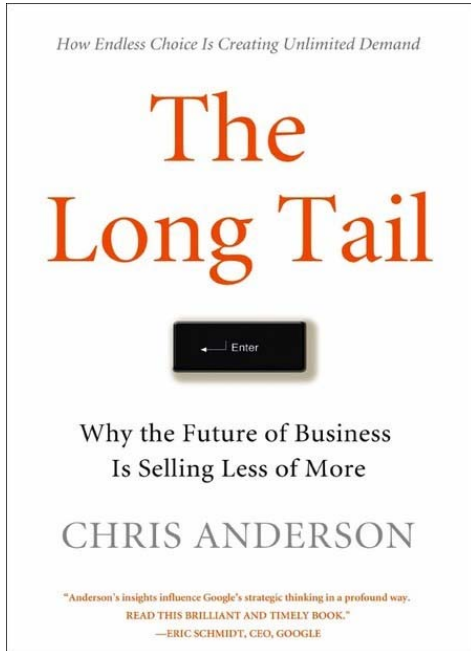


From Behind Our White Picket Fence Week 110
By Freddy and Eddy (www.freddyandeddy.com)

The Long Tail of Coco and Kiki



As the adult industry continues to grow – albeit slowly – into a more acceptable and available shopping choice, it is only natural certain segments develop and advance, while older established ones fracture into smaller niches. Call it the “Long Tail” phenomenon, made famous by Wired Magazine’s Chris Anderson, who posits that with virtually unlimited choices now available to us in every conceivable product category, we naturally migrate away from “hit” products pushed onto us by savvy advertising and PR campaigns toward closer approximations reflecting our true tastes. To put this into real world perspective, why buy a Britney Spears or Justin Timberlake song (along with 12 other awful songs) on CD at Walmart when you can find well over 1.5 million better alternatives on iTunes or Rhapsody? This “long tail” of millions of songs (or access to widely

varying products not able to make it onto Costco shelves, if you will) enables smaller businesses to profit by carrying items within specific niches, selling them in sufficient quantities to keep the doors open and websites operating.

We, for example, cater mainly to couples and, to a lesser extent, females, especially those in long term, committed relationships. Not that we don’t offer products and services that appeal to consumers outside this niche, but you’d certainly feel more comfortable in our shop if you’re in a relationship or are a female and our selection reflects that fact.

Babeland is a similar business to ours, but serving a different niche; they offer a great selection of toys just about anyone can use; however, if you’re a lesbian, there simply isn’t better place to acquire your tools. Newly opened JT’s Stockroom serves up bondage

gear and latex, specifically, while 665 can’t be beat in the gay arena. Certainly, we cross into each other’s territory on occasion, but this is more a function of the products’ versatility than anything else. Certainly, a bondage item can integrate into a married couple just as a vibrator has its place in a dungeon.



We point out this economic theory to segue into one of the more curious niches propagating all over LA (and, accordingly, New York), which is the upscale and high end sex shop. Starting with

London-based Coco De Mer's store opening on Melrose (8618, to be exact) a couple years back, more companies seem to be jumping on this bandwagon. For those of you who've never been to Coco De Mer, it's worth the drive into West Hollywood to see just how grand a sex shop can be. With a boudoir atmosphere recalling old world Paris, the store is meticulously designed to welcome you into a world of sensual delights. From the dark wood paneling and carefully displayed items – ranging from corsets to sumptuous leather spankers and everything in-between, owner Justine Roddick (and her sister) have created a warm and inviting experience the two of us could never hope to capture in our little palace of smut out west.

The downside? Price. Coco De Mer is undeniably expensive, made necessarily so by high rent, high employee costs, and high end merchandise. With rents on Melrose averaging between \$8.00 and \$14.00 per square foot, the amount of sales needed to sustain ANY business on that street is staggering. Imagine having to fork out 15-20 THOUSAND dollars per month BEFORE taxes, paychecks, utilities and your own salary. It's no wonder the rate of business failures in that side of town is mind-bogglingly high.

And yet, Coco De Mer survives and thrives.

Which brings us to the new monster and blatant derivative of Coco De Mer recently opened just up the boulevard – Kiki De Montparnasse. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Kiki De Montparnasse should win an Oscar for obsequiousness. Kiki De, Coco De. High end lingerie? Check. High end vibrators? Check. A collection of sexy Taschen books? Check. Sexy dressing rooms? Yup. \$65.00 massage candles? Whoa – there's one Coco doesn't have. Regardless, the two stores share more similarities than differences in product offerings, with Coco's warm and cozy atmosphere giving way to Kiki's icy cosmopolitan air. Kiki De Montparnasse is also roughly triple the square footage of Coco De Mer, which puts more space between items and therefore seems more sparse (despite a larger selection of garments). Finally, the "Shopgirl," mannequin-esque employees standing with military precision at Kiki were a far cry from their more eccentrically and friendlier dressed counterparts at Coco. In fact, after choking on the \$550.00 price tag of a cashmere slip dress and \$175.00 silver tipped riding crop, we couldn't help wonder if LA is really that rich a city to support such extravagance. But hey, this town is nothing if not surprising.

Apparently, more stores in this high end arena are on the way, so get out your checkbooks and head to Coco De Mer for the bargains.

PS. We have a Beginning Tantra for Women class tonight, so if you're interested, please call Deva Charu at 323-363-3135 to inquire about space availability.

Freddy and Eddy – aka Ian and Alicia Denchasy – can be reached via e-mail at freddy@freddyandeddy.com or by calling 310-915-0380. Their store address is 12613 Venice Blvd., LA CA 90066 and all articles are archived on their website.