



Ipsos Connect

DEEP FAKE

The Future of Content?

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What would happen in a world where you could truly control content? What if you could swap your favourite actors and re-cast roles? What if you could even cast your real life friends, enemies, or even yourself?

That future is looming closer and closer, with recent strides made in the world of AI generated face-swap technology. It is opening up a whole world of possibilities in terms of personalisation and pushing the creative boundaries of content, but it has a darker side too.

Which brings us to 'Deep Fake', an AI app was posted to a Reddit forum earlier this year, allowing users to 'face swap' in video content, i.e. superimpose a new face on to an existing actor. This type of machine learning technology has been used before, but this example is differentiated by a. the level of quality and realism you can achieve and b. the fact that any coder worth their salt can have a go and generate new user content. A Reddit community sprung

up with enthusiastic techies trying this technology, and sharing examples of their attempts to refine the process.

Inevitably the content they are creating is not family friendly. It is almost exclusively adult in nature, most often superimposing well known actresses onto adult performers. While there are currently some telltale signs that content is a 'Deep Fake' (e.g. sound editing) there are also examples that look and feel incredibly authentic, and may be very difficult to distinguish from the 'real thing'.

So far, the community seems interested primarily in perfecting the technology, not in the very real issues of consent and copyright it raises. In the coming months, it will be interesting to see if and how society can step in to place limitations on what is being dubbed 'the new revenge porn'. It is worth noting that, at the time of going to press, Twitter, Gfycat, and PornHub have banned this type of content and Reddit has shut down the forum. However, the damage may already have been done. The community is likely to look for another

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platform to continue its work and examples may still appear on mainstream platforms if users do not flag this content.

The potential cultural impact here cannot be underestimated. What happens when people cannot believe what they see? If people cannot distinguish what is real and what isn't in video content, how will they decide what to trust? Over the past year, we have explored the nature of trust in social media and advertising and it is clear that it is eroding [69% of people now distrust advertising*]. Trust is a hard thing to come by and questions about the authenticity of video content is likely to add another layer of confusion and complexity to this area. However, media brands may be able to play a role in helping people understand what is real, and what to put their faith in.

Whilst the moral, ethical, and trust based considerations this raises are at the heart of the current debate, as media and tech researchers, we are well aware the questions this may raise for the future of content. Pornography has influenced many digital trends, from the adoption of

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VHS to the rise of piracy and curation of content. Consequently, content creators cannot dismiss the potential impact of this technology and the opportunities and challenges that it may bring.

We know that personalisation of

experiences and content meet a deep seated human need of ego-centricity. People crave personalisation as it leaves them feeling like their interests and preferences are important, valuable, and endorsed. When this is coupled with the potential to create personally relevant narratives within the emerging codes and dominant cultural products of the moment, this has the potential to be a truly powerful hit. Like its roots in the adult industry, it could meet our desires – would you like to fly the Millennium Falcon as Han Solo alongside Chewie? Would your teenage relatives like to be Pretty Little Liars? Would you turn your enemy into Gareth Southgate and watch him miss that game-changing penalty?

As the technology is open source, exactly how users generate content and distribute content, coupled with the desire and ability for platforms to control this, may provide the answers. Much like the rise of the vlogger, users themselves may answer these questions before brands can keep up.



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