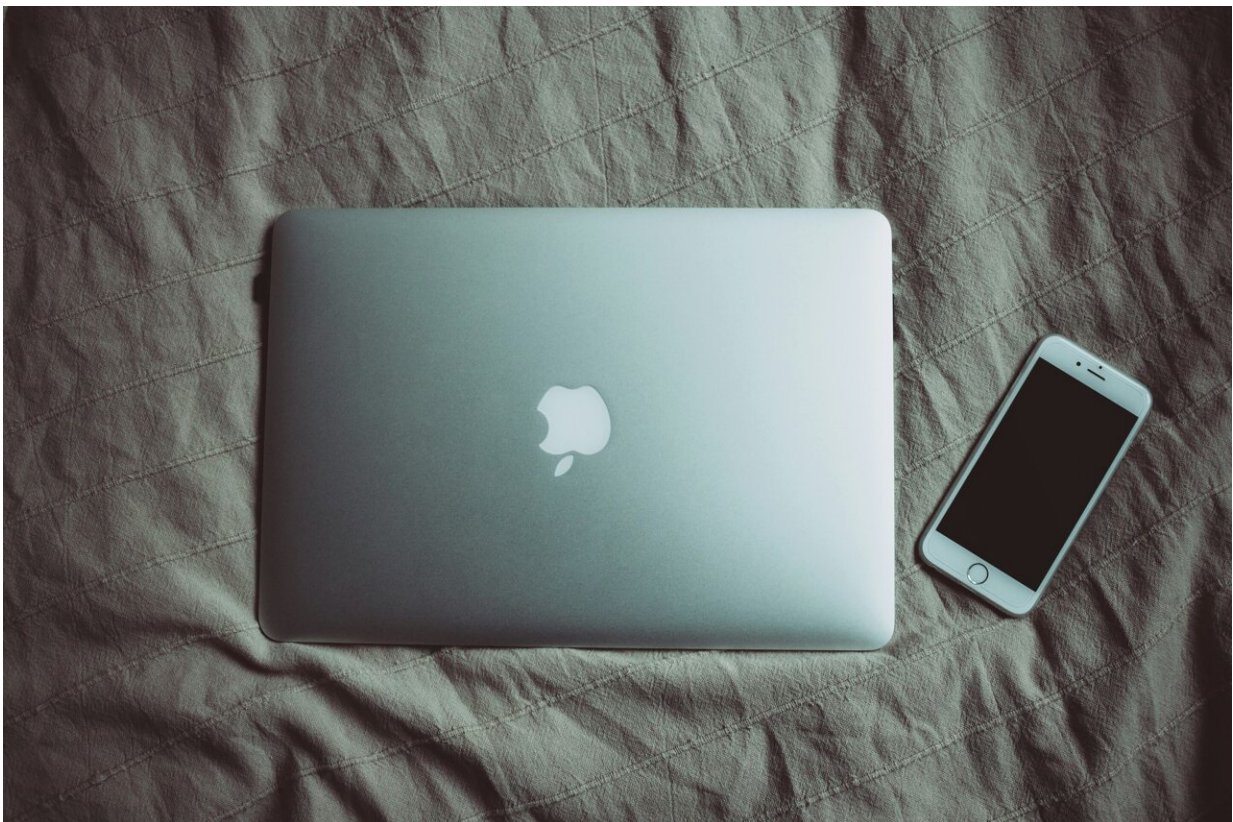


Is it ethical to watch AI pornography?

March 16 2024, by Chantal Gautier



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If you're in your 20s and 30s, you probably watch pornography. Millennials and gen Z are [watching more](#) pornography than any other age

group and are also [more likely](#) than any other demographic to experiment with AI pornography.

As [technology advances](#), AI-generated tools and techniques are becoming increasingly sophisticated and accessible. This can lead to unethical content, including deepfakes—videos in which a person's face is replaced with someone else's likeness, without their consent. Social media platform X (formerly Twitter) recently faced a scandal when it became awash with [deepfakes of Taylor Swift](#).

But what about other kinds of AI pornographic content? How can consuming it affect you, and how can you make sure that you're consuming it ethically? I'm a sex and relationship therapist, so I'm interested in helping clients with various sexual issues, including porn consumption problems. I am also curious about the ways AI could be used positively to create pornography that is not only ethical, but educational and sexy at the same time.

The impact of watching AI porn

While it's perfectly normal to be curious about sex, watching a lot of pornography can affect your [sexual satisfaction](#)—and AI porn is no different. You might, for example, start comparing your partner to the hyper-realistic, but impossibly perfect, digitally generated actors of AI porn.

Already, [research](#) suggests that men who frequently watch online porn may experience erectile dysfunction. This could be due to the idealized unrealistic portrayals in pornography compared to real-life sexual encounters. AI pornography would likely only exacerbate this, with AI porn avatars able to participate in sex acts that wouldn't be possible, or as

accessible, for real people.

Among women who watch porn, opinions vary. Some women have [noted](#) positive changes, including a reduction in the shame associated with sexual pleasure. But others have expressed reservations about the [beauty standards](#) in pornography, finding them unattainable.

This stance is very much shared by [anti-porn campaigners](#), who claim that porn degrades and objectifies women. They believe it feeds into ideas of male supremacy, potentially leading to [violence against women](#).

Regulating AI pornography

The roles women are given within mainstream pornography often portray a different power imbalance than, for example, gay male porn. For this article, I spoke to porn actor John Thomas. He argued that gay male porn was somewhat more ethical than mainstream straight porn which is [made for men to consume]. "Both roles in a gay scene might be appreciated by the viewer, rather than the pure objectification of the woman in a straight scene."

One of the many concerns with unregulated AI-generated pornography is that it can distort a viewer's sense of reality, leading to misinformation, [unrealistic expectations](#) around sex and potential harm. However, since the moral landscape surrounding ethical AI porn is a gray area, we are pushed into uncharted territory. As new technology emerges, new challenges arise.

To ensure [responsible](#) innovation within the adult entertainment industry, it's essential to be aware of AI's ongoing [integration](#) into our daily lives. For example, risks could be mitigated by training AI systems to recognize deepfakes, violence or child pornography.

For actors in the adult entertainment industry working pre-AI, consent has always been key. I asked John Thomas about best practice in the industry:

"When working for a porn studio [as a freelance worker], I sign a contract which typically includes clauses relating to rights to my image—usually I am signing to give the studio the right to use, and alter, my image [from the photos or video created] and distribute it. AI is not specified in any contract I've signed."

But since AI porn is expected to become more mainstream, the topic of consent becomes more ambiguous. As John Thomas adds, "I think one could interpret the contract to include AI ... the contracts are written in such an expansive way that, having signed away the rights to your image, and consent to your image being altered, it could [hypothetically be used in AI]."

How to be an ethical porn consumer

Just as there are fair trade brands known for their ethical practices in producing coffee and clothing, there should be a safe space for consumers to explore their sexuality and fantasies.

As a porn viewer, you can be more ethical in your consumption by becoming [porn literate](#), improving your understanding of realistic sexual expectations, [gender identities](#), sexual orientations, relationship styles, kinks and ethical BDSM practices.

And if you decide you want to watch AI porn and want to [minimize](#) the risk of consuming unethical content, here are some tips to help enhance your porn literacy skills:

- consider joining [online communities](#) where discussions about

- ["feminist porn"](#) and sexualised content are open and encouraged
- if you are a fan of a particular porn actor, consider following them on social media. This will provide you with some insights into their performance activities and their preferred ways for you to access their content
 - when coming across porn sites, take a moment to assess if they are recognized for ethical production practices. Some [established sites](#) are known for their commitment to ethical pornography. Typically, the ethical emphasis will revolve around aspects such as production standards, consent, representation of diverse body types, genders and races, portrayal of safe sexual practices and prioritizing the enjoyment of all involved
 - keep in mind the difference between fantasies and real [sexual encounters](#) when watching porn. Remember that what you see online may not translate to real life
 - keep a close eye on your porn consumption. If you sense it's becoming overwhelming, or impacting your daily life or sexual experiences, don't be ashamed. Seek support from a professional, such as a sex therapist.

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