


Netherlands
EUROPEAN BUSINESS

"I shall never forget my roots."

EXCLUSIVE | *The Netherlands are one of the largest exporting countries in the global economy and Dutch companies in the adult industry contribute to this balance of trade as many of them are internationally active. EAN spoke to Mr Oscar Heijnen, president of Shots Media on the Dutch adult industry and its idiosyncrasies, such as the liberal legislation and the international scope of business.*

The Dutch apparently have a relatively liberal attitude towards pornography, adult life style products and sex. Is this true? Where does this attitude originate?

Oscar Heijnen: I actually find it very strange that our

rules apply to the distribution of pornography for trade and industry?

Oscar Heijnen: Almost none. Of course, nobody does anything with people under 18. Shots Media is incidentally the only company worldwide that has a secured online system

Brazil and East Europe. We were the first to do this but soon everyone will be doing this. Take the US regulation 2257. Without the correct documents nobody can sell DVDs. Shouldn't this be normal?

Have the liberal laws contributed to the fact that there are several large adult suppliers in Holland, for example Shots Media, Scala, Playhouse etc?

Oscar Heijnen: I can only talk for my own company. Then I think the answer is no, because we don't have products that are on the edge of the law. We only supply products that meet our own personal laws and these are stricter

"The sex industry is not an industry where you can sit back and relax"

country is so free with sex. Our current government in Den Haag is trying to change this and very soon animal films will be forbidden and I believe they should go a step further and forbid all films depicting real violence, depict blood and extreme SM. Why are the Netherlands so liberal? For the simple reason that our governments have always tolerated and allowed this and have only ever been opposed to child pornography, all the time ignoring the fact that far stranger things are going on in this country besides this. They are starting to wake up and a lot will change here soon. This won't affect my company at all because we don't distribute anything extreme.

How liberal is the Dutch legislation these days? What

with all the contracts and passport details of the performers in our films, even if they are not our own productions. Our b2b website www.shots-media.com has a button labelled Model Release and with the right pass word allows access to our files. If anybody in the world thinks that something is not correct we can check this within seconds. This is very important to me and its the foundation on which my company is built. I think every company in the world should have this particularly if the production comes from countries like



Oscar Heijnen welcomes new technologies and sales channels without neglecting his primary fields of business

than the national laws. I believe we have become such a big distributor because we sell and buy across the whole world. It has nothing to do with the fact that we are in Holland, we simply try to work harder than the competition: That's the only way to be successful.

When did the adult industry start up in Holland?



There are between 300 and 350 sex shops on the Dutch market. This is the Erotica shop in Zutphen

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Who were (or still are) the pioneers?

Oscar Heijnen: The first industry in Holland dates back to the sixties where the main business was the print media. One of the pioneers was Peter Muller (www.petermuller.nl). He was a millionaire of his time and owned the biggest magazines in Holland and had his own club, the Candy Club. There were no distributors before the sixties and names such as Intex from Ton van Vuuren and Scala from Charles Greet were the first real distributors. I can even remember the 8mm films without sound. These old-school people have left the market and new, modern and professional companies have entered. I'd like to consider us as a pioneer, but that's not up to me to dictate!

It is often said that the golden years of the sex industry are over. How is business in Holland these days?

Oscar Heijnen: What were the golden years and what were not? The sex industry is not an industry where you can sit back and relax because in this industry new technology is very important. Our main income will be from the Internet, broadcast and mobile and other high tech business. We mustn't forget the old business, for example Shots Mags

still publishes more than 60 to 70,000 magazines every month and our DVD division still sells more than 3 million DVDs a year. Our business is stable compared to last year. New fields of business are always welcome because this brings expansion and business is in general better than anybody who thinks this is nonsense should wake up and see that the industry has never been so interesting. There are different types of stores we can supply, the Internet makes the world a smaller place and business bigger and the opportunities for selling content are better than ever.

From a German point of view there is a stereo-typed Dutch porn film: the film with blonde amateur teens. Is this merely a cliché or is there really a Dutch touch?

Oscar Heijnen: I think typical Dutch films are made in famous places in Holland with blonde and other types of girls. It's probably the same with German films only with less budget. Our market only has 16 million consumers.

We are all familiar with the big players of the Dutch adult industry but know little about the retail side of the business. How many shops are there in Holland?

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Netherlands**EUROPEAN BUSINESS****And how is the online retail market structured?**

Oscar Heijnen: There are about 300 to 350 sex shops in Holland and they are all complaining about the business at the moment so this number will decrease in the future. Professional shops will survive. A large number of consumers buy on the Internet but there will always be a shop where you can get good advice and touch the product.

provinces. This means that tourism makes up for a large proportion of a shop's turnover. Amsterdam has a lot of tourism and that's why most of the sex shops are there. I think this will change as the government is trying to ban the red light district as we speak.

Christine Le Duc was the pioneer of modern shop design for many years and targeted women and couples. Are all shops in Holland so modern and female-friendly?

this type of shop and they were extremely successful at the time.

What are the current retail trends? What products sell best?

Oscar Heijnen: The organic toys. These are exclusive to Shots. And in the DVD sector niche products sell best such as Robert Hill or Max Hardcore.

A visitor to Holland cannot avoid noticing that adult films are sold at petrol stations and toys are sold in drug stores.

This is still unthinkable in other European countries. How important is this distri-

Holland you can buy an adult DVD with your petrol and all these new sales accounts are essential to the future of our industry.

Is the Dutch market also afflicted by the pan European problems of cheap products, price battles, piracy, seasonal slumps, changing distribution channels etc. etc? Or do you have your own domestic problems?

Oscar Heijnen: Of course, we suffer from the fall in the DVD prices but exclusive and quality products will always keep a high price point. All large DVD producers are affected by piracy and this evil is rooted in Greece. However, the EU and local industry are working hard in setting new copyright laws so this should be a thing of the past soon.

Holland is densely populated. Does this mean that shops are ubiquitous or are they primarily located in the

Oscar Heijnen: No, most of the shops in Holland are classic shops as you see them everywhere. However, there is one shop that had a female-

bution channel? Does it compete with the sex shops? Oscar Heijnen: These



Love Company: a modern and female-friendly shop in Purmerend near Amsterdam



The interior of Love Company

larger cities?

Oscar Heijnen: About 25% of the shops are in Amsterdam, 50% are in the other big cities and 25% spread through the

friendly concept that was even better than Christine Le Duc and that is Love Company. But the Hartog family were one of the first to establish and open

new channels will become more important because it is what the consumer wants. Many people have inhibitions about entering a sex shop. In

Toys can be purchased online and porn can be consumed as VoD. To what extent has the Dutch consumer changed his

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purchasing patterns and methods?

Oscar Heijnen: The Internet is a great tool for every consumer. they can find all the information and prices at any time during the day. The world is at your feet. We began with VHS, went to DVD and now we have VoD and it won't stop there. DVD belongs to the past and VoD and other high tech formats are the new business.

come from and how important is this to survive on today's highly competed markets, both home and abroad?

Oscar Heijnen: Our home industry is still very important for me although this contributes to only a small percentage of total turnover, but I shall never forget my roots. The export sector is far larger and more important. Holland is a small country and our

„Yes! The Dutch industry will survive!“

In many European countries retailers are noticing how their type of customers are changing. Are more women and couples buying adult products in Holland as well?

Oscar Heijnen: Yes, you can see that for example in the home party sector of the industry almost 90% of the consumers are women. They have higher quality standards than men and this makes the industry more professional and we all benefit from this.

language is not widely spoken. That's why we all speak other languages, such as English and German and other languages. This makes us easy exporters. If you can communicate, you can do business. We also have many foreign immigrants in Europe, which means we understand other cultures and can easily connect to other parts of the world. I don't know whether we are an exception in Europe.

Where do you believe the Dutch adult industry is heading? Will the retail sector survive? Will other and newer sales and distribution channels arrive on the scene? How important will the Internet be in the future?

Oscar Heijnen: Yes, the Dutch industry will survive. I am not sure whether it will stay in Dutch hands. Shots Media will be in Dutch hands for a long time to come and I shall stay where I am. I love my job and can't live without it. Retailers that are active and innovative will survive and the small ones will famish. Internet is today, DVD is yesterday and so this is our future and all the other business sectors where we are busy.

Mr Heijnen, thank you for your time.

Holland is considered to be economically internationally orientated and the adult industry is no exception. Where does this global business mentality

Dutch pornography laws are liberal, but are the Dutch equally as liberal? What role, for example does sex play in the media?

Oscar Heijnen: There is no sex on public television. Sex is still a taboo but compared to other countries we are very liberal in Holland.



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