

Digital technology is helping women to explore their sexuality

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Women who consume Internet pornography are using technology to explore their sexuality and connect with others to discuss their sexual interests, according to research from the University of Waterloo.

The qualitative study involved in-depth discussions with 28 women across the spectrum of sexual identities who had consumed online erotic material. Through the interviews, researchers found that pornography encouraged women to embrace their sexuality and that digital [technology](#) has helped them to connect with others to discuss issues such as new sexual practices and the use of sexual aids.

"We know from existing research that women are one of the fastest growing groups of people consuming online pornography and this study helps us understand some of the reasons they are doing so," said Diana Parry, a professor of recreation and leisure studies at Waterloo. "It also seems clear that technology has enabled women to explore [pornography](#) on their own terms and to explore aspects of their sexuality that are new to them."

In conducting the study, researchers learned that the privacy offered by personal computers and smartphones made women more comfortable exploring erotic material that they may have felt less comfortable accessing in more traditional ways.

The study used a cyber-feminist theoretical lens, which looks at the interplay of gender and technology.

The research is part of a larger study conducted by Parry, Penny Light, a professor at Thompson Rivers University, and Janet McKeown, who did her PhD at Waterloo, that explored how [digital technology](#) facilitates women's consumption of explicit online material.

"It's important to understand that society still has a very traditional idea of women's sexuality, with views that are typically more accepting of men's needs and desires," said Parry. "Digital technology appears to have the ability to highlight [women's sexuality](#) in a way that we haven't seen before."

The research was recently published in the journal *Sexuality and Culture*.

Provided by University of Waterloo

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