Control of the Immoral Information on the Internet

The Internet provides a highway for information.   We can find useful information on the Internet at the speed of light.   However, people also can access the immoral information on the Internet so quickly and easily.   Should we protect the children and teenagers from the contamination by the immoral information?   I say "yes".   I think the LegCo should put the topic of controlling immoral information on the Internet in the agenda

Recently, the Hong Kong Police have carried out the investigation of the case that a boy posted a photo showing his sex organ and asked for sex service at an adult forum. Many people in Hong Kong have great reaction about the case.   Before blaming the boy, we should ask why he could access the adult forum.   Most of the adult websites will just give a warning like – "This website contains material which may offend and may not be distributed, circulated, sold, hired, given, lent, shown, played or projected to a person under the age of 18 years. (Person under the age of 18 years. please leave)."   Is it the reasonable control to prevent a teenager or a child from entering the adult website?   I really doubt it.   It is just so easy to enter the adult website by clicking the "I'm 18 years old" button.   In fact, the adult website owners just used the warning as a legal disclaimer to help them escape from the legal liability.

In Year 2000, VeriSign prepared a paper to responds to the Commission on Online Child Protection's request for comments regarding "one-click away" resources, age verification systems, and an adult top-level domain in support of the Child Online Protection Act.   As described in the paper, the digital certificates and supporting public key infrastructures (PKIs) might be used to support age verification systems on the Internet.   If the technology is mature and commercially available, why don't we use it?   People like to surf on the Internet anonymously and they are afraid that they will be recognized and tracked.

It is essential that the technology used for the age verification system implementation will not compromise an individual's privacy in any way.   According the Verisign's paper, digital certificates do not necessarily require users to disclose their personal information when accessing a website.   They can serve as age tokens rather than identity tokens.   Anyway, the risk of identity or age thefts should be further studied. If the risk is considered as low, the Government should be encouraged to work out a plan of age verification system using digital certificates with the Specialists in Information Security and the digital certificates issuing body (the HongKong Post).

I believe that if the adult websites are required to implement age verification system by the legislation, the children and teenagers can be effectively protected from accessing the immoral information not suitable for their age group.   The Internet is not a virtual world already.   We do shopping, business, studying, gaming, etc. on the Internet.   We do need some minimum and effective controls on the Internet.   If no control, thing will tend to go into a chaotic state.

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