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Judgement-Free” Sexuality: Expression and Support on Japanese Amateur Audio Erotica Sites

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Abstract

In Japan, as elsewhere in the developed world, the creation and use of online media has become an ordinary part of life. For many people this includes some form of pornography, from soft to explicit. However, despite the rising popularity online of what is known in English as “audio porn”, there has only lately been an increase in attention paid to audio-only modes of erotica. Japan in particular has a history of audio-centred pornography dating back several decades. Most recently, amateur “erotic voice” streaming websites have allowed anonymous performers to upload their own erotic episodes and scenarios and interact with commentary from listeners. In a culture that still, to a certain degree, variously sensationalizes, prohibits, and penalizes the articulation of sexual desire by women (McLelland, 2015), the audio streaming mode could allow a space for low-risk expression, exploration, and interaction around sexuality for all genders. The high proportion of content on these websites made by and for women, and the statements of support the creators receive from listeners, could be said to bear this out. This presentation examines the opportunities and modes of engagement that “erotic voice” provides for amateurs in Japan to anonymously participate in the creation and use of sexual material and fantasies. It will then discuss how far streaming audio-only porn offers a space in which to break away from restrictive and hegemonic sexual norms.

Keywords: sexuality, Japan, erotica, sound, women’s sexual expression