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The Digital Age: Giving Sex Work a New Meaning

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The digital age has changed our lives forever. Technology could once be defined so simply. Television, phones, and computers could summarize what it meant to partake in the digital world. It is now used in nearly every aspect of our daily lives. We easily have breaking news at the tips of our fingertips, minute by minute. We are able to connect with loved ones, coworkers, even strangers from across the globe with just a simple click. Recipes, books, music, and more are all easily accessible. Anyone can sell or purchase goods at any time of the day. Concepts, ideas, and activities that once seemed impossible can now easily be achieved with a stable internet connection.

Thanks to Generation Z and Millennials overindulgence in digitalization, social media has reimagined the way we live. Even the older generations are partaking in it. Boredom strikes and we pick up our phones or tablets, resorting to a digital escape. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok include significantly more than just posting and scrolling. These platforms allow us to discover, produce, connect, and consume. Anyone and everyone can download an app, create an account, and post, comment, like, or dislike as they please. Social media has not only allowed for new opportunities, but new outlooks on life, allowing for topics and activities once considered taboo to now be engaged with more critically and open-mindedly. Thanks to this, sex work even has a platform to take place digitally, allowing for safer experiences that protect workers from physical dangers as well as health wise. OnlyFans, premium Snapchat accounts, and many other platforms have allowed anyone to immerse themselves into the field of sex work and give themselves the opportunity to make a decent living. A struggling mother can now easily work from home and use images and videos of her body to be able to pay for summer camp or groceries without even leaving the house. Broke college students can pay off their loans. Any one of any race or gender can sign up and post and earn some cash. Some of these users may participate in this digital sex work because they feel liberated, but many do it because they are burdened by poverty. Financial security is something everyone desires, but most never achieve that. Our economy does not allow for many to climb social classes, but apps like OnlyFans is the perfect side-hustle or full-time gig for anyone wanting to try to ease their burden.

Although these websites and apps do not eliminate prostitution, they certainly make it easier and more desirable to participate in sex work. Internet-based sex work cuts the need for physical interaction. Workers do not have to put themselves at risk of being either sexually or physically abused by a customer nor will they be exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and infections. Having sexual intercourse with a stranger may sound undesirable to some, but digital sex work opens the door for those who are more reluctant. Plus, anyone can do it, as long as they are eighteen or older and have a stable internet connection.

Digital sex work not only keeps the worker safe from physical and sexual violence but also secures the payment. OnlyFans takes all major credit and debit cards and premium Snapchat accounts allow workers to charge consumers on Venmo, CashApp, or any other mobile payment service. Sex work is like any other business; offering a service and getting paid for it. Society claims they encourage and support women being their own boss but view sex work as criminal, immoral, and degrading. Creating an OnlyFans or premium Snapchat allows women to make their hours and set their wages all without having to leave the house. Being a sex worker is just like being any other laborer. They use their body and skill to make a living, just like a carpenter or electrician.

While not everyone is an advocate for sex work, Generation Z and Millennials are certainly helping in changing the narrative and social media aids us in doing so. It is an enormous step in de-stigmatizing and eventually decriminalizing all sex work. Digital sex work allows and encourages all women and men to use their bodies to earn an income. While not everyone supports it, it's a way for those who have been particularly marginalized to use their identity as a focus for empowerment, rather than a liability. Kinks, fetishes, and sexualities are expressed and represented, allowing consumers to navigate their way to exactly what they desire it. The options are endless. One who may fear being shamed for enjoying a certain type of content or individual can now indulge in the privacy of their own home. One needs a stable internet connection and a credit card and they can participate.