

Parasocial Crack

They say porn is an early adopter. OnlyFans [passed \\$7 billion in revenue in 2024](#). But most of that money doesn't come from subscriptions, but rather through [paid messaging with creators](#), which is a mix of paid interactions, pretend friendship, and sometimes video clips sold over messaging.

Originally, OnlyFans creators outsourced these "authentic conversations" to remote workers in low-wage countries but they have since [become enthusiastic users of custom chatbots](#) and chatbot vendors offer [helpful guides](#) on how to systematically extract dollars from their users through a mix of FOMO, time pressure, and alluring content.

But here porn wasn't necessarily the main innovator. Want to talk to your favorite Youtube commentator or Twitch Streamer? [Youtube](#) and other services have long offered ways to pay to get the attention of their internet idols.

Even pre-AI, this business model could be extremely successful. And not just financially. [Hasan](#) and [Nick Fuentes](#) (of Groyper fame) have used this parasocial relationship to build large fanbases and real political influence.

What happens when real celebrities, or maybe we should call them legacy celebrities, get into the game? They'll likely be much more successful than pornstars or streamers.

Shared Fandom is More Fun

People really want AI to be their friend. When ChatGPT downgraded the friendliness of their o4 model to the professional and polite ChatGPT-5, the internet protested. Sam Altman [justified the shift](#) by arguing that while AI could be very good for its users, attachment to AI could make users feel good in the moment but distract them from core long-term goals and make weaning themselves of chatbot usage hard. ([Last week](#), Altman announced that ChatGPT would soon have options to take on a friendlier conversation and generate erotica for its users)

But in addition to having a celebrity or virtual friend, people really like to talk about their friends with others. The internet is full of for-now niche communities of people sharing their relationships with AI with others. At [r/MyBoyfriendisAI](#), the largely female userbase posts AI-generated portraits of themselves with their digital partners as well as complaints about safety guidelines that interfere with more intimate interactions. On [r/GrokCompanions](#), the largely male users share cute interactions with Ani. Even more explicitly erotic AI companions have generated discussion boards ([r/SpicyChatAI](#), [r/ChatGPTNSFW](#)).

But at least for now, even successful OnlyFans models and purely virtual companions have lacked one of the things that make real-life fandom so addictive: the community of fellow fanatics.

What happens when we move from digital stand-ins for adult performers to pop stars? When people can jointly obsess over their celebrity crush and chat with them before night?

I'm Not that Kind of Pop Star

Taylor Swift is obviously too classy to have a digital chatbot avatar.

But things have a way of climbing up the prestige ladder. It used to be that TV stars would film commercials, but movie stars were too good for them. Or it used to be that Vegas residencies were kind of pathetic but now even Adele will do them. Commercial innovations might start with porn stars but I doubt they'll stop there.

A few years back both [Jeremy Renner](#) and Taylor Swift launched their own social networks which fizzled out. Who will be the first real star to have their own digital avatar?

Probably a Bravolebrity.

“A person’s face softly lit by the glow of a phone screen in a dark room. The lighting should feel intimate and moody, with the person’s features partially illuminated by the bluish light from the phone. Faint translucent icons of hearts and chat bubbles are superimposed in the air around them, suggesting digital intimacy or parasocial connection. The overall tone should be cinematic, modern, and subtly eerie—suitable as a header image for an essay about AI companionship and parasocial relationships