakamura 2002). An in-depth analysis of the racial, ethnic, and national avatar creation and population in this sex game could be the subject of another publication.
9. I disagree with the idea that racialized dynamics in porn are more significant within the US porn context and production than elsewhere.
10. The sexual position (sport) prank was part of the build update 412 from April 2020. Besides the penis, no other characteristics of the avatars are modified.
11. <https://www.pornhub.com/blog/crash-course-categories-and-tags>; <https://www.pornhub.com/blog/crash-course-how-to-use-metadata-tags-categories>; and <https://www.pornhub.com/blog/tip-6-of-10-optimize-metadata>.
12. As an example, see Pornhub's trend reports.
13. *3DXChat* has a moving camera, so every sexual play happening in shared environments is potentially visible to all the other players in the same space.
14. The sexual positions in a multiplayer setting are only visible after mutual consent for avatar pairing. Both players also have to agree on alternate positions. The partnerships and animated sexual interaction can be ended at any point if one of the pair chooses to do so.
15. The game allows the combination of three avatars from the same gender, and this option could amplify sexual dynamics that are not favouring heteronormativity. However, none of the videos used the tags FFF and MMM.
16. Masturbation or solo play does not require a partner.
17. In *3DXChat*, there are no sex toys (plugs, vibrators, etc.) to be used in sexual play as animated objects.

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