

InEQE - What is Yoti?

In light of recent announcements regarding partnerships between Yubo, Instagram, and Yoti aimed at enhancing age verification for users, the online safety experts at inEQE have delved into the world of Yoti.

They explore what Yoti is and how its photo age verification capabilities can contribute to a safer online environment, especially for young people.

What is Yoti?

Yoti is a digital ID app that empowers users to verify their identity with businesses and digital services. While it has been around since 2014, it has gained significant attention recently due to its collaborations with social media giants like Instagram and Yubo. Yoti functions both as a standalone app that anyone can download and use and as integrated software within other apps, such as Instagram.

How Does Yoti Work, and Is It Safe?

Different apps, platforms, and websites use varying methods for age verification. Some rely on users simply inputting their birthdate or checking a box to confirm their age, which can be easily manipulated and is often ineffective.

Yoti, on the other hand, employs facial analysis technology to verify age. Users are prompted to take a real-time photo, which Yoti's algorithms then analyse for age-related features like wrinkles and grey hair. Importantly, Yoti's system does not identify or recognise individuals, ensuring privacy protection. The photo is deleted from the system after analysis, adhering to the UK's GDPR "privacy by design" principle.

Key Points about Yoti's Age Verification:

- Yoti's artificial intelligence analyses individual facial features, such as wrinkles and grey hair, to estimate age.
- Users cannot be identified or recognised by the system.
- All user images are promptly deleted.
- Yoti's age estimation system accurately identifies 13–17-year-olds as under 23, 99.65% of the time.

Facial Analysis vs. Facial Recognition

It's essential to differentiate between facial analysis and facial recognition. Yoti operates as facial analysis software, not facial recognition. While facial recognition aims to identify individuals within photos, Yoti focuses on analysing a face within an image to extract specific information, such as the subject's age.

Currently, Yoti appears to be a leading company in age verification software. However, as the Online Safety Bill gains momentum, more companies may join the competition to develop age verification solutions, given the increased scrutiny.

Age Verification and The Online Safety Bill

With the potential enactment of the Online Safety Bill, age verification on websites that publish pornography will become mandatory. While the exact requirements are still under review, this could extend to sites hosting user-generated content, including platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Why Is Age Verification Important?

Age verification serves several critical purposes, including:

- Reducing the presence of fake accounts.
- Ensuring age-appropriate interactions among young people.
- Preventing adults from impersonating minors.
- Safeguarding young people from age-inappropriate and harmful content.

On Instagram, Yoti's collaboration aims to provide age-appropriate experiences for different user age groups, with a specific focus on teenagers.

Risks Associated with Yoti

While Yoti's age verification system is robust, certain risks should be acknowledged:

- Adults or abusers could coerce young individuals to take photos for verification purposes.
- Minors could seek older individuals to take photos for them, bypassing age restrictions.
- A false sense of security may lead young people to assume that all users on the app have been identity-verified.

Additionally, Yoti's treatment of faces with disabilities or conditions that cause facial differences remains unclear, raising concerns of potential biases.

Top Tips for Online Safety

To enhance online safety for young people, consider these tips:

- Engage in open conversations about their online activities and friends.
- Discuss modern tech developments like facial recognition and verification.
- Encourage discussions about making friends online and create a non-judgmental environment.
- Learn about and implement safety settings together using online safety resources.

In conclusion, Yoti offers a promising solution for age verification, but it should be complemented by active communication, guidance, and safety measures to ensure young people's online well-being.

Please see the link below for the full report:

https://ineqe.com/2022/07/07/what-is-yoti/?utm_campaign=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&hsmi=281100758&hsenc=p2ANgtz-0L9KMCtayAaOJ2iwMMT2jjUqBPABzadE4SkY0OBH1FEqz80hahghXgLp7puKaHnJMNblnS86sApaW 0G5iapDiJe9UQ&utm_content=281100758&utm_source=hs_email