Quote by Nilaya Varma, Co-Founder and Group CEO, Primus Partners

Published in Passionate in Marketing
November 11th, 2026

Primus Partners calls for design-first approach to child safety online, says blanket social media ban may not address underlying risks

New Point of View urges India to prioritise platform accountability, stronger age assurance and enforcement of existing child-protection safeguards.



Read on: Primus Partners calls for design-first approach to child safety online, says blanket social media ban may not address underlying risks | Child online safety, digital regulation, age assurance, parental consent, platform accountability

Article Content:

As countries across the world move towards tighter restrictions on children's access to social media, Primus Partners has called for an India-specific, design-first approach to child safety online, arguing that a blanket age-based ban, while potentially part of the policy response, may not by itself address the underlying risks associated with platform design, weak enforcement and digital inequality.

In its latest Point of View, 'Regulating a Child's Social Network: Weighing a ban against the alternatives for India', Primus Partners examines the growing global movement

towards minimum-age restrictions, the practical challenges of enforcing such measures, and their implications for India's large and diverse digital population. The report notes that while concerns around children's exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, disrupted sleep, digital addiction and online exploitation are legitimate, the evidence on the direct causal impact of social media on adolescent wellbeing remains contested.

The Point of View highlights that countries are adopting markedly different approaches. Australia has implemented a ban on social media accounts for under-16s, the UK has announced similar restrictions, while European approaches have combined age thresholds with parental consent, age assurance and measures targeting addictive platform design. India, meanwhile, already has a comprehensive regulatory architecture through the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, the Information Technology Rules and the POCSO Act, with the DPDP framework placing obligations on platforms dealing with children's data.

Meta's recent landmark settlement with U.S. states brings platform design and accountability to the centre of the child-safety debate. Its provisions include hiding like and reaction counts from minors, daily usage limits, nighttime restrictions and muted notifications during school hours, backed by independent compliance audits. The settlement could serve as a global benchmark for building child protection into social media platforms. India should study its implementation and outcomes to identify safeguards that can be adapted to its own needs.

Nilaya Varma, Co-Founder and Group CEO of Primus Partners said, "*Protecting children online is no longer a question of whether regulation is needed, but of where regulation can make the greatest difference. For India, the priority should be to move beyond access alone and examine how platforms are designed, how algorithms shape what children see, and how effectively existing safeguards are enforced. Age assurance, parental consent, safer defaults, algorithmic accountability and independent oversight can work together to create a digital environment that protects children without inadvertently excluding those who rely on the internet most for learning, opportunity and support.*"

Primus Partners recommends that India consider a risk-based design code for significant social media intermediaries, including stronger safeguards around infinite scroll, autoplay, notifications and personalised recommendation feeds for minors. It also recommends that platforms undertake child-safety impact assessments before introducing or materially changing algorithmic features, with greater scrutiny of how recommendation systems can expose young users to harmful content.

The report further calls for accelerated implementation of the existing DPDP framework, including the development of credible age-assurance and consent-verification

mechanisms, adequate resourcing of the Data Protection Board, and measurable compliance reporting by significant data fiduciaries. It proposes annual, India-specific algorithmic impact assessments for major social media platforms, supported by independent testing and regulatory oversight.

The Point of View also cautions that access restrictions need to be assessed against India's digital inequalities. With significant gaps in internet access across gender and geography, particularly among rural women, a blanket restriction could have unintended consequences for young people who use digital platforms as sources of information, education, peer support and opportunity. Primus therefore recommends pairing any access restrictions with investments in digital literacy, alternative support systems and greater access for underserved communities.

The report concludes that India's objective should not simply be to keep children off social media, but to create an online environment that is demonstrably safer for them. Primus Partners argues that effective child protection will require a combination of safer platform design, enforceable accountability, credible age assurance, parental tools and stronger implementation of existing laws, rather than reliance on any single intervention.