

If you fell asleep 100 years ago, you would have closed your eyes in an era when a person would be hard-pressed to find a sexually explicit image of any kind. But you would awaken to a world saturated in pornography. As you emerged from your slumber, you would see a world fundamentally altered by hypersexualized media—a world where human sexuality had been fundamentally redefined.

Most of us have been exposed to porn in one way or another. Academic studies report that between 93¹⁶ and 100 percent¹⁷ of boys, and between 62¹⁸ and 82 percent¹⁹ of girls are exposed to internet porn during their adolescence and young adulthood. Most young people will be exposed to pornography by age 13,²⁰ some even younger.²¹ If you haven't been exposed yet, look at the person on your right and on your left. Statistics indicate that both of them have. The sheer amount of internet porn available today is difficult to comprehend, and that vast supply grows exponentially every year.

In 1991 there were fewer than 90 pornographic magazines published in the US. In 1997, there were about 900 pornographic sites on the web. By 2011, there were at least 2.5 million pornographic websites.²² This explosion is due to the rise of the internet and the widespread use of high-tech devices.²³

It is important to note that each website contains hundreds (if not thousands) of individual pages. That means that if there were 2.5 million porn websites in 2011, and if the average porn site hosted 500 individual pages or links, that's a yield of 1.25 billion pornographic web pages. And the scope of pornography available today far exceeds

the 2011 numbers. One prominent site, YouPorn, proudly touts that they serve 4,000 pages per second during peak times, receiving more than 100 million page views per day.²⁴

In 2019, Pornhub, one of the world's largest porn sites, received 42 billion visits: an average of 115 million visits every day. (According to Xbiz.com, daily visits had increased to 130 million by the time a 2020 "Tech Review" was published.)²⁵ To place this in context, that's like the populations of Canada, Australia, Poland, and the Netherlands all visiting at once.²⁶ In 2019 there were 39 billion searches performed on Pornhub; that is 8.7 billion more searches than in 2018.²⁷

In 2019, Pornhub boasted that it had welcomed more than 6.8 million new video uploads. If you compiled all of that video content into one film and started watching it right now, you would still be watching in the year 2192!²⁸ To deliver its high volume of explicit content, Pornhub's servers stream 209 gigabytes of data every second. For perspective, picture a 16GB USB thumb drive. Now imagine 194 million of those thumb drives, spanning 6,800 miles from end to end, or enough to traverse the circumference of the moon.²⁹

While we're on the topic of mind-bending stats, Pornhub reports that they stream enough pornographic data to fill the storage of all of the world's iPhones.³⁰ These staggering numbers aren't just reserved for the best-known websites. Other porn sites, such as Xvideos, LiveJasmin, and Tube8, also receive billions of page views monthly.³¹ According to author Gary Wilson, "Today a guy can see more hot babes in ten minutes than his ancestors could in several lifetimes."³²

Singer John Mayer said (in an interview for *Playboy*) that pornography is "a new synaptic pathway. You wake up in the morning, open a thumbnail page, and it leads to a Pandora's box of visuals. There have probably been days when I saw three hundred vaginas before I got out of bed."³³

Today, in the privacy of our bedrooms, we can access porn 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without paying a dime. Where and when did this porn explosion begin? Sexually explicit material has been sparsely available for generations, but pornography didn't enter the mainstream until after World War II. Until then, even Hollywood had conservative regulations that limited sexual content.³⁴ However, in 1948 a book was published, a book that would alter the course of human sexuality forever.

Alfred Kinsey, considered “the father of the sexual revolution,” published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, a “scientific study” of human sexuality. The conclusions cited in this first volume of “The Kinsey Reports” dramatically redefined the way society understood sex. (The second volume, titled *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, was published in 1953.)

“Kinsey not only studied sexuality,” wrote one of his admirers, “he helped create it . . . in such a way that it is difficult to imagine what pre-1950s sexuality looked like.”³⁵

Although Kinsey's research methodology was eventually questioned and criticized, his reports were initially regarded as near-biblical truth. The general public had little idea of the flaws in the research. For example, at least one of his adult male research subjects admitted to having sexual contact with children. While Kinsey denied that he or any of his research team was involved in sexual experimentation on children—or trained anyone to observe children in inappropriate settings—his methodology raised the question of whether a researcher should obtain information from a sexual offender without notifying the police.

Further, his research indicated that 17 percent of “farm-bred males” had engaged in sexual intercourse with an animal,³⁶ which most people regarded as a suspiciously high number. Today, many people regard Kinsey's research as unreliable and unethical.

Unfortunately, his reports were originally regarded as science, so his conclusions were accepted. It is nearly impossible to overstate the impact that these reports had on the American public's psyche. In fact, many consider "The Kinsey Reports" to be the most influential publications of the 20th century.

When Kinsey reported that a majority of men (68 percent) reported having sex with a prostituted woman or that almost half of all married men had at least one affair,³⁷ the public was shocked. This was earth-shaking information for the American people, because it questioned everything we thought we knew about sexuality.

Five years after Kinsey's first report was published, a young Hugh Hefner arrived on the scene, ready to capitalize. Hefner confessed, "Kinsey had a tremendous impact on me. . . . [Kinsey's reports] supplied the evidence that proved the things that I had been feeling for so many years, which was that what we said about our sexuality was not what we did."³⁸ This was the validation Hefner needed to pursue his agenda of taking pornography from the "back street to the main street."³⁹ Hefner noted, "Kinsey was the researcher, and I was the pamphleteer."⁴⁰

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JOHN MAYER, Singer-Songwriter

Thus, *Playboy* was born. In December of 1953, the first issue of *Playboy* was published. British journalist Christopher Turner reflected on that issue: "With an \$8,000 loan (\$1,000 from his mother, who had hoped he'd become a missionary), the 27-year-old Hefner

produced a pasted-together magazine. He bought the rights to an old pin-up picture of Marilyn Monroe and used it as centerfold bait to drum up 70,000 advance orders.”⁴¹

The caption describing Monroe’s centerfold read, “She’s as famous as Dwight Eisenhower and Dick Tracy, and she and Dr. Kinsey have monopolized sex this year.” *Playboy* went on to become a colossal money-making enterprise that turned objectifying women’s sexuality into an industry, an industry that changed the world as we know it.

By discovering the extremely lucrative commercial value of female sexuality, *Playboy* eventually inspired copycats like *Hustler* and *Penthouse*, which also experienced enormous financial success.

In the early to mid-1970s, porn entered the realm of film with a series of high-production movies such as *Deep Throat* and *Behind the Green Door*, ushering in “the Golden Age of Porn.” Actor Warren Beatty took fellow performer Britt Ekland on a date to a porn film.⁴² Porn became a cultural phenomenon. When the 1980s arrived, people began taking porn home with them in the form of VHS cassettes.

The 1990s brought us the World Wide Web, and the planet became hardwired with accessibility to endless pornographic images at the push of a button. The porn industry transformed from a handful of prominent magazines and pornographic film houses to an ocean of sexually explicit websites.

Today, porn is a multi-billion-dollar industry with an ever-increasing pool of customers. Theo Sapoutzis, former CEO and chairman of Adult Video News (AVN), the pornography industry’s best-known trade journal, and organizer of the Adult Entertainment Expo (AEE), estimated that the pornography industry made roughly \$10 billion in 2012.⁴³

Current estimates are as high as \$97 billion. In early 2019, *Relevant* magazine reported that three porn sites were among the 15

most popular in the United States, more popular than Instagram, Wikipedia, Twitter, Netflix, and ESPN.⁴⁴

Thanks to the advent of “tube sites,” porn has become more profitable than ever. Using the YouTube model, these sites are now cashing in on global porn consumption through paid advertising (and paid-content options). Porn has also invaded social media. Yes, with the advent of the internet, the levees were breached, the floodgates burst open, and porn and its influence came rushing like a violent river into almost every aspect of our lives. Technological advances like smartphones and tablets, streaming sites, and wireless connectivity have multiplied access to pornography, allowing it to be watched anonymously and for free.

Simply put, pornography is ubiquitous. In the words of one Playboy executive, “You’re now one click away from every sex act imaginable for free.”⁴⁵

What does this mass proliferation of internet pornography mean for us? To answer that question, we must understand that porn isn’t benign imagery coming to us via our various screens. Rather, it’s a potent story about who we are as men and women—and the purpose of sex. And before we can fully understand porn’s widespread impact, we must explore stories and their powerful influence on our lives, as individuals and as a society.

The porn industry has exploited human sexuality more than any other. If the pop-culture presentation of sexuality is a gateway drug, porn is like mainlining heroin. Far beyond the “softcore porn” of mainstream media, the porn industry tells the most potent story of all. Porn’s portrayal of men, women, and sexuality is uniquely potent because it is hardwired into our bodies via arousal and orgasm. No other story evokes such a powerful physical and psychological response. Every pornographic image or scene presents a narrative of who men and women are, and how they should relate to one another. Consumers are conditioned to keep coming back for more.

As we will detail later in the book, a person captivated by porn's story can become trapped in that story because of its addictive qualities. Today, scores of us are getting stuck in the story of porn—a story that doesn't acknowledge values, human dignity, or the preservation of society.

Most American consumers are unaware that pornography is controlled by a handful of behemoth companies who rule the industry and control the stories of who we are and what sex is for. A few multi-billion-dollar porn “Walmarts” control tube sites, such as Xvideos.com, Pornhub.com, and Xnxx.com, which are colonizing the sexuality of a generation.

Why? Because they have gained control of the narrative about what it means to be a sexual being in today's world. And this potent narrative is being told to nearly every child growing up in our tech-saturated world.

There are serious implications for the stories a culture tells, especially to its children. That's why it's vital to understand the stories our children are growing up on and how those stories will shape their future. Stories affect and influence today's kids, and the tale of porn is certainly no exception. This story shapes our culture and changes our world.

The story of porn is making the unacceptable seem acceptable, just as it did during the rise of Nazi Germany and during the days of the slave trade.