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Discreet Affairs Sites Generating Gobs of Revenue – and Controversy

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Posted by [Neal Leavitt](#) on May 30th, 2015 at 5:11 pm



Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery

--*Exodus 20:14*

What's considered adultery really isn't readily defined in this Biblical passage. And for the numerous online sites that offer a chance to be anonymously naughty, that's probably good for them – and good for their business. And it is a *big* business.

Earlier this year I wrote a [piece](#) on how the dating industry has become a global multi-billion dollar annual industry. Market research firm IBISWorld predicts, for instance, that it will be just under \$3 billion in four years.

Data on extramarital dating sites is sparse but UK-based *The Independent* reported these interesting snippets back in February:

- Canada-based [Ashley Madison](#), the 800-pound gorilla of the industry, is hugely popular in the UK, for instance; it currently operates in 45 countries with more than 32 million members worldwide. Ashley Madison (parent company Avid Life Media is now trying to raise about \$200 million by listing shares for Ashley Madison in London later this year) also claims to be the world's second largest dating site – only [Match.com](#) is bigger.
- A 2013 freedom of information request showed that Members of Parliament, peers, and their staff in Parliament had clicked on an extra-marital dating website called [Out of Town Affairs](#) 52,745 times. The site's moniker – “Adult dating with no complications.”

And last year Ashley Madison worked with researchers from New York University's Stern School of Business and the Anderson School of Management at UCLA, analyzing data on more than eight million men who had registered with the site. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the study was one of six published together in 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences' journal. It examined when people made significant life changes.

The *Journal* story also stated that “the study found about 950,000 men ages 29, 39, 49, 59 and their numbers on the dating site were 18% higher than what would be expected by chance, according to the researchers. The study also looked at data for women and found a similar, though less pronounced, pattern.”

And way back in 2007, researchers at Chapman University in Orange, Calif., and Cal State University-Los Angeles, surveyed 60,000+ heterosexuals, homosexuals and bisexuals. They asked more than 100 questions on infidelity.

“Men looked for sexual variety and excitement,” said Dr. David Frederick, assistant professor of healthy psychology at Chapman and the study's lead researcher. “Women were more likely to fall in love with someone else or to look for reassurance that they were still desirable.”

Today there are literally dozens of extramarital dating sites; some accept various forms of advertising, some also offer affiliate programs. Ashley Madison's, affiliate program, for example, bills itself as “an easy-to-join system that enables webmasters, affiliates and publishers to earn monthly pay checks by promoting one or more

of the sites within our diverse network of offerings.”

Despite the growing popularity of extramarital dating sites, there have been some hiccups.

French site [Gleeden](#) has 2.3 million members in Europe, including one million in France. Women don't pay to register on the site; men buy credit, opening up different levels of access to registered women.

Gleeden was hit in March with a legal complaint against the site's American publisher, Black Divine, in a Paris superior court. The Association of Catholic Families (ACF) filed a complaint about risqué ads splashed on the backs of buses in several French cities. A French court will now decide whether the company is illegally encouraging spouses to cheat.

And there may be some legal precedence, reports *BBC News*. Article 212 of France's Civil Code states “married partners owe each other the duty of respect, fidelity, help and assistance.”

“What we are trying to do with our suit is to show that the civil code – the law -- has meaning...what makes Gleeden different from other websites out there is that its business model is based on marital infidelity,” said Jean-Marie Andres, ACF president.

No matter the Gleeden outcome, it's safe to bet that this rather unique segment of the online dating industry will continue to flourish.

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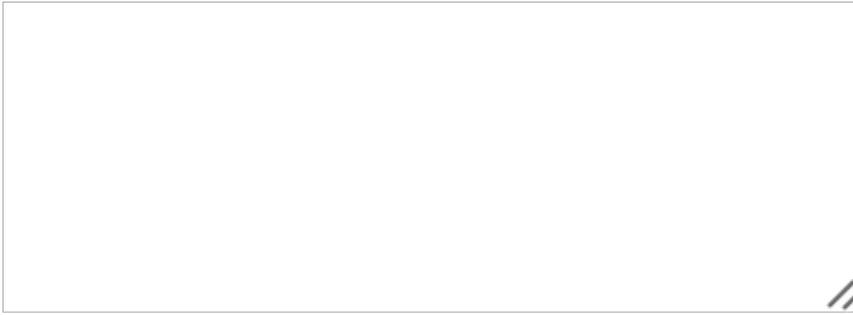
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