

Pornhub is urging tech giants to enact device-based age verification

Ultimately, Stabile says that may be the point. In the US, “the advocates for these bills have largely fallen into two groups: faith-based organizations that don’t believe adult content should be legal, and age verification providers who stand to profit from a restricted internet.” The goal of faith-based organizations, he says, is to destabilize the adult industry and dissuade adults from using it, while the latter works to expand their market as much as possible, “even if that means getting in bed with right-wing censors.”

But the problem is that “even well-meaning legislators advancing these bills have little understanding of the internet,” Stabile adds. “It’s much easier to go after a political punching bag like Pornhub than it is Apple or Google. But if you’re not addressing the reality of the internet, if your legislation flies in the face of consumer behavior, you’re only going to end up creating systems that fail.”

Adult industry insiders I spoke to in August explained that the biggest misconception about the industry is that it is against self-regulation when that couldn’t be further from the truth. “Keeping minors off adult sites is a shared responsibility that requires a global solution,” Kekesi says. “Every phone, tablet, or computer should start as a kid-safe device. Only verified adults should unlock access to things like dating apps, gambling, or adult content.” In 2022, Pornhub created a chatbot that urges people searching for

child sexual abuse content to seek counseling; the tool was introduced following a 2020 New York Times investigation that alleged the platform had monetized videos showing child abuse. Pornhub has since started releasing annual transparency reports and tightened its verification process of performers and for video uploads.

According to Politico, Google, Meta, OpenAI, Snap, and Pinterest all supported the California bill. Right now that law is limited to California, but Kekesi believes it can work as a template for other states.

“We obviously see that there’s kind of a path forward here,” she says.

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