



## DID YOU KNOW?

# The difference between BARCODES AND QR CODES

Today, both barcodes and quick-response (QR) codes act as tools for storing and sharing digital information. However, they differ in structure and capacity.

A barcode is a one-dimensional (1D) representation made of parallel lines of varying widths. It is most commonly seen on product packaging in retail stores, where it encodes basic information like price and inventory numbers. Because it is linear, a barcode can hold only a limited amount of data.

On the other hand, a QR code is a two-dimensional (2D) matrix



made up of black and white squares arranged in a grid. In fact, QR codes are often referred to as a type of 2D barcode. The 2D design allows QR codes to store significantly more data compared to a barcode, including text, URLs, and even multimedia links. QR codes are often scanned using smartphones, making them versatile for marketing, payments, and digital interactions.

Barcodes are typically read using laser scanners, while QR codes can be scanned quickly with phone cameras. As a result, QR codes are more accessible and adaptable in today's digital age.

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# THE RISE OF AI-GENERATED CONTENT

## What does it mean for kids' entertainment?

**ADRIN SARWAR**

Like most others, after a long day, I try to slip into the comfort of watching an episode of a show while having my dinner. Lately, I have been watching shows from my childhood. After quite a few attempts at binge-watching all the favourites, I have been able to find episodes of *Ben 10*, *Ed, Edd and Eddy*, *Pokémon* and *Courage the Cowardly Dog* so far. These shows were from the time when I had some sense of understanding of a foreign language.

After a while, I decided to go even further back and watch shows from when I only understood Bangla. I can remember two gems, *Meena* and *Sisimpur*. Thanks to YouTube, I was able to find most of the episodes online. I took my sweet time reminiscing about the good old days through the shows. While watching an episode, however, I felt compelled to compare these shows to the kinds of videos I see online. In many ways, it feels as though the quality of the shows that were produced in the early 2000s can surpass today's viral "children's" content.

What I am referring to when I say viral content catered to kids are the AI-generated animations floating around the internet. What is particularly frustrating about them is that they can be characterised by a lack of narrative cohesion, sometimes featuring cats attempting to escape dogs, only to be rescued by another Hercules-like cat. There is no lesson at all. Just a string of strange scenes.

Even if it seems funny at the beginning, the frequency at which you see these kinds of content on your feed and different versions of it will surely make you think: Is anyone making sure kids aren't just watching nonsense? Are we being mindful enough of what children are watching and the type of content

being produced for children?

According to Vladimir Propp, a Russian folklorist, a fairy tale has essential character roles: the hero, the villain, the donor, the helper, the princess (or person sought who is sought after), the dispatcher, and the false hero. In good storytelling, these roles create conflict, transformation, and meaning. Most of the existing children's literature, movies, and animations are based on this theory. One concern about this theory, however, is that it proposes specific roles for the characters, often leading to gender bias and strict gender representation. This impacts a child's perception of society and gender roles.



ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

However, we are at a time when we are trying to remove gender bias from children's literature to present a more neutral approach towards gender. AI-generated content, though, is often a string of disconnected events, gender stereotypes, and absurd plotlines. In the age of social media and, more recently, AI, unregulated content comes algorithmically and in an endless loop. They are devoid of any logic, emotions, or values.

Shows like *Meena* and *Sisimpur* were different. Not only did they provide entertainment and amusement, but they also mirrored society. *Meena* taught us about child rights, girls' education, and health. *Sisimpur* modelled empathy, friendship, and curiosity. These shows addressed real problems with real solutions. Most importantly, they were aligned with real world context, even if they were often set in fictional and magical worlds.

The AI-generated videos do not offer the lessons these shows once taught. Moreover, there is a clear shortage of locally produced content for children in Bangladesh. Even though Duroto TV has steadily produced several shows for children in the past few years, we continue to mostly rely on producers and studios that are based outside of the country for children's entertainment. This can lead to kids feeling disconnected from their own culture and language.

Without proper supervision, lots of pointless or even harmful videos slip through. We do not need more weird animations with Elsa battling Shrek in the setting of *Subway Surfers*. We need more shows and stories that reflect our culture, teach real values, and help kids grow into thoughtful, kind people. They may be eclipsed by the barrage of AI-generated content online, but they do exist.