

Shadow banning of social media posts

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In news— Recently, Elon Musk used the term Shadow banning in the context of the so-called Twitter Files, internal company documents that were released with Musk's authorization.

What is Shadow banning?

- The term **refers to the perception real or imagined that social media companies are taking stealth actions to limit a post's visibility**. And it's been coming up a lot lately.
- The very notion that our online activity can be **manipulated by a platform without our knowing it can be unnerving**.
- Shadow banning is the worry by any user that they are howling into the void, that they have been placed in a bubble and it's undisclosed.
- **The term traces to at least 2012**, when Reddit users accused the platform's administrators of banning a link to a Gawker article while publicly championing transparency.
- The meaning of the term has evolved over time. Now, users may throw around "shadow ban" to describe general discontent about not getting the attention they believe they deserve on social media, even if they don't necessarily think a platform has engaged in any clandestine moderation.

Is shadow banning by companies legal?

- **Private companies are allowed to make their own rules about content moderation, but for advertisers, users and free speech champions, true shadow bans are problematic** because they enforce unarticulated rules secretly.

- They allow a company to avoid taking responsibility for moderating content while quietly manipulating its flow. And those who are silenced have no process for emerging from the shadows.